

CONFERENCE REPORT

AFTER THE UPRISINGS:

*The Arab World in Freefall,
Fragmentation or Reconfiguration?*

Edited by Leila Kabalan



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Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs

This is a report on the two-day academic conference that was co-sponsored by AUB's Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, and Princeton University's Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice, in addition to the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Workshop on Arab Political Development with the collaboration of the Project on Middle East Political Science, and the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs.

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Edited by Leila Kabalan

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SCHEDULE

Opening Remarks

Amaney Jamal (Princeton University), Rami Khouri (American University of Beirut) and Marc Lynch (George Washington University)

Keynote speaker: Tarek Mitri (Director of AUB's Issam Fares Institute), "The Arab Revolutions: Five Years on the Arduous Road" (Video, includes Panel 1)

Keynote speaker: Fawwaz Traboulsi (American University of Beirut), "The Comeback of Social Justice"

Panel One: The Ongoing Civil Wars in Syria and Iraq

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- ▶ Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl (University of Virginia), "The Dynamics of Escalation in Syria."
- ▶ Samer Abboud (Arcadia University), "Authority, Governance, and Networks of Violence in Syria"
- ▶ Ranj Alaaldin (London School of Economics), "Shi'i Mobilisation in Iraq."

Panel Two: Labor, Unions and their Mobilizational Capacity

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- ▶ Ashley Anderson (Harvard University), "Going Political: Labor, Institutions, and Democratic Unrest in the Middle East/North Africa."
- ▶ Dina Bishara (Harvard University), "Trade Unions as Brokers of Transitions from Authoritarian Rule? Insights from Tunisia."
- ▶ Ian M. Hartshorn (University of Nevada, Reno) and Janicke Stramer (University of Nevada, Reno), "Revolutionary vs. Partisan Requests: What Constitutes a Fair Demand in the New Egypt?"
- ▶ Nevine Amin (Ain Shams University), "Independent Labor Movements (ILMs) Between their Allies and Adversaries after 25th Egyptian Revolution."

Panel Three: Public Opinion Transformations (video)

Panel Three Summary

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- ▶ Mazen Hassan (Cairo University), Elisabeth Kendall (University of Oxford) and Stephen Whitefield (University of Oxford), "Between Scylla and Charybdis: Religion, the Military and Support for Democracy among Egyptians, 2011 – 2014."
- ▶ Sabri Ciftci (Kansas State University), "Human Development, Corruption, and Political Satisfaction in Arab Societies: A Sub-national Analysis."
- ▶ Sam van Vliet (PAX) and Rabi Bana (COSV), "Demands for Social Justice among Youth Networks in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon; a Comparative Analysis of Challenges and Successes."
- ▶ Erin Ashley York (Columbia University) and Daniel Corstange (Columbia University), "Ethnic Framing in the Syrian Civil War: Evidence from a Survey Experiment."

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Panel Four Summary

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- ▶ Sarah Weirich (Rutgers University), "Lineages and Mythologies of the Old Elite: Power in Present-Day Tunisia."
- ▶ Kristen Kao (University of Gothenburg), "Rigging Democracy: Maintaining Power Through Authoritarian Electoral Institutions."
- ▶ Merouan Mekouar (York University), "Distorting Mirrors and Authoritarian Collapse: How Repressive Regimes Fail to See Themselves."
- ▶ Tereza Jermanova (University of Warwick), "The Struggle for Rules of How to Write the Rules: A Case Study of Constitutional Change in Egypt after the 2011 Uprising."

Panel Five: Arab Barometer Panel (video)

Panel Five Summary

Discussant: Michael Hoffman (Princeton University)

- ▶ Michael Robbins (Princeton University), Amaney Jamal (Princeton University) and Mark Tessler (University of Michigan), “Passive Support for the Islamic State in the Middle East and North Africa: Evidence from a survey experiment.”
- ▶ Justin Gengler (Qatar University), Bethany Shockley (Qatar University) “Qualification or Affiliation? Revealing Arab Voter Preferences via a Conjoint Experiment.”

Panel Six: Urban, Local and Protest Politics (video)

Panel Six Summary

Discussant: Chantal Berman (Princeton University)

- ▶ Jeanie Sowers (University of New Hampshire), Erika Weinthal (Duke University) and Neda Zawahri (Cleveland State University), “State Deconstruction and the Targeting of Urban Infrastructure in the Middle East.”
- ▶ Lana Salman (University of California, Berkeley) and Bernadette Baird-Zars (Columbia University), “From the Fragments Up: Expansions of Municipal Autonomy in Syria and Tunisia.”
- ▶ Shamiran Mako (University of Edinburgh) and Valentine Moghadam (Northeastern University), “The Arab Spring and its Aftermath: Explaining Divergent Outcomes.”
- ▶ Nadine Abdalla (Freie Universität Berlin), “The Quest for Accountability and Socio-political Change in Egypt: Repertoire of Actions and Challenges for Youth Activism at the Local Level.”

Panel Seven: The “New” Sectarianism? (video)

Panel Seven Summary

Discussant: Killian Clarke (Princeton University)

- ▶ Steven Brooke (Harvard University), “Elite Appeals, Social Expectations, and Sectarian Violence: Experimental Evidence from Egypt”
- ▶ Rima Majed (University of Oxford) “Beyond Sectarianism: Challenging the Mainstream Analysis of Conflict in the Middle East.”
- ▶ Diana Zeidan (EHESS), “Dependencies and Sectarian Reproduction in South Lebanon: Reconstruction as a Tool to Reconfigure Clientalist Strategies and Fragment Social Claims.”
- ▶ Marina Calculi (George Washington University), “Taming Power: Hezbollah and the Lebanese State.”

Panel Eight: International and Regional Influences (video)

Panel Eight Summary

Discussant: Steve Monroe (Princeton University)

- ▶ Ariel Ahram (Virginia Polytechnic Institute) and Ellen Lust (Yale University), “Sovereignty, Nationhood, and Regional Disorder in the Arab State System.”
- ▶ Sean Yom (Temple University), “Diffusion-Proofing after the Arab Spring: New Authoritarian Strategies of Framing and Control.”
- ▶ Layla Saleh (Qatar University), “Bashar, Obama, and ‘The People’: A Tale of Two Powers.”
- ▶ Waleed Hazbun (American University of Beirut), “Beyond the American Era? Turbulence and Interdependencies in US-Middle East relations.”

Panel Nine: Youth, Social Media and Social Justice (video)

Panel Nine Summary

Discussant: Sharan Grewal (Princeton University)

- ▶ Mark Thompson (King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals), “Societal Transformation, Public Opinion and Saudi Youth.”
- ▶ Alanoud Alsharekh (Kuwait University), “Social Media and the Struggle for Authority in the GCC.”
- ▶ Zeyad Elkelani (Cairo University), “Intergenerational Value Change in Egypt.”
- ▶ Soha Bayoumi, (Harvard University), “Egyptian Doctors’ Fight for Health and Social Justice: The Paradox of the Activist-Expert.”

ABSTRACT

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut cosponsored along with the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University a two-day conference entitled “After the Uprisings: The Arab World in Freefall, Fragmentation or Reconfiguration?” The conference was in collaboration with the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Workshop on Arab Political Development, and the Project on Middle East Political Science, and the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs. It is the first of two biennial conferences to be organized at Princeton and AUB on a rotating basis. The conference brought together academics, activists, scholars, and policy practitioners from more than twenty countries divided over nine panels. Tarek Mitri, director of the Issam Fares Institute, along with Fawwaz Traboulsi, academic adviser for the Social Justice and Development Policy Program at the Institute, were the two keynote speakers of the conference. Brief summaries of the panels are provided below, authored by each panel’s discussant, credited in the subtitles.

KEYNOTE SPEECH: “THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS: FIVE YEARS ON THE ARDUOUS ROAD”

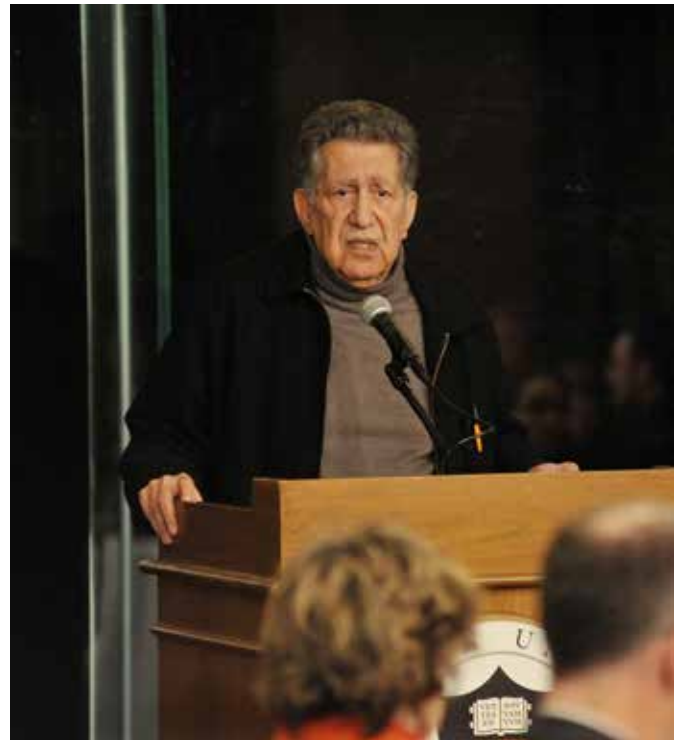
Tarek Mitri saw that very few of both the Arab elite and general population foresaw the revolutions five years ago despite the authoritarian regimes, continuous political and social oppressions, and the deteriorating political and economic conditions. As a matter of fact, there was an overall pessimism in the future of a democratic Arab world notwithstanding under-the-radar movements that planted the seeds for political change. All of a sudden, avenues of change, revolution, and progress were open and possible. However, similarly to the sudden optimism came an abrupt cynicism as revolutions brought Islamists through ballot boxes, direct foreign military intervention, and outright civil war to some of the revolting countries.

Mitri argued that a paradigm for political change has to be better suited to the landscape of today, not to their lingering hopes of those who religiously believe in “democratic transition” as a natural, unquestionable phenomenon. Tried and retried solutions like elections did not translate into a consolidated democracy, institutions incapable of playing a mediating role, and liberal economies did not shield growth promised through trade-offs and sacrifices. Not enough time was given to the delicate and crucial first phase of transition, which established rules for public life accepted by all, ensuring the widest possible political participation and developing consensus on national building cohesion. On the contrary, the struggle for power preceded the negotiations of a new social contract and it was oblivious to the essential distinction between “controlling and government” and “appropriating a state”. For Mitri, the widest possible political participation refers to the principle of inclusivity as a condition for the success of the early phase of democratic transition. Before electoral competition, inclusivity is an energizing principle that is costly for those who have to assure it. The different political players were both unprepared or unwilling to pay the cost, and thus refrained from reaching out to the fearful minorities. This translated and contributed to the radicalization of those who were excluded, whether Islamists or not.



KEYNOTE SPEECH: “THE COMEBACK OF SOCIAL JUSTICE”

Fawwaz Traboulsi argued that the revolutions took everyone by surprise, while their underlying causes should not have. The revolutions presented a harmonized chants of demands that echoed simultaneously across the region. To understand this façade of homogeneity, Traboulsi urged scholars, researchers, and policy practioners to reassess the decades of failed socioeconomic policies. He saw that those policies tried to treat social classes and divisions as separate phenomena, issuing “treatments” for poverty while disregarding broader inequalities and exacerbating wealth concentrations. Traboulsi argued that this issue – separatism – is still the go-to mechanism for devising policies in the post-Arab uprising era. A stable, prosperous, and just region cannot be achieved if this trend continues.



PANEL ONE: THE ONGOING CIVIL WARS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

Discussant: Kevin Mazur (Princeton University)

All three of the papers on this panel investigated the conditions under which group solidarities form and allow actors to mobilize collectively, whether to defend their interest as Shi'is, mobilize against the authoritarian Syrian regime, or administer basic services in their local Syrian community when state authority had evaporated. The papers give conflicting answers as to what creates solidarity, focusing respectively on macro, meso and micro levels. Ranj Alaadin (London School of Economics) argued in his paper, entitled "Shi'i mobilisation in Iraq," that agentive action at an elite level dictated action at the mass level in the case of Shi'i mobilization around the Iraqi Da'wa party in the 1960s and 1970s. He argued that the Shi'i identity category came to trump all other material ties and networks in the community because of combination of state persecution and the organizing efforts of social movement entrepreneurs within the Da'wa organization. The paper draws on extensive work in the United Kingdom archives, reading of previously un-analyzed Da'wa party documents and interviews with party members.

Samer Abboud's (Arcadia University) paper, entitled "Authority, governance, and networks of violence in Syria," argued that local characteristics determine meso-level action of fighting and service provision organizations in the ongoing Syrian uprising. The paper examines the relationship of fighting groups to local communities and argues that the nature of these ties determines the sorts of alliances the two groups will make and whether they can be coherent and provide services. The piece is primarily theoretical—advancing the concept of actors in an insurgency as nodes in networks—but also sketches a comparison between how networks form under the rule of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and other rebel groups.

Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl (University of Virginia) gave a presentation entitled "The Dynamics of Escalation in Syria." He investigates the ways in which the violence of the Syrian regime in the early phases of the ongoing uprising condition later levels of violence during civil war. The project draws on quantitative event data gathered from various Internet sources.

PANEL TWO: LABOR, UNIONS, AND THEIR MOBILIZATION CAPACITY

Discussant: Marc Lynch (George Washington University)

**This summary is based on the paper abstracts submitted by the speakers, with minor stylistic edits.*

Ashley Anderson (Harvard University) explored why under authoritarian rule some unions participate in politically motivated protests while others confine their activism to labor-related demands. Her paper examined labor unions in Tunisia and Morocco. Using an institutional perspective, Anderson argues that both the extent of labor incorporation and union alliances with political parties are critical variables that affect a union's decision to participate in political protest. Taken together, Anderson argues that these variables capture both the willingness and capacity of unions to engage in political opposition against authoritarian rulers, thereby providing a fuller account of divergence in protest patterns within autocratic states.

Dina Bishara (Harvard University) presented an alternative explanation to the UGTT's high-profile political role in Tunisia's transition from authoritarian rule rooted in the organization's historical origins. Having had a strong presence at the time of regime formation, and having developed an institutional identity tied to broader struggles (such as the struggle for national independence), the UGTT emerged as a union whose self-image is informed both by its unionist and political orientations. This legacy was reproduced over time through rank and file militancy and a process of self-selection, where new members were attracted to the organization's historical legacy. This argument highlights the importance of the timing of union emergence vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes. Rather than rival arguments related to union autonomy, this argument urges us to probe why institutionally autonomous unions may embrace agendas that transcend their members' interests.

Janicke Stramer and Ian M. Hartshorn (University of Nevada, Reno) questioned how the demands of workers moved from the mainstream of the Egyptian Revolution to the sidelines of an authoritarian reconsolidation. Socioeconomic demands formed a key component of the revolutionary discourse in both the protests of 2011 that brought down the Mubarak regime, and the multi-year strike and protest wave that preceded it. Despite this, workers' issues have been re-conceptualized in the Egyptian context as a "specialty" or "partisan" demand. Even political activists who at first seemed like natural allies came to see economic demands as peripheral to their own struggle for political change. Stramer and Hartshorn presented extensive fieldwork carried out from 2011-2015 that looked at both elite and rank-and-file discourses, the position of political parties, and how workers' demands have been eclipsed and subsumed by other concerns. They find that rhetoric drives not only the content but also the scope of the conversation, conditioning who speaks for workers and what they can ask for.

Nevine Amin (Ain Shams University) assessed the effect of the structure of mobilization on the role of Independent Labor Movements (ILMs) after January 25th Egyptian Revolution, based on a case study of Misr Spinning and Weaving Company. The paper argues that although the Egyptian Revolution provided a positive environment for ILMs in Mahalla Company to pursue their legitimate right of existence in independent trade unions and federations, many concerns have been raised about their role after the revolution as a consequence of both their worsening conditions and lack of political vision. These conditions gave political forces, such as the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the opportunity not only to create divisions among workers in an attempt to weaken their collective power but also to fill the gap with their own political agendas.

PANEL THREE: PUBLIC OPINION TRANSFORMATIONS

Discussant: Daniel Tavana (Princeton University)

Mazen Hassan (Cairo University), presented his paper: “Between Scylla and Charybdis: Religion, the Military and Support for Democracy among Egyptians, 2011 – 2014.” Hassan analyzes changes in mass support for democracy, mediated by pressures from both religious and military forces. He finds that Egyptians in large numbers favor both democracy and unfettered military intervention in politics, though negative experiences with democratic procedures in 2011-13 drive decreases in support for democracy.

Sabri Ciftci (Kansas State University) presented “Human Development, Corruption, and Political Satisfaction in Arab Societies: A Sub-national Analysis.” Ciftci examines the determinants of political satisfaction in Arab societies in the post-Arab spring period. He argues that human development and perceptions concerning the quality of governance explain political dissatisfaction.

Sam van Vliet (PAX) presented “Demands for social justice among youth networks in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon; a comparative analysis of challenges and successes.” Van Vliet analyzes youth networks in these countries, looking more broadly at the current status of youth engagement in the region.

Erin Ashley York (Columbia University) presented “Ethnic Framing in the Syrian Civil War: Evidence from a Survey Experiment.” In a recent experiment, York tested the extent to which ethnic framing alters the way individual Syrians self-identify and perceive conflict.

PANEL FOUR: AUTHORITARIAN RETRENCHMENT

Discussant: Elizabeth R. Nugent (Princeton University)

The fourth panel focused on issues of authoritarian retrenchment. The papers collectively provided interesting analysis about how authoritarian institutions, either by persisting in the same form or providing a strong anchor for path-dependence, affected transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, and a period of liberalization in Jordan, following the 2011 uprisings.

In “Lineages and Mythologies of the Old Elite: Power in Present-Day Tunisia,” Sarah Weirich (Rutgers University) argues that both Islamists and old regime representatives positioned themselves as politically relevant elite (PRE), during the country’s 2011 transition. These individuals controlled central sources of power and influence, which allowed them to seize Tunisia’s transformation process and quickly marginalize the young revolutionaries in what she terms a bargained competition.

Kristen Kao (University of Gothenburg) analyzes Jordan’s National Proportional List (NPL) system in “Rigging Democracy: Maintaining Power through Authoritarian Electoral Institutions.” The system was implemented in the wake of 2011 protests as a concessionary reform and was intended to encourage broader based voter coalitions, strengthen political parties, and encourage the entrance of new actors into the political process. She finds that NPL MPs are not significantly different from regular MPs and suggests this law does not appear to be liberalizing the kingdom.

Merouan Mekouar’s (York University) paper, titled *Distorting Mirrors and Authoritarian Collapse: How Repressive Regimes Fail to See Themselves*, looks at why police officers defect when facing overwhelming social mobilization. He shows that the low cohesion and low scope of the security forces is one of the main factors explaining the rapid collapse of Tunisia’s police force in 2011, despite it having been one of the most powerful in the region, at least in appearances. He argues that preference falsification, which is normally theorized to perpetuate authoritarian regimes at the mass level, can also be detrimental within a regime when it makes core regime members overestimate the loyalty of low-ranking members of the security apparatus.

Tereza Jermanova (University of Warwick) argues in “The Struggle for Rules of How to Make the Rules: The Early Stage of Constitutional Change and the Case of Egypt,” that in order to understand the process through which constitutions are made, we need to spend more time focusing on the early phase pre-actually writing and deliberation, when actors set the rules for how a constitution is to be made. This specifically refers to formal and informal discussions about who will be involved in constitution-making, when, and how the process will proceed. She supports her argument with evidence from Egypt’s 2012 constitution.

PANEL FIVE: ARAB BAROMETER

Discussant: Michael Robbins (Princeton University)

Michael Robbins (Princeton University) presented a paper entitled “Passive Support for the Islamic State in the Middle East and North Africa: Evidence from a survey experiment ¹”. The paper discusses the ongoing data collection for the most recent wave of the Arab Barometer, with a focus on a survey experiment aimed at estimating levels of support for the Islamic State (IS). The experiment aims to evaluate the effectiveness of three types of “appeals” presented by IS. The first type of appeal (“Sunni dominance”) relates to protecting the “purity” of Islam. This appeal emphasizes the importance of maintaining Sunni dominance in an era of heightening sectarian tensions. The second appeal (“religious appeal”) focuses on protecting Islam from secular forces. The final appeal (“anti-West”) presents IS as protecting against Western forces. Respondents are presented with either a control prompt (no prompt) or one of these three appeals. They are then asked a series of questions about their support for IS and its tactics. Differences in responses between treatment groups will shed light on the relative effectiveness of each of these types of appeals.

Justin Gengler (Qatar University) and Bethany Shockley (Qatar University) presented “Qualification or Affiliation? Revealing Arab Voter Preferences via a Conjoint Experiment.” Gengler and Shockley’s paper analyzes the determinants of vote preference in Qatar. It addresses the puzzle that surveys in the Arab world typically show high levels of emphasis on candidates’ objective qualifications, but in many cases, voters seem to vote for candidates based on their ascriptive characteristics rather than their qualifications. The authors use a phone survey on a random sample of Qatari respondents and conduct a conjoint experiment to estimate the importance of different traits in determining voter preferences. Respondents were given candidate profiles with random variation on candidate’s name, education, work experience, and level of religiosity. They were then asked about their willingness to vote for that candidate as well as their evaluation of the candidate’s competence in promoting Islamic values. Finally, after the experimental module was complete, voters were asked directly about the importance of different types of characteristics in determining their vote choice. The

direct survey results indicate a preference for objective qualifications such as education and issue agreement; tribal and family affiliations are not reported to be important. The conjoint experiment revealed different patterns: education is an inconsistent predictor of candidate support, and work experience is not a significant predictor at all. Ascriptive factors (particularly, the candidate’s last name) have a strong effect on vote choice. Presumed tribal and sectarian affiliation are highly important factors in influencing support for the hypothetical candidates in this experiment. In both the direct and indirect tests, religiosity is an important predictor.

¹ This paper is coauthored with Amaney Jamal (Princeton University) and Mark Tessler (University of Michigan).

PANEL SIX: URBAN, LOCAL AND PROTEST POLITICS

Discussant: Chantal Berman (Princeton University)

Jeanie Sowers (University of New Hampshire) presented “State Deconstruction and the Targeting of Urban Infrastructure in the Middle East.”² This paper investigates damage to environmental infrastructure as a strategy of war-making in the contemporary Middle East, taking a very broad view of these tactics to include destruction of systems ranging from natural resource production to water and electrical infrastructure. The paper calls to re-conceptualize the social effects of conflict, beyond conflict death counts and other popular indicators, arguing that the consequences of targeting environmental infrastructures have more profound and longer-term impacts for human livelihoods and individual security than previously considered in security studies. The authors investigate case studies including the Syrian uprising/Iraq/ISIS, state collapse in Yemen, and the Libyan uprising/NATO intervention. The authors argue that tactics of environmental destruction have become prevalent first because of the weakness of states themselves and second because of the involvement of outside powers in domestic conflicts, creating a situation where multiple forces are vying for control and nearly all are complicit in the destruction of local infrastructure.

Lana Salman (University of California, Berkeley) and Bernadette Baird-Zars (Columbia University) presented “From the Fragments Up: Expansions of Municipal Autonomy in Syria and Tunisia.” This paper argues that, perhaps counter to expectation, municipalities in Arab states have continued and even expanded their role in local governance in the post-2011 period. The authors contextualize current decentralizations within a longer trajectory of centralization during state-building, followed by an attempt at decentralization overseen by structural adjustment programs, and further delegation to municipalities during the current period, when central states are in the process of either re-organizing or collapsing, and municipal governments are stepping in to fill this void. This paper draws on case studies in Tunisia, where the authors use participant observation to research interactions between citizens and municipal agents, and Syria, where the authors research the enforcement of zoning laws in Hama. The authors argue that decentralization trends, whether top-down or bottom-up, represent a “rearrangement of old forms in new ways.”

Shamiran Mako (University of Edinburgh) and Valentine Moghadam (Northeastern University) presented “The Arab Spring and its Aftermath: Explaining Divergent Outcomes.” This paper explains outcomes from the Arab uprisings in reference to four variables – state and regime type, civil society, gender relations, and international influences. The authors use Millian methods of comparison complemented by within-case analysis to identify a complex causal chain linking these variables with outcomes of democratization and reform (cases of Tunisia and Morocco), authoritarian reversal or persistence (cases of Egypt and Bahrain), and civil war / state failure (cases of Syria, Yemen, and Libya). In particular, the authors identify the nature of international influence as a sufficient factor determining whether potential transitions may continue or collapse.

Nadine Abdalla (Freie Universität Berlin) presented “The Quest for Accountability and Sociopolitical Change in Egypt: Repertoire of Actions and Challenges for Youth Activism at the Local Level.” This paper explores how youth activist movements have continued organizing to affect the Egyptian transformation following the initial 2011 revolutionary events. The paper provides detailed case studies of three movements – the Front of Municipalities in Egypt, the Municipalities of Al-Dokki and Al-Agouza, and the Popular Coalition of Ard Alliwaa – identifying three strategies of mobilization used by youth actors on the municipal level: street demonstrations, building new social structures and social capital, and forming alliances with various political actors. The author investigates key challenges of youth organization on the local level, showing how while certain movements have successfully mobilized to affect municipal decision-making, others have faced competition from longer-standing clientele networks, and some have faced cooptation from state authorities.

² This paper is coauthored with Erika Weinthal (Duke University) and Neda Zawahri (Cleveland State University).

PANEL SEVEN: THE “NEW” SECTARIANISM?

Discussant: Killian Clarke (Princeton University)

This panel examined the topic of sectarianism in the Middle East, raising critical questions about the way in which sectarianism is conceptualized and operationalized in research on the region. Some papers focused on the theoretical and epistemological assumptions underlying the concept of ‘sectarianism.’ Some papers focused on how sectarianism operates in practices, specifically the way in which it has structured political coalitions and development practices in Lebanon. And some papers focused much more on the micro-level mechanisms by which sectarianism comes to shape political action. Collectively they offered a nuanced and analytical perspective on a categorization of social identity that is frequently invoked in analysis of the region but often poorly understood.

Each paper came at the question of sectarianism from a different angle. Rima Majed’s (University of Oxford) paper, for example, argued that we ought to think more critically about what we mean when we invoke sectarianism as a concept in our research. She provided a thorough review of the literature on ethnicity, in which she helpfully explicated the distinction between primordialist and constructivist understandings of ethnicity. She then made a compelling case that new research on constructivist identity from scholars like Kanchan Chandra, Rogers Brubaker, and Andreas Wimmer, in which ethnic politicization comes to be the outcome in need of explanation, may provide a promising blueprint for studying sectarianism in the Middle East.

Diana Zeidan’s (Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) research in many ways picked up on the agenda laid out by Majed and showed us in the case of Lebanon how sectarian identity comes to be constructed and reinforced through practices of development and reconstruction. By studying Hezbollah’s reconstruction activities in South Lebanon following the 2006 war, she demonstrated how sectarian identity can be produced and reproduced through practices of clientelism and non-state welfare provision, and the complex ways in which state and non-state actors may depend on and legitimize each other.

Marina Calculi’s (George Washington University) paper also examined Lebanon, but took a much more institutional and coalitional lens to explain the reasons behind Hezbollah’s surprising resilience since the end of the Civil War. She drew on the methodological tools of historical institutionalism to outline a “critical juncture” from 2005 to 2008 in which Hezbollah and the Lebanese state came to agreement on areas of influence and mutual autonomy. The institutionalization of this agreement, Calculi argued, is what explains the surprising resilience of Hezbollah’s *muqawama* in the years since.

Steven Brooke’s (Harvard University) paper focuses on the precise mechanisms by which sectarianism comes to be a basis for mobilization and collective action. Using a survey experiment in Egypt, he presented evidence for a paradoxical form of social desirability bias that may explain why people engage in ethnically-motivated violence. Individuals may respond to elites’ calls to action due to a strong anti-minority social norm, which pressures them to act even where they may not personally hold strong anti-minority attitudes. Brooke used this experiment to explain the rise of anti-Shia violence in Egypt following the 2011 uprising.

PANEL EIGHT: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL INFLUENCES

Discussant: Steve Monroe (Princeton University)

Two themes bound this panel together. The first highlighted the West's disengagement, if not retreat from the region. In its place, the second theme emphasized the emergence of regional and non-state actors. Ariel Ahram (Virginia Polytechnic University) and Ellen Lust's (Yale University) "Sovereignty, Nationhood, and Regional Disorder in the Arab State System" argues that the region's current instability reflects the rise of *de facto* and not *de jure* states after the Cold War. They propose that global "dissensus" towards *de facto* states is recalibrating the political calculus of regime stalwarts and separatist movements. This uncertainty has prompted regional and non-state actors to transgress *de jure* borders and contest the political landscape. Waleed Hazbun's (American University of Beirut) "Beyond the American Era? Turbulence and interdependencies in US-Middle East relations" asserts that American hegemony over the region is quickly subsisting. A disastrous war in Iraq, a faltering economy, and the prospects of a shale gas revolution have pushed the US out of the Middle East. Regional and non-state actors are now filling and fighting over this vacuum. Crucially, Hazbun warns that the transnational ideologies motivating non-state actors may poorly conform to the traditional logics of the nation state.

Layla Saleh's (Qatar University) "Bashar, Obama, and 'The People': A Tale of Two Powers" contends that the US' military campaign against ISIS is undermining its hearts and minds campaign with the Syrian opposition, to the benefit of the Assad regime. "Hard" power can weaken "Soft" power in Joseph Nye's calibration of "Smart" power. Saleh uses an array of interviews with Syrian opposition members, as well as secondary sources, to illustrate this point.

Sean Yom's (Temple University) "Diffusion-Proofing and the Arab Spring: New Authoritarian Strategies of Framing and Control" proposes that the Arab Spring has prompted the region's monarchs to form a new epistemic community of royals in defiance of the popular uprisings. Yom exposes the emerging ideological, political and economic cooperation between Arab monarchs.



PANEL NINE: YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Discussant: Sharan Grewal (Princeton University)

This panel featured four exciting papers under the broad theme of youth, social media, and social justice. Mark Thompson's (King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals) "Societal Transformation, Public Opinion, and Saudi Youth" examined the political attitudes of youth in Saudi Arabia. Leveraging a national survey as well as interviews, focus groups, and a survey of students at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Thompson contends there has been a political awakening among Saudi youth, driven largely by a youth bulge, rising education levels, and growing unemployment. Operating through Twitter and other forms of social media, these youth have facilitated the creation of an online civil society that is demanding increased governmental accountability and has, according to Thompson, pushed the regime to promote greater transparency over its policies.

Moving to Saudi Arabia's neighbors, Alanoud AlSharekh's (Kuwait University) "Social Media and the Struggle for Authority in the GCC" traces the impact of social media in the Gulf, especially Kuwait. AlSharekh observes that while social media has provided a new vehicle for voicing criticism of the regime and cultural traditions, it has also led to the emergence of social media stars amassing thousands of followers and promoting themselves, their social commentary, and often commercial products. While online political activists have been repressed by the regime, some of these social media stars have been coopted, serving as the regime's new public relations arms in exchange for lucrative contracts.

Zeyad Elkelani (Cairo University), in his "Intergenerational Value Change in Egypt," seeks to complicate several commonly held assumptions about youth in Egypt during the Arab Spring. Drawing on survey data from the Arab Barometer and the World Values Survey, Elkelani suggests that Egyptian youth were more fragmented and materialistic than we may have expected. Elkelani leverages these results to push for reconsidering Ronald Inglehart's model of intergenerational value change in developing countries.

Finally, Soha Bayoumi (Cairo University) in her "Egyptian Doctors' Fight for Health and Social Justice: The Paradox of the Activist-Expert," focuses on the mobilization of Egyptian doctors before and after the 2011 revolution. She traces how the doctors' mobilization against attempts to privatize the industry in 2007 foreshadowed and influenced the doctors' entrance into revolutionary protests in January 2011. Drawing on this case study of the Egyptian doctors, Bayoumi contends that political factors cannot be divorced from economic ones in explaining mobilization and revolution.



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program

In collaboration with the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University, the Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program tries to further understand through research the many different meanings of the phrase “Social Justice” and its social and economic policy implications. The program looks at social justice in the realm of urbanism, labor unions, social policies, and protest movements. Each component has a dedicated project that aims at establishing a partnership, through research, between scholars, policy-makers, and activists in Lebanon (and beyond).

ABOUT AUB POLICY INSTITUTE

The AUB Policy Institute (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region.

We are committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.

Main goals

- ▶ *Enhancing and broadening public policy-related debate and knowledge production in the Arab world and beyond*
- ▶ *Better understanding the Arab world within shifting international and global contexts*
- ▶ *Providing a space to enrich the quality of interaction among scholars, officials and civil society actors in and about the Arab world*
- ▶ *Disseminating knowledge that is accessible to policy-makers, media, research communities and the general public*

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