The State and Civil Society in the Arab Middle East

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THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

by

Stacey E. Pollard

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Political Science
Western Michigan University
June 2014

Doctoral Committee:

James Butterfield, Ph.D., Chair
Mahendra Lawoti, Ph.D.
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THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

Stacey E. Pollard, PhD.

Western Michigan University, 2014

While the notion that civil society organizations can democratize authoritarian regimes from below has become an article of faith among many policy makers and democracy promoters, some area experts warn that practitioners and advocates should not overestimate civil society's democratizing role. This dissertation challenges a large body of scholarship on civil society by arguing that while civil society may constitute a democratic force in any given polity it may also be comprised of less democratic, even radically undemocratic forces as well. Therefore, commensurate with the research yielding that finding, this project argues that on an account of the nature of Middle Eastern regimes civil society is more often a key dependent rather than independent variable.

To that end, I empirically tested the proposition that it is the expansion of democracy that facilitates more vibrant, liberal and secular civil societies in the region and not the converse, through an analysis of the impact of the formal institutions of the state on voluntary associational participation in five distinctive Arab Middle Eastern political regimes, including Syria, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Lebanon. My expectation was to find that increased measures of democracy have a strong, positive impact on increased levels of vibrancy, liberalism and secularism in civil society and a strong, negative impact on increased levels of fundamentalism and militancy in civil society in each case study. The methodology employed was an empirical data collection process entailing a two-fold snowball interviewing strategy, in which I carried out in-depth interviews with both experts and members of civil society organizations in each country. The study found that without exception expert and activist consensus held that the formal
institutions of these states had a far stronger impact on their civil societies than vice versa.

However, there was not a single case where all four hypotheses I proposed were substantiated without nuance or deviation.
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Finally, I would like to acknowledge and extend special appreciation to those who participated in this study in Syria, Egypt, the U.A.E., Jordan and Lebanon, many of whom have endured tremendous suffering, and some of whom have lost their lives since the time of my field research in the region. Their bravery, fortitude and generosity of spirit is unmatched by any people I have ever met.

Stacey E. Pollard
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... ii

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... xvi

PART I. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

PART II. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 3

Civil Society ................................................................................................................................. 3

  Perspectives on Civil Society ................................................................................................. 4

State and Civil Society: Impacts of Political Institutions ......................................................... 6

Arab Middle Eastern Institutions .............................................................................................. 7

  Background .............................................................................................................................. 7

  The Contemporary Debate ..................................................................................................... 9

PART III. HYPOTHESES .......................................................................................................... 12

  Operationalizing Civil Society ............................................................................................... 13

PART IV. RESEARCH DESIGN ................................................................................................. 14

  Case Selection ......................................................................................................................... 15

  Preliminary Research ........................................................................................................... 15

  Methods ................................................................................................................................... 17

    Expert Interviews .................................................................................................................. 17

    Participant Interviews ......................................................................................................... 18

  Measures .................................................................................................................................. 18

    Dependent Variable(s) ......................................................................................................... 18

    Independent Variables ......................................................................................................... 19
Interactions with the State............................................................................................................. 54

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF SYRIA’S BUNKER PRAETORIAN REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY ...... 55
  Robustness ................................................................................................................................ 55
  Heterogeneity ............................................................................................................................... 56
  Vibrancy ....................................................................................................................................... 57
  Political Orientation of Civil Society ............................................................................................. 57
  Ideological Orientation of Civil Society .......................................................................................... 58
  Secular and Trans-sectarian & Trans-ethnic Associations ............................................................ 58
  Sectarian Associations ................................................................................................................... 59

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY ........................................................................................................... 60

PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN SYRIA ............................................. 62

CHAPTER III. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN EGYPT ..................................................................... 65

PART I. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 65

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE EGYPTIAN BULLY PRAETORIAN REGIME .......................................... 65
  Historical Background .................................................................................................................... 65
  Rebellion and the Free Officer’s Coup of 1952 ............................................................................... 66
  Consolidation of the Regime under Nasser .................................................................................... 67
  The Regime under Sadat .................................................................................................................. 69
  The Regime under Mubarak ............................................................................................................ 71
  The Roots of Egyptian Civil Society ................................................................................................ 72

PART III. EGYPTIAN REGIME TYPE INDICATORS .............................................................................. 77
Egyptian Executive Authority Characteristics ................................................................. 77
Egyptian Executive Constraints Characteristics .............................................................. 78
Egyptian Political Participation Characteristics ................................................................. 78
Egyptian Civil Liberties Characteristics ............................................................................ 78
Egyptian Composite Variable Regime Score .................................................................. 79
PART IV. MODEL OF THE EGYPTIAN REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES
AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY ................................................................................ 80
PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL .............................................................................. 80
PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES ....................................................................................... 84
  Designated, Unconstrained Executive and Restricted Participation and Civil Liberties .... 84
  Political Institutions ........................................................................................................ 84
PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF EGYPTIAN CIVIL SOCIETY .......... 87
  Sectarian Trends ............................................................................................................. 88
  Background ..................................................................................................................... 88
  Descriptions .................................................................................................................... 89
  Interaction with the State ............................................................................................... 92
  Secular Associations ....................................................................................................... 93
  Background ..................................................................................................................... 93
  Descriptions .................................................................................................................... 93
  Interaction with the State ............................................................................................... 96
  Egypt’s National Level Trans-sectarian Coalition ......................................................... 98
  Background ..................................................................................................................... 98
Interactions with the State................................................................................................................. 100

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF EGYPT’S BULLY PRAETORIAN REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY ........ 102

Robustness ........................................................................................................................................ 102
Heterogeneity .................................................................................................................................... 102
Vibrancy............................................................................................................................................ 104
Political Orientation of Civil Society ............................................................................................... 105
Ideological Orientation of Civil Society ............................................................................................ 106
Secular and Trans-sectarian Trends .................................................................................................. 106
Sectarian Associations ...................................................................................................................... 107

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY ......................................................................................................... 108

PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN EGYPT......................... 111

CHAPTER IV. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES .......... 115

PART I. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 115

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE EMIRATI MONARCHY ............................................................. 115

Historical Background ...................................................................................................................... 116
Foundations of the Emirati Social Structure .................................................................................. 116
Independence and Consolidation of the Federation .......................................................................... 120
The Roots of Emirati Civil Society ................................................................................................... 122

PART III. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES REGIME TYPE INDICATORS ........................................ 123

Emirati Executive Authority Characteristics ................................................................................. 123
Emirati Executive Constraints Characteristics .............................................................................. 124
Emirati Political Participation Characteristics ................................................................. 124
Emirati Civil Liberties Characteristics ............................................................................ 124
Emirati Composite Variable Regime Score ..................................................................... 125

PART IV. MODEL OF THE EMIRATI REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES
AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY ................................................................................. 126

PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL ................................................................................ 127

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES ....................................................................................... 127
Designated, Unconstrained Executive and Repressed Participation and Civil Liberties ....... 127
Political Institutions ........................................................................................................ 128

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF EMIRATI CIVIL SOCIETY ............. 130
Trans-sectarian Associations ............................................................................................ 130
Background .................................................................................................................... 130
Descriptions .................................................................................................................. 132
Interactions with the State .............................................................................................. 132
Sectarian Associations .................................................................................................... 133
Background .................................................................................................................... 133
Descriptions .................................................................................................................. 133
Interactions with the State .............................................................................................. 135

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF EMIRATI ‘MORE CLOSED’ MONARCHICAL REGIME ON
CIVIL SOCIETY .............................................................................................................. 136
Robustness ...................................................................................................................... 136
Heterogeneity .................................................................................................................. 137
Vibrancy .......................................................................................................................... 138

Political Orientation of Civil Society ............................................................................. 138

Ideological Orientation of Civil Society ....................................................................... 139

Trans-sectarian Rights-based Associations .................................................................. 139

Sectarian Associations ................................................................................................. 140

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY .................................................................................. 140

PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS INFLUENCING THE STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY
RELATIONSHIP IN THE U.A.E. .................................................................................. 142

CHAPTER V. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN JORDAN .................................. 143

PART I. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................. 143

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE JORDANIAN MONARCHICAL REGIME ..................... 144

   Historical Background ............................................................................................ 144

   The British Mandate ............................................................................................ 144

   Independence ........................................................................................................ 146

   The Palestinian Crisis ............................................................................................ 147

   King Talal’s Brief Reign ......................................................................................... 147

   Consolidation of the Regime under King Hussein ................................................. 147

   The Jordanian Civil War ....................................................................................... 149

   Political Liberalization ......................................................................................... 150

   Roots of Civil Society in Jordan ............................................................................ 151

PART III. JORDANIAN REGIME TYPE INDICATORS ............................................... 154

   Jordanian Executive Authority Characteristics .................................................... 154
Jordanian Executive Constraints Characteristics .......................................................... 155
Jordanian Political Participation Characteristics .......................................................... 155
Jordanian Civil Liberties Characteristics ...................................................................... 155
Jordanian Composite Variable Regime Score ............................................................... 156

PART IV. MODEL OF THE JORDANIAN REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES
AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY ........................................................................ 157

PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL ........................................................................ 158

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES .............................................................................. 158

Ascribed-Designated, Unconstrained Executive, Managed Participation and Selected Civil
Liberties ....................................................................................................................... 159
Political Institutions .................................................................................................. 159

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF JORDANIAN CIVIL SOCIETY .... 161

State-led Hashemite Trends ......................................................................................... 162
Background ................................................................................................................. 162
Descriptions ............................................................................................................... 162
Interactions with the State ......................................................................................... 163

Secular Trends ........................................................................................................... 164
Background ................................................................................................................. 164
Descriptions ............................................................................................................... 164
Interactions with the State ......................................................................................... 165

Sectarian Trends ......................................................................................................... 167
Background ................................................................................................................. 167
Descriptions .................................................................................................................. 200

Interactions with the State ............................................................................................ 200

Ethnic Trends .................................................................................................................. 202

Background ..................................................................................................................... 202

Descriptions .................................................................................................................. 202

Interactions with the State ............................................................................................ 203

Secular Trends .................................................................................................................. 204

Post-war Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Associations ........................................... 204

Human Rights Associations ........................................................................................... 206

Inter-religious Educational Associations ..................................................................... 207

Civil Society Advocacy Associations ........................................................................... 209

Lebanon’s National-Level Socio-Political Coalitions .................................................. 210

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF LEBANON’S SEMI-DEMOCRATIC REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY .................................................................................................................. 212

Robustness ..................................................................................................................... 212

Heterogeneity .................................................................................................................. 213

Vibrancy .......................................................................................................................... 213

Political Orientation of Civil Society ......................................................................... 214

Ideological Orientation of Civil Society ....................................................................... 214

Secular and Trans-sectarian & Trans-ethnic Associations .......................................... 214

Sectarian Associations .................................................................................................. 215

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY ......................................................................................... 216
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN LEBANON

CHAPTER VII. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST:

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Hypotheses and Comparative Research Findings

Explaining Nuances and Deviations

The Arab Spring and Its Outcomes

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

APPENDIX

WORKS CITED
LIST OF TABLES

1. Freedom House Scores for the Middle East and North Africa (2006-2009) ........................................ 8
2. Model: Syrian State-Civil Society Relationship: Eradication .......................................................... 37
3. Model of the Egyptian State-Civil Society Relationship: Repression ............................................. 80
4. Model of the Emirati State-Civil Society Relationship: Eradication and Preclusion ..................... 126
5. Model of the Jordanian State and Civil Society Relationship: Co-optation and Repression ........... 157
6. Model of the Lebanese State-Civil Society Relationship: Obstruction ........................................... 192
7. Comparative Vibrancy and Political & Ideological Orientation Scores ........................................... 223
THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Since the events of September 11th 2001 and the subsequent Global War on Terror, the international community, including Western democracies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations has emphasized the importance of the role of civil society in promoting democratization in the Arab Middle East (Hawthorne 2004). In the wake of the Arab Spring, this proposition has become particularly controversial. While the notion that civil society organizations can democratize authoritarian regimes from below has become an article of faith among many policy makers and democracy promoters, some area experts have warned that practitioners and advocates should not overestimate civil society's democratizing role in the region (Hamid 2011, 1-2; Hawthorne, 2004, 3).

What accounts for the nature of civil society in the Arab Middle East? What explains its robustness, heterogeneity, divergent political orientations, such as liberalism and illiberalism, or political orientations, such as secularism, fundamentalism and militancy?

Much of the research on the topic indicates that although the character of civil society has been identified as a salient variable in predicting political behavior and outcomes in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and East Asia, the concept has been over-sold and under-studied in analyses of the Arab Middle East (Berman 1997; Sajoo 2002). While countless inquiries have emphasized the intricacies of individual movements in the Arab World, few of them have contributed to a theoretical explanation of why for example, clashes between the Syrian military and the Muslim Brotherhood led to a massacre in Hama in 1982, while the Brotherhood in Egypt vacillated between a politics of violent protest and accommodation; why fundamentalism thrives more in the United Arab Emirates than in Jordan; and why Lebanese civil society demonstrates a greater commitment to tolerating liberal pluralism than any other in the region.
This dissertation challenges a large body of scholarship on civil society by arguing that while the latter may constitute a democratic force in any given polity it may also be comprised of less democratic, even radically undemocratic forces as well. Therefore, commensurate with the research yielding that finding, this project argues that on an account of the nature of Middle Eastern regimes civil society is more often a key dependent rather than independent variable (Armony 2004; Bellin 1994; Berman 1997; Encarnacion, 2006). To that end, I empirically tested the proposition that it is the expansion of democracy that facilitates more vibrant, liberal and secular civil societies in the region and not the converse, through an analysis of the impact of the state on voluntary associational participation in a case study comprised of five Arab Middle Eastern countries, including Syria, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Lebanon.

Although the term civil society remains conceptually ambiguous, general scholarly consensus identifies it as the constellation of actors that comprises the terrain between the state and individuals (Cohen and Arato, 1992, 200). In addition, the concept is increasingly understood in Tocquevillean terms as measures of voluntary associational participation (Berman 1997; Encarnacion 2006; Putnam 1993). Operationalized as such, civil society has come to achieve the trumpeted status of a “most salient causal variable” in predicting and explaining democratic outcomes in the post-cold war era. However, a second body of scholarship has identified an important deficiency in the general literature on the topic of civil society (Encarnacion 2006).

The Tocquevillean concept of participation in voluntary associations as a prerequisite for democracy has been demonstrated in many cases to be dubious at best (Armony 2004). This argument by no means precludes the potential utility of civil society as a tool for political analysis. To the contrary, it only suggests that while civil society may consist of democratic forces in a given society, it is not inherently democratic and therefore, may be characterized by elements subversive to democratization. That is to say, participation in voluntary associations does not always equate to political liberalism (Armory 2004; Bellin 1994; Berman 1997;
Encarnacion 2006), a contention that is highly relevant to investigations of political behavior in the Arab Middle East.

Therefore, drawing from this latter body of literature, which points to the importance of analyzing both the size and nature of civil society, the first objective of the research is to determine the vibrancy of civil society in each case study. Vibrancy is comprised of two dimensions: robustness and heterogeneity. The next task of the research is to identify the substantive quality of civil society in each case. Substantive quality is also measured along two dimensions. The first describes the political orientation of civil society in the region, either liberal or illiberal, while the second describes its ideological orientation, categorized as secular, fundamentalist or militant.

PART II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Civil Society

Historically, “civil society” has represented the peaceable society human beings enjoy under the protection of a Leviathan (Hobbes); that constellation of private, voluntary associations that schools citizens in civic virtue (Tocqueville, Montesquieu); and the stratum of cultural institutions that guarantee the ideological hegemony of the ruling class (Gramsci) (Bellin 1994, 509). Most relevantly, while each of these definitions identify the concept as that social layer which operates between individuals and the state, remarkably not one of them implicitly or explicitly entails liberalism on the part of either the state or civil society.

Furthermore, the reluctance of researchers to invoke civil society in analyses of the Arab World is owed to two main bodies of scholarship. First, generally speaking the utilization of civil society as a salient, independent variable is found in the literature on democratic transitions and consolidation. Therefore, because the concept has been predominately employed in the scholarship of researchers who seek to explain democratic success stories, the application of analyses of civil society in the Arab World has been marginal (Sajoo 2002, 3). Secondly, perceptions of Arab polities have historically been dominated by the orientalist, neo-orientalist
and culturalist assumptions that the Middle East is inherently inhospitable to civil society. Hence, the populations of these states have been viewed as devoid of the entrenched reverence for individual freedom and civil liberties that democratization specialists claim are “part and parcel” of a strong civil society (Bellin 1994, 509; Sajoo 2002, 7).

**Perspectives on Civil Society**

Nevertheless, the study of civil society as a prerequisite for democracy was most influentially marked by Putnam (1993), who (measured in Tocquevillean terms of voluntary associational participation) argued that Italy’s democratic success was accredited to the vibrant, civic associational participation that transpired in the northern region of Italy. According to Putnam, it was this occurrence - the fortification of social capital - entailing “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions,” which ushered in the process of democratization in the country (Putnam 1993, 167). Since then, many scholarly works (e.g. Edwards et al., 2001) reflected Putnam’s Tocquevillean operationalization of civil society, proclaiming the same findings, and leading to a consensus around Putnam’s thesis.

However, while Putnam’s focus is on participants in voluntary organizations (group members), a second analytical perspective on civil society, the third sector approach, posits a model which consists of the state, market and the third sector of voluntary, non-profit associations (Wuthnow 1991, 5-7). This body of literature identifies the unit of analysis as civic associations and non-governmental organizations, and emphasizes the number, goals, makeup, structures, links and distribution of non-profit associations. Furthermore, while for Putnam the function of social capital rests mainly in socializing individuals into cooperative behavior, ultimately resulting in the production of trust, the third sector approach perceives associations as government watchdogs, channellers of demands and service providers, resulting in increased monitoring, public exposure, advocacy, interest articulation and administration (Armony 2004, 24).
Finally, a third analytical perspective on civil society, which focuses on informal networks, social movements, public forums, associations, and the media places emphasis on what is termed the “public sphere.” This body of literature underscores the role of publics in exercising informal control and influence over policy-makers, legislatures and courts. Studies employing the public sphere as the unit of analysis are interested in how this form of association leads to the generation of grassroots mobilization and social protest, identity-building and the creation and circulation of critical discourses (Armony 2004, 24).

Hence, while three distinctive analytical approaches to studies of voluntary associational participation can be discerned, each of them identifies civil society as an important variable in determining democratic outcomes. Yet, without disputing the analytical value of civil society, many studies have directly challenged the relatively conspicuous flaw in the hypothesis that civil society is a necessary condition for democratization. These projects have revealed that in fact while civil society has contributed to democratic efforts in some cases at various points in time, the link is indirect. That is to say, agents of civil society are most likely to advance democracy when the formal institutions of the state generate the incentive structure to do so, and hence, when that incentive structure is absent, the converse is more likely to occur (Armony 2004; Berman 1997; Bermeo et al. 2000).

Berman’s work, for example, examined the case of the Weimar Republic and how vibrant, voluntary, civic engagement actually facilitated the mobilization of the Nazi Party in Germany (Berman 1997). In addition, Armony’s analysis of the United States during the civil rights movement revealed that dense networks of voluntary civic associations ultimately undermined the expansion of democracy, due to elites’ fears that the increased institutional enfranchisement of marginalized populations would infringe upon their privilege. In addition, he demonstrated that in the case of Argentina a mobilized sector of civil society advocating increased provisions for human rights effectively deepened and intensified cleavages between
individuals and the state, as opposed to bridging pre-existing gaps, since the state refused to coalesce to advocates’ demands (Armony 2004).

Furthermore, in a study of civil society in eight European states Bermeo and Nord found that civic engagement has led to both “good” and “evil” outcomes on the continent. In each case, their findings underscored that it was not the numerical quantity of intermediary associations that facilitated democratic outcomes, but instead the qualitative substance of those associations (Bermeo et al. 2000). Finally, most persuasively Berman (1997) proposed that civil society is essentially a neutral force that tends to mirror or multiply the larger political context. Therefore, she argued that adherents to the Tocquevillean paradigm have confused the dependent variable for the independent variable in their analyses of state and civil society relationships.

State and Civil Society: Impacts of Political Institutions

These works emphasized that a country’s political institutions are critical to the shape that civil society takes.\footnote{The relevance of political institutions in shaping political behavior is widely accepted in the social sciences. For example, according to North (1990) political institutions provide two main functions. First, they act to constrain or facilitate political behavior. Secondly, political institutions provide actors with political incentives and disincentives, by which the latter estimate the costs and benefits of their actions.} Namely, they maintained that if a state’s political institutions are capable of channeling and redressing associational grievances, then civil society is likely to contribute to the advancement or deepening of democracy. However, if the existing political regime is (or is perceived to be) ineffective or provides no reciprocity for civic associations, then civil society is likely to undermine political stability, deepen social cleavages, further dissatisfaction, and provide a breeding ground for disparate oppositional groups to grow (Berman 1997, 428-9). In view of this contention and what Encarnacion termed civil society’s “over-sold assumptions,” an increasing call for studies analyzing the impact of the formal political institutions on the nature of civil society has emerged (Encarnacion, 2006, 371).

It should be noted, however, that this less optimistic perspective on the relationship between the state and civil society is nothing new. For example, in Hegel’s conception of the

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1 The relevance of political institutions in shaping political behavior is widely accepted in the social sciences. For example, according to North (1990) political institutions provide two main functions. First, they act to constrain or facilitate political behavior. Secondly, political institutions provide actors with political incentives and disincentives, by which the latter estimate the costs and benefits of their actions.
dynamic, the state contains civil society. Therefore, while independent activity occurs within the sphere of civil society, the orientation of civic actors is in accordance with the state, thereby resulting in the ultimate rationalization of the state-society relationship. Furthermore, borrowing from Hegel’s organic model, Marx eliminated any distinction between the state and society, asserting that in the context of bourgeois social relations all public activity is orientated toward the pursuit of the interests of the ruling class (Butterfield and Weigle 1992, 3).

Furthermore, in early comparative political science scholarship, Huntington (1968) argued that without the required institutions in place to manage the demands of robust civic engagement, the latter is likely to politically destabilize a country. Moreover, O’Donnell (1999), Hirschman (1970), even Tocqueville himself cautioned that while active civic engagement may facilitate democracy it may also (in various ways) preclude its chances. Most relevant, of the litany of contemporary studies on state and society relationships, Linz (1975) is celebrated as having made the most impressive progress toward our understanding of the impacts of regime type on societies’ capacity to mobilize and advance independent socio-political interests. Furthermore, as developed by Linz and Stepan (1978), the effectiveness of governance and efficacy of channels of reciprocity have been found to exercise an instructive impact on socio-political behavior. However, contrary to the many scholarly investigations of the influence of regime type on civil society in other regions, little attention has been paid to these impacts on civil society in the Arab Middle East.

**Arab Middle Eastern Institutions**

**Background**

During the 20th century the Middle East was divided up into separate zones of influence by the then “great world powers.” Following World War I, these zones were delineated into states (many of which were administered by the French and British under their mandates), and after World War II, the British colony of Palestine became the site of the Zionist state of Israel. Later, after sufficient oil reserves were found in the in the gulf region, these polities were given
even greater reason (for defensive purposes) to become so-called “strong states.” The combination of a lack of a democratic legacy in the Middle East, its quick transition to statehood, perceived or real threats to state security, deep primordial cleavages, and the stated need on the part of elites for a guided market in order to achieve economic development all contributed to the evolution of a purely, politically, heavy fisted, authoritarian Middle East.

However, a decade beyond the “third wave” of democratization (1974-1996), the snowballing effect of political liberalization across the globe had yet to capture in its momentum the vast region of the Arab Middle East, as demonstrated by Freedom House’s findings below.

1. **Freedom House Scores for the Middle East and North Africa (2006-2009)**

<table>
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<th>PR</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Referencing the above chart, according to *Freedom House*, during the period of this inquiry there was not a single Arab Middle Eastern country that qualified as free (or fully democratic). Why might this be the case? Was the Middle East uniquely, politically exceptional, and if so, does this mean that it could only be understood on its own terms? In other words, is it a
“conceptual stretch” to apply grand or generalizable theoretical approaches to an analysis of the puzzling and seemingly anomalous context of Arab Middle Eastern political institutions?

The Contemporary Debate

In order to answer this question it is necessary to dwell momentarily on the evolution of the literature on Arab political institutions to date. By now most scholars are familiar with the explanation most commonly offered for the persistence of Arab Middle Eastern authoritarianism: culture. Although there’s been a litany of explanations provided by political scientists, the media and laypersons alike, to include the Arab Middle East’s laggard modernization process, statist economics, lack of “good governance,” widespread poverty, corruption, low literacy rates, deeply entrenched primordial cleavages—i.e., Shi’a vs. Sunni, and the fact that it resides insulated in a so-called “undemocratic neighborhood,” the claim that the political culture of the region accounts for a nearly universally undemocratic Arab Middle East has until recently remained pervasive (Bellin 1994, 139-141).

However, though none of the aforementioned explanations alone or combined is sufficient to explain the persistent resistance of the Arab Middle East to democratization, neither is culture (Bellin 1994, 141). For decades and even to date much of the scholarship on the Middle East has pointed to Middle Eastern or more specifically “Islamic culture” to explain away the problematic political status of the region. Persuasively, yet uncritically analysts argued that democracy is not of the fiber of Middle Eastern culture, which is characterized by the subversion of its population to heavy fisted despots, vis-à-vis Allah, and hence, a dogmatic recalcitrance to rational thought. In addition, it has even been argued that certain features of the Arabic language inhibit an appreciation for independent thinking and self-determination (Ansary 1996, 76-7).

For example, Huntington (1993) argued that, “the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.” (Huntington 1993, 22) In this controversial piece, the author boldly stated his view that culturally, the West is different from the
rest, claiming “Western concepts of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets and the separation of church and state often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures” (Huntington 1993, 40).

This is not to say that culture, together with the various other potential barriers to democracy enumerated above does not matter. Each of these factors plays a legitimate role in assessing the odds. However, for each of them and even all of them combined there are counter examples of democratic success stories (Bellin 1994, 141). So the question remains, what most persuasively explains Arab Middle Eastern political institutions? An alternative consensus that’s emerged among specialists in the field is the robustness of the coercive apparatus of the state. This contention, while relatively novel to studies on the polities of the Arab Middle East was most notably developed in Theda Skocpol’s classic work more than three decades ago, in which the author found that where a state’s coercive apparatus is strong and opposed to political reform, a revolution—in this case a democratic transition—will not occur (Skocpol 1979 in Bellin 1994, 142).

In addition, several scholars have addressed the important reality that although Arab states are nearly singularly authoritarian they are not homogenous. Ayubi (1995), for example, found that while the Arab state is fierce, it is not invariably strong. His work demonstrated that state capacity is divergent, both across and within Arab Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, while coming from a very different perspective, Henry and Springborg (2001) assessed prospects for coping with the challenges of globalization in the Middle East and North Africa by disaggregating states based on regime type. These authors found that the political capacity of each Arab Middle Eastern state is heavily indebted to the country’s colonial legacy. Those capacities and legacies in turn are the main determinants of the type of regime that emerged following the transition period. They outlined that the region consisted of three major types of
polities: *praetorian republics, monarchies* and *semi-democracies* (Henry and Springborg 2001, 20-1).

Praetorian republics were either *bunker* or *bully* states. According to Henry and Springborg, bully states had some elements of civil society and legal legitimacy, which helped to reduce but not eliminate violence and oppressive coercion. They were also stronger than bunker states, though only marginally, demonstrating a greater capacity to ensure the protection of property. These states therefore enjoyed a greater propensity for capital accumulation than their counterpart. Bully states included Egypt, Tunisia and Palestine (Henry and Springborg 2001, 63).

Bunker states, on the other hand, were termed such because they were either physically or metaphorically governed from bunkers. They were characterized similarly to bully states, except their critical political weakness was that they had little if any autonomy from the traditional social forces that managed the turbulent nationalist phase following decolonization, through to the seizer of state control. The leaders of these states were on nearly all accounts controlled by the family and tribal allies who put them into power in the first place. Each of them—except for the Algerian regime—represents either primordial or religious minorities, who were typically despised by the rest of the population. Therefore, their brutal initiatives to protect the regime were not just efforts to stay in power, but instead a perceived or real necessity for survival. Bunker states included Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Yemen (Henry and Springborg 2001, 99-100).

Monarchies existed as such because the societies they contained were never subjected to colonial rule as intensely and protractedly as those that became republics. These states never experienced the mobilization of the lower strata of society, which in other Arab Middle Eastern states either overthrew the monarch or rendered its persistence nearly impossible. In addition, their commercial elites typically survived rather than being booted out by either colonial settlers or radical nationalists. Both state and market in monarchies experienced greater continuity than those of the praetorian republics. The influence of the market over the state was usually greater
in monarchies than in the republics. Therefore, Arab Middle Eastern monarchical polities and economies tended to be more open and competitive. They demonstrated a greater capacity to respond to domestic and international pressures for political and economic liberalization than praetorian states. However, such capacities were in all cases limited by the prerogatives of the royal power (Henry and Springborg 2001, 63-4).

Monarchies were divided into two categories. The first category consisted of Morocco, Jordan and Kuwait, where power tended to be relatively dispersed and political competition was somewhat institutionalized. The second category consisted of Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, where power was more concentrated in ruling families and political competition was less open, structured and legitimate (Henry and Springborg 2001, 63-4).

Finally, the only Arab country to qualify as semi-democracy was Lebanon. Lebanon was more open, competitive and institutionalized than those of praetorian republics or monarchies, which accounted for a greater capacity to tolerate a strengthening civil society and its demands for increased political openness. However, that capacity was also constrained by the constitutional design of the democratic system and external factors, which served to intensify political identity questions that continue to confound the polity (Henry and Springborg 2001, 64).

PART III. HYPOTHESES

Given these dynamics between the state and civil society, this research empirically tests the proposition that due to the highly repressive nature of Arab regimes civil society in the Middle East is most often a key dependent rather than independent variable (Armony 2004; Bellin 1994; Berman 1997; Encarnacion, 2006). To that end, this work is an analysis of the impacts of the formal institutions of the state, operationalized as regime type on civil society in five Arab Middle Eastern countries.

**Hypothesis One (H1):** Increased measures of democracy have a strong, positive impact on the robustness of voluntary associational participation.
Hypothesis Two (H2): Increased measures of democracy have a strong, positive impact on the heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation.

Hypothesis Three (H3): Increased measures of democracy have a strong, positive impact on increased levels of liberalism and secularism in voluntary associational participation.

Hypothesis Four (H4): Increased measures of democracy have a strong, negative impact on increased levels of fundamentalism and militancy in voluntary associational participation.

Operationalizing Civil Society

While some scholars have undertaken detailed theoretical and historical discussions of the concept of civil society in their work (Cohen and Arato 1992; Keane 1998), such is not the aim of this project. In fact, as Armony has argued, efforts to enhance the conceptual precision of civil society have by-and-large contributed to the conceptual casualty of civil society as a tool for political analysis, as they have resulted in restrictive definitions that exclude, impugn, or delegitimize certain groups or actors. Restrictive approaches therefore “prevent analysts from understanding how societal interests are actually identified, defined and disputed” in a given context (Armony 2004, 9). Moreover, as Rutherford (1993) aptly argued, groups often perceived as “dogmatic and rigid and therefore, incapable of any constructive contribution to democratization”- such as Islamic fundamentalist groups - may promote “democratization by strengthening the institutions and practices of democratic politics, while also gradually modifying [their] own ideology in a democratic direction” (Rutherford 1993, 315). Hence, taking an exclusionary approach to the study of associations based on their specific features prevents us from discovering the ways in which various civil society organizations influence democracy. Moreover, exclusionary definitions risk the danger of introducing selection bias by eliminating variation in either the independent or dependent variable (King et al. 1994).

A large number of studies measure civil society in terms of membership in formal associations. However, this reductionist approach—especially in the context of the robustness of the coercive apparatus of the state in the Arab Middle East—is highly problematic. This is
because it not only explicitly ignores the various forms of civic engagement—e.g., those not channeled through formal groups—that constitute voluntary associational participation in any region of the world, but in the case of the Middle East, it excludes all forms of association that have not been criminalized by the government. Therefore, I chose a definition of civil society proposed by Skocpol and Fiorina (1999) that enjoys wide scholarly support. That is, civil society is characterized as the “network of ties and groups through which people connect to one another and get drawn into community and political affairs” (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999, 2).

Finally, for the purposes of this project it is requisite to identify the criteria by which I deemed a “network of ties” or “group” to be described as such. While it is important to delineate what counts as a group or network, I avoided choosing restrictive or reductionist criteria. Therefore, for a group or network to qualify as a voluntary association it was required to be characterized by uncoerced collective action with the aim of influencing the public agenda. In addition, it had to consist of at least a dozen members, possess an explicit measure of autonomy from the state, which of course could not be discovered without substantial inquiry, and it needed to have been in existence for at least one year prior to data collection.

PART IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research strategy of this project consisted of a comprehensive, qualitative and quantitative comparative study of voluntary associational participation in five Arab states. It employed multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Prior to the undertaking of this research one obstacle to an analysis of voluntary associational participation in the Middle East was that existing data was insufficient to describe it. Therefore, while for the most part I took advantage of existing data on the project’s independent variable (regime type), which was collected and indexed by two reputable sources, I conducted field research to collect data on the dependent variable (civil society). Between 2007 and 2008 I was based in Cairo, Egypt, and from

2 For the purposes of this research, autonomy from the state is defined as associational freedom.
2008 to 2009 I was based in Beirut, Lebanon. Altogether I spent over two years collecting primary data in the region on both the additional regime type indicator “state strategies” and the four dependent variables “robustness,” “heterogeneity,” “liberalism,” “secularism,” “fundamentalism” and “militancy.”

**Case Selection**

Since this research was designed to test the impacts of regime type on voluntary associational participation in the Arab Middle East, I chose one case from each of Henry and Springborg’s categories of regime typology. Case selection was based on a most similar case study model, which is defined by each unit of analysis bearing most possible explanatory variables in common but showing marked diversity in the dependent variable. The similarity among these cases is that they are all part of the Arab Middle East—which was nearly singularly undemocratic—they have populations that by-and-large identify as Arab with Muslim majorities, and speak the Arabic language. It is important to notice here that culture is held constant across cases.

**Preliminary Research**

Ronald Inglehart’s *World Values Survey 1990-2005* asked numerous questions that directly reflected the vibrancy and orientation of associational participation in numerous countries across the globe. Indeed Encarnacion called the Survey “the richest empirical baseline for comparing the density of civil society across national boundaries” (Encarnacion 2006, 362). Therefore, I began an investigation of vibrancy and orientation of civil society in the Arab Middle East by conducting online data analysis on the *World Values Survey 1990-2005* website. However, although this database has been demonstrated to be sufficient for data analyses on some regions of the world, it was insufficient for my purposes in two important ways. First, Lebanon

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3 Some researchers depend on the output of governmental censes (such as the number and variety of registered organizations) as indicators of robustness and heterogeneity in a country. However, while these indicators should not be ignored (and this project does observe them), because of the nature of Arab regimes, data generated by governments cannot be safely relied upon.
was not in the *Survey* sample. Second, even in the event that I substituted Lebanon for another
case qualifying as a semi-democracy (e.g., Turkey or Iran, which are not Arab) there was not a
single question relevant to my study that was permitted by the governments of each country in the
analysis. Therefore, the *Survey* data was not suitable for the purposes of my research.
Methods

This research required two sets of interview analyses, both of which were carried out through a snowball sampling strategy. The first set of interviews was with experts on the relationship between the state and civil society in each case. In order to best maximize standards of social scientific inquiry, I took a two-pronged approach to beginning the expert interviewing process in each country. First, where possible, I met with and interviewed the chair of the Department of Political Science (or related departments) at every relevant university in each case study. Second, I contacted and interviewed leading experts, including academics and journalists prior to the interviewing process. During this first phase, I collected the names and contact information for all of those known for their expertise on my topic and then acquired further contacts through the suggestions I gathered.

The second set of interviews I conducted was with participants in civil society organizations. These interviewees were initially selected based upon information provided through the expert interviewing process. Experts made valuable contributions to identifying groups or networks that met the criteria of the project. I acquired further participant interviewee contacts through the information I gathered from my original pool of civil society activists.  

**Expert Interviews**

In the first analysis, I conducted in-depth interviews with experts in order to ascertain the specific impacts of each government’s regime type characteristics on civil society and the strategies these states undertook toward coping with the agendas of civil society organizations. In addition, I interviewed experts in order to assess the vibrancy and substantive quality of voluntary associational participation in each country. As aforementioned, experts included both academics

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4 All interviews were confidential; the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. In place of names, I numbered each expert and participant interviewee. For citation purposes, a letter denotes the country, Ex indicates expert, and CSO signifies participant in a civil society organization. For example, EEx2 represents the abbreviated citation for Egyptian Expert #2 and LCSO5 represents the abbreviated citation for Lebanese civil society organization #5).
and journalists. This is a method of determining the observations of those most intimately familiar with the subject of this project in each case.

**Participant Interviews**

Secondly, I conducted interviews with participants of various voluntary associations. Collecting a subjective account of the views of members of voluntary associations in the region enabled me to determine both participants’ perceptions of their ability to penetrate the state and their views on the vibrancy and substantive quality of voluntary associational participation in each country. Of course, the number of interviews I conducted in this section of the research depended on the vibrancy of voluntary associational participation in each case. While the ultimate goal was to interview members of as many groups or networks as possible, I set and in some cases far exceeded a target of at least ten in each country. These interviews were important to confirming my hypotheses that regime type had the expected impact on voluntary associational participation in each country, especially because my expectations held that agents of civil society behave in response to the constraints, incentives and disincentives of political institutions.\(^5\) The full participant interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

**Measures**

**Dependent Variable(s)**

**Vibrancy**

As stated, existing baseline data was insufficient to describe the vibrancy of voluntary associational participation in the Arab Middle East. Therefore, I collected primary data through fieldwork in the region. Based on data collected through expert and activist interviews I measured vibrancy according to two characteristics: robustness and heterogeneity. Through comprehensive interviews with experts, the latter were asked to describe the robustness and

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\(^5\) Again the number and variety of members I interviewed in each case study was contingent on the vibrancy of associational participation in each country. Therefore, because upon empirical examination I found that Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had the most robust and/or heterogeneous civil societies of my case studies I well exceeded my targets in those states.
heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation on a scale of: 1. very low, 2. low, 3. low-moderate, 4. moderate, 5. moderate to high, 6. high. Experts’ scores were triangulated with the subjective perspectives of activists in voluntary associations. While indicators of each characteristic are important on their own, the composite variable, vibrancy, comprises the average of both indicators.

**Substantive Quality**

Existing baseline data was also insufficient to describe the substantive quality of voluntary associational participation in the Arab Middle East. Therefore, it was also measured through expert and activist interviews. In this analysis substantive quality was measured along two dimensions: political orientation, both liberal and illiberal and ideological orientation, including secular, fundamentalist and militant. Again, through comprehensive interviews with experts, the latter were asked to describe the political and ideological orientations of voluntary associational participation on a scale of: 1. very low, 2. low, 3. low-moderate, 4. moderate, 5. moderate to high, 6. high. These scores were also triangulated with the subjective perspectives of activists in voluntary associations.

**Independent Variables**

**Regime Type**

Two of the most commonly employed indices of regime type are Polity IV and Freedom House. However, Munck and Verkuilen (2002) assessed indices of regime openness based on three criteria, conceptualization, measurement and aggregation and concluded that the Polity IV index is the most reliable of the indices. Nevertheless, because Polity IV does not code for civil liberties, I chose to specify a model of regime type employing both Polity IV authority characteristics and Freedom House civil liberties indicators.

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6 While these distinctions are not always mutually exclusive (e.g., fundamentalist-militant) they are treated as categorically separate and largely characteristic of the main impulses of civil society in the Muslim Arab Middle East by many scholars of the region. See Eickelman and Piscatori (1996).
Regime Type Measures, Authority Characteristics: Polity IV

*Polity IV* generates two numerical estimations of authority characteristics. These are democracy and autocracy indicators, which are plotted on an eleven point scale based on a weighted calculation of three composite indicators, including executive recruitment, executive constraints and participation. The polity score is the sum of the democracy score subtracted by the autocracy score. A polity score of ten corresponds to the greatest level of regime openness.

Regime Type Measures, Civil Liberties: Freedom House

*Freedom House* generates a numerical estimation of civil liberties, which is plotted on a six-point scale based on a weighted calculation of four composite indicators, including freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law and the right to autonomy and personal freedom. A score of one corresponds to countries that enjoy the widest-range of civil liberties while countries with a rating of seven have few or no civil liberties.

Regime Type Composite Variable: Polity IV and Freedom House

Since a *Freedom House* civil liberties score of one represents the widest-range of civil liberties a country can have, for the purposes of this project, the composite variable *regime type* is calculated by deducting one point from a country’s *Polity IV* polity score, for every point over one that it is rated by its *Freedom House* civil liberties score. Therefore, a regime type composite variable score of 10 corresponds to the greatest level of democracy and a score of -16 corresponds to the greatest level of autocracy.

Determining the Strategies of the Formal Institutions of the State

Since the primary objective of this research was to thoroughly assess the impact of the formal institutions of the state on civil society in the Arab Middle East, it was also necessary to identify the spectrum of strategies states actively take toward coping with agendas of voluntary associations, those that may not be captured by authority or civil liberties indicators. Therefore, for the purposes of this project state strategies were identified and categorized according to one or a combination of the following: 1. *toleration*—the regime asserts neutrality toward the aims of
civil society, 2. obstruction—informal institutions obstruct the ability of civil society from influencing the public agenda, 3. co-optation—the regime attempts to co-opt or absorb civil society associations, 4. repression—the regime utilizes coercion to repress voluntary associations, 5. eradication—the regime seeks to eradicate voluntary associational participation altogether, 6. preclusion—the regime tries to preclude voluntary associational participation from ever developing.

Chapter Design

Each case study in this volume (Chapters II – VI) conforms to a uniform template. Parts I and II introduce the cases and provide a historical background on the making of the regimes, as well as the evolution of their relationship to society. Part III characterizes each regime according Polity IV regime type and Freedom House civil liberties indicators. Part IV of the chapters presents a model portraying the contemporary (although pre-Arab Spring) relationship between the regime’s characteristics, the strategies the regime utilized toward coping with the agendas of civil society organizations and the impacts they had on civil society. The subsequent sections flesh out the model based on expert and member interviews. Part V provides the interviewing protocol I used in each country. Part VI of the chapters contain experts’ and activists’ assessments of the institutions and tactics the regimes employed to maximize their strategies, and Part VII provides descriptions and narratives of voluntary associations, illustrating civil society organizations’ interactions with the state. Part VIII analyzes the impacts of state strategies on the robustness, heterogeneity and substantive quality of civil society in each case study. Part IX concludes the chapters with a summary of its findings, and Part X provides a chronology of events critical to shaping the state-civil society relationship in each country.

Finally, the Middle East and North Africa have experienced dramatic changes since I conducted my field research between August 2007 and December 2009. Since the Arab uprisings went largely unpredicted by scholars and practitioners, this project’s findings provide rare
insights to the relationship between the region’s regimes and their civil societies prior to the Arab Spring and its outcomes.

Thus, having laid out the dynamics that preceded the Arab Spring, Chapter VII of this dissertation performs three core functions. First, it assesses and compares the research findings from each case study against the hypotheses proposed in this chapter. Second, it brings current the events that have taken place in the region since the field research was conducted. In this section I argue that the events of the Arab Spring provide palpable evidence contradicting cultural theorists’ explanations for laggard democratization in the Middle East and North Africa, the body of literature I criticized in the literature review of this dissertation. I also argue that these events lend substantial support to Eva Bellin’s theory that the principle reason the region remained nearly, singularly authoritarian prior to the Arab Spring was owed to the robustness of the coercive apparatuses of these states, a thesis I maintained was most convincing.

Third and finally, the chapter demonstrates how the thesis that in contexts of robust authoritarianism civil society is most often a key dependent variable can contribute to enhancing our understanding in the comparative politics literature of: the reasons some regimes faced fierce Arab Spring opposition while others experienced more moderate demands; strategies each regime took when confronted by the uptick in their civil societies’ activism during the Arab Spring; and the outcomes produced by those strategies.

The chapter concludes with suggestions on how this dissertation research and the events that followed can help to inform grounded hypotheses for future research on the relationship between the state and civil society in the Arab Middle East.
CHAPTER II. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SYRIA

“If the two of us are able to meet, which one of us is a secret service agent?”


I. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian regime’s justification for the exercise of excessive repression in the country was long the prioritization of stability over democracy. Indeed, much of the scholarly literature on the state society relationship in Syria echoed the regime’s claims that maintaining stability in a context characterized by many ethno-sectarian communities and the threat of Islamic militants necessitated heavy-handed policies. Even regional experts such as Leverett argued that Hafez Assad transformed a coup-ridden “semi-state into a veritable model of authoritarian stability” (Leverett 2005, 28). Hinnebusch maintained that if it were not for the increase in authoritarian control needed to contain severe challenges posed by the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and early 1980s, greater economic liberalization may have deepened and intensified (Hinnebusch 1990, 295-6; Owen 2004, 119).

Following a half-century of fierce regime repression in Syria, academics and policy-makers continued to make the argument that circumstances in Syria required a strongman and that Syrians were happier to live under stable, albeit substantial repression than prospective alternatives. To the contrary, my field research evidenced that over time the exclusionary structure of the Syrian regime in tandem with the strategies it undertook to eradicate potential competition promoted illiberalism, fundamentalism and militancy while marginalizing moderate, liberal trends in Syrian civil society (SEx Consensus 2007-9; SCSO2 2008; SCSO8 2008; SCSO10 2008).
PART II. THE MAKING OF THE SYRIAN BUNKER PRAETORIAN REGIME

Historical Background

The stage was set for upheaval in Syria prior to independence, which was declared in 1943, three years prior to the full evacuation of French forces. Owing to French imperial strategies of exercising control over its holdings, including preferential recruitment of previously marginalized minorities to the security apparatus, in particular, along with other highly divisive socio-political and economic policies, independence in Syria activated a series of military-initiated bids for political survival that stacked the odds against prospects for consolidating Syria’s fledgling democracy (George 2003, 6).

The French Mandate

Not unlike the experiences of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon, where French imperial rule made some of its deepest impressions, the divide-and-rule strategy in Syria worked by simultaneously politically, economically and socially displacing formerly powerful social groups that resisted the Mandate while empowering minority groups that were looked upon with derision by the majority of the population. Two key ways in which France did so were by carving up and reallocating land and recruiting embattled groups to the security apparatus. In Syria members of the deeply disenfranchised Alawite sect had strong incentives to cooperate with the French (Khoury 1987, 58-9).

The Carving Up of Territory and Ascent of the Alawis

In order to exacerbate pre-existing ethno-sectarian rivalries and exercise greater control over Syria, mandatory authorities divided the country into five zones. The Sunni majority, which represented the strongest opposition to the empire, was divided between Aleppo and Damascus. Alexandretta was designated for Turks and Jabal Druze for Druze. The French granted Alawis Latakia, termed the autonomous “State of the Alawis,” where the population had dwelled for centuries, largely under Sunni landowners. Critically, the city of Latakia contains Syria’s
principal seaport and it was the main manufacturing center for surrounding agricultural towns and villages (Khoury 1987, 58-9).

Under the Mandate Alawis benefited more than any community. Beyond regional autonomy, they gained legal autonomy in 1922, which ended Sunni control of court cases involving Alawis and transferred legal authority to Alawite jurists. The Alawite state also enjoyed low tax rates and benefitted from substantial French subsidies. In return Alawis helped maintain French rule by supporting it politically and cooperating militarily. For example, when most Syrians boycotted French-sponsored elections in January 1926, Alawis turned out in large numbers. They represented approximately half of the eight infantry battalions of the Troupes Speciales du Levant, served as police and supplied intelligence (Pipes 1989, 438).

The Era of Sunni Dominance, 1946-1963

Nevertheless, when the French Mandate ended in 1946, Sunni, largely urban elites inherited government. After coming to power in Damascus, Sunni rulers overcame armed Alawi resistance to the reintegration of Latakia into Syria. They abolished the Alawite state, Alawite military units, Alawite seats in Parliament and Alawite laws of personal status. Subsequently, Alawis became reconciled to Syrian citizenship. While Sunni initiatives were effective in the short term, they did not bring about the demise of Alawite power in Syria. Instead, the era of Sunni domination was marked by Alawite ascension in two key institutions: the military and the Ba’ath party (Pipes 1989, 440).

Alawis Dominate the Military

Under the French Mandate membership in the security apparatus was frowned upon by Sunni elites. The Sunni-led post-independence government seems to have believed that simply reserving top military positions for themselves and lessening the strength of the coercive apparatus by reducing military funding would undermine the prospect of the widely minority composition of the military from becoming a threat (Seale 1965, 37). To the contrary, factionalized Sunni leadership in Damascus prompted countless military coups from 1949 to
1963. Each change of government thus engendered relentless power struggles among Sunnis, which generated purges and counter-purges of top Sunni military personnel. As highly suspicious Sunnis eliminated one another, Alawis inherited their positions, rose to senior ranks and brought their clansmen along with them. In contrast to the ever-shifting loyalties of Sunni officers, Alawite ethnic solidarity offered an enduring basis upon which to cooperate (Pipes 1989, 441).

**Alawis Dominate the Ba’ath**

Along with gaining the dominion of the security apparatus, Alawis captured dominance of the Ba’ath party. An Alawi Ba’ath party founder, Zaki al-Arsuzi brought many of his co-religionists with him. The appeal of the Ba’ath to rural minorities, Alawis in particular, was also significant. Its doctrines of socialism and secularism were widely supported by largely rural, economically disenfranchised Syrians and victims of ethno-sectarian discrimination. These aspects along with the disbanding of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in 1955 drew Alawis in disproportionate numbers to the Ba’ath rather than Pan-Arab nationalism (Galvani 1974, 5).

**The Ba’ath and the Military**

As coups d’etat persisted (interrupted only briefly by Syria’s short-lived union with Egypt 1958-1961) Alawis flooded the military and the Ba’ath party. Three key events marked the capture of Alawi power: the Ba’ath coup of 1963, the Alawi coup of February 1966 and the final coup staged by Hafez Assad along with other members of his Alawite, Ba’athist clique on November 16th, 1970 (Pipes 1989, 442).

In order to preclude Syrian nationalists under the Egyptian-controlled unitary government of the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.), 1958-1961, Nasser transferred numerous Syrian officers from their commands in Syria to Egypt or to other diplomatic posts. In 1959 thirteen of these officers, including Salah Jadid, Hafez Assad, Muhammad Umran and Hamad Uwayd formed a secret military organization later known as the “Military Committee,” with the goal of restoring the Syrian Army to Syrian control. Although the Committee was not a part of the formal Ba’ath structure, it operated as one of many politically active groups of officers involved in the
dissolution of the U.A.R., and in the struggle for political power in Syria over the next year and a half (Galvani 1974, 6).

On March 8, 1963 the Military Committee along with several other groups of officers took part in what is now commemorated as the Ba’athist Revolution of 1963. In the months to follow the officers managed to purge other groups from government. They then concentrated power over the armed forces and by February of 1964 the Committee had gained control of much of the Ba’ath party structure. Though Salah Jadid and Hafez Assad – both Alawis coming from competing families – had clashed in the past, in February 1966, the two allied their respective factions to stage the bloodiest coup in Syria’s modern history overtaking the Sunni president Amin Hafiz. The Military Committee gained full control of the Ba’ath party and by 1968 Hafez Assad was the most powerful figure in the country. In November 1970, Assad’s faction carried out the final coup, which ousted Jadid and the rest of Assad’s competition. Shortly thereafter, Hafez Assad was declared president of Syria (Pipes 1989, 443-6).

Consolidation of the Syrian Regime

Endeavoring to preserve the survival of the new regime Hafez Assad then set out to bring every element of society firmly under his control. Owing in no small part to the continued state of emergency declared following the 1963 coup, the president managed to achieve a tight monopoly over all formal institutions of the state, initially by dismantling any checks and balances that did exist, and then building institutions through which he and close party members could execute their goals (Perthes 181-4, 1997).

The 1973 constitution dictated the ultimate power of the president and the leading role of the Ba’ath Party in both state and society (Syrian Constitution, Article 8). Thus, Hafez Assad reigned over every part of the interlocking pyramid of state power. He was the supreme commander of the armed forces, secretary-general of both the Regional (Syrian) and National (pan-Arab) Commands of the Ba’ath Party, head of the executive branch of government and personally responsible for appointing his vice president, the prime minister, government
ministers, as well as deputies, military officers, senior civil servants and judges. Finally, Assad endowed himself with the authority to name his successor and make amendments to the Constitution, capabilities which proved important to the succession of his son, Bashar on June 10, 2000 (George 2003, 11).

Other high-ranking positions, particularly within the security apparatus, were staffed to ensure the hegemony of and loyalty to the president. In 1976 the decisive figures occupying these positions in order of importance were Hafez Assad, his brother Rif‘at, the chief of Defense Units; Muhammad al-Khawli, the chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee and chief of Air Intelligence; Ali Haydar, the commander of the Special Forces; Ali Dubah, the head of Army Intelligence; and Ahmad Sa‘id Saleh, the Chief of International Security. All of these men, except for Ali Haydar—who may have been Shi‘a from Salamiyyah or an Alawi from the clan of Haddadin—were Alawi and belonged to Assad’s al-Matawirah clan (Batatu 1982, 20).

But taking over the formal institutions of the state and fortifying power through patrimonialism was not sufficient to eliminate threats to the regime. Hafez Assad also precluded opposition in the country by absorbing the private sphere, expanding the Ba‘ath Party and the security apparatus, and tightly assimilating all elements of economic, social and cultural activity under his control (George 2003 10).

With the president himself guiding the process, Ba‘ath Party membership was promulgated, bringing with it access to the power system and petty privileges. The Party’s numbers, which stood at fewer than 500 at the time of the 1963 coup had reached 65,398 by 1971, 374,322 in 1981, and 1,008,243 in 1991 (Batatu 1990, 161).

Assad’s stratagem of massive expansion of the state’s bureaucracy and security apparatus succeeded in bringing millions of Syrians and their families directly under his supervision. The public sector workforce, including military and security personnel, numbered only 236,000, in 1970. Ten years later, that figure tripled to 757,000, and by 1991 it had reached 1.215 million. Absorption of the legitimate, economic private sphere meant that employment was rapidly
concentrated under the regime’s purview. In 1970, only 136,000 Syrians worked in public state-run institutions and companies. By 1991 that number had almost quintupled to 685,000.

Although, military and security personnel positions increased from 100,000 in 1970 to 530,000 in 1991, the regime was keen to maintain highly cautious, strategically patrimonial recruitment to positions within the security apparatus, the regime’s most vital formal institution (Perthes 1995, 141).

The corporatist strategy of gathering up and functionally differentiating voluntary associations, which began at the systematic stage after the 1963 Ba’ath takeover, organized trade unions and professional associations for doctors, lawyers, engineers and journalists under direct regime control. Simultaneously, the leadership of such organizations was replaced by handpicked Assad loyalists, and membership was forced to accept the government’s role as the mediating, organizing brain of the association (Perthes 1997, 134).

**The Roots of Syrian Civil Society**

In order to understand the contemporary state-civil society relationship in Syria it is necessary to first consider how the policies promulgated by the bunker praetorian regime ultimately fostered the types of civil society organizations to emerge in Syria in the 21st century.

**Ba’ath Decimation of Sectarian, Trans-sectarian and Trans-ethnic Opposition**

In contrast to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood began by engaging in the politics of parliamentary democracy alongside secular Communist, Nasserist, Ba’athist and other leftist political parties at the time of the country’s independence in 1946 (Rabil 2010, 73). However, during the four years (1966-1970) of political competition between Alawite Committee members Hafez Assad and Salah Jadid, dissension also set in within the Muslim Brotherhood. The youth of Aleppo and Hama branches, rattled by the Arab military defeat of 1967, urged for a policy of confrontation with the Ba’ath, which it deemed to have failed Muslims (Batatu 1982, 19).
Then Muslim Brotherhood general guide Isam al-Atar and the bulk of the membership in Damascus and Homs succeeded in resisting the tendency. Instead, the leadership of the Brotherhood with its largely urban base of Sunni artisans and petty traders calculated that an alliance with the more pragmatically oriented program of Hafez Assad’s faction better served its interests than the strongly ideologically socialist orientation of Salah Jadid. The Brotherhood’s leadership chose to strengthen Assad’s hand in the contest. However, fissures within the Muslim Brotherhood became apparent in 1968 when disgruntled young militants led by Marwan Hadid, a 34 year old agronomist from Hamah, left Syria for Jordan to receive commando training at one of the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s (PLO) training camps. This event marked the advent of the militarization of some wings of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (Batatu 1982, 19).

Nevertheless, the first half of the 1970s was characterized by relative calm, largely because Hafez Assad’s economic policies were initially seen to benefit the urban classes and by extension, the Damascus leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood. By 1975 the tide began to turn. A number of factors stirred discontent in the country, ultimately culminating in nation-wide uprisings against the regime. These included economic frustrations, the continued state of emergency, the regime’s betrayal of the Palestinian cause, and perhaps most crucially, the highly exclusive policies and Alawite bias of the regime (Batatu 1982, 20).

The oil crisis, beginning in 1973, resulted in a massive reduction of Arab oil rents to Syria sending the Syrian state-led economy into decay. Deep economic and social grievances were also fostered by growing inflation and the heightening scale of rural migration to Syrian cities, which generated greater competition over scarce resources (Batatu 1982, 19).

Then in August 1976 Assad ordered Syrian military units to collaborate with the Lebanese Christian Maronite Phalange, in order to carry out an insurrection on the PLO at camp Tal al-Za’tar in Lebanon. Since 1917, none of the Syrian regimes – whatever their political orientation – had taken an anti-Palestinian stand. This event shocked and alienated wide segments of Syrian society (Batatu 1982, 20).
In addition, the continued state of emergency, supported by special courts set up to prosecute accused violators, and harshly coercive regime tactics were triggering concerns among the country’s intellectuals, specifically, members of the regime’s recently coopted Syrian Lawyers Union. In 1976, the Union formed a human rights committee that called for lifting the state of emergency, abolishing special courts and safeguarding judicial independence in Syria. When the Lawyers Union announced plans for a one-day strike in March 1980, the regime responded fiercely by dismissing the entire elected executive committee of the union, dissolving the human rights committee and arresting some of its members (HRW Report 2007, 8).

Finally, the regime’s rigidly exclusionary policies, Assad’s dominance over the entire political system and the heavy Alawite—even al-Matawirah—bias within the coercive apparatus had become clear to Syrians. These factors, combined with an ever-growing class of Assad’s patrimonial networks, rampant corruption in the upper levels of the bureaucracy and the capriciously repressive tactics practiced by the Alawi-dominated security agencies generated profound societal hostility toward the regime (Batatu 1982, 20).

By 1980 these factors had galvanized popular protest in Syria comprising the spectrum of society’s orientations. Simultaneously, stoked by the regime’s capture of Marwan Hadid and subsequent torture to death, militant Islamic nationalists led by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood waged war on the state. As George explained, “Deprived of all legitimate outlets for political activity, conservative Islamist opponents of a regime which was avowedly secular, and which was regarded by many traditional Sunnis as a clique of socially inferior and heretical Alawi, turned to violence” (George 2003, 15).

**Ba’ath Cooptation of Kurdish Opposition**

Since independence, successive governments in Syria had actively discriminated against and repressed Syrian Kurdish identity because they perceived it as a threat to the unity of an Arab Syria. In 1962 the regime carried out a special census in al-Hasakeh province in northeast Syria on the basis that many non-Syrian Kurds had crossed illegally from Turkey. Kurds had to
demonstrate that they had lived in Syria since at least 1945 or lose their citizenship. Consequently, the authorities revoked the citizenship of some 120,000 Kurds, leaving them stateless (Yildiz 2005, 33).

When the Ba’ath party came to power in 1963 it continued to follow a policy of denying Kurdish identity under the guise of promoting Arab nationalism. The regime executed resettlement plans, mainly by building “model farming villages” in the Kurdish region and populating them with Arabs. They enacted restrictions on the Kurdish language, which continue to this day and stand in contrast to Syria’s treatment of its other non-Arab minorities, such as the Armenians and Assyrians, who are permitted to have private schools, clubs, and cultural associations, where their respective languages are taught. Kurdish festivities such as Nowruz, the celebration of the Kurdish New Year, were banned, and in 1967 school geography books dropped all mention of a Kurdish minority in Syria (HRW Report 2009, 10-11).

As the opposition movement to the Ba’athist regime grew among Syrian Arabs and the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1970s, president Assad sought to placate Syria’s Kurdish community, whom the government had long discriminated against and build a functional alliance with them. To do so, aside from Alawis, Assad recruited a disproportionate number of Kurds to the security services and the army, released some long-term Kurdish political detainees and showed tolerance toward public manifestations of Kurdish culture. The Ba’ath bolstered up certain individual Kurds, such as Mahmud Ayubi, (prime minister 1972-76) and fostered the ability for others to reach symbolically high-ranking positions in the government or hold positions of local authority (Tejlel 2009, 66-7).

**The Hama Massacre and Its Aftermath**

Although the regime succeeded in temporarily coopting Syrian Kurds, pressures emanating from secular Sunni Arab and Islamist trends only continued to grow. In March and April of 1982, opposition forces were met with the brute force of the regime at Hama, where security forces are believed to have massacred between 5,000 and 10,000 Syrians. The
nationwide rebellions ended in the execution, imprisonment or exiled status of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Communist, Nasserist and other members of the Syrian secularist left and the decimation of the city of Hama (George 2003, 15).

Following the brutal annihilation of the regime’s early opposition, Assad’s strategic cooptation of Syria’s Kurdish communities persisted. The regime became a champion of Kurdish rights in Iraq and Turkey. Syria provided a haven for Iraqi Kurds, particularly the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani, in the 1970s and in the 1980s and early 1990s the Syrian government backed the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) against Turkey by providing its fighters based in Syrian-controlled Lebanon with arms and training. These strategies had great success in putting pressure on the Kurdish community in Syria to keep quiet about their demands on Damascus in the 1980s and 1990s in order to ensure that Syria’s support for Kurdish groups in Iraq and Turkey continued (HRW Report 2009, 12).

But the passivity of the Kurdish community in Syria began to change in the late 1990s due to a combination of external and internal factors. Under heavy pressure from Turkey in 1998, Syria ended its support for the PKK, expelling PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from his home in Damascus and closing PKK camps in Syrian-controlled Lebanon. In the meantime, Assad’s reconciliation with Saddam Hussein in the late 1990s strained his relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders. These developments meant that there was less pressure on Syrian Kurds to suppress their criticism of the Syrian regime. By the time of the transition from Hafez to Bashar Assad, a splintered yet highly visible Kurdish opposition had emerged (Gambill 2004, 3).

The Transition of Assad Rule

After surviving a heart attack in 1983 Hafez Assad began grooming his first-born son, Basil for succession. Basil was a military officer who also enjoyed considerable support among the Ba’ath party elite. Following his death in a car accident in 1994, Hafez selected his second son, Bashar, an ophthalmologist living in England who unlike his brother possessed neither experience nor legitimacy among important inner circle Ba’ath Party elites (Bronson 2000, 96).
To cope with the problem the elder Assad took a dual approach to securing the succession of his son. First, in 1994 he embarked on a program of picking off old guard Ba’ath members who were likely to challenge Bashar’s ascension and replace them with Bashar loyalists. Key strongmen such as Muhammad Khuli, air force commander; Adnan Makhluf, head of the Republican Guard; Ali Duba, military intelligence chief; Hikmat Shihabi, chief of staff, Vice President Khaddam and Prime Minister Zu’bi all lost their positions (Bronson 2008, 97).

Second, Hafez ensured Bashar was quickly promoted through military and party ranks. In the same year as his brother’s death he was made captain, one year later major, and by 1996 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, taking over the Lebanon portfolio from long-term holder, Abdel Khalim Khaddam. In January 2000, he was awarded the rank of colonel, and in June made a three-star general, as well as commander-in-chief of the Syrian armed forces. To dovetail with Bashar’s rapid ascension through the ranks of the Syrian military he was also elected to the Ba’ath Party’s most important organ, the Regional Command. Finally, on June 10, 2000, the day Hafez Assad died the constitutional age for assuming the presidency was changed from 40 to Bashar’s age of 34. Then following 30 years of his father’s strongman rule Bashar Assad became president of Syria (Bronson 2000, 96-7).

**Historical Summary**

The previous section explained the processes leading to the evolution and consolidation of today’s Syrian regime. By virtue of French strategies undertaken during the Mandate, the widely despised minority Alawite sect came to occupy disproportionate numbers within the Syrian coercive apparatus. During the political turmoil that ensued following Syrian independence, disparate power allowed the Alawi-dominated Ba’ath to penetrate and control the state, as well as virtually every sphere of Syrian society. Over time, large segments of the population came to view the regime as fundamentally illegitimate and intended on serving its own interests, rather than the country as a whole. When public opposition to regime policies emerged, it was met with intransigence or brutality. These factors generated an environment whereby the
regime was in a perpetual state of potential war with society, and coercion became the only means by which government could ensure the public’s compliance. Political rights and civil liberties were suppressed and the regime sought to eradicate civil society (Henry and Springborg 2001, 114).

**PART III. SYRIAN REGIME TYPE INDICATORS**

*Polity IV* characterized the regime as having a very strong executive chosen by an inner circle of elites from among a limited (in this case, very small) number of potential candidates. Political participation was highly repressed, as were nearly all civil liberties (Polity IV 2007-2009; Freedom House 2007-2009).

**Syrian Executive Authority Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized the Syrian system of executive recruitment as “designated” and the regulation of executive recruitment was described as “designation - transitional.” That is, the chief executive was chosen by designation within the Ba’ath Party political elite without formal competition (i.e. Syria was a one-party system). The competitiveness of executive recruitment was also characterized as “selection,” which indicates the chief executive was determined by a combination of hereditary succession and designation, and the openness of executive recruitment was characterized as “dual executive-designation,” meaning recruitment was based on hereditary succession, executive or court selection of an effective chief minister (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Syrian Executive Authority Characteristics**

Constraints on the executive in Syria were characterized as “slight to moderate.” This indicates that the prerogative of the executive went entirely unchecked by the will of the population he governed and only slightly to moderately by elite members of the ruling Ba’ath Party (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Syrian Political Participation Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized political participation in Syria as “repressed competition.” The regulation of participation in the country was “restricted” and the competitiveness of participation
was described as “repressed.” Restricted participation was characterized by Polity IV as a system in which “some organized [Ba’ath Party] political participation was permitted without intense factionalism but significant groups, issues and/or types of conventional participation were regularly excluded from the political process.” The repressed competitiveness of participation was characterized as a system in which “no significant oppositional activity [was] permitted outside the ranks of the regime and ruling party.” Polity IV typically characterized totalitarian party systems, authoritarian military dictatorships and despotic monarchies in this way. However, the mere existence of these structures was not sufficient for a repressed coding. The regime’s institutional structure also needed be matched by its demonstrated ability to repress oppositional competition” (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Syrian Civil Liberties Characteristics**

*Freedom House* characterized extensions of civil liberties by the Syrian bunker praetorian regime with a score of 6, which indicates that civil liberties were very restricted. “An overwhelming and justified fear of repression characterizes these societies.” Although some freedom of personal autonomy and individual rights were permitted (5), equitable rule of law was at a bare minimum (1), freedom of expression and belief were highly restricted (2) and freedom of association was prohibited (0) (*Freedom House* 2007-2009).

**Syrian Composite Variable Regime Score**

*Polity IV* rated the Syrian bunker praetorian regime with a polity score of -7 and *Freedom House* rated civil liberties in Syria with a score of 6. This makes Syria’s regime composite variable score a -12.
PART IV. MODEL OF THE SYRIAN REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type Characteristic</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated Executive</td>
<td>Insulate Executive Recruitment from Societal Influence</td>
<td>Civil Society Cannot Influence Executive Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Executive Constraints</td>
<td>Endow the Regime with Nearly Absolute Power</td>
<td>Civil Society is Not Protected from Arbitrary and Despotic Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repressed Competition</td>
<td>Eliminate Political Opposition to the Regime</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations Cannot Influence the Public Agenda, Civil Society Becomes Highly Politicized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Liberties</td>
<td>Attempt Eradication of Voluntary Associational Participation</td>
<td>Low Robustness, Heterogeneity and Secular Liberalism, High Levels of Iliberalism, Fundamentalism and Militancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Syrian state-civil society model depicted in Table 1 demonstrates that Bashar Assad came to power by a combination of heredity and designation. Very weak executive constraints endowed the president and inner circle Ba’ath elites with nearly absolute power, rendering Syrian civil society unprotected from arbitrary and despotic rule. Highly repressed competition evidences that the regime sought to eliminate political opposition, effectively preventing civil society from influencing the public agenda and generating widely politically motivated publics. Restricted civil liberties allowed for a strategy of eradicating Syrian civil society that reduced its vibrancy (robustness and heterogeneity) and obviated liberal secular associations while fostering fundamentalism and militancy.

PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL

I conducted field research in Damascus, Syria from April to May 2008, and interviews with experts on Syria, as well as exiled members of civil society organizations living in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the United States and Great Britain between August 2007 and December 2009.
I interviewed activists from ten civil society organizations inside of Syria. Owing to scarcity and safety concerns within the country, I was only able to interview two experts inside of Syria. The precarious security environment in Syria necessitated very cautious coordination and conduction of interviews with experts and members. Most interviews were highly clandestine. Interviewees sometimes preferred to meet in the privacy of homes or businesses, while others opted to meet in highly visible, public settings with the hope that our interaction would appear less suspicious.

**PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES**

Given that power was so densely concentrated in the designated, nearly unconstrained executive and that *Polity IV* characterized participation in Syria as repressed, this section of the chapter examines the institutional structures of the regime that were used to exercise the repression of participation and civil liberties. Part VII provides descriptions and narratives of Syrian civil society organizations, and Part VIII assesses the impacts of the bunker praetorian regime’s policies on the vibrancy and ideological orientations of civil society in Syria.

**Designated, Unconstrained Executive, Repressed Participation and Restricted Civil Liberties**

According to experts and activists, the Assads built a fortress of formal institutions, fortified by arbitrary rule and ruthless coercion in order to enable themselves and Ba’ath Party elites to rule nearly unchecked by parliament, the judiciary and society. These included Syria’s legal framework crafted by Hafez Assad following the coup of 1970, the ongoing state of emergency (enacted following the Ba’athist coup in 1963) which enabled unbridled, arbitrary rule in the country, the omnipresent state security apparatus, and specific laws aimed at eradicating independent civil society organizations; all of which served to preclude Syrians’ ability to influence the regime and exercise basic civil liberties (*SCSO Consensus 2007-9; SEx Consensus 2007-9*).
Political Institutions

Executive

By virtue of the Syrian constitution President Bashar Assad inherited all of the same powers his father had carved out for himself. He was the supreme commander of the armed forces, head of the executive, and he appointed his deputies, the prime minister, government ministers and their deputies, officers of the armed forces and high civil servants and judges. The president was also empowered to draft the regime’s domestic and foreign policies (Perthes 1997, 139).

Parliament

Although the parliament took on the facade of a multiparty system under what the Ba’ath termed the National Progressive Front, the six legal parties that it comprised were all Ba’ath aligned and their members answered with marginal deviation directly to the executive. The regime did permit independents to run for a limited number of seats in the Syrian parliament but their autonomy from the Party was usually highly suspect and criticism of the regime was harshly punished (Perthes 1997, 139-40).

By law the Syrian parliament was also answerable to the president, who submitted bills and promulgated laws that the parliament passed. The president had the ability to veto any law. Although political rights and civil liberties were guaranteed in print, constitutional articles addressing them were directly contradicted by Article 8, which declared the Ba’ath the official party of the state, and Articles 107, 111, 113 enabling the executive to dissolve parliament, assume legislative authority and authorize both the continuation and adoption of new decrees under emergency law (Syrian Constitution 1973).

Emergency Law

Assad and Ba’ath party elites justified the continuation of emergency law based on claims of the threat of domestic militants (typically Islamic) as well as external threats such as Western agents, prospective Israeli aggression, or since 2004, an Iraqi insurgency. Interviewees
placed acute emphasis on the state of emergency, which usurped constitutional law endowing the Syrian State Security Court, special military courts and the regime’s omnipresent security agencies to act with impunity (SCSO Consensus 2007-9; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

The state of emergency not only enabled the president to rule unchecked. It authorized the regime to place restrictions on freedoms of individuals with respect to meetings, residence, travel and passage in specific places or at particular time, to preventatively arrest anyone suspected of endangering public security and order, to authorize the investigation of persons and places and to delegate any person to perform any of these tasks (Legislative Decree 51, Art. 4(a)). Such powers created an environment where the regime could assert a monopoly over the most basic rights and freedoms of the population and where arbitrary measures could be used under any circumstance in the name of safeguarding national security (SEx Consensus, 2007-9).

**The State Security Court**

Although normal civil and criminal courts in Syria operated with some independence, the Syrian State Security Court which was set up in 1968 under Legislative Decree #47, along with various pre-existing, special military courts operated outside of the constitutional judicial system. An outgrowth of the state of emergency, in practice the State Security and military courts’ chief role was to prosecute people who criticized the regime’s policies in trials that lacked basic guarantees of due process (HRW Report 2009, 1).

**Intelligence Agencies**

There were four main intelligence agencies in Syria: Military Intelligence, the Political Security Directorate, the General Intelligence Directorate (referred to as state security), and Air Force Intelligence. It was these agencies under emergency law that had virtually unlimited authority to carry out arrests, searches, interrogations, and detentions which dealt with civil activists involved in what the authorities considered “political activities.” Thus, much more than national security services, in practice Syria’s security agencies were autonomous entities answerable only to president Assad (HWR Report 2009, 16).
Laws Specific to Rights to Association

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and Law #93

Similar to Egypt, the U.A.E. and Jordan, laws governing associational participation presented a regular challenge to activists in Syria. The most infamous to target Syria’s secularist, nongovernmental associations was Law #93, the 1958 Law on Associations and Private Societies, which made it illegal for any association to operate without a license from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MoSAL). A common regime strategy for undermining independent non-governmental organizations was to refuse their applications for licensure. Without legal status, these groups operated at the whim of the authorities and lived in constant fear of being shut down or prosecuted for violating Syrian law (SCSO Consensus 2007-9; SEx Consensus 2007-9; Law 93 1958; HRW Report 2007, 18-21).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Law #49

Until recently religious associations had been governed by MoSAL as well. But in an effort to further tighten controls on the growing number of religious associations in Syria, in 2008 the regime created the Religious Affairs Ministry, which was designed to keep legally sanctioned religious associations under the regime’s purview. It was also notorious for refusing or retracting associations’ registration, thereby criminalizing them. In addition, by virtue of Law #49, membership in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was illegal, as was membership in any salafist – meaning Islamic fundamentalist – organization. Although the regime never defined what constituted a salafist or why it was illegal, affiliation with either the Muslim Brotherhood or salafists was punishable by death under Syrian law (SEx4 2009; HRW Report 2009, 21-3).

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Interviews with members of Syria’s civil society organizations provide important anecdotal insights to the Syrian state - civil society relationship. During the time of my research, the voluntary associational participation that took place on the surface in Syria was still “illegal but working” (Lahn 2006). It comprised a very lean spectrum of four main types of voluntary
trends. They included Sunni Islamic sectarian, 7 Kurdish ethnic, 8 and secular 9 trends, as well as the remnants of two nearly eradicated trans-ethnic & trans-sectarian national level coalitions: the Damascus Spring 10 and the Damascus Declaration Movements 11 (SCSO Consensus 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Sectarian Trends

Background

Experts and activists emphasized how following the implementation of Law 47, the Hama massacre of 1982, forced exile, arrest, imprisonment and execution of those accused of associating with the Muslim Brotherhood, its members were either systematically picked off or driven underground. However, in the wake of these events, experts explained that Hafez Assad must have realized the danger of the country’s largely Sunni Muslim public viewing the secular, Alawi-dominated regime’s tactics as explicit attacks on Islam. Therefore, he embarked on a cooptation strategy (SEx1 2008; SEx2 2009; SEx10 2009).

Believing the regime could simultaneously improve its legitimacy by adopting Islamic credentials while expanding control over Islamic society, experts said that the Ba’ath party launched a campaign designed to promote Islamic symbolism, sponsor the construction and restoration of mosques, and endorse Islamic education. Experts explained that in the short-term this helped to enhance public perceptions of the regime and shore up the loyalty of some

7 Examples include many small Islamic charity associations, small Islamic parties such as the Islamist Hizb al-Tahrir (hizb al-tahrir means “the liberation party” in Arabic), clandestine members of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Qubaisiate (a women’s Islamist association).
8 Examples include the Kurdish Democratic Assembly and Kurdish Democratic Front.
9 Examples include some small democratization and civil society forums, human rights groups, and illegal parties such as Nasserist parties, the Syrian Peoples’ Democratic Party and the National Democratic Gathering.
10 Participants include several democratization and civil society forums, human rights groups, the Nasserist parties, the Syrian Peoples’ Democratic Party and the National Democratic Gathering.
11 Participants include several democratization and civil society forums, human rights groups, the Nasserist parties, the Syrian Peoples’ Democratic Party, the National Democratic Gathering, the Kurdish Democratic Assembly, the Kurdish Democratic Front, some mainstream Islamic Associations and the Muslim Brotherhood.
respected religious figures such as Sheikh Said Ramadan al-Bouti, who Bashar Assad even teamed with to facilitate a women’s Islamic association called the Qubaisiate. However, as discussed below, the regime’s co-optation strategy combined with other circumstances ultimately gave rise to a resurgence of Sunni Islamist activism, and a second round of regime crackdowns (SEx1 2008; SEx2 2008; SEx10 2009).

Descriptions

Islamic activists I had met outside of Syria helped to facilitate interviews with members of Islamic associations. Human rights activists and educators I met inside the country also aided in this process. Many of the men and women participating in the Islamic charity associations I interviewed preferred not to be viewed as activists and instead, simply, people in the service of god. Their focus was largely on restoring dignity to people in Syria, the poor in particular, often by providing very basic community services such as meals, small employment opportunities, and Islamic education, and espousing Islamic values such as piety, generosity, modesty and austerity. Most of the people carrying out the functions of these organizations said they had no interest in direct confrontation with regime. Instead, they explained that conducting their work quietly best facilitated their goal of servicing victims of the heretical system of governance (SCSO1 2008; SCSO8 2008).

However, other members of Islamic associations and the broader underground Islamic movement were emphatically critical of the regime. These activists who wanted justice for Syria’s Sunni majority believed that there was no solution for Syria except to replace the existing regime with an Islamic system of government. This grouping’s activities centered on ‘purifying’ Islamic education and Syrian Muslims’ way of life, discussion circles to that end, and recruitment (SCS06 2008; SCSO10 2008).

12 Sheikh Said Ramadan al-Bouti was a highly respected, moderate Sunni scholar (SEx2 2008)
**Interactions with the State**

By the time I began field research in Syria the unintended consequences the regime’s strategy of trying to co-opt Islam had become clear to both the regime and Syria experts. Cooptation tactics, along with the influence of the region’s growing Islamic revivalism and strong religious fervor in Syria generated by the war in Iraq, had culminated in an active, unregulated network of underground Islamist activity. In addition, experts said the influence of outside militant Islamist groups that the regime hosted was also very likely critical to augmenting this trend, but the opaqueness of Islamist currents made it very difficult to determine with any certainty (SEX1 2008; SEX2 2008; SEX10 2009).

Regardless, in 2008 the regime undertook another wave of crackdowns on Islamists, creating the Ministry of Religious Affairs, banning the Qubaisi ate and rounding up and imprisoning suspected Islamists. As one prominent Islamic activist even told me "not until every single Syrian rises up against the regime, prepared to die, will Assad back down, and even then he won’t" (CSO10 2008).

**Ethnic Trends**

**Background**

Experts and activists explained that the Syrian regime’s legacy of institutionalized discrimination against Syrian Kurds, which denied them cultural rights and even citizenship fostered deep animosity toward the regime in Syria’s Kurdish communities. Although Hafez Assad’s tactic of co-opting the Kurdish community in the 1980s was partially successful, after his priorities changed in the 1990s, anti-regime Kurdish activism (albeit fractured) began to surface (CSO5 2008; CSO9 2008; SEX Consensus 2007-9).

**Descriptions**

Interviews with members of two of Syria’s banned Kurdish associations were coordinated by researchers I met working for an international human rights monitoring organization. These interviews took place in home offices and activists said that the ultimate
purpose of their parties and civic participation was to restore the Kurdish identity and achieve justice for Kurds. However, more specific goals between the two parties were divergent. Members of one organization explained that they had coordinated efforts with human rights and democratization activists, believing that agitating for political representation and equality for all Syrians was the best way to advance Kurdish rights. Members of the other organization advocated more nationalistic goals. The latter group was of the persuasion that collaborating too closely with other disaffected sectors of Syrian civil society would convolute the Kurdish cause and specific calls on the part of the Kurdish minority for greater autonomy (SCSO5 2008; SCSO9 2008).

According to the interviewees, the leading activities of Kurdish advocacy groups were coordinating and consolidating efforts between disparate Kurdish agendas, pressuring the regime to open a dialogue between Kurdish groups and Syrian decision-makers and publicizing Kurdish causes (SCSO5 2008; SCSO9 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

Interviews with members of Syria’s Kurdish associations indicated that the 2003 U.S.-led war in Iraq led to a significant rise in Syrian Kurdish activism and nationalist sentiment. Having observed the expansion of political rights and civil liberties to Iraqi Kurds, Syrian Kurdish activists said that they were encouraged to believe that they could achieve the same outcome for Syrian Kurds (SCSO5 2008; SCSO9 2008).

The activists claimed that tensions between Kurdish activists and the Syrian government came to a head after March 12, 2004, when clashes broke out between supporters of rival Kurdish football teams in Qamishili (a town in northern Syria). Interviewees explained that rather than using non-lethal force to stop those fighting, Syrian security forces opened fire on unarmed spectators, killing at least thirty Kurds and injuring hundreds. The next day, thousands attended the funerals of those killed. When protests broke out, security forces again opened fire. For months to follow, Syrian authorities arrested dozens of Kurds from Qamishili regardless of
whether they had been present at the demonstrations (SCSO5 2008; SCSO9 2008; SEx8 2009; Yildiz 2005, 42).

Secular Trends

Background

Having witnessed the Hama massacre and the regime’s campaigns to eradicate dissidence throughout the 1990s, many of Syria’s most prominent activists during the time of my field research were staunch secular human rights and democratization advocates. In the mid-1990s those living in exile established the Damascus Center for Theoretical Studies and Civil Rights Studies, in Sweden, and the Syrian Human Rights Committee, a London-based organization. These associations collected and disseminated information on human rights abuses in Syria, and called for democratic reform in Syria (SEx1 2008; SEx2 2008; SCSO5 2008).

Inside of Syria, on the surface democratization and human rights activists were also the most organized and coherent current in Syrian civil society. However, if regime repression prompted their fortitude so too did it plague their efforts. With illegal status, these activists were gravely constrained (SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008).

Descriptions

My initial meeting with members of one of Syria’s leading human rights organizations took place at a renowned café in the old city of Damascus. The organization was the Syrian branch of a larger network of Arab human and women’s rights activists. These activists introduced me to their counter-parts inside of Syria and experts on Syria who resided outside of the country (SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008).

Members of these organizations stated that their key goals were to advance justice under law, transparency and accountability of government and democratization. To advance their aims these groups coordinated (or tried to coordinate) with members of the spectrum of Syrian civil society organizations. While activists belonging to this trend explained that they attempted to remain as active as possible, given their participation in the Damascus Spring and the Damascus
Declaration, they were well-known targets of Syrian security agents. Therefore, although they continued to host meetings on human rights, civil society and democracy, and gathered data on, as well as published criticism of the regime's human rights abuses, they sought to maintain a low profile (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

Prior to my arrival in Syria, members of the Egyptian branch of the organization had put me in touch with co-activists in Syria. When I arrived, two pre-scheduled meetings were cancelled because security agents had detained the activists (for reasons unrelated to my visit). To my knowledge they remained in detention for the duration of time I was in the country. Their colleagues told that this kind of occurrence was not out of the ordinary. In fact, they said, it was the status quo in Syria (SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008).

Although these activists indicated that they were prepared to risk everything for the cause, intimidation by security agents who regularly broke up or infiltrated meetings, followed activists home or arbitrarily detained them made their lives very difficult. On top of this incessant harassment by security agents, these activists said that they and their colleagues had been subject to arrests, torture, imprisonment and exile. They explained that they, their friends and family lived in constant fear owing to their participation in Syrian civil society (SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008).

**Syria’s Trans-ethnic & Trans-sectarian National Level Coalitions: Damascus Spring**

**Background**

Experts and activists stated that the succession of Bashar Assad in June 2000 had the most profound influence on civil society in Syria since the nation-wide rebellion against the Alawi-dominated Ba’ath regime was put down in 1982. This was because contrary to his father, who was often referred to as the “lion” (assad means “lion” in Arabic) or “dictator of Damascus,” Bashar, who was seen as young, progressive and Western-oriented, was believed by many to have
an eye toward liberalizing Syrian politics (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Experts said the country’s new leader gave activists credible reasons to think the new guard would be responsive to *infitah*. For example, upon his assumption of power, Assad addressed the public on several occasions emphasizing the need for an infusion of creativity in Syrian policy, room for constructive criticism, reform and modernization in Syria (SEx Consensus 2007-9). Straightaway the new president released thousands of Islamist and liberal secularist political prisoners. He also closed the Mazzeh prison, a leading destination for political prisoners convicted of crimes by the State Security Court, and transferred approximately 500 political prisoners out of the Tadmor prison, which was notorious for torture and other abuses of political prisoners (SEx2 2008; George 2003, 40).

However, the new guard’s brief exercise of tolerance came to an abrupt end approximately one year after Bashar Assad came to power (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9). On January 29, 2001, Syrian Information Minister Adnan Omran publicly declared the activists to be neo-colonialists, and claimed that civil society was an American term. Shortly thereafter, Assad communicated warnings to the civil society movement, “When the consequences of an action affect the stability of the homeland, there are two possibilities, either the perpetrator is a foreign agent acting on behalf of an outside power, or else he is a simple person acting unintentionally. But in both cases a service is being done to the country’s enemies, and consequently both are dealt with in a similar fashion, irrespective of their intentions or motives” (HRW Report 2007, 11).

**Descriptions**

These interviewees said that even prior to Bashar Assad’s ascension to power, in anticipation of prospects for increased political openness, one of the country’s most famous

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13 Arabic for “opening up.”
activists, Michel Kilo, who had been jailed from 1980-1983 for participating in the rebellion against the regime, began forming a movement called the Committee for the Revival of Civil Society in Syria, which was aimed at strengthening civic capacity. Shortly thereafter, independent parliamentarian and outspoken regime critic Riad Seif founded the Friends of Civil Society in Syria that called for the revival of civil society and advancing a just balance between the state and Syrian society, including greater extensions of political rights and civil liberties. In addition, Seif opened what was known as the National Dialogue Forum. The meetings, which were geared toward the study of civil society, attracted hundreds of Syrians weekly, and featured guest speakers with expertise on the topic (SCSO2 2008; SEx7 2009; George 2003, 33-7).

Experts and activists explained that this gave rise to what became known as the “Damascus Spring.” In September 2000, 99 leading Syrian civil society activists even released a signed statement known as the “Manifesto of the 99,” which called for lifting of the state of emergency in Syria, a general amnesty for all political prisoners, the return of political exiles and greater extensions of political rights and civil liberties. The Manifesto stated, “No reform, be it economic, administrative or legal, will achieve tranquility and stability in the country unless fully accompanied by the desired political reform” (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9; “Manifesto of the 99” 2000).

In the months to follow, activists said they increasingly organized in private homes and public halls. Several more movements and forums emerged. Among the best-known discussion circles were the al-Kawakibi Forum led by Majid Manjouneh and the Atassi Forum headed by Habib Issa. Other prominent activists included Anwar al-Bunni, a Syrian human rights lawyer and founder of the Syrian Human Rights Association, Aref Dalila, an economics professor and regime dissident and Kamal al-Labwani a physician and artist. While the forums represented a variety of political philosophies, common to all of them were the primary concerns of regime repression, the pervasiveness of security agencies and the problem of rampant corruption under
the patrimonial regime (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9; Ghadry 2005; Landis 2006-7, 49).

By January 2001, 1000 Syrian activists signed and released a second manifesto, known as the “Statement of 1000,” which laid out more specific requests for reform. The Statement called for an end to the emergency law, comprehensive political freedom, freedom of the press, a democratic election law, an independent judiciary, economic rights, a reassessment of the parliamentary structure and legality of parties and an end to discrimination against women. It also boldly denounced the one-party system and the concentration of power among Assad’s small, sectarian elite and condemned the marginalization of civil society (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9; “Statement of 1000” 2001).

In addition, the Damascus Spring incentivized Syria’s illegal political parties. In May 2001, the country’s strongest Islamist opposition group, the exiled Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, published a new National Charter renouncing the use of violence as a means to political ends and calling for a modern democratic state. Nasserist and Kurdish parties and the Syrian Democratic People’s Party, the latter led by renowned regime dissident Riad al-Turk, all increased their activities (SCSO2 2008; SEx5 2008; Manna 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

As aforementioned, following threatening warnings by the Information Minister and Assad himself, activists and experts explained that the regime began discrediting, harassing, rounding up and imprisoning activists, as well as confiscating and destroying their assets. Security agents appeared at Syria’s universities and cultural centers, denouncing the movement and claiming Damascus Spring activists were Israeli agents (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

One of the movement’s leading figures told me that during the Damascus Spring he had directly petitioned government for greater transparency. A high-ranking Ba’ath official he knew
personally invited him to discuss the movement’s goals. The activist’s initial impression was that the official was receptive to his proposal but shortly thereafter security agents began following him. He was repeatedly arrested by security agents and held in different, unfamiliar detainment facilities. While detained, he was beaten and his life and loved ones were threatened. His colleagues, friends and family members were also followed and harassed. People close to him said that while he remained greatly respected, many distanced themselves from him because his political activities were too dangerous. Finally, he was sentenced to five years in prison, where he said he experienced and witnessed torture (SCSO3 2007; SCSO2 2008).

Activists lamented that most of the civil society forums were forcibly shut down. Security agents confiscated their computers, documentation of members’ personal information, as well as other materials, and government launched smear campaigns against them. Known members were at risk for their lives and livelihoods. Security agents descended on activists’ workplaces to threaten and intimidate them and their colleagues, and they went to their homes to interrogate family members and neighbors. Security agents infiltrated those forums that remained. Activists described arriving at meetings only to find conspicuous new attendees, who were espousing Ba’athist loyalty and making thinly veiled threats against the movement. As time passed, it became clear to activists that the only forums still open remained so that security agents could target and spy on them. Eventually, activists disbanded and left almost every forum established during the Damascus Spring (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Syria’s Trans-ethnic & Trans-sectarian National Level Coalitions: Damascus Declaration

Background

By mid-2002 the regime had succeeded in nearly eradicating the Damascus Spring movement. Independent parliamentarians Riad Seif and Mamoun al-Homsi along with illegal party leader Riad al-Turk were arrested and issued sentences between three and five years. Other
leaders of the Damascus Spring, such as Anwar al-Bunni, Habib Issa, Aref Dalilah and Kamal al-Labwani were arrested and issued prison sentences of between two to ten years (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9; HRW Report 2007, 11).

However, the activists explained that over the years to follow, three key events reactivated the movement in what became known as the Damascus Declaration. These events included the Iraq War, crackdowns on Syrian Kurds and the Lebanese Cedar Revolution (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Syria’s trans-sectarian and trans-ethnic activists said that the 2003 U.S.-led intervention in Iraq brought a host of new considerations to their movement. On one hand, successful regime change in Iraq was inspirational to some Syrian activists. U.S. and coalition forces had swiftly deposed the once infallible Saddam Hussein. On the other hand, the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the subsequent deterioration of security environment there had important implications for both the Syrian regime and Syria’s broad-based opposition movement (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

The activists explained that the suffering Operation Iraqi Freedom caused Iraqis aired unabated on Syrian state television. It also fed directly into Assad’s rhetoric that civil society activists were Western agents, that civil society and democracy are Western concepts (inapplicable to Syria), and that the alternative to the Syrian Ba’ath regime would be chaos. Both the reality of what was occurring in Iraq and the Syrian regime’s exploitation of it presented challenges to Syrian civil society (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

The interviewees said that although there had long been controversy around whether to agitate for regime reform or regime change, the Iraq war sharpened the debate. While some activists became convinced that pressing for gradual reform instead of revolution better served Syrians’ interests, others disagreed. Regardless, this dialogue combined with the activists’ heightening frustration over the regime’s intensifying crackdowns on Kurdish Syrians since 2004
brought renewed momentum to the movement (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Finally, the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in then Syrian-controlled Lebanon triggered widespread outrage in both Syria and Lebanon; ultimately leading to the Lebanese Cedar Revolution, which called for an end to the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. These dramatic events reinvigorated Syrian trans-sectarian and trans-ethnic activism (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Descriptions**

Interviewees noted that even with many key Damascus Spring activists in prison, civil society reconstituted itself to continue agitating for political reform. Members of the National Democratic Gathering, the civil society committees, the Kurdish Democratic Assembly and Kurdish Democratic Front, among other organizations, came together to generate greater cohesion within the opposition. On October 16, 2005, for the first time in 43 years of living under the state of emergency, an umbrella group comprising members of 12 secular, Islamic (including the Muslim Brotherhood) and Kurdish activists converged to establish the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, which called for a peaceful, gradual transition to democracy in Syria (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9; Manna, 2008).

But the new movement was soon confronted and ultimately divided by several critical events. First, upheaval occurred within the Syrian Ba’ath Party when claims that high-level Syrian officials were involved in the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri likely prompted the suicide of Interior Minister Ghazi Ka’nan and the defection of former Syrian Vice-President Abdel Khalil Khaddam. Following Khaddam’s exile in Paris, the former regime strongman who lost much of his power to Bashar Assad prior to the transition, made bold attempts to join the opposition and take down the Syrian regime from outside of the country (Manna 2008; SCSO4 2008; SEx7 2009; SEx9 2009).
Khaddam’s abrupt shift of loyalty created controversy among activists within Syria, who had only recently been the victims of his role in violent crackdowns. To complicate matters, the former vice-president forged an alliance with then General Guide of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Ali Sadr al-Din Bayanuni, headquartered in London. This alliance resulted in the two exiled leaders announcing a collaborative effort, called the National Salvation Front for Peaceful Change in Syria, in March of 2006. However, activists in Syria were at odds on whether to associate with the new coalition. While some within Syria advocated that cooperation with the National Salvation Front would present opportunities to resource and widen the base of the Syrian oppositional movement, many activists remained skeptical of the Front’s motives. They also feared the prospect that it could undermine the authenticity and aims of the opposition inside of Syria (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Disagreement between activists was further aggravated when the U.S. State Department publicly offered $5 million to finance the Syrian opposition. Activists said that although the movement clearly suffered a resource deficit, many believed that accepting U.S. backing would greatly compromise the autonomy of Syrian civil society by influencing its goals and strategies and confirming the regime’s claims that activists were Western agents. Therefore, they declined U.S. support (SCSO2 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx4 2009; SEx7 2009; Wikas 2007, 30-1).

**Interactions with the State**

In response to intensifying internal and external opposition, the regime undertook another wave of crackdowns. From 2005 through 2009 secularist, Kurdish and Islamist activists were again rounded up, arrested, detained and sent to prison. The regime issued arrest warrants for Syrian dissidents abroad, handed down sentences in absentia, and implemented travel bans, restricting activists from leaving the country (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).
On November 8, 2005, upon his return from the U.S., Dr. Kamel al-Labwani—who had only recently been released from prison due to his participation in the Damascus Spring—was arrested. A year and a half later, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison, including hard labor for communicating with a foreign country and inciting it to initiate aggression in Syria. In May 2006, Anwar al-Bunni was again arrested and imprisoned after publicly advocating prisoners’ rights in Syria. Then following a meeting in December 2007, more than 40 members of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change were arrested. While most were released without charges, on October 30, 2008, 12 activists, including Riad Seif, who had been jailed along with Labwani and al-Bunni during the Damascus Spring, were sentenced to 30 months in prison (SCSO4 2008; SCSO9 2008; SCSO10 2008; SEx7 2009; SEx9, 2009; HRW Report 2009, 23-4).

Finally, in January 2010, one year before the Arab Spring began, First Lady Asma Assad opened a conference in Damascus by declaring that the state “wanted to open more space for civil society to work, develop and partner with the government and implement development-oriented policies.” She said, “We will learn from our mistakes and a law will be passed soon—after consultation with civil society—to provide non-governmental organizations (NGOs) the safeguards they need to operate effectively.” But no change actually occurred (HRW Report 2010, 9).

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF SYRIA’S BUNKER PRAETORIAN REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Robustness

On a six-point scale, experts rated the robustness of civil society at 2.2. While the Syrian Ba’ath party’s strategy of habitually harassing and infiltrating civil society organizations, rounding-up, detaining and imprisoning activists and liquidating unlicensed associations only reinforced the conviction of some opposition members, these methods were highly effective in deterring most Syrians. The illegal status of civil society organizations also created very practical
barriers to day-to-day operations. An organization’s lack of legal registration weakened its ability to grow and become more sustainable. It prevented organizations from corresponding with officials on rights issues, and by Syrian law, precluded them from fundraising inside and outside of Syria. These factors blended to significantly narrow participation in Syrian civil society (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Heterogeneity**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the heterogeneity of civil society at 2.0. The regime’s exclusionary structure and fiercely coercive strategies were also critical to shaping the varieties of civil society associations that emerged in Syria. In the 1970s and 1980s exclusion and disapproval of Alawi-dominated Ba’ath, domestic and foreign policies generated extensive resistance against the regime. It also produced widespread support for the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic religious establishment, which provided services and assistance to Syrian society that the government did not. Following the Hama massacre, Islamic dissidents were either purged or driven underground.

The 1990s were characterized by a more covert campaign to thoroughly rid the country of dissent. The Syrian Human Rights Committee estimated approximately 17,000 Syrian and Lebanese dissidents were “disappeared” over the decade (SHRC Report 2010). But by the time of Bashar Assad’s assumption of power, injustices imposed on Syrian society under his father’s rule prompted broad-based human rights-oriented activism.

In 2004, protests occurred as a result of simmering grievances on the part of the systematically disenfranchised Syrian Kurdish community. Regime crackdowns on Kurds and government’s refusal to resolve or even seriously address Syria’s inequitable policies toward the Kurdish community fostered ethnic based Kurdish human rights activism and an uptick in Kurdish nationalist sentiment.

Finally, in 2000 and 2005 two national level coalitions emerged, demanding basic political rights and civil liberties, but both were brutally quashed. Thus, the civic trends to
emerge in Syria were a direct reflection of the regime’s survival strategy; the eradication of associational participation. Rather than representing a multitude of interests—as do the civil societies of more open polities—the fundamental goal of these trends was to simply endure.

**Vibrancy**

The transition of power from Hafez to Bashar Assad marked the beginning of a historic transformation in Syria. With the Damascus Spring and Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, peaceful trans-sectarian and trans-ethnic civil society forums and human rights associations emerged by way of collaboration between mainstream Arab secularist, Islamist and ethnic Kurdish groups. However, brutal regime crackdowns and draconian policies toward Syrian civil society had important consequences for the robustness and heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation in the country.

The heavily draconian tactics of the Syrian bunker praetorian regime not only influenced the robustness and heterogeneity of civil society; they virtually dictated them. This rendered Syria with an averaged vibrancy score of 2.1, the second lowest of any case in this study after the United Arab Emirates (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Political Orientation of Civil Society**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the liberalism of civil society 2.2. With the 1980s and 1990s characterized by state-sponsored crimes against humanity, many of Syria’s most prominent activists were stalwart human rights and democratization advocates. Despite incessant harassment by security agents, arrests, torture, imprisonment and exile, these activists made important strides toward energizing and educating publics and pressuring for political reform in Syria (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

However, while in rhetoric all Syrian civil society organizations, except for some salafist trends, decried the regime’s authoritarianism, calling for democratic reform in the country, experts said that in practice many members of these associations actually demonstrated little tolerance for pluralism and compromise. Having never been habituated to democratic norms,
most Syrian voluntary associations desired a democratic transition in the country while exhibiting highly authoritarian behavior within their own spheres of influence; often rejecting and trying to oust fellow members of their associations who challenged their perspectives or attempted to provide alternative points of view. This, in addition to regime interference, caused pernicious infighting and hindered Syria’s fledgling liberal associations from forming cohesive policy platforms. Moreover, Syria’s liberal associations were more often than not, run by charismatic leaders who were known and admired for their bravery in the face of the regime rather than their leadership skills. In other words, the majority of Syrian civil society organizations wanted democracy without quite understanding or adhering to the democratic rules of the game (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Ideological Orientation of Civil Society**

**Secular and Trans-sectarian & Trans-ethnic Associations**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the secularism of civil society at 2.1. On the surface, secular democratization and human rights activists were the most organized and vocal trend in Syrian civil society (including secular-Islamic and Kurdish). Nevertheless, the regime’s repressive tactics, which prevented access to resources, neutral workspaces and institutionalized polices, often served to obstruct coordination and cooperation between activists. In addition to the constraints already mentioned in this chapter, experts emphasized that since activists in secular human rights and democratization associations were forced to work out of one another’s homes and other informal settings, personal aggravations between activists often led to squabbling, and associations’ members either leaving or forming splinter organizations (SCSO2 2008; SCSO3 2008; SCSO4 2008; SCSO7 2008; SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Furthermore, experts said that while believing that they were acting on behalf of all Syrian citizens, much of Syria’s secular human rights and democratization trend came from backgrounds many Syrians could not relate to. Most trans-sectarian and trans-ethnic activists came from economically enfranchised families and secular educational backgrounds. They were
also members of an older generation. Thus, they were widely disconnected from an ever younger, poorer population, many of whom received a highly conservative Islamic education (SEx1 2008; SEx9 2008; SEx2 2009).

Finally, because they operated visibly above ground, the most serious barrier to secular human rights and democratization associations remained the regime’s policies and the omnipresence of Syrian security services. These activists risked everything for their causes, which often landed them in prison where they were subjected to torture and sometimes killed.

**Sectarian Associations**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the fundamentalism of civil society at 2.6 and militancy at 5.05. The long and troubled past between the regime and Islamists had a complicated and disturbing influence on the orientation of Islamist associations in Syria. Many Syrians revered the Muslim Brotherhood prior to the consolidation of the regime, on account of its piety and commitment to the underprivileged and because it provided a host of social services to Syrians. Following the Hama massacre, enactment of Law 47, the regime’s early intolerance of public displays of Islamic symbolism and crackdowns on Syrians accused of associating with salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic activists were either eliminated or they went into hiding (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Consequently, many of Syria’s communities of devout Muslims turned inward. Based on the realization on the part of the Assads that the Hama massacre could be interpreted as the secular, Alawi-dominated regime explicitly attacking Sunni Islam, the regime temporarily succeeded in co-opting the Sunni Islamic establishment. However, the Assad’s efforts to improve their legitimacy by promoting Islamic symbolism, sponsoring mosques and endorsing Islamic education ended up backfiring. The combination of decades of repression and co-optation tactics, mixed with the influence of the region’s growing Islamic revivalism had resulted in an active, unregulated network of underground Islamist activity. In sum, the regime’s indiscriminately
inhumane treatment Syrian citizens had the effect of deepening religious fundamentalism in Syria and generating spikes in militancy against the regime (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

**PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In Syria, the perspectives of experts and activists on the relationship between the state and civil society were nearly as unwavering as the regime. Although the means by which the regime targeted trends in civil society changed over time to balance oppositional challenges as they emerged, the Ba’ath took a uniformly ruthless approach to quashing any group seeking to exercise basic liberties. Because of its excessively repressive tactics, the regime came to be seen as the single greatest problem facing Syrians. Thus, civil society took on a highly defensive posture and its substance became a product of the mechanisms used to cope with the regime’s strategies (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

The robustness of Syrian authoritarianism came close to approximating its counterpart in the United Arab Emirates, but the Syrian regime’s lack of legitimacy required persistent and ubiquitous coercion. Alawi-dominated Ba’ath isolation within the domestic context underscored its most critical weakness. That is to say, the capacity of the state to execute its aims was most compromised by the same factor that necessitated the regime’s fierceness—its dislocation from society (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

Since Hafez Assad evidenced the savage, credible threat of the regime’s coercive apparatus at Hama in 1982, he and his successor maintained a dynamic arsenal of strategies, by which voluntary associational participation was nearly decimated and substantively distorted. Fierce and comprehensive regime strategies toward coping with the agendas of civil society organizations succeeded in minimizing the robustness and heterogeneity of civil society (SEx Consensus 2007-9; SCSO Consensus, 2007-9). While active and deliberate repression of voluntary associational participation was successful in undermining the initiatives of mainstream liberal-secular voluntary associations, the regime’s attempted cooptation of Islam resulted in fostering the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy (SEx Consensus 2007-9).
This was true for several key reasons. Repression generated highly incensed, under-represented publics that viewed the status quo policies of the secularist Ba’ath party with indignation. Furthermore, because the secularist Ba’ath regime was seen as illegitimate, many Syrians were less likely to identify with the secular opposition, as compared to Islamic and local identities. Moreover, regime efforts to target and discredit liberal secular opposition further compromised the relative strength of the latter (SEx Consensus 2007-9).

On the other hand, Sunni salafist associations came to be seen as virtuous alternatives to the regime’s Alawite despotism. The outcomes of the Ba’ath’s two key strategies toward Islamic activists in Syria combined to foster the growth of fundamentalism and militancy. First, the near eradication of the Muslim Brotherhood generated a vacuum that experts explained was filled by more radical, highly clandestine Islamic elements. Secondly, the regime’s attempted cooptation of Islam through the sponsorship of mosques and endorsement of Islamic education inevitably resulted in strengthening Islamist sentiment in an already ideologically hospitable context. Finally, while the Ba’ath sought to keep religious associations under close scrutiny, the refusal of the regime to tolerate or grant autonomous Islamists legal recognition effectively drove them further underground where their activities and acquisitions, including human and monetary capital and military capabilities could not be observed (SCSO8 2008; SCSO10 2008; SEx9 2008).
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN SYRIA

1920-1946
Modern day Syria is administered by French authorities under the French Mandate.

1920-1936
The “State of the Alawis” is established in the mountainous coastal country of Latakia.

1946
French forces withdraw from Syria and Sunni urban elites inherit the government.

1949-1963
The Syrian government experiences a series of military coups. In the meantime, Alawis come to dominate the military and the Ba’ath Party.

1958
Law #93, the Law on Associations and Private Societies makes it illegal for any association to operate without a license from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

1963
The Alawi-dominated “Military Committee” leads a coup d’etat, also known as the “Ba’athist Revolution” of March 8th 1963. Syria’s emergency law goes into effect and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as membership in any Islamic fundamentalist organization is banned.

1966
Alawis Salah Jadid and Hafez Assad overtake Sunni president Amin Hafiz in the bloodiest coup in Syria’s modern history.

1970
Hafez Assad and his faction carry out a final coup ousting Salah Jadid and the rest of Assad’s competition. Hafez Assad is declared president of Syria.
1982
During March and April nationwide rebellions against Hafez Assad’s regime end in Hama where Syrian security forces are believed to have massacred between 5,000-10,000 Syrians.

2000
On June 10th Hafez Assad dies. His son, Bashar Assad becomes president of Syria.

2000-2002
The transition of power from Hafez to Bashar Assad ushers in the Damascus Spring, a groundswell of civic mobilization aimed at the expansion of basic political rights and civil liberties. By mid-2002 the regime succeeds in nearly eradicating the Damascus Spring movement.

2005-2006
The fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, regime crackdowns on the Syrian Kurdish population and the Lebanese Cedar Revolution reactivate the Damascus Spring movement in what becomes known as the “Damascus Declaration.” In response the regime undertakes another wave of crackdowns. From 2005 through 2009 secularist, Kurdish and Islamist activists are again rounded up, arrested, detained and sent to prison.

2010
In January, one year before the Arab Spring begins, First Lady Asma Assad opens a conference in Damascus by declaring that the government wants “to open more space for civil society to work, develop and partner with the government and implement development-oriented policies.” However, no action toward that end is taken.

2011
On March 15th (two months after the uprisings began in Tunisia and Egypt), the families and friends of Syrian political prisoners hold a peaceful “Day of Dignity” protest in Damascus calling for the release of innocent dissidents. Simultaneously, demonstrations take place in the cities of al-Hassakeh, Dera’a, Deir al-Zor and Hama. After Syrian authorities respond with heavy force,
protests steadily spread throughout the country. Manifesting the consensus that had culminated among Syrian activists over the previous decade, the protestors demanded reforms, such as an end to the emergency law, corruption and political exclusion. However, with the regime’s dismissal of demonstrators as Western/Israeli agents and terrorists, and intensifying crackdowns, Syrian protesters become increasingly outraged, and the demonstrations soon called for ousting the regime and transitioning the country to democracy. The Syrian uprising unravels in the worst humanitarian crisis of the Arab Spring.
CHAPTER III. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN EGYPT

“The government won’t let us live… but it can’t allow us to die either.” Egyptian Bus Driver

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Free Officers took power in in 1952, the governments of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak claimed that restrictive authoritarianism was the only viable counterbalance to violent Islamic extremism in Egypt. In the last several decades, international donors, the United States in particular, as well as democratization and development scholars were long focused on the weakness of political parties and Egyptian civil society to bring about political reform while emphasizing the dangers of radical Islam. Even Egyptian experts—although critical of the regime—lent deeper consideration to the composition and orientations of Egyptian civil society than the ways that the regime shaped them (Sayyid 2005, 270).

After six decades of bully praetorian rule, practitioners and scholars alike continued to focus on strengthening civil society in Egypt rather than weakening the ability or will of the regime to exercise excessive influence over it. My field research showed that from the time of the 1952 coup, the restrictive structure and ever shifting strategies utilized by successive governments to repress its opponents served to undermine liberal trends, while encouraging illiberal secularism, fundamentalism and militancy in Egyptian civil society (ECSO1 2008; ECSO6 2008; ECSO9 2008; ECSO15 2008; ECSO16 2008; ECSO20 2008 EEx Consensus 2007-9).

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE EGYPTIAN BULLY PRAETORIAN REGIME

Historical Background

Owing to its strategic location and natural resources, Egypt experienced centuries of heavy foreign influence and intervention prior to the official date of its independence from Great Britain on February 28, 1922. The subsequent refusal of Great Britain to fully withdraw from
Egyptian domestic and international politics, and perceived illegitimacy of the Egyptian monarch—through whom the British ruled—galvanized decades of nationalist fervor. These grievances ultimately gave way to the Egyptian military coup d'état of 1952, and the establishment of the Egyptian bully praetorian regime (Deeb 2007, 407).

**Rebellion and the Free Officer’s Coup of 1952**

Prior to World War II, several Egyptian military officers (including Mohamed Naguib, Gamal Nasser and Anwar Sadat) formed a secret society, later known as the Free Officers. The aim of the society was to overthrow the Farouk monarch, as well as the Wafd party—which was dominant in parliament. Their primary goals were to end British indirect rule and dispossess the aristocracy that controlled much of the countryside and the economy. The society was also directed against the Egyptian army, which it viewed as a tool of the monarch and British (Johnson 1976, 3).

By the winter of 1951 the Free Officers—in conjunction with the Muslim Brotherhood—as well as communist and nationalist groups combined forces to galvanize popular demonstrations and wage guerrilla attacks against British bases and paramilitary formations in Egypt’s cities and towns. In January 1952, the Free Officers initiated riots and arsenals in the capital, which came to be known as the “Cairo fires.” As the resistance movement gained popular support, both domestic and international criticism of Britain’s involvement in Egyptian affairs increased and the monarchy began to fold. By summer, the increasingly fragile position of the monarchy allowed for the Nasser-led, Free Officer’s coup d'état of July 23, 1952 (Johnson 1976, 3).

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14 The Wafd was a widely popular, liberal party that came to be influential just prior to and following the official date of Egypt’s independence. However, its negotiations with the British later came to be seen by many Egyptians as a betrayal of the nationalist cause. Owing to this and perceptions that it had failed to develop and implement a program for social and economic reform, the Wafd declined in power and influence.
Consolidation of the Regime under Nasser

Upon assuming control over the country, the Revolutionary Command Council of the Free Officers selected the cadre’s Palestinian war hero, Mohamed Naguib, to be president of Egypt. While the coup d'état was initially well received in Egypt, the Free Officers came to power lacking political experience, organization, an ideology or a concrete base within Egyptian society. Quite aware of their tenuous grip on control, the Officers initiated a prolonged political “transitional period,” emphasizing the need for unifying the country after centuries of fractious international intervention (Deeb 2007, 408).

During this time, the Free Officers consolidated their authority over the country. On December 9, 1952, the 1923 constitution was abrogated. On January 16, 1953, all political parties were dissolved, except for the Muslim Brotherhood. Finally, on June 18, 1953, a Republic was proclaimed. In the meantime, the Free Officers had established the regime’s first official political forum, National Liberation Rally, in an attempt to win over the public with unifying nationalist messages. Simultaneously, the Free Officers’ revolutionary allies—the Muslim Brotherhood, communists and other nationalists—were re-cast as potential rivals and were rounded up and imprisoned (Bagley 1956, 195).

Waves of demonstrations demanding the return of the country to civilian rule followed the imprisonment of opposition party members. Then, following an attempt on his life by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954, Gamal Nasser saw an opportunity to capture power. Claiming that the president was complicit in the plot to kill Nasser, his Free Officer allies forced Naguib from office and placed him under house arrest. Subsequently, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned and brutally repressed (Soage and Franganillo 2010, 41).

The Free Officers faced criticism from across the spectrum of Egyptian society, but several key events allowed for the continued consolidation of the regime’s power under Nasser.

15 Following the establishment of Nasser’s Pan-Arab socialist program, the National Liberation Rally was replaced (if only in name) by the Arab Socialist Union.
First, the nationalization of the Suez Canal and popular perceptions that Nasser averted the 1956 tripartite military attempt by Britain, France and Israel to retake the Canal energized Egyptians. Second, Nasser developed a transformative ideology that swept Egypt and much of the Arab world. Nasser gained the support of many segments of Egyptian society by cultivating a political agenda that espoused non-alignment with Cold War super powers, in favor of Pan-Arab nationalist socialism, land redistribution to benefit the country’s middle and lower classes, and extensive state welfare policies (Deeb 2007, 414).

Simultaneously, the new president reconfigured the formal institutions of the state in order to maximize his control and autonomy. In 1956 a new constitution was promulgated. It expanded the powers of the president, enabling him to initiate and veto legislation with ease, as well as to submit disputed matters to a referendum. While political rights and civil liberties were guaranteed on paper, the constitution stipulated that previous laws and decrees declared by the Council remained in force and that constitutional provisions were subject to the regulations laid down in existing law (Bagley 1956, 196).

In addition, Nasser brought much of Egyptian society firmly under the regime’s control by corporatizing the private sphere, expanding the security apparatus, and co-opting political, social and religious associations. For example, the number of Egyptians employed by the bureaucracy and public enterprises grew from approximately 350,000 in 1951-1952, to over 1,000,000 in 1965-1966: an expansion that far exceeded the growth of general employment, production or the population as a whole. During the same period, the number of government ministries nearly doubled, from fifteen to twenty-nine (Ayubi 1980, 189). By the time of the 1960 census, the government employed about a third of the Egyptian non-agricultural labor force (Henry 1974, 199). The total number of soldiers, sailors and airmen increased from 80,000 in 1955-1956 to approximately 180,000 in 1966, in addition to 90,000 paramilitary police (Picard 1988, 119). Moreover, government expenditure—including defense spending—as a proportion
of Egypt’s gross national product grew from 18.3% in 1954-1955 to 55.7% in 1970 (Henry 1974, 199).

Independent political parties remained banned and unions, as well as other organizations, were either dissolved or reorganized according to new sets of rules and regulations, resulting in a monopoly of political activity under the Arab Socialist Union (formerly the National Liberation Rally). Nasser also extended control over the political space that the schools, courts and mosques might offer to any opposition movement by appropriating institutional philosophy and co-opting practices to serve regime purposes. A national curriculum was established which either forbade student political activity or channelled it into government controlled youth organizations. The regime either coerced or replaced existing judges and then restricted the scope of the judicial system by delegating responsibility for much of the adjudication and enforcement to extra-legal authorities, such as security and military courts, managers of state enterprises or village councils. As for Islam, the regime co-opted al-Azhar University, the leading Islamic theological institution of higher education in the region. It gained control over the ulama\textsuperscript{16} by paying official salaries, which, in turn, gave the government finer control over the issuing of fatawa\textsuperscript{17} aligned with regime policy. It also set up state-run secular print and broadcast media outlets to compete for public attention with traditional religious institutions (Owen 2004, 28-29).

**The Regime under Sadat**

Egypt’s devastating defeat in the 1967 War with Israel led to growing disapproval of Nasser on the part of corps officer elites. As an effect, support for the president waned, creating differences between the officers’ policy preferences and loyalties. In the last few years of his rule, Nasser’s leadership became mostly symbolic and the unity, as well as direction of the regime, far less certain. Thus, following Nasser’s death in 1970, when Vice President Anwar Sadat assumed presidential power, his first tasks were to protect his ascension and the survival of

\textsuperscript{16} Arabic for “clergy.”

\textsuperscript{17} Arabic for “edict.”
the regime by preventing the emergence of any organized opposition within the ranks of the praetorian elite and purging potential political rivals (Henry and Springborg 2010, 193-4).

Sadat’s executive powers were cemented by a new constitution established in 1971 that, more concretely than the Constitution of 1956, delineated and augmented presidential hegemony over every other institution. But, Sadat’s most important early victory came after the 1973 War with Israel was perceived to have restored dignity to the Arab world, in general, and the Egyptian military, in particular (Deeb 2007, 414-18).

Having achieved greater legitimacy, Sadat promised to move forward with policies representing a clean break from the past. Subsequently, he released thousands of political prisoners jailed under Nasser and shifted from the staunch secularist rhetoric of his predecessor to publicly embracing and even promoting Islam and Islamist organizations. Faced with growing demands for democratic reform, Sadat spearheaded a critique of the ruling Arab Socialist Union in a manifesto, dated October 1974, that outlined his plans to liberalize the Egyptian polity. With the official adoption of infitah, 18 Egypt experienced a brief—albeit limited and uneven—period of economic and political liberalization (Henry and Springborg 2010, 30).

In 1976, Sadat appointed a committee for the “Future of Political Action.” The Committee was tasked with studying the establishment of forums, their role in consolidating democracy and their effect on the future of political action in Egypt. In March of that year, the president permitted the establishment of three political forums within the framework of the Arab Socialist Union: the Liberal Socialist Forum, the Arab Socialist Union and the Nationalist Progressive Unionist Forum representing the right, center and left, respectively. These three forums participated in the November 1976 parliamentary election, which were the first elections held since the military came to power in 1952. Competing political programs and views were submitted to the Egyptian voters and many political groups, including individuals from the old

18 Arabic for “opening.”
Wafd party and Muslim Brotherhood, participated in the election campaign (Hinnebusch 1985, 70-1).

Continuing on his campaign to liberalize from above, Sadat transformed the political forums into parties. In 1978, three parties were established: the new Wafd Party, the National Democratic Party—established by Sadat to replace Egypt's ruling Arab Socialist Union—and the Socialist Labor Party. However, the “reformist” president’s brief experiment with democratization came to a halt with increasing public dissatisfaction over deteriorating living conditions, and Sadat’s concessions with Israel and the United States (Hinnebusch 1985, 73-4).

In 1977, the president’s reduction of price subsidies on basic commodities, in response to pressures for a show of financial responsibility to the International Monetary Fund and the United States fueled food riots and demonstrations that engulfed the country. Sadat, thus, responded by issuing a series of decrees, repressively curtailing the political freedoms, and civil liberties that had grown during his previous years in power. The signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in March, 1979 further enflamed public dissatisfaction, leading to protests that ended in the jailing of some 1,250 oppositionists. Finally, Sadat engineered new elections in order to guarantee an overwhelming majority for the National Democratic Party, rigging the elections and utilizing all administrative and coercive means to achieve this goal (Hinnebusch 1985, 74-7).

The Regime under Mubarak

Vice President Hosni Mubarak came to power following the assassination of Sadat by Islamic militants in 1981. Under Mubarak emergency law was implemented and it remained in force until his ouster in 2011, based on the pretext that Islamists continued to present an imminent threat (Ayubi 1989,14).

Mubarak differed from his predecessors, in that he was non-charismatic and non-ideological. Instead, he promoted an image of a pragmatic leader, open to listening to different points of view. However, his lengthy administration was marked more by continuity than a divergence from the regime under Sadat. Early on, Mubarak picked off prospective cadre rivals
and secured his hegemony over the polity. In an effort to legitimize his rule and pacify Egyptians, as well as Western donors, Mubarak released political prisoners jailed under Sadat and stated the administration’s commitment to gradual democratization. However, when the quasi-liberal policies of the 1980s generated considerable challenges to the ruling National Democratic Party, Mubarak clamped down. The 1990s were characterized by de-liberalization policies and heavy-handed coercion utilized to suppress most varieties of political and autonomous voluntary associational participation (Henry and Springborg 2010, 194-5).

**The Roots of Egyptian Civil Society**

In order to understand the contemporary state-civil society relationship in Egypt it is necessary to first consider how the mixed policies promulgated by the bully praetorian regime ultimately fostered the types of civil society organizations to emerge in Egypt in the 21st century.

**The Radicalization of Islamic Associations**

Prior to the 1952 coup, the political, social and economic exploits of imperial powers, along with the Egyptian rulers that served them and the disruptive interventions of the two World Wars gave way to religious revivalism that began in Egypt in the mid-20th century. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood, which later inspired branches throughout the region, was founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in the late 1920s (Ex8 2009). Like many Islamic associations at the time, in its early incarnation the Brotherhood was an apolitical religious reform and mutual aid society devoted to religious dialogue, morality and social services. However, the organization became politicized in the late 1930s, as it grew increasingly critical of the exclusionary and exploitative policies of the Egyptian monarch, British indirect rule in the region and Britain’s policies in Palestine (Munson 2001, 488).

In the 1940s the Muslim Brotherhood established a military wing—with which Nasser and Sadat were associated—and following violent skirmishes between the Brotherhood and Egyptian authorities, the Egyptian police shot Hassan al-Banna, leaving him to bleed to death in the street. This event, combined with widespread perceptions of the illegitimacy of Egypt’s rulers
and what was seen as the heroic Islamic nationalism of the Brotherhood prompted an increase in the popularity of the organization. By 1949, the Muslim Brotherhood had over two thousand branches throughout Egypt, between 300,000 and 600,000 active members and the vacuum of leadership following al-Banna’s death was soon filled by the organizations’ most famous ideologue, Sayyid Qutb (Munson 2001, 488).

Three years later, owing to their mutual aim of overtaking government, the Muslim Brotherhood collaborated with the Free Officers to carry out the 1952 coup. Shortly after, fissures in the alliance emerged. While the Brotherhood viewed the Free Officers as a vehicle for capturing power in order to establish an Islamic state, the latter wished to leverage the grassroots following of the former, which they themselves lacked (Soage and Franganillo 2010, 41).

By 1954, Nasser and the Free Officers had turned on the Brotherhood, banning the organization, arresting tens of thousands of its members, torturing them, placing them on trial and condemning some to death (Kedourie 1980; 58). These events outraged and further radicalized Brotherhood members, particularly Sayyid Qutb, who wrote some of his most influential works from behind bars. In his most famous book, Milestones, Qutb likened the leaders of the Middle East to Western barbarians and advocated that jihad was necessary to depose them (Calvert 2010, 222-224). But Islamic extremism in Egypt peaked in 1965 when Nasser’s regime ordered the execution of Qutb and six other Brotherhood members by public hanging (EEx8 2009).

When Sadat came to power in 1970, as a part of his timid liberalization process and in an effort to enhance his Islamic credentials, he released the Brotherhood members jailed under Nasser. This and the perceived victory of the 1973 War with Israel resulted in short-lived Brotherhood support for Sadat. However, Sadat’s popularity plummeted when the Brotherhood launched fierce criticisms of his economic policies, which seemed to benefit only narrow segments of society, as well as his cooperation with the West and peace overtures to Israel. Following a massive and indiscriminate campaign, targeting Islamists and the secular opposition
alike, on October 6, 1981, Islamist radicals assassinated Sadat during a military parade (Soage and Franganillo 2010, 43).

Despite emergency law, the first several years of Mubarak’s government were characterized by relative political openness. Multi-party elections, albeit flawed, were held, and once again, political prisoners, including Muslim Brotherhood members were released. During that time the Brotherhood emerged strong, but when it did, Mubarak struck back by purging its members from positions of power and arresting its leadership (Soage and Franganillo 2010, 43).

**Persecution of Copts**

The political exclusion and brutally coercive tactics that radicalized Egyptian Muslims were also of consequence to the country’s Coptic Christian communities. As a countermeasure to growing Islamic sentiment in Egypt, beginning in the early 1930s consecutive Egyptian governments placed tight restrictions on Egypt’s Coptic Christian minority, ultimately pitting Christians and Muslims against each other in a bid for earning greater legitimacy among the latter (EEx9 2009).

Egyptian law required permission from the government to begin construction on any new church and limited the number of churches that were allowed to be built annually. The permissibility for building churches was contingent on various discriminatory conditions, such as the distance of the church from the nearest mosque in Muslim neighborhoods and the size of the Christian population in the area. To combat these restrictions and parallel the proliferation of Islamic associations, some of which expressed strong anti-Coptic sentiments, Coptic communities began establishing voluntary associations reflecting nationalist and religious zeal (HRW Report 2003).

Muslim hostility toward Egypt’s Christian communities worsened after the 1952 coup due to the implementation of heavy, state-sponsored, anti-Western, anti-Israeli propaganda and a perceived connection between Coptic Christians, the West and Israel. While Nasser’s official policies toward Copts reflected relative tolerance, he allowed state agents a free hand in
exercising their confessional prejudices. As a part of Sadat’s early strategy to brandish an Islamic identity, he engaged in manipulating Muslim-held stereotypes and conspiracy theories in his attacks on Copts, reinforcing the latter’s image as agents of the West and unpatriotic collaborators with Egypt’s enemies. Thus, by the late 1970s, informal and formal discrimination against Copts, as well as worsening economic conditions combined to foster the emergence of more Coptic associations, which provided a variety of social services and underground safe havens where Copts could practice their faith (ECSO2 2007; ECSO3 2007; EEx4 2008).

However, the uneasy relationship between Copts, the Muslim population and the state was intensified when these associations were either liquidated by Egyptian authorities, or targeted by Muslim individuals. Waves of Copts with financial means fled the country as Islamist opposition to the regime sharpened over time and offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, once encouraged by Sadat, grew in number and militancy, which left behind a predominantly poor and vulnerable Coptic minority (AbdelRahman 2004, 142).

**The Rise of Trans-sectarian Associations**

Nasser brought all of Egypt’s voluntary associations under governmental control and implemented Law #32 which required that all non-governmental organizations gain licensure by the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as approval from the Ministry before accepting foreign donations. Thus, following Nasser and Sadat’s crackdowns on Islamists, Egypt’s twenty-four professional syndicates, where relatively fair elections were allowed to take place, became the domain of secularists.

But Mubarak’s early relaxation of political repression and the release of Sadat’s political prisoners opened the arena of professional syndicates to Islamists. By the mid to late 1980s when Islamists won elections in a number of these syndicates, the regime retaliated by replacing elected representatives with loyal National Democratic Party members. The ultimate demise of syndicate autonomy came in 1992, when Mubarak implemented Law #100, which placed syndicates and their governing boards directly under the regime’s control (El-Gawhary 2000, 39).
Having been squeezed out of every sphere of political influence, the regime’s secular opposition began establishing trans-sectarian associations that advocated for fair and just treatment for all Egyptians under law. Staffed by well-educated and highly-trained activists, with access to embassies and international organizations and drawing on their members’ impassioned zeal, these associations boldly took on some of Egypt’s most controversial issues, including police brutality, torture, discrimination against Islamists and Copts, election fraud and violence against women. In the years to follow, many human rights and democratization groups became prominent actors in the Egyptian political and social landscape, eventually attracting an attentive foreign audience. In response to these developments, in 2002, the Mubarak government tightened restrictions on the burgeoning movement with the implementation of Law #84. While this legislation reaffirmed Law #32, it also prohibited associations from exercising what was loosely defined as “political and unionist activity” (El-Gawhary 2000, 39).

Historical Summary

The previous section explained the processes leading to the evolution of the Free Officer’s corps and consolidation of the Egyptian regime under Gamal Nasser, as well as the strategies that Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak utilized to procure power and preserve the regime during their administrations. In response to the persistence of British intervention in Egypt, the perceived illegitimacy of the monarch and growing discontent within the ranks of the military, which was seen by Nasser and his cadre as an instrument of both, the secret society of the Free Officers was formed. With the country in upheaval and the costs of imperialism outweighing the gains, when the British withdrew from Egypt, the Free Officers succeeded in seizing full control over the coercive apparatus of the state.

While there was significant variation in the policies pursued by Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, the broader evolutionary pattern of each administration followed a similar trajectory. First, Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak purged their rivals within the officer corps. Second, they reached out politically to both supporters and opponents, while attempting to project an image of
civilian political leadership. Third, they tinkered with political organization. Under Nasser, a single party was established that lasted, under different names, until the fall of the regime. Sadat lifted restrictions on the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists in general and created a façade of political liberalism. Mubarak rekindled Sadat’s failed reforms in the 1980s and granted the opposition access to representative institutions (Henry and Springborg 2010, 194).

However, flirtations with civilian politicians did not last under any administration. Nasser suspended efforts at widespread political mobilization. Sadat jailed the Islamists and other opposition groups he had invited to participate in the political system. After only six years of his rule, Mubarak withdrew his commitment to pluralism, vacillating between a politics of severe repression and relaxation. Ultimately, when these three presidents failed to build bases of power outside of the executive branch of government, each of them suspended political rights and civil liberties, severely repressing most trends in Egyptian civil society (Henry and Springborg 2010, 196).

PART III. EGYPTIAN REGIME TYPE INDICATORS

Polity IV characterized the regime as having a very strong executive chosen by an inner circle of elites from among a limited number of potential candidates. Political participation was restricted, as were most civil liberties (Polity IV 2007-2009; Freedom House 2007-2009).

Egyptian Executive Authority Characteristics

Polity IV characterized the Egyptian system of executive recruitment as designated and the regulation of executive recruitment was described as designation - transitional. That is, the chief executive was chosen by designation within the National Democratic Party political elite without formal competition (i.e. Egypt was a one-party system). The competitiveness of executive recruitment was characterized as selection, which indicates that the chief executive was designated, and the openness of executive recruitment was characterized as dual executive-designation, meaning recruitment was based on the selection of the executive (Polity IV 2007-2009).
**Egyptian Executive Constraints Characteristics**

Constraints on the executive in Egypt were characterized as slight to moderate. This indicates that the prerogative of the executive went entirely unchecked by the will of the population he governed and only slightly to moderately by elite members of the ruling National Democratic Party (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Egyptian Political Participation Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized political participation in Egypt as factional/restricted competition. The regulation of participation in the country was sectarian and the competitiveness of participation was described as factional. Factional restricted participation is characterized by *Polity IV* as a system in which “the group or coalition in power (the National Democratic Party) maintains that power over time and uses central authority to exclude substantial groups from access to resources and restrict the identity/interest mobilization of groups that may, potentially, seek greater access.” Authoritarian countries with no, or highly circumscribed electoral systems are more often than not associated with factional/restricted systems. *Polity IV* typically characterizes systems in which excluded groups are permitted limited political rights (e.g., the right to vote, but not the right to form a political party or hold political office, etc.) in this way (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Egyptian Civil Liberties Characteristics**

*Freedom House* characterized extensions of civil liberties by the Egyptian bully praetorian regime with a score of 5, which indicates that the Egyptian regime only moderately protected some civil liberties while neglecting others (freedom of association, in particular). Although Egyptians enjoyed some freedom of belief and expression (6), equitable rule of law (5) and personal autonomy and individual rights (7), freedom of association was highly suppressed (2) (Freedom House, 2007-2009).
**Egyptian Composite Variable Regime Score**

*Polity IV* rated the Egyptian bully praetorian regime with a polity score of -3 and *Freedom House* rated civil liberties in Egypt with a score of 5. This makes Egypt’s regime composite variable score a -7.
PART IV. MODEL OF THE EGYPTIAN REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

3. Model of the Egyptian State-Civil Society Relationship: Repression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type Characteristic</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated Executive</td>
<td>Insulate Executive</td>
<td>Civil Society Cannot Influence Executive Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment from Societal Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Executive Constraints</td>
<td>Endow the Regime with Nearly Absolute Power</td>
<td>Civil Society is Not Protected from Arbitrary and Despotic Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Competition</td>
<td>Prevent Political Opposition to the Regime</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations Can Scarcely Influence the Public Agenda, Civil Society Becomes Highly Politicized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Liberties</td>
<td>Repress Voluntary Associational Participation</td>
<td>Moderate Robustness, Heterogeneity, Secularism and Liberalism, Moderate to High Levels of Illiberalism, Fundamentalism and Militancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Egyptian state-civil society model depicted in Table 1 demonstrates that Hosni Mubarak came to power by designation. Very weak executive constraints endowed the president and inner circle elites with nearly absolute power, rendering Egyptian civil society unprotected from arbitrary and despotic rule. Restricted competition evidences that the regime sought repress political opposition, scarcely allowing civil society to influence the public agenda, and generating widely politically motivated publics. Targeted restrictions on civil liberties also allowed for a strategy of repressing civil society, which reduced its vibrancy (robustness and heterogeneity) and obviated moderate Islamic and secular liberal associations, while fostering illiberal secular, fundamentalist and militant associational trends.

PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL

I conducted field research in Cairo, Egypt from August 2007 to December 2009. I began conducting field research in Cairo by contacting and setting appointments with some of the country’s predominant scholars on the state - civil society relationship. Many of these experts
knew leading members of civil society organizations personally, and therefore, they could easily coordinate introductions.

I interviewed activists from twenty-two civil society organizations and ten experts. Owing to Egypt’s relative openness at the time, interviewing there required slightly less caution than in Syria and the UAE. Interviews with experts, who possessed high levels of visibility and prestige and thus, enjoyed more protection from retaliation by the regime, were typically conducted by appointment in university or other work-place settings. However, activist interviewees, who were more vulnerable to regime harassment sometimes preferred to meet less conspicuously, in the privacy of homes or businesses.

My initial interviews with Islamic activists were facilitated by scholars of Islamic trends in Egypt. The first meeting took place at a well known, Muslim Brotherhood run health clinic in Cairo. Later, I interviewed Brotherhood, and members of other two other Islamic associations at different public and private locations across the city. According to members of all three Islamic associations I interviewed the top priorities of their organizations were to promote the centrality of Islam in Egyptian society, and to restore dignity to Egyptians, who they perceived had suffered at the hands of government for decades. Beyond these very general goals, the aims and activities of the associations were marked by significant diversity (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO9 2008; ECSO11 2008; ECSO13 2008; ECSO20 2008; ECSO22 2008).

For example, one Islamic association was comprised largely of educators. Its members told that the organization was primarily dedicated to promoting quality religious and general education, as well as morality among Egyptian youth. The association had established a small network of schools and youth organizations throughout the country that emphasized the importance of education in Koranic Arabic and religious studies, in addition to arts and sciences curricula. Members of this association explained with exasperation that, for decades, government had failed to deliver quality educational opportunities to Egyptian youth, which they believed had highly deleterious civic consequences in Egypt (ECSO9 2008; ECSO13 2008).
These activists said that in terms of education in the country, Egyptian families were forced to choose between deplorable conditions in Egyptian public schools, expensive, secular, Western private schools or free Islamic schools operated by Islamic fundamentalist associations. Thus, members of this organization sought to provide Egyptian youth with the merits of what they called “modern secular education” and the “promotion of pluralism,” with “traditional Islamic values” (ECSO9 2008; ECSO13 2008).

While relatively apolitical Islamic associations, such as the one described above, were widespread in Egypt, another highly renowned Islamic association that networked mainly throughout the country’s mosques had a very different and acutely political agenda. These activists decried what they viewed as the depravity of Egyptian Muslims by amoral, Western imported values and lifestyles that they believed were ushered into Egypt by the illegitimate regime. Members of this association, which comprised highly devout Muslims, many of whom came from Egypt’s lower socio-economic strata, explained that their key activities centered on the promotion of Islamic scholarship, proselytism / recruitment and the establishment of a system of governance guided by Islamic principles. While the association had officially renounced violence as a means to achieve these goals, members I interviewed said that they believed armed rebellion was likely the only way to liberate Egyptians from the country’s repressive government (ECSO11 2007; ECSO22 2008).

Residing between these two polarized trends in Egyptian Islamic civil society was the Muslim Brotherhood. According to its members, the Brotherhood comprised a complex of hundreds of institutions throughout the country that provided education, healthcare, employment opportunities, social and religious services, informal dispute resolution and political forums (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO20 2008).

Owing to its extensive membership and the number of activities and services the Brotherhood offered, the orientations of its membership were highly diverse. Interviewees concurred that the primary political objective of the organization was to advance a formal
democratic system of governance, whereby Egyptian citizens could elect Islamic representatives in free and fair elections. However, the organization’s leadership comprised people coming from a wide spectrum of interpretations of democratic theory, Islam, Islamic law and the role Islam should play in government (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO20 2008).

Interviews with one large and one small Coptic association in Egypt were arranged through contacts I acquired with leading human rights organizations in the country. Activists in the smaller organization explained that their work, which was financed by charitable donations from the Coptic Church, was focused on disenfranchised Coptic communities in Cairo. These interviewees told that their main priorities were to foster community projects, support Coptic businesses and provide basic services to the poor (ECSO18 2008; ECSO19 2008).

Members of the larger Coptic association which operated throughout Egypt, with several branches in north, explained that their network was committed, generally speaking, to advancing equity under law for all Egyptians and promoting social, cultural and economic cooperation between Muslims and Christians. This organization’s activities, which were largely autonomous from the church, but tied to the Coptic diaspora outside of Egypt, were geared toward promoting sustainable development in Egypt primarily through educational, agricultural and business programs (ECSO2 2007; ECSO3 2007).

The priorities of both of these associations were centered on improving living conditions for Egyptian Copts, but neither, in their philosophies or practices placed emphasis on religiosity or politics. As a minority population, historically discriminated against by government and society, Coptic activists explained that while the constraints imposed by authoritarianism were largely responsible for the conditions they sought to improve, they believed that politicizing their causes or openly criticizing the regime could make matters worse. As one member of a Coptic association said,

I’ll tell you, the Egyptian government is our real problem. I would like to see Egypt become a democracy as you practice it in the United States. But here, government’s bad policies
have radicalized Muslims. If we held democratic elections today, Islamists would win and I don’t think that would be better for us (ECSO13 2008).

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES

Given that power was so densely concentrated in the designated, nearly unconstrained executive and that Polity IV characterized participation in Egypt as restricted, this section of the chapter examines the institutional structures of the regime that were used to exercise the repression of participation and civil liberties. Part VII provides Descriptions and narratives of Egyptian civil society organizations, and Part VIII assesses the impacts of the bully praetorian regime’s policies on the vibrancy and ideological orientations of civil society in Egypt.

Designated, Unconstrained Executive and Restricted Participation and Civil Liberties

In writing the Egyptian constitution provided for the separation of powers in Egypt and the political rights and civil liberties of Egyptian citizens. However, according to experts and activists, Mubarak utilized a myriad of institutions to maintain his volatile grip on power. These included the absolute power of the executive over the legislative and judicial branches, as provided by the ongoing state of emergency, and specific laws and policies aimed at repressing independent civil society organizations; all of which served obviate Egyptians’ ability to influence the regime and exercise many basic civil liberties (ECSO Consensus 2007-9; EEx Consensus 2007-9). 

Political Institutions

Executive

By virtue of the Egyptian constitution President Mubarak presided over the entire political arena. He was the supreme commander of the armed forces, head of the executive, and he appointed the vice president, prime minister, the cabinet and the governors of Egypt’s twenty-six provinces. The president was also empowered to propose, veto and promulgate legislation, as well as issue decrees that have the force of law (Ayubi 1989, 2; Zaki 2008, 51).
Parliament

The bicameral parliament consisted of the Shura Council (upper house) and People’s Assembly (lower house). Although extensive executive dominance over parliament severely restricted legislative power, there were twelve legal parties (most of which were very weak or only existed name) and independents were permitted to run for office. While parliamentary elections were typically fraught with corruption (the regime utilized arbitrary exclusion, vote rigging, gerrymandering and coercion to ensure National Democratic Party dominance), the parliament nevertheless provided a forum for some debate and political competition (Zaki 2008, 51).

In addition, although political rights and civil liberties were guaranteed in print, constitutional articles addressing them were directly contradicted by Law #40 governing the establishment of political parties, Law #80 governing the rights of civil society organizations and the authority of the executive to authorize both the continuation and adoption of new decrees under emergency law. Thus, the assembly had limited effective power and was restricted to introducing minor modifications to the bills that were carried initiated by the executive. Many policies and initiatives were simply carried out by administrative decree, bypassing the legislature altogether (Zaki 2008, 51).

Law #40

In 1977, Article 8 of Law #40 established the Political Parties Committee. The Committee was endowed with the authority to register new parties, freeze or close existing ones and their newspapers, reverse parties’ decisions, halt their activities at will, and to dissolve parties and redistribute their funds. The Committee, which comprised seven members, six of whom were selected by the president and the seventh by the Shura Council, was the president’s and ruling party’s primary lever of control over political parties (HRW Report 2010, 4).
Emergency Law

Mubarak and National Democratic Party elites justified the continuation of emergency law based on claims of the threat of domestic militants (typically Islamic) as well as external threats such as prospective Israeli aggression. Interviewees placed acute emphasis on the state of emergency, which usurped constitutional law endowing the regime’s state security intelligence agency and special military courts to act with impunity (ECSO Consensus 2007-9; EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Emergency law, which was authorized by Law #162 (1958), persisted almost continuously since 1967, and without interruption since Hosni Mubarak became president in 1981. Thirty-four of the 211 articles in Egypt’s constitution were amended in March 2007, via legislation that President Mubarak proposed in December 2006. Two of these laws helped to institutionalize the state of emergency. Article #179 legalized many restrictions on Egyptians’ basic rights, allowing for arrests without warrant and prolonged detention without charge, and Article 88 severely restricted judicial control of the voting process (Reza 2007, 54; Zaki 2008, 54).

The State Security Court

Although normal civil and criminal courts in Egypt operated with some independence, the Egyptian State Security Court which was set up in 1958 under Law #162, along with other special military courts operated outside of the constitutional judicial system. An outgrowth of the state of emergency, in practice the State Security and military courts’ chief role was to prosecute people who criticized the regime’s policies in trials that lacked basic guarantees of due process (HRW Report 2003, 1).

Intelligence Agencies

There were three main intelligence agencies in Egypt: General Intelligence; Military Intelligence, and General Directorate for State Security Investigations. It was these agencies under emergency law that had virtually unlimited authority to carry out arrests, searches,
interrogations, and detentions which dealt with civil activists involved in what the authorities considered “political activities.” Thus, much more than national security services, in practice Egypt’s security agencies were autonomous entities answerable only to president Mubarak (EEx10 2009).

**Laws Specific to Rights to Association**

**The Ministry of Social Solidarity and Laws #32**

Similar to Syria, the U.A.E. and Jordan, laws governing associational participation presented a regular challenge to activists in Egypt. In the aftermath of the 1952 revolution, the government sharply restricted rights relating to freedom of association. Determined to eliminate any possible role for the Muslim Brotherhood, the regime created a suffocating legal infrastructure codified in Law #32 of 1964 to subordinate all voluntary associations to government control. Under the law, all civil society organizations required licensure from the Ministry of Social Affairs, approval from the Ministry before accepting foreign donations and organizations were allowed to work only in one of a group of twelve fields. Government officials could reject a group’s creation, its board candidates, and board decision-making for any reason and officials could dissolve or merge groups at any time (HRW Report 2005, 5).

A common regime strategy aimed at undermining autonomous organizations seeking to influence the public agenda was to refuse their applications for licensure. Without legal status, these groups operated at the discretion of the authorities, were regularly harassed and dealt with imminent threats of being shut down or prosecuted for violating Egyptian law (ECSO Consensus 2007-9; EEx Consensus 2007-9; HRW Report 2007, 18-21).

**PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF EGYPTIAN CIVIL SOCIETY**

Interviews with members of Egypt’s civil society organizations provide important anecdotal insights to the Egyptian state - civil society relationship. During the time of my research, the voluntary associational participation that took place in Egypt was comprised of a
fairly robust spectrum of three main types of voluntary trends. They included Sunni Islamic\textsuperscript{19} and Coptic Christian\textsuperscript{20} sectarian and secular trends, as well as a growing trans-sectarian national level coalition\textsuperscript{21} (ECSO Consensus 2007-9; EEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Sectarian Trends**

**Background**

Experts and activists emphasized that in nearly thirty years of Mubarak’s rule the state invested very little in infrastructure, healthcare and social services. Thus, in a country of over eighty-five million people—many living in abject poverty—low employment opportunities, massive youth unemployment and heightening food prices, public dissatisfaction with Egyptian public services was on the rise (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

With worsening suffering in the country, religious charities and sectarian (Muslim and Coptic) community development organizations proliferated. Experts and activists said that so long as these “community development associations,” as the Ministry of Social Affairs termed them, refrained from criticizing the regime, they were permitted, if not actively encouraged to carry out their activities (ECSO1 2007; ECSO7 2008; ECSO13 2008; EEx1 2007; EEx4 2008).

But this hands-off policy was, in fact, not limited to apolitical sectarian community development associations. Instead, as Egypt slipped deeper into economic crisis, the regime began to rely on them—the banned Muslim Brotherhood, in particular with the multitude of services it provided—to diffuse societal discontent. In exchange, the Mubarak administration turned a blind-eye to these organizations’ ever growing grass-roots constituencies. The administration also allowed some Muslim Brotherhood candidates and members of other grass-

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\textsuperscript{19} Examples include several mid to large size mainstream Islamic associations, the Muslim Brotherhood, Gamaat Islamiya (gamaat Islamiya means “Islamic groups” in Arabic) and many small Islamic charities.

\textsuperscript{20} Examples include the Coptic Association for Social Care, Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services and al-Sayed Association.

\textsuperscript{21} Examples include the Ibn Khaldun Center, Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and Arab Organization for Human Rights, some new democratic reform movements consisting of secular, Islamist and Coptic activists such as the Egyptian Movement for Change and the April 6th Movement, and businessmen’s associations such as the Egyptian Businessmen’s Association; a coalition of over 200 of Egypt’s largest business groups.
roots sectarian associations to run as political independents in parliamentary elections. This trade-off ultimately fostered the ability of sectarian associations—especially the Brotherhood—to expand their influence in civil society and enhance their credentials in national politics (EEx1 2007; EEx4 2008; EEx5 2008; EEx6 2008).

**Descriptions**

**Islamic Associations**

My initial interviews with Islamic activists were facilitated by scholars of Islamic trends in Egypt. The first meeting took place at a well-known Muslim Brotherhood run health clinic in Cairo. Later, I interviewed Brotherhood, and members of other two other Islamic associations at different public and private locations across the city. According to member of all three Islamic associations I interviewed the top priorities of their organizations were to promote the centrality of Islam in Egyptian society, and to restore dignity to Egyptians, who they perceived had suffered at the hands of government for decades. Beyond these very general goals, the aims and activities of the associations were marked by significant diversity (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO9 2008; ECSO11 2008; ECSO13 2008; ECSO20 2008; ECSO22 2008).

For example, one Islamic association was comprised largely of educators. Its members explained that the organization was primarily dedicated to promoting quality religious and general education, as well as morality among Egyptian youth. The association had established a small network of schools and youth organizations throughout the country that emphasized the importance of education in Koranic Arabic and religious studies, in addition to arts and sciences curricula. Members of this association complained with exasperation that, for decades, government had failed to deliver quality educational opportunities to Egyptian youth, which they believed had highly deleterious civic consequences in Egypt (ECSO9 2008; ECSO13 2008).

These activists said that in terms of education in the country, Egyptian families were forced to choose between deplorable conditions in Egyptian public schools, expensive, secular, Western private schools or free Islamic schools operated by Islamic fundamentalist associations.
Thus, members of this organization sought to provide Egyptian youth with the merits of what they called “modern secular education” and the “promotion of pluralism,” with “traditional Islamic values” (ECSO9 2008; ECSO13 2008).

While relatively apolitical Islamic associations, such the one described above, were widespread in Egypt, another highly renowned Islamic association that networked mainly throughout the country’s mosques had a very different and acutely political agenda. These activists decried what they viewed as the depravity of Egyptian Muslims by amoral, Western imported values and lifestyles that they believed were ushered into Egypt by the illegitimate regime. Members of this association, which comprised highly devout Muslims, many of whom came from Egypt’s lower socio-economic strata, explained that their key activities centered on the promotion of Islamic scholarship, recruitment and the establishment of a system of governance guided by Islamic principles. While the association had officially renounced violence as a means to achieve these goals, members I interviewed said that they believed armed rebellion was likely the only way to liberate Egyptians from the country’s repressive government (ECSO11 2007; ECSO22 2008).

**The Special Case of the Muslim Brotherhood**

Residing between these two polarized trends in Egyptian Islamic civil society was the Muslim Brotherhood. Similar to the Shi’a Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Sunni Islamic Muslim Brotherhood ran a complex of hundreds of institutions throughout the country that provided education, healthcare, employment opportunities, social and religious services, infrastructural projects, informal dispute resolution and political forums. However, the critical difference between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Hezbollah was that the Brotherhood had renounced violence and disarmed its militias over a half century ago (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO20 2008).

Contrary to conventional wisdom, owing to its extensive membership and the number of activities and services the Brotherhood offered, the orientations of its membership were also
highly diverse. Members of the Brotherhood concurred that the primary political objectives of
the organization were to restore the centrality of Islam in Egyptian life and to advance a formal
democratic system of governance, whereby Egyptian citizens could elect Islamic representatives
in free and fair elections. However, the organization’s leadership was made up of people coming
from a wide spectrum of interpretations of democratic theory, Islam, Islamic law and the role
Islam should play in government (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO20 2008).

For this reason, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood could be best understood as a
microcosm of Egypt’s Sunni Islamic population. Although its reach did not extend beyond
sectarian boundaries, the Brotherhood—with its varied demographic composition (i.e.
conservative-liberal leaning, rich-poor, young-old, male-female, etc.)—encapsulated the
pluralism located within Egypt’s Sunni Islamic communities.

Christian Coptic Associations

Interviews with one large and one small Coptic association in Egypt were arranged
through contacts I acquired with leading human rights organizations in the country. Activists in
the smaller organization explained that their work, which was financed by charitable donations
from the Coptic Church, was focused on disenfranchised Coptic communities in Cairo. These
interviewees told that their main priorities were to foster community projects, provide basic
services to the poor and help to support and protect Coptic businesses—especially those
enterprises that were considered haram 22 (i.e., raising pigs to be eaten or selling alcohol) or filthy
(i.e. garbage collection) by Muslims (ECSO18 2008; ECSO19 2008).

Members of the larger Coptic association which operated throughout Egypt, with several
branches in north, explained that their network was committed, generally speaking, to advancing
equity under law for all Egyptians and promoting social, cultural and economic cooperation
between Muslims and Christians. This organization’s activities, which were largely autonomous

22 Meaning “sinful” in Arabic.
from the church, but tied to the Coptic diaspora outside of Egypt, were geared toward promoting sustainable development in Egypt primarily through educational, agricultural and business programs (ECSO2 2007; ECSO3 2007).

The priorities of both of these associations were centered on improving living conditions for Egyptian Copts, but neither, in their philosophies or practices placed emphasis on religiosity or politics. As a minority population, historically discriminated against by government and society, Coptic activists explained that while the constraints imposed by authoritarianism were largely responsible for the conditions they sought to improve, they believed that politicizing their causes or openly criticizing the regime could make matters worse. As one member of a Coptic association said, “I’ll tell you, the Egyptian government is our real problem. I would like to see Egypt become a democracy as you practice it in the United States. But here, government’s bad policies have radicalized Muslims. If we held democratic elections today, Islamists would win and I don’t think that would be better for us” (ECSO13 2008).

**Interaction with the State**

Members of Egypt’s sectarian associations explained that their interactions with the state were mixed. Given their vital contribution to improving the quality of life of Egypt’s Muslim and Coptic communities, they were often allowed to operate unencumbered by government officials even with illegal status. However, when Islamic associations became vocally critical of the regime or gained too much political power or when Egypt’s Muslim communities complained of the growing visibility and influence of Coptic associations the government cracked down on them. While I was in Egypt, popular support for the Muslim Brotherhood had reached heights unseen since the 1960s. Therefore, the regime had undertaken a renewed wave of attacks on the organization. From 2008-9 thousands of suspected and known members of the Muslim Brotherhood were rounded up and jailed (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; EEx7 2008; EEx8 2009; EEEx10 2009).
Secular Associations

Background

Similar to their sectarian counterparts, Egypt’s secular organizations emerged as a result of the regime’s repressive policies. During the 1990s, lack of political, economic and social mobility in Egypt—leading to declining quality of life for most Egyptians—inspired the growth of numerous democratization and human rights, development and entrepreneurial associations. However, while in the early 21st century many scholars grouped secular Egyptian civil society organizations together emphasizing their common ideological orientation, this makes the mistake of overlooking these associations’ political orientations, which were widely divergent.

Descriptions

Human Rights and Democracy Associations

Interviews with members of four of Egypt’s secular human rights and democratization associations were originally arranged by expert interviewees from the social science departments of Cairo’s universities. However, since Egypt contained such a wide variety of these associations, including several international, regional and domestic human and women’s rights groups, democratization and development and think centers, as well as smaller issue based organizations, they were uniquely accessible.

Members of secular human rights and democratization associations often knew each other and worked closely together. They were highly active and visible in Egyptian society and they explained that their aims were explicitly political in nature. These associations were by-and-large made up of well-educated, largely Western oriented scholars, banned politicians, human rights activists and students. Human rights and democratization activists said that their work was largely focused on advocacy, petitioning government to advance specific causes or political reform, hosting meetings and conferences on human rights, civil society and democracy and gathering data on, as well as publishing criticism of the regime's human rights abuses (ECSO1 2007; ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; ECSO21 2008).
**Development Associations**

Human rights and democratization activists helped to coordinate interviews with two of Egypt’s secular development associations. Given the failure of the Egyptian regime to fully implement any of its series of five-year economic development plans (the first of which began in 1982), uneven development in the country—according to observers with first-hand knowledge—was reaching “apocalyptic proportions.”

Although the entire region of the Arab Middle East was fraught with development problems, in no other country examined in this volume were these problems so clear to the naked eye. In Egypt, clean air, water and safe sanitation were difficult to come by. Pollution was so dense that it was often challenging to see through the smog of the capital’s city centers and many new-comers to Cairo developed what was termed ‘Cairo cough,’ a sore throat and cough presumably developed from air pollution. In addition, the ground water was so contaminated that it was unadvisable to eat produce that was grown in the soil; lettuce and cabbage, in particular. This issue was substantiated by a group of frustrated Western development professionals who told me that Cairo’s sewage system (installed under British indirect rule) hadn’t been renovated since 1919.

Egypt was plagued by a myriad of other development challenges, and the exclusiveness of the regime prevented development organizations from accessing and addressing these dangerous issues with respective government officials. Discrimination and abuse of women and girls were commonly observed in public spaces, as was indentured servitude. The country harbored an unknown (but highly visible) number of undocumented street children and adults. Many of Egypt’s buildings and most public schools, as well as hospitals and even tourist destinations were in hazardously deleterious condition.
Consumables were primarily made available by the military regime’s industrial empire 23 (that produced and manufactured everything from bread, soap and industrial materials to electronics, utilizing free conscripted labor), ‘Islamic’ owned businesses (that were exempt from many government regulations, as a trade-off for their cooperation with the regime) or unregulated shadow economy entrepreneurs.

Thus, members of Egypt’s secular development associations said that they worked (largely in vain) to help alleviate these problems. While in rhetoric the government supported their efforts, the Egyptian regime resisted any serious policy implementation to assist them. The activists said that when they criticized the regime for its neglect, government officials dismissed and smeared their critiques as evidence of Western or Zionist chauvinism. The activists claimed that if they persisted, the regime was likely to physically obstruct their operations or even shut them down, making it very risky to do so.

Finally, most members of voluntary development associations I spoke with held very cynical views of Egyptian democratization and human rights associations. They were also adamant to differentiate between their goals and the aims of democratization and human rights associations. These activists firmly believed that given Egypt’s under-development, increased political openness could not and should not occur, until Egypt underwent significant economic and development reforms.

**Entrepreneurial Associations**

Development researchers I met in Cairo facilitated interviews with members of three secular entrepreneurial associations in Egypt. These organizations were comprised largely of young, highly politically and economically enfranchised entrepreneurs. Generally speaking, these staunch capitalists explained that they believed the key impediment to quality of life in

23 According to a personal interview I conducted with Egyptian military regime expert, Robert Springborg, the military owned anywhere from 5-40% (maybe more) of the Egyptian economy. But the opaqueness of the regime made it difficult to tell with any certainty.
Egypt was the economic backwardness that had resulted, in the words of one interviewee, from “ignorance, greed and neglect” in the regime’s military dominated economic policy-making ministries (ECSO6 2007).

While members of Egypt’s entrepreneurial associations advocated economically liberal policies, such as lifting barriers to international trade and investment, easing the grip of state-owned domestic monopolies and reducing bureaucratic constraints on small businesses, the political orientations of members of these associations were widely divergent from both, secular human rights and democratization, as well as development associations. Rather than pursue confrontation to the regime, or attempt to practice politically benign activism, members of Egypt’s entrepreneurial associations said that they sought to work within the system. They explained that they either had or endeavored to gain connections in government in order to obtain its endorsement and influence policy (ECSO6 2007; ECSO10 2009; ECSO14 2009).

These activists expressed a much deeper level of disdain toward the notion of political liberalization in Egypt and those who advocated for it than members of development associations. In fact they were emphatic. This perspective was captured in the words of an interviewee who roared, “These democratization organizations in Egypt are ridiculous. They don’t represent the Egyptian people. Egyptians don’t want democracy. They don’t even know what it means! Egyptians are poor and uneducated. Democracy in this country would lead to chaos” (ECSO9 2009).

**Interaction with the State**

Interviews with Egypt’s secular associations showed that under growing internal and external pressures for political and economic reform, the regime tried to enable the aspects of the work of these associations that it benefitted from while repressing those aspects that could be threatening. During the time of my research, conditions in Egypt had become so difficult that human rights and democratization and development associations had become vocally critical of the government.
Therefore, the regime had taken on a two-pronged strategy of attempting to silence dissidents and empower potential collaborators; namely the country’s business elite. According to experts, this was accomplished in a few ways. In the 1990s Mubarak altered electoral laws and gerrymandered districts in order to guarantee electoral advantages to particular businessmen whose wealth, interests, expertise and influence he sought to co-opt. In addition, he ousted the country’s old guard economic ministers and replaced them with younger talent. Finally, Mubarak paved the way for his son Gamal, a highly credentialed investment banker, and Gamal’s skilled technocrat cadre to obtain important economic portfolios in government (EEx4 2008; EEx10 2009).

Experts said that the establishment of the new technocratic elite was critical to the regime’s divide and conquer approach to what could have otherwise become a coherent secular opposition. This tactic was particularly effective in pitting Egypt’s secular youth activists against each other. On one hand, viewing Gamal as economically innovative and competent, many formerly reform-minded youth activists began seeking access to Gamal’s privileged patronage network and in so doing retreated from their oppositional posture in supportive of the regime (EEx4 2008; EEx10 2009).

On the other hand, interviewees said that the arrogance and lavish life-styles of these elites and their benefactors—against the backdrop of deteriorating public services and fewer subsidies to meet Egyptian’s basic needs, such as cooking oil and wheat—triggered disgust toward government, and the inequality its economic policies perpetuated. The deprivation of Egypt’s poor and relative deprivation of social forces lacking connections to the regime’s patronage network resulted in an uptick in activism on the part of development and human rights and democratization associations.
Egypt’s National Level Trans-sectarian Coalition

Background

Experts and activists said that following the events of September 11th 2001 the Egyptian regime exploited terrorist attacks on the United States by utilizing them as an excuse to crackdown on Egypt’s domestic opposition. Following the attacks, hundreds of Egyptians of various political orientations were rounded up and brought before military courts for alleged ties to militant Islamist groups. Subsequently, anti-war protests during the United States led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (which the Egyptian government came out in support of) quickly evolved into anti-government demonstrations. In response, activists said that the police and security agents beat, arrested and jailed them (ECSO15 2008; ECSO16 2008; ECSO21 2008; FH Report 2006).

According to Egypt’s trans-sectarian coalition activists, by 2004 the objections of human rights and democratization associations and Islamic groups to the regime’s indiscriminate abuses gave way to several important events. First, a number of opposition groups and movements formed what was called the “National Front for Change.” Participants included the liberal Wafd, leftist Tagammu and Nasserist parties, the unlicensed Wasat and Karama parties, the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kifaya), three other pro-reform movements and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Movement called for direct, multicandidate presidential elections, the abrogation of emergency law, better judicial supervision of elections, the lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties and an end to government interference in the operation of nongovernmental organizations (Alanani 2005; ECSO4 2008; ECSO9 2008; EEx9 2009; EEx10 2009).

The pressure was so great that Mubarak responded with promises of reform. In September 2004 the National Democratic Party rolled out a political reform plan and the Political Parties Committee granted licensure to oppositional parties, such as the liberal secular Ghad Party (ghad means “tomorrow” in Arabic), which was chaired by Ayman Nour, a renowned liberal who enjoyed broad support in Egypt.
Shortly thereafter the Movement for Change rallied a small grouping of Egyptians to the steps of the High Court in Cairo. This was the first ever protest explicitly demanding Mubarak step down. In a strong showing of defiance the protesters taped their mouths with large yellow stickers that said “kifaya,” 24 a slogan that became commonly used as a pseudonym for the Movement of Change. In interviews, these activists said that despite security forces regularly harassing, detaining and arresting them, they refused to back down. Instead, they persisted with the demonstrations and encouraged other new pro-reform movements to do the same (ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; EEx3 2008; EEx4 2008; HRW Report 2005, 3).

Therefore, in an attempt to quell the growing political dissent, in February 2005, Mubarak announced an amendment to the constitution allowing for Egypt’s first multi-party presidential elections. Yet, interviewees said that the amendment was predictably restrictive, limiting the eligibility of the candidates to licensed parties or a significant bloc of elected officials. They also explained that while the event heightened fervor among activists and politicians, generating a lively public debate, as a practical matter, it scarcely facilitated fairer or freer presidential elections (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Indeed the Independent Committee for Elections Monitoring (a formalized coalition of independent NGOs) found that “in addition to the violence and arrests, the electoral process was marred by other serious and widespread violations that contributed to the withering credibility and integrity of the election. These violations included vote-buying, voter intimidation, illegal campaigning, ballot stuffing, counting irregularities and inaccuracies with voter lists” (ICEM, 2005).

As a result, Mubarak captured eighty-eight percent of the vote with Ayman Nour a distant second (seven percent). Still, Nour was arrested and imprisoned for four years after he was convicted on charges of forging the signatures of the Ghad Party petition. In the legislature,

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24 Arabic for “enough.”
with the exception of an increased number of members of the Muslim Brotherhood (running candidates as independents) elected, the National Democratic Party remained dominant and by the end of the elections the levels of violence and harshly repressive tactics used by the security services led to hundreds of arrests and twelve fatalities (HRW Report 2010, 10).

For these reasons, by the time I began interviewing in August 2007, the tone of both secular and Islamist associations had become revolutionary, with each side insisting that only regime change could bring democratic reform to Egypt (ECSO Consensus 2007-9).

Activists of all orientations, the Muslim Brotherhood, old school democratization activists and members of the growing dissident youth movements were all coordinating in opposition to the regime. In early March 2008, rumors of an imminent uprising began circulating. Later in the month, the April 6th Youth Movement (a small group of young Egyptian activists) started a Facebook page in support of the textile workers' strike, planned on that day in the city of Mahalla al-Kobra to protest low wages and high food prices. Shortly thereafter, Mubarak issued a decree temporarily prohibiting the public from gathering in groups of more than three people (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; ECSO15 2008; ECSO21 2008; EEex5 2008; EEex6 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

In spite of the government’s threatening warnings, thousands of workers, students and members of the country’s democratic opposition movements protested on April 6th 2008. When they did, Egyptian security forces cracked down, killing four demonstrators and arresting hundreds (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; ECSO15 2008; ECSO21 2008; EEex5 2008; EEex6 2008).

The violence failed to deter oppositional activists, especially the youth. They pressed on, organizing on Facebook, monitoring human rights violations and demonstrating outside of the State Security Prison for the release of the country’s political prisoners. These activists explained that while widespread fear prevented most Egyptians from challenging the government, they
believed that the time had come to mobilize the public against the abuses of the regime and bring dignity and freedom to the Egyptian people (ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; ECSO21 2008).

Yet, with police on every corner and plain clothed security agents following them, many of the activists were repeatedly thrown into the prison, beaten, tortured and raped. The activists said that rape, in particular, was used to utterly shame and outcast activists from their communities. Security agents nearly always discovered their identities, even when they attempted to keep a low profile by conducting most of their work anonymously, online (ECSO7 2008; ECSO12 2008; ECSO21 2008).

One activist who’d succeeded in maintaining anonymity for several months following his participation in the coalition explained what happened after he was identified by the security services. At first, he received threatening text messages, warning that if he did not cease his activities, he would be hurt or ‘disappeared,’ his sister and mother would be raped, and his family’s home would be destroyed. When he persisted with his online human rights and democratization advocacy, security agents began following him. Eventually, the activist was abducted by plain clothed security agents, thrown into prison and severely beaten. While in prison he witnessed the torture and rape of other political prisoners. Finally, after he was released his family pleaded with him not to return home because the security services had already terrorized them, descended indiscriminately on their neighbors and ransacked the family business (ECSO21 2008).

The mushrooming prevalence of such experiences, exchanged gradually more between activists heightened their conviction toward advancing their causes, regardless of the consequences. By late 2009, the regime was engulfed by an increasingly cohesive (albeit, beleaguered) opposition movement that was bolstered by popular discontent. Thus, sensing its inability to undermine the movement’s momentum with political solutions, the regime’s position hardened. It continued cracking down, directing more resources into the security services, police
and military and strengthening their presence, while smearing civil society organizations in state-run media and attacking their members (EEx7 2008; EEx8 2009; EEx9 2009; EEx10 2009).

**PART VIII. IMPACTS OF EGYPT’S BULLY PRAETORIAN REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY**

**Robustness**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the robustness of civil society at 3.7. Owing to the inability or refusal of the state to provide many basic functions of governance, much of Egypt’s civil society emerged to either fill the voids left by government or protest restrictions on Egyptians’ rights. Restricted political participation channeled the country’s illegal political organizations into the sphere of civil society, which, over time, both fueled and augmented the civil society movement (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Similar to the Syrian context, while Mubarak’s strategy of harassing civil society organizations, rounding-up, detaining and imprisoning activists, as well as liquidating unlicensed associations when seen fit, re-enforced the conviction of some segments of Egyptian civil society. However, these methods were effective in deterring many Egyptians from participation in voluntary associations. As in Syria, the illegal status of most truly autonomous civil society organizations created very practical barriers to day-to-day operations. An organization’s lack of legal registration weakened its ability to grow and become more sustainable and uneven and often arbitrarily applied constraints on financing hindered organizations’ ability to survive. These factors combined to offer greater degrees of autonomous space for some trends, while significantly narrowing opportunities for other segments of Egyptian civil society (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Heterogeneity**

Experts rated the heterogeneity of civil society at 3.2. The Egyptian polity’s restrictive structure and its tendency to shift between policies of enabling and disabling the activities of civil
society organizations (depending on its priorities) were also critical to shaping the variety of civil society organizations that emerged in Egypt.

Successive administrations’ crackdowns on the widely popular Muslim Brotherhood both promoted the Brotherhood’s popularity and delegitimized the state. Yet, under Mubarak, while the Brotherhood remained banned, several formal and informal regime policies served not to inhibit, but instead facilitate the proliferation of the Brotherhood and other Islamic associations. On one hand, the services, opportunities and political forum the Brotherhood and other Islamic associations provided to Egyptians, worked to alleviate the intensity of domestic grievances with government. This, combined with the regime’s policy of non-interference in the monetary affairs of religious associations (Law 32 excluded the supervision of donations to mosques and churches and mosques by the Ministry of Social Affairs), allowed for Islamic associations’ unhindered ability to accumulate assets and influence. On the other hand, following the Islamic revolution in Iran, the assassination of Anwar Sadat, spikes in Islamist militancy, and finally September 11th, 2001, the regime enjoyed some domestic and widespread Western support for sustaining policies that repressed Islamist currents. These factors blended to help successive administrations’ foster or subvert the varieties of Islamic associations operating in Egypt (ECSO4 2008; ECSO5 2008; ECSO15; EEx1 2007; EEx4 2008; EEx52008; EEx10 2009).

Just as restrictive regime policies in Egypt stoked the proliferation of Islamic associations, their influence on the Coptic community was comparable. Discriminatory policies against Copts, the often hostile rhetoric of Islamic groups toward Christians, and the regime’s penchant for adopting that discourse in efforts to enhance its Islamic credentials and appease Islamists, combined to have a complicated influence on the variety of Coptic associations that emerged to resist such threats (ECSO2 2007; ECSO3 2007; ECSO18 2008; ECSO19 2008; ECSO16 2008; EEx3 2008; EEx7 2008).

Since the wealthiest Copts left Egypt to more hospitable environments in the West, the poorer Copts that remained established Coptic-run associations to provide themselves with
services, so they would not have to rely on government or society at large. While the majority of
these associations remained fraught by the same circumstances that brought them into existence,
others prospered from donations by Copts, who had emigrated from Egypt and formed strong,
well-financed Coptic associations in their new countries of residence. With the inability of the
regime to regulate the financing of those associations, several Coptic associations were able to
grow and flourish (AbdelRahman 2004, 142; ECSO2 2007; ECSO3 2007; ECSO18 2008;
ECSO19 2008; ECSO16 2008; EEx3 2008; EEx7 2008).

Many of Egypt’s secularist human rights and democracy associations were born of their
members’ increased marginalization in the country’s corporatized professional syndicates during
the 1980s and 1990s. Following decades of regime exclusion and brutality toward oppositional
trends in Egypt, these associations appeared as the strongest secular counterbalance to the regime

Finally, despite their obvious motives to influence the public agenda, entrepreneurial
associations were able leverage the state’s economic dysfunction, in order to carve out increased
autonomy and privilege. Since their interests coincided with the state’s goals, entrepreneurial
associations enjoyed both the cooperation and support of the regime (ECSO6 2007; ECSO10

Vibrancy

With the coerced National Democratic Party domination of both the political arena and
co-opted professional syndicates and unions in the 1990s, reform minded political trends were
eliminated from legally recognized spheres of influence. While this gave rise to the rapid growth
of autonomous civil society organizations in Egypt, the regime’s ever shifting strategies of
instituting liberal policies, retracting or manipulating those policies in favor of de-liberalization
and cracking down on groups when they grew in influence had important consequences for the
robustness and heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation in the country. In other
words, the Egyptian bully praetorian regime’s restrictive structure and mixed, as well as shifting
policies were mirrored by the mixed robustness and heterogeneity of civil society. These factors rendered Egypt with an averaged vibrancy score 3.45, falling just between the vibrancy scores of Jordan and Lebanon (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Political Orientation of Civil Society**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the liberalism of civil society at 3.4. With decades of brutal military rule and neglect of the public sector in Egypt, many of Egypt’s most prominent voluntary associations were centered on enhancing Egyptians’ quality of life, as well as advancing economic mobility, economic development and human rights and democratization in the country (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Although all of Egypt’s voluntary associations sought increased space to conduct their activities and greater access to the political system in order to facilitate their aims, many of them were not liberal in nature. Experts explained that the incentive structure provided by the regime made seeking patronage privileges more pragmatic and attractive to most civil society organizations than pursuing fair and equal access (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

For example, Christian Copts and Egyptian entrepreneurs had the strongest incentives, not only to cooperate with the regime, but also to protect the illiberal status quo. While Egypt’s bigger, widely modern and well-funded Coptic associations were largely staffed by democratically-minded professionals, these activists believed that the costs of taking on a political agenda out-weighed the benefits. In addition, since most entrepreneurial associations promoted economic policies that met both their interests and the state’s, Egypt’s cooperative entrepreneurs enjoyed the most freedom of any type of civil society organization. Yet, because of their desire to preserve the extensive privileges they enjoyed under the regime, these associations were among the least politically liberal. Furthermore, given Egypt’s ‘backward’ development, many members of development associations (who tended to subscribe to modernization theory) questioned the preparedness of Egypt for wholesale democratization.
Finally, although some Islamic educational and recreational groups and clubs, as well as certain factions of the Muslim Brotherhood were pluralistically oriented, others were not. A sizable chunk of Egypt’s Islamist trend, dejected after decades of the National Democratic Party’s repression and brutality, rejected the concept of democracy as an illusion in any context and subscribed to salafist visions of an Islamic state, guided by clerical leadership.

Therefore, experts said that while democratization and human rights associations continued to bravely press for greater political openness, this trend obviously faced the toughest challenges to its political orientation (EEx Consensus 2007-9). Even they (along with their secular and Coptic sectarian counterparts) feared the influence Egypt’s Islamist associations could bring if Egypt democratized. Although they were loath to admit it, this fear served to dilute their fortitude. In addition, while Egypt’s human rights and democratization associations had some exposure to the practical implications of democratization, similar to their Syrian equivalents, the combination of incessant regime interference in their activities and the legacy of authoritarianism in Egypt sometimes functioned to confound their ability to practice what they were preaching. Moreover, often—owing to state-sponsored tactics—human rights and democratization associations were separated geographically and in their capacity to collaborate. This occasionally caused these associations to distrust of one each other’s actual motives and led them to compete with one another rather than coordinate. Experts said that all of these factors blended to undermine liberal associations’ ability to widen their base in Egyptian society (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Ideological Orientation of Civil Society**

**Secular and Trans-sectarian Trends**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the secularism of civil society 2.7. With the centrality of Islam in much of Egyptian society, many Egyptian voluntary associations seeking to preserve the separation of religion and state were staunchly secular. In addition, a number of Coptic, human rights and democratization, development and entrepreneurial associations viewed
fundamentalist Islam as the greatest threat to their interests—even beyond that of the regime (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Although Egypt’s human rights and democratization associations were in the process of trying to build a political consensus with other secular and mainstream sectarian associations based on bringing justice, human rights and dignity to Egyptians, Egypt’s secular currents were divided by their political orientations. This served to constrain secular associations’ ability to capture a broad, empowered base in Egyptian society because secular currents were split between illiberal secular regime loyalists and liberal secular human rights or democratization oppositional trends (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Sectarian Associations**

Experts rated the fundamentalism of civil society 4.3 and militancy 2.3. Seeking to carry out their work unobstructed by government interference Coptic associations by-and-large maintained an ideologically benign agenda. Emphasizing religiosity would have presented a number of risks they were not willing to take. As demonstrated by past experience, it could have provoked the regime to discredit them as foreign agents—as government often did anyway, incite investigations, obstruct funding or lead to their closure (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

Beyond these considerations, Coptic associations were concerned with the dangerous implications that the politicization of their organizations would have for the welfare of the community they served. Government’s smear campaigns, when they occurred, invariably led to stronger anti-Christian sentiment within Muslim communities, sometimes resulting in violence. This said, experts explained that discrimination by the regime and the Muslim population at large promoted well-hidden religious fundamentalism within Coptic associations (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

On the other hand, the ideological orientations of Egypt’s wide variety of Islamic associations ranged the spectrum, from faithful to militantly fundamentalist. But the center-right Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed the broadest support of any civil society organization in Egypt
since the 1930s. Early on, Nasser’s crackdowns on the Brotherhood shocked and alienated many Egyptians who were deeply loyal to the organization. The abhorrence the country’s population felt toward government on an account of these acts, seen as aggression against the nation’s traditional and religious values was exacerbated by the vicious cycle—from one president to the next--of arresting, imprisoning, torturing and executing alleged Islamists. After each iteration of these crackdowns (wherein the accused were jailed, tortured and then released back into a deeply embittered society), Islamic fundamentalism and militancy Egypt intensified. However, during the time of my research experts said that in the past several years the regime’s relative tolerance of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood (the social services it provided, in particular) had a dual influence on the organization. It both allowed for the deepening of the Brotherhood’s reach inside of Egypt’s Sunni Islamic communities, and it had a moderating effect on the organization; reducing it prior militancy (EEx Consensus 2007-9).

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The perspectives of experts and activists on the state-civil society relationship in Egypt revealed a complicated and factious relationship. From the time Nasser came to power, restricting Egyptians’ political rights and civil liberties (especially the right to association) by banning opposition parties (including the Muslim Brotherhood), corporatizing civil society, and making Egypt’s unlicensed voluntary associations illegal the country’s civil society was besieged by the state (CSO Consensus 2007-9; Ex Consensus 2007-9).

Given the threat of Islamist extremism over the decades, but especially since September 11th 2001, the regime was in a prime position to exploit the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic associations to its advantage, allowing them to provide Egyptians with everything from basic services and education to employment opportunities and effective governance. This tactic of utilizing Islamic groups as proxies to diffuse popular discontent by letting them to alleviate suffering, and distribute scarce resources while simultaneously relinquishing the costs of governing worked to the regime’s advantage in more than one way.
Enabling the growth of popular fundamentalist Islamic sentiment on a grassroots level in Egypt generated local loyalties on the part of ordinary Sunni Muslim Egyptians to the Islamic associations that serviced them. While academics and practitioners often argue that this outcome was an unintended consequence of the regime’s policies, my field work in Egypt evidenced that to the contrary, it was the centerpiece of the National Democratic Party’s complex web of very deliberate strategies aimed at the preservation of the regime.

The expansion and deepening of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt provided the state with the evidence it needed, to press the case to domestic secular and Coptic groups, as well as the international community and donors (the United States and the International Monetary Fund, in particular) that should Egypt democratize the alternative to the secular National Democratic Party would be an Islamic fundamentalist government. For years this fear tactic convinced domestic civil society organizations that if they succeeded in pressuring for reforms, the outcome of their activism could usurp its impetus. It also allowed Mubarak the ability to exercise greater arbitrary license, because playing on the anxieties of those organizations and bodies, the regime could provide a justification for the perpetual renewal of the state of emergency, maintenance of government’s restrictive structure and brutal crackdowns on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic associations when they grew in strength.

Thus, the reality of this regime sponsored strategy, not only determined the expansion and contraction of Islamic associations and their influence, for a half of a century, it succeeded in building powerful illiberal entrepreneurial associations, producing politically benign development and Coptic associations and stymieing the intensity of liberal secular activism. These factors combined to reduce the robustness and heterogeneity of civil society in Egypt and generate high levels of illiberalism. However, by the late 1990s the regime’s exclusivity and brutality prompted the rise of secular human rights and democratization associations.

This, rather than the Muslim Brotherhood, represented the most viable threat to the regime’s survival. The effect of peaceful, secular organizations contradicting the military
government’s long-effective rhetoric was twofold: it exposed the latter’s grave abuses of power and the desire of the former for greater political inclusion. When crackdowns on these associations proved that Mubarak’s ruthless tactics were not limited to Islamists but instead a tool the regime was willing to utilize to prevent any political opposition from growing in the country, secular human rights and democratization associations proliferated.

While smear campaigns, crackdowns and the fact that human rights and democratization associations resonated less at the grassroots level than did Islamic associations, all contributed to the marginalization of the former, the uniformly draconian approach the regime took to eliminating challenges to its hegemony revealed a convergence of interests between some secular currents and mainstream Islamic associations. After these disparate civil society associations united, bridging their common goals and tearing down the mutual fears and enmity they had toward one another—if only temporarily—Mubarak began to lose the leverage that the divisiveness of Egyptian civil society had long provided the regime.
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN EGYPT

1922

On February 28th Egypt is declared officially independent from Great Britain.

1952

In the winter of 1951 the Free Officers, Muslim Brotherhood, communist and nationalist groups combine forces to galvanize popular demonstrations and wage guerrilla attacks against British bases and paramilitary formations in Egypt’s cities and towns. As the resistance movement gains popular support, both domestic and international criticism of Britain’s continued involvement in Egyptian affairs increases and the Egyptian monarchy begins to fold. By summer, the increasingly fragile position of the monarchy allows for the Nasser-led, Free Officer’s coup d'état of July 23rd 1952. The Free Officers select the cadre’s Palestinian war hero, Mohamed Naguib to be president of Egypt.

1953

All political parties except for the Muslim Brotherhood are dissolved and the Free Officers’ revolutionary allies—the Muslim Brotherhood, communists and other nationalists—are re-cast as potential rivals, rounded up and imprisoned.

1954

Waves of demonstrations demanding the return of the country to civilian rule follow the imprisonment of opposition party members. Following an attempt on his life by a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Gamal Nasser claims that the president was complicit in the plot to kill him. Nasser’s Free Officer allies force Naguib from office and place him under house arrest. Subsequently, Nasser becomes president. The Muslim Brotherhood is banned and brutally repressed.

1964
Law #32 is enacted. Under the law, all civil society organizations require licensure from the Ministry of Social Affairs, as well as approval from the Ministry before accepting foreign donations.

1967

Egypt’s devastating defeat in the Arab-Israeli War leads to the decline of Nasserism.

1974

President Anwar Sadat begins a political and economic liberalization process in Egypt.

1981

Following Sadat’s political de-liberalization process, and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, the president is assassinated by Islamic extremists. Hosni Mubarak becomes president.

1990s

After promising democratic reforms in Egypt, Mubarak cracks down on all potential political opposition.

2001

The September 11th terror attacks on the U.S. provide a justification for crackdowns on people accused of Islamic extremists inside of Egypt.

2003

Egypt’s backing of the U.S.-led war in Iraq generates protest against the government in Egypt.

2004

The objections of secular and Islamic groups to the regime’s indiscriminate attacks on civil society organizations give way to the formation of the “National Front for Change.” The Front called for direct, multicandidate presidential elections, the abrogation of emergency law, better judicial supervision of elections, the lifting of restrictions on the formation of political parties and an end to government interference in the operation of nongovernmental organizations.

2005
Mubarak announces an amendment to the constitution allowing for multi-party presidential elections. However, the amendment is restrictive, limiting the eligibility of the candidates to licensed parties or a significant bloc of elected officials and crackdowns on the opposition persist.

2008

The tone of secular and Islamist associations becomes revolutionary, with both insisting that only regime change could bring democratic reform to Egypt. Activists of all orientations begin coordinating in opposition to the regime. In early March 2008, rumors of an imminent uprising begin circulating. Later in the month, the April 6th Youth Movement starts a Facebook page in support of the textile workers' strike, planned on that day in the city of Mahalla al-Kobra to protest low wages and high food prices.

During the protest, Egyptian security forces crack down, killing four demonstrators and arresting hundreds.

2009

The regime is engulfed by an increasingly cohesive (albeit beleaguered) opposition movement. Mubarak begins directing more resources into the security services, police and military, as well as strengthening their presence, while smearing civil society organizations in state-run media and attacking their members.

2011

On January 25th waves of Egyptians take to the streets to demand democratic regime change in Egypt. On February 11th Mubarak officially cedes presidential power.
CHAPTER IV. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

“We are free to gather… so long as the authorities never find us.”

Civil Society Activist, 2008

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the discovery of vast oil reserves in the 1960s, the seven principalities now constituting the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) were essentially underdeveloped backwaters of the British Empire. Very few countries have changed as swiftly in one generation as the U.A.E (Davidson 2005, 1). Since it emerged a relatively stable polity experiencing rapid economic growth, some theoreticians expected a vibrant, liberally oriented civil society to develop alongside these processes. However, my field research in the U.A.E. showed that the country’s tightly closed monarchical structure and patronage system which offered lavish subsidies and positions of power to Emirati citizens, in exchange for their cooperation with the ruling families thwarted the growth of Emirati civil society and fostered illiberalism and fundamentalism in Emirati voluntary associational trends.

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE EMIRATIC MONARCHY

Unlike Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon the U.A.E. did not experience high levels of violent turbulence leading up to, or following the end of colonial rule, and British imperialism there left a seemingly lighter footprint than it did in most other former British protectorates. Formerly known as the Trucial States, the U.A.E. did not achieve formal statehood until 1971, following the British decision to withdraw from the Gulf in 1968. The union of the Emirates was initiated by the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai—the two richest emirates—and by February of 1972 the ruling gulf families of Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quaywayn, Fujairah and Ras al-Khaymah joined the federation, to comprise seven emirates altogether. In addition, rather than exiting the U.A.E. on account of local demands, as they did in Egypt in 1952, the British did so in cooperation with Emirati rulers. Ultimately having installed and protected Emirati rulers from the
beginning, their tactics secured a more harmonious relationship with the ruling families that persists to this day (UEx Consensus 2008).

**Historical Background**

**Foundations of the Emirati Social Structure**

Prior to British intervention in the Gulf, the geography and highly austere climatic conditions of the region had important consequences for the evolution of the social structures that emerged there over time. For centuries before the Gulf pearling (early 1900s) and oil booms (1960s) the clans of the U.A.E. lived largely nomadic lifestyles. Animal husbandry typically took the form of either sheep- or camel-herding, and of the two, camel herding was by far the more mobile pursuit of subsistence living, given the greater range and resilience of camels. As such, the *sharif* clans—camel-herders—slowly achieved a variety of dominance over their sheep-herding counterparts, many of whom were reduced to tending flocks and taking care of pastoral lands owned by the former. Moreover, the exclusivity of the *sharif*, as shown by selective intermarriage between clans and subordination of less mobile clans, laid the groundwork for the formation of a lineage-based desert hierarchy, which continues to be carefully maintained (Davidson 2005, 10-11).

Plagued by underdevelopment and a dearth of natural resources in the interior of the country, the diversification of subsistence living was difficult. Therefore, rather than pursue occupational specializations, such as farming or fishing, Emirati clansmen with the means to do so undertook highly flexible and peripatetic survival strategies, engaging in animal husbandry during the winter months and migrating to the nation’s cooler coasts for fishing and pearling in the summer months. By the time the pearling boom hit in the early 20th century, the aforementioned *sharif* clans had finally accumulated enough wealth to purchase more than basic necessities and began investing in the pearling industry. This development effectively transferred the old hierarchy of the desert to the region’s coastal pearling hubs and transformed them into a new entrepreneurial merchant class. The prominent figures to emerge in this class included
Khalaf al-Otaibi and Hamid bin Buti of Abu Dhabi, Salim bin Musabbah of Dubai, and Humayd bin Kamil of Sharjah, all of whose families remain influential in Emirati society to date (Heard-Bey 1982, 200; Davidson 2005, 12).

**The Pre-colonial Emirati Political System**

Contrary to the historical experiences of other case studies in this volume, even by the mid-20th century the establishment of an Emirati territorial state with distinct physical boundaries was still very “out of tune with the traditional conduct of local politics given that sovereignty over people was far from permanently binding, let alone sovereignty over territory” (Heard-Bey 1982, 56-7). Instead, just as Emirati clans’ means of subsistence and material acquisitions relied largely upon their ability to maximize the region’s scarce resources, the traditional political structures to emerge prior to British indirect rule evolved in parallel.

That is, the inhospitable desert conditions that gave impetus to the U.A.E.’s largely nomadic, subsistence-based migratory patterns meant that the traditional forms of governance that were developed alongside them were also relatively fluid. The nomadic clans moved at will and their rulers held the allegiance of groups of clans instead of lording over geographic territory. Although in times of emergency the clans would rally around the sheikhs of particularly strong tribes for protection, the concept that the authority of a ruling sheikh extended to territories, or even people, was only brought about when the British introduced the notion of the “state” to the Emirates (Fenelon 1973, 19).

This said, the region’s traditional governments did possess certain key institutions, which were both indicative of early Emirati social structures and necessary for administering the sheikh’s authority. The most important of these were the diwan and the majlis. The diwan, the sheikh’s cabinet of advisors, was typically comprised of his clan members, representing the primacy of dominant families. The majlis was an informal political chamber whereby people could air their grievances, often convened in the presence of the ruling sheikh. Thus, while highly-decentralized and loosely-defined, these institutions provided for local governance and, at
least theoretically, a consultative, grassroots medium for political dialogue. In addition, the region’s relatively amorphous constituent boundaries allowed for unsatisfied clansmen to simply move to another village or town under a different administration, thereby permitting them to “vote with their feet” (Heard-Bey 1982, 100; Davidson 2005, 16).

As populations grew more sedentary, the number of institutions and official positions designed to protect, supervise and govern various towns and activities proliferated. Rulers took on personal secretaries—normally educated expatriate Arabs—to liaise between themselves and other authorities and appointed religious leaders for dispensing justice according to Islamic law. They established courts for dispute resolution and selected officials to represent the rulers in outlying regions, collect taxes and customs, maintain irrigation and agriculture, oversee the functioning of the towns markets and provide internal and external security (Heard-Bey 1982, 124-5).

Another important aspect of the traditional administrative structure which in some ways served as a precursor to the system of wealth distribution during the oil era was its ability to heavily subsidize the population to buy influence and protection from other clans, thereby keeping the peace (Heard-Bey 1982, 120-2). Perhaps most noteworthy is that tax collection became fundamental to the development of a system of capital extraction and redistribution, requiring the government to raise funds for public development projects, as well as operate extractive institutions: fiscal capabilities rarely utilized by the contemporary state (Davidson 2005, 19).

**Colonial Era**

Early British interests in the Arabian Peninsula were mainly aimed at achieving hegemony over trade routes to British India and, later, the southern Gulf’s coastal ports. Over time, however, competition between Britain and its early rivals (France and the Ottoman Empire) pertaining to access and dominance over the Gulf both intensified what began as marginal penetration of the region to a highly dependent core–periphery relationship between Great
Britain and the Trucial States. Indeed, British policies toward the Arabian Peninsula radically altered the balance of power between the region’s rulers and society, as well as its economic practices in three ways.

First, as early as 1820 Britain mounted its first land assault against the powerful Qasimi merchants of Ra’s al-Khaimah, who’d recently joined forces with burgeoning Wahhabist trends of the northern emirate to fight off competition brought by the traders of British East India Company. That defeat, amounting to a demonstration of credible threat, coupled with British financial inducements and promises made by the empire to protect sheikhs who cooperated with British indirect rule gradually shifted the dynamic in the region from one of a growing entrepreneurial merchant class able to check the authority of their rulers, to a displaced merchant class beholden to a British client elite (Davidson 2005, 52-3).

Second, although the lower Gulf experienced a long history of rent-gathering from the British, as the strategic worth and resource value of the region grew, so too did the substantial, often personal subsidies offered to the sheikhs by air companies and British oil exploration firms. These new sources of unearned rentier wealth were on a far greater scale than seen in the past and they laid the foundations for many of the U.A.E.’s contemporary structures. With access to such revenues the rulers discontinued most of the existing extractive institutions and instead, distributed wealth to their populations, transforming former entrepreneurial trends into clients of the sheikhdoms (Davidson 2005, 53).

Third, as a function of this new rentierism and the atrophic effect it had on the region’s autonomous sectors to influence governance, by the mid-20th century the ascension of Emirati rulers and the policies they employed relied less on the approval of local populations and more on that of the British. Thus, as the empire began to withdraw from the lower Gulf, in the late 1960’s, seeking to ensure the survival of its clients and its future oil suppliers, the British helped to build up region-wide institutions, such as the Trucial States Council and the Trucial States Development Office (early institutions aimed at creating the blueprints for a federation) that
served to deepen perceptions of the rulers’ legitimacy, and Britain provided guarantees of at least some measure of security from nearby powers, as well as the threat of internal fragmentation. In exchange the ruling sheikhs of the country offered oil rents and exclusionary political, economic and military privileges to Great Britain (Davidson 2005, 53).

**Independence and Consolidation of the Federation**

Prior to British withdrawal from the lower Gulf, Qatar and Bahrain participated in negotiations to create a federation of the British dominated Trucial States. After they opted out (for various reasons outside the scope of this chapter), in July of 1971 the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwayn and Fujairah (Ras al-Khaymah joined the federation in 1972) signed a provisional constitution and in November of that year proclaimed the statehood of the United Arab Emirates.

The constitution stipulated the ultimate power of the president and nineteen of its one hundred and fifty-two articles dealt with matters of central authority. Apart from more obvious areas such as foreign affairs and defense, this catalogue included education, electricity services, labor relations, social security, real estate and expropriations in the public interest. However, owing to variation in the size and capacity of each emirate, absence of pre-existing federal institutions, and insufficient infrastructural capacity (e.g. roads leading from one emirate to another and shoddy internal telecommunications grids) the framers deliberately omitted a list of the powers attributed to the individual emirates. The wording of articles addressing the delineation of power between the federal and emirate levels is also distinctively vague. Conflicts that have ensued on account of omissions or vagueness have been by-and-large resolved by ad hoc negotiations and compromise. In practice, the implementation of social services by the federal government has been need-based rather than as directed by law (Heard-Bey 1982, 372-4).

Furthermore, through extensive discussions between the rulers of each emirate, Sheikh Zayed al-Nayhan (hereafter referred to as Sheikh Zayed) of Abu Dhabi was elected president, for a five-year term. Sheikh Rashid bin Sa’id, of Dubai was elected vice-president, and his son,
Sheikh Maktum bin Rashid, also of Dubai was elected prime minister. In reality, these leaders remained in power until their deaths and succession was based mainly on heredity. The relative power of each emirate was also primarily, informally represented by its wealth (Heard-Bey 1982, 367).

Two principle developments led to the consolidation of the monarchy under Sheikh Zayed, at the federal level and individual emirate levels. Christopher Davidson coined these ‘the sheikh’s legitimacy formula’ and the corporatization of Emirati civil society.

At the advent of statehood, Davidson explained that the new sovereign was faced with the challenge of achieving legitimacy in order to ensure his hegemony over the state. To this end, Sheikh Zayed devised a comprehensively manipulative formula, ultimately containing five parts. First, he and the other sheikhs used personal resources, including charisma and demonstrated leadership skills to shore up popular support. Second, the sheikhs deepened their pre-existing patronage networks, to touch nearly all levels of society, providing petty privileges and positions of power to other Emirati families. Third, the rulers set out to utilize cultural and ideological resources to their advantage and to build an Emirati identity. The sheikhs tied their rule to the country’s Bedouin, Islamic past and pressed on to try to develop a national identity, introducing a new national flag, a national anthem, national holidays, a “national university” and other symbols of the new U.A.E. identity. Fourth, the sheikhs built on structural resources. Challenged with the problem of undertaking rapid economic development, but possessing mostly pre-modern institutions, the U.A.E. embarked on efforts to build new institutions, alongside the old ones that were more capable of handling the demands of development. Fifth and finally, they were able to provide substantial subsidies to potential oppositional forces, especially other powerful families, in exchange for their loyalty (Davidson 2005, 170-196).
The Roots of Emirati Civil Society

In order to understand the contemporary state-civil society relationship in the U.A.E. it is necessary to first consider how the policies promulgated by the ‘more closed’ monarchical regime almost completely precluded the country’s nascent civil society from ever developing.

With the rentier economy already belonging to the ruling sheikhs, rendering economic corporatization moot, a second regime survival strategy was to corporatize the country’s civil society organizations. Although there existed a long tradition of voluntary associational participation in the region, a topic expounded on later in this chapter, in 1974 a law was passed requiring all associations to register with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Subsequently, the ruling families at both the emirate and federal level began financing these associations with wealth that could outflank even those activists most determined to remain autonomous. Furthermore, the sheikhs set up umbrella organizations, typically headed by themselves, close male relatives or favored wives in every sphere of civil society (cultural, educational, environmental, recreational, welfare and women’s initiatives; Islamic, charity, media and press-related associations). Over time these umbrella groups came to absorb nearly all of Emirati civil society (Davidson 2005; 270-285).

Historical Summary

Early on the geography and highly austere climatic conditions of the lower Gulf generated migratory subsistence living and highly fluid systems of governance. Some clans, specifically the sharif developed remarkably flexible survival strategies such as engaging in animal husbandry during the winter months, and migrating to the cooler coasts for fishing and pearling during the summer. By the early 20th century, the sharif clans had accrued enough wealth to invest in the pearling industry, subsequently transferring the old hierarchy of the desert to the region’s coastal pearling hubs and transforming them into a new merchant-entrepreneurial class.
While very fluid, political structures capable of redressing grievances and extracting capital through taxation to provide public services also emerged, as British strategic interests in the region intensified, so too did the empire’s penetration of the traditional political, economic and hence, social structures of the Trucial States. The East India Company put much of the Trucial State’s indigenous merchant class out of business, and British indirect rule with its generous compensation to cooperative sheikhs and their families effectively determined who ruled the territories. This also converted the U.A.E.’s fledgling extractive political system into a rentierist one.

Thus, with the announcement of Great Britain’s intent to withdraw from the lower Gulf in 1968 the ruling families, in coordination with British leadership negotiated plans for sovereign statehood that would continue to benefit the British core and Emirati periphery post-independence. But the hastily established, uninstitutionalized federation of the U.A.E. prompted Sheikh Zayed and the other ruling sheikhs to undertake extensive measures to maintain their hegemony. These included inducing the population with a comprehensively manipulative legitimacy formula and exterminating the possibility of any other type of opposition from emerging by absorbing the country’s autonomous voluntary associations into tightly organized governmental organizations.

PART III. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES REGIME TYPE INDICATORS

Polity IV characterized the regime as a loose federation of sheikhdoms, whereby each ruling sheikh had absolute control over his territory, people and income. Political participation was repressed, as were most civil liberties (Polity IV 2007-2009; Freedom House 2007-2009).

Emirati Executive Authority Characteristics

Polity IV characterized the Emirati system of executive recruitment as regulated, the competitiveness of the process as selected and the openness of the selected executive as ascription – designation. In the case of the U.A.E., the position of the chief executive (de facto head of government) was shared and executive recruitment was determined both by hereditary succession
and designation by the country’s ruling monarch. That is, members of the monarch assumed their positions of power by right of descent, while the institutional power of the chief minister was dependent on the continued support of the monarch (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Emirati Executive Constraints Characteristics**

Constraints on the ruling sheikhs of each of the seven emirates in the U.A.E were characterized as slight to moderate. This indicates that the prerogative of each ruling sheikh went entirely unchecked by the will of the population he governed and only slightly to moderately by the Federal Supreme Council (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Emirati Political Participation Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized political participation in U.A.E. as repressed. The regulation of participation in the country was restricted and the competitiveness of participation was described as repressive. Repressed participation is described by *Polity IV* as a system in which no significant political activity is permitted outside the ranks of the monarchy. However, some organized political participation was allowed to occur within the ranks of the ruling families through highly circumscribed institutional channels. *Polity IV* typically characterizes despotic monarchs that officially ban all organized political parties and oppositional social movements in this way. In order to receive a repressed coding the hegemonic regime must have a demonstrated record of possessing the political capacity and willingness to effectively exclude opponents from the political arena (Polity IV 2007-2009).

**Emirati Civil Liberties Characteristics**

*Freedom House* rated extensions of civil liberties by the ‘more closed’ Emirati monarchical regime with a score of 5, which indicates that some civil liberties were moderately protected while others were neglected. Although Emiratis enjoyed some freedom of belief and expression (8), equitable rule of law (3), personal autonomy and individual rights (4) and, freedom of association (4) were highly suppressed (*Freedom House*, 2007-2009).
Emirati Composite Variable Regime Score

*Polity IV* rated the ‘more closed’ Emirati regime with a polity score of -8 and *Freedom House* rated civil liberties in the U.A.E. with a score of 5. This makes the U.A.E.’s composite variable regime score a -12.
PART IV. MODEL OF THE EMIRATI REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

4. Model of the Emirati State-Civil Society Relationship: Eradication and Preclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type Characteristic</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated Executive</td>
<td>Insulate Executive Recruitment from Societal Influence</td>
<td>Civil Society Cannot Influence Executive Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Executive Constraints</td>
<td>Endow the Regime with Nearly Absolute Power</td>
<td>Civil Society is Not Protected from Arbitrary and Despotic Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Competition</td>
<td>Prevent Political Opposition to the Regime by Providing Inducements</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations Can Scarcely Influence the Public Agenda, Civil Society Becomes Highly Sanitized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Liberties</td>
<td>Prevent Voluntary Associations from Forming</td>
<td>Low Levels of Robustness, Heterogeneity, Secular Liberalism and Militancy. Moderate to High Levels of Fundamentalism and Illiberalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Emirati state-civil society model depicted in Table 1 demonstrates that Sheikh Khalifa came to power by designation. Very weak executive constraints endowed the president and ruling families with nearly absolute power, rendering Emirati civil society unprotected from arbitrary rule. Restricted competition evidences that the regime sought to eliminate the prospect of political opposition, scarcely allowing civil society to influence the public agenda. However, unlike in Syria, Egypt and Jordan, the regime’s wealth gave it the ability to provide generous subsidies to citizens in exchange for their cooperation, thereby producing publics largely compliant with government’s exclusionary policies. Heavily restricted civil liberties combined with monetary inducements also allowed for a strategy of eradicating existing civil society organizations and to precluding new ones from forming. These policies greatly reduced the vibrancy (robustness and heterogeneity) of Emirati civil society, and obviated secularism and liberalism, while fostering illiberal and fundamentalist associational trends.
PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL

I conducted field research in the U.A.E. beginning in August 2008 and ending in October 2008. While I centered my research in the capital cities of the four other cases in this study since the U.A.E. is a loose federation of emirates, I conducted interviewing there in the capital, Abu Dhabi, as well as in Dubai and Sharjah.

I interviewed ten experts inside and outside of the U.A.E. and activists from ten civil society organizations inside of the country. Second to Syria, interviewing in the U.A.E. was the most challenging and potentially dangerous. The precarious security environment in the U.A.E. necessitated very cautious coordination and conduction of interviews with experts and members. I interviewed experts at places such as malls and hotel restaurants where it appeared that I was simply a visitor enjoying the U.A.E.’s lavish tourist destinations. All interviews with members of autonomous civil society organizations were highly clandestine and took place in the privacy of homes.

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES

Given that power was so densely concentrated in the designated, nearly unconstrained executive and that Polity IV characterized participation in the U.A.E. as repressed, this section of the chapter examines the institutional structures of the regime that were used to exercise the repression of participation and civil liberties. Part VII provides descriptions and narratives of Emirati civil society organizations, and Part VIII assesses the impacts of the ‘more closed’ monarchical regime’s policies on the vibrancy and ideological orientations of civil society in the U.A.E.

Designated, Unconstrained Executive and Repressed Participation and Civil Liberties

According to experts, Sheikh Zayed managed to unite the seven emirates, by awarding the ruling patriarchs of each principality nearly autonomous authority over their respective territories and populations in exchange for his absolute power over the federation. The constitution explicitly prohibited political rights and while in writing it protected some civil
liberties, experts emphasized that in practice most Emirati political institutions were designed to prevent the exercise of civil liberties. These institutions included the absolute power of the president over the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and specific laws and informal policies aimed at precluding independent civil society organizations from developing (UEX Consensus 2008).

**Political Institutions**

**Executive**

At the federal level the executive was split with a president who chaired the Federal Supreme Council of the various hereditary rulers, and a prime minister who presided over the appointed Federal Council of Ministers. However, the president ruled at the apex of this decision-making structure, appointing the prime minister, selecting the National Council of Ministers (the legislature), supervising meetings between the two Councils of ministers and decreeing the beginning and ending of meetings of the Supreme Council of rulers (the executive cabinet) (Peck 1986, 122; UEx Consensus 2008).

**The Federal Supreme Council**

Composed of the hereditary rulers from each of the seven emirates, the Federal Supreme Council was the Emirati executive body. While constitutionally the Supreme Council elected the president and vice president in five-year terms (without term limits), in reality the president and vice president were the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, respectively and they had veto power on Federal Supreme Council decisions. The ruling families of each emirate chose new members of the Federal Supreme Council, the primary function of which was the approval of federal legislation (CEP Report 2006, 3-4; UEx Consensus 2008).

**The Federal National Council**

The Federal National Council reviewed legislation and proposed amendments but could not enact or revise legislation. It did not have veto power, and only served in an advisory and consultative role (CEP Report 2006, 4; UEx Consensus 2008).
Political Parties

There were no political parties in the U.A.E. and it was illegal to form them (UEx Consensus 2008).

Judiciary

Although the constitution provided for an independent judiciary, all judicial decisions were subject to review by the regime. The Ministry of Justice was directly involved in almost all aspects of court administration. Judges were appointed by the president and their decisions were also subject to review by the Federal Supreme Council (CEP Report 2006, 5; UEx Consensus 2008).

Laws Specific to Rights to Association

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and Federal Social Welfare

Societies Law of 1974

Similar to Syria, Egypt and Jordan, the Federal Social Welfare Societies Law of 1974 criminalized any association that was not licensed with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and voluntary associations focused on political issues were not permitted. In 1981 an amendment was made to the Law, effectively suspending the licensure of associations by reason that their existence posed a “significant threat to internal security.” In 2002, that amendment was repealed and it was replaced by a new law giving the Ministry and its subsidiaries full legal authority to oversee the activities of licensed organizations by allowing for the supervision of all their programs, projects and financial resources. On the surface, there was not a single independent human rights association in the country (CES Report 2006, 9-12; Davidson 2005, 271; UEx Consensus 2008).

Law #15 of 1988

Federal Law #15 of 1988 criminalized any publication that was not approved by the Ministry of Information. The Ministry was responsible for approving the appointment of editors, and the majority of the media was either government-owned or government-subsidized. The
regime also censored what it considered anti-government, pornographic, and radical Islamic Internet sites (CES Report 2006, 9-12).

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF EMIRATI CIVIL SOCIETY

Interviews with members of Emirati civil society organizations provide important anecdotal insights to the Emirati state-civil society relationship. During the time of my research, the regime (at the federal and emirate levels) boasted a deep commitment to allowing for the expansion of Emirati civil society (UEx2 2008; UEx5 2008; UEx6 2008). Thus, at first glance, I saw a plethora of active organizations. These included multiple women’s advocacy, welfare, educational, cultural, environmental and Islamic organizations. However, as indicated in Part V of this chapter, I quickly discovered that all of these organizations were tightly governmentally organized and financed.

The U.A.E.’s authentic civil society was comprised of a very lean, largely underground spectrum of two main types of voluntary trends. These included a small number of trans-sectarian and many Sunni Islamic sectarian associations.

Trans-sectarian Associations

Background

Experts and activists in Emirati civil society organizations explained that a relatively vibrant trans-sectarian civil society in the region predated the formation of the U.A.E. With the territories of the Trucial States representing a central trading hub between East and West, the region’s local populations came into contact with a diverse array of cultures and traditions, which early on, inspired the growth of a number of professional, entrepreneurial, educational and recreational associations. However, as a key facet of the monarch’s survival strategy, throughout

25 Participants include the Jurists Association, women’s advocacy organizations, labor rights and environmentalist groups and small eclectic associations aimed at advancing the protection of civil liberties in the U.A.E.
26 Examples include al-Islah (an off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood), Wahhabi groups, small Islamic charities and men’s and women’s Islamic study circles.
the 1980s most of these organizations were first co-opted through patronage and then completely absorbed by the ruling families (UCSO Consensus 2008; UEx Consensus 2008).

I began the interviewing process in the U.A.E. with the help of a colleague who is an Emirati citizen and member of one of the royal families. However, with the constraints imposed on him by government, which were inextricably linked to his familial ties, he was only able to facilitate my snowball interviewing with experts and members of governmentally organized civil society organizations who were friendly, loyal and sympathetic to the regime.

When I started contacting known experts on the state-civil society relationship inside of the U.A.E.--all of whom were autonomous from the regime--I was first met with rejection and told that “these are only conversations one has in the Emirates if they want to be thrown out of the country, discredited or jailed.” However, experts I knew from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon eventually put me in touch with their counterparts in the U.A.E. who were willing to risk their careers, reputations and harsh penalties for objectively critiquing the Emirati state.

Initially, identifying and scheduling interviews with authentically autonomous civil society organizations was also very difficult. Although I’d found experts who were willing to speak to me to discuss the varieties of civil society organizations in the U.A.E. and their relationship to the state, many experts were unwilling to provide coordination with autonomous associations. Instead, they repeatedly pointed me back to various governmental ministries and organizations, indicating that I’d eventually find their members there. Shortly thereafter, while waiting in the lobby to interview the Minister of the Ministry of Culture in Sharjah, I met a Bahraini journalist who was there to have some of his work approved by the Ministry. He invited me to his home to meet his Japanese wife and discuss Emirati culture from their perspective. However, when we arrived I discovered his house was a sanctuary for journalists and artists living in exile from other countries. After explaining my research to them and gaining their trust, it was this group--highly diverse in background and ideological orientation, but possessing a deep commitment to tolerance and pluralism--that put me in touch with some of Sharjah and Dubai’s
autonomous civil society associations. From there, I was able to continue the snowball interviewing throughout the three emirates.

**Descriptions**

While in the Emirates, I interviewed members of four associations that can be broadly described as trans-sectarian rights-based associations. These associations were composed of very small collections of Emirati and expat men and women. Activists in these associations explained that their aims were to advance greater freedoms in the U.A.E., protect the ability of their members to exercise basic civil liberties, and advocate for disenfranchised groups in the country (UCSO1 2008; UCSO2 2008; UCSO3 2008; UCSO4 2008).

Two of these groups primarily sought the freedom to form political parties, vote for representatives in government, publish and circulate their perspectives, demonstrate against government policies, and promote greater government-led freedoms and protections for women. The other two groups were predominately focused on advocating for enhanced economic freedoms for Emirati citizens (i.e., employment based on merit instead of patronage, greater ability to own private businesses and rights to participate in a competitive market) and expanding protections for the country’s low-wage foreign laborers (UCSO1 2008; UCSO2 2008; UCSO3 2008; UCSO4 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

Not surprisingly, given the tightly closed political environment in the U.A.E., the narratives of members of these rights based associations were similar. One activist’s comment neatly captured the overarching sentiment of these groups when she said, “We don’t want to be bought off and we’re not enemies of the state, we’re simply people who desire political and economic rights… and protection from harm” (USCO2 2008).

She explained that she had recently been released from a women’s prison where she’d been jailed for five years (although she’d been sentenced to fifteen years) on charges of conspiring against the government after the Secret Services discovered a correspondence between
her and human rights activists in Great Britain. Her early release came only after a series of negotiations between her family and members of the ruling family of Dubai. She also explained that her activism, jailing and the negotiations her family was subsequently drawn into in order to secure her release severely damaged her family’s reputation and put a lasting strain on her relationship with loved ones (UCSO2 2008).

This woman, along with other members of the U.A.E.’s small trans-sectarian rights based trend lamented that their organizations exercised virtually no agency at all, and that because of the constraints imposed on them by the regime, they primarily functioned to try to promote and protect a dialogue between their members. Beyond that, these activists said that most of them participated in the regime’s governmentally organized voluntary associations, and that they did so for two inter-related reasons. First, participation in governmentally organized associations reduced the authorities’ suspicion of their independent activities by indicating loyalty to the regime. Secondly, it provided them with the ability to secretly network, and, in subtle ways, press their associations’ agendas in public forums (UCSO1 2008; UCSO2 2008; UCSO3 2008; UCSO4 2008).

Sectarian Associations

Background

With Islam constituting a centerpiece of Emirati identity, in an age when the regime’s rapid development programs brought a rather large, garish and popularly disliked tourism industry to the country, safely harnessing the country’s religious establishment under the control of state authorities had become a top regime priority. This had the dual effect of creating a vast, entirely state-sponsored and regulated Islamic infrastructure and a number of smaller underground Islamic associations, which sought to maintain their independence from the regime.

Descriptions

I interviewed members of a diverse set of six Islamic associations: one large, indigenous and deeply institutionalized Islamic association, two Islamic women’s discussion circles, two
small off-shoots of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and one highly conservative Wahhabi group.

The first, al-Islah Reform and Social Guidance Association, was the country’s oldest and largest, moderate Islamic group. Its members explained that, inspired by the values of Islam, the aim of the organization was to provide moral guidance to Emirati citizens and discourage the Islamic extremism its membership believed was growing in the country. Al-Islah’s members maintained that this extremist trend was a result of Emiratis trying to protect their pious Muslim identity in the wake of the regime’s rapid economic development policies, which had ushered in the competing cultural norms and practices of both the West and developing world nations (UCSO5 2008).

These activists insisted that from its foundation, al-Islah was unbending in its stand against violence and that to further the association’s aims it promoted sports, culture, charitable work and social activities. Its membership was made up of all ages, genders and professions and interviewees said that for decades al-Islah had enjoyed favorable relations with the government. Indeed, in 1974, as the regime began corporatizing Emirati civil society, members explained that al-Islah was the second organization to receive licensure from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and until the mid-1990s the association was permitted to operate largely unmitigated by government (UCSO5 2008).

Members of Islamic women’s discussion circles explained that they merely wanted to discuss and interpret Koranic teachings and their application to day-to-day life (childrearing, in particular) independent of the interpretations of imams in the U.A.E.’s state-run mosques. However, direct observation of these associations showed that they provided a forum for much more than that. Attending women’s Islamic discussion circles showed that the women conversed about everything from the Koran, to politics and social life, allowing the women to share grievances, network and find ways to carve out greater space to advance a wide variety of interests (UCSO6 2008; UCSO7 2008).
Interviews with members of the U.A.E.’s enclaves of the Muslim Brotherhood and one Wahhabi group gleaned that many of the U.A.E.’s Islamic organizations were comprised of some Emiratis, but primarily foreigners from other Middle and Near Eastern countries who came to the U.A.E. for employment or because they viewed the country’s leadership as truer to Islamic values than the autocratic nations they were from. Brotherhood members, from Egypt and Syria, in particular, had fled persecution in their own countries. The Wahhabi group contained Emiratis, but also Saudis, Yemenis and Omanis who brought with them highly literalist interpretations of Islam and advocated an ideology that was hostile to what they viewed as the Emirati government’s increasing closeness to the heretical West. Both of these types of associations practiced strict segregation of men and women (UCSO8 2008; UCSO9 2008; UCSO10 2008).

Interviews with members of the Emirate based Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabi groupings showed that they were predominantly focused on maintaining ties with and helping to finance their domestically oriented counterparts abroad, as well as recruiting Muslims in the U.A.E. They pressed their influence primarily through their professions (often as teachers), the Islamic discussion circles they held and the clandestine lectures they conducted (UCSO8 2008; UCSO9 2008; UCSO10 2008).

**Interactions with the State**

Experts, members and international human rights organizations reported that in 1994 with spikes in terrorist activities across the region, a number of Gulf countries – including the U.A.E. – employed the Egyptian Secret Services to overhaul and "modernize" their intelligence agencies (UCSO Consensus 2008; UEx Consensus 2008). Subsequently, according to interviewees, al-Islah was targeted by government as an organization with the potential to radicalize and develop in opposition to the regime. As a result the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor purged the board of directors and replaced them with a handpicked new one. Members said that since then, they became the victims of government-led smear campaigns; they were prevented from taking up public posts; and they were removed from
positions of influence, such as in the media, universities and health services. Many of these activists indicated that while they were chiefly concerned with challenging the policies of other authoritarian Middle and Near Eastern regimes, as well as Western influence—rather than the government of the U.A.E—that was changing. Specifically, these activists lamented what they saw as post-9/11, U.S. sponsored crackdowns on their counterparts in the U.A.E., who’d been accused of jihadist plots, jailed or deported and the U.A.E.’s support for U.S. efforts in wars on the Muslim soils of Iraq and Afghanistan (UCSO7 2008; UCSO8 2008; UCSO9 2008; UCSO10 2008).

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF EMIRATI ‘MORE CLOSED’ MONARCHICAL REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Robustness

Experts rated the robustness of civil society 1.75. The regime utilized patronage to preclude independent civil society organizations from forming. With its very small Emirati population and the regime’s ample petro-wealth, the individual emirates were able to purchase the loyalty and cooperation of most of the Emirati population (UEx Consensus 2008).

For rogue trans-sectarian rights-based activists who refused to back down to the government, their families were smeared, privileges revoked and they were locked out of the activities of stake-holding families. This usually resulted in the ostracism of these activists from their families, as the latter sought to reclaim their place in the socio-political system (UEx Consensus 2008).

During the mid-1970s and 1980s the Emirati regime maintained a tolerant posture toward moderate Islamic activism. In addition, many Islamic activists fled the region’s praetorian regimes to the U.A.E., viewing the Emirati monarch as more legitimate than their own leadership and seeking employment opportunities. However, having witnessed the regional uptick in Islamic militancy during the early 1990s, which was largely a reaction to the first U.S. – Gulf War (particularly in Saudi Arabia, another oil-rich ‘more closed’ monarchy where violent Islamic
opposition against the regime emerged in response to the Saudi government hosting U.S. troops in the war against Iraq), the U.A.E. began purging Arab professionals and skilled laborers and cracking down on Islamic associations of all varieties (UEx Consensus 2008).

The Emirati regime’s strategy of eradicating existing voluntary associations and precluding new ones from forming was so effective that the only kinds of civic-oriented activities that took place were governmentally organized, politically benign (i.e. expatriate recreational clubs) or underground (UEx Consensus 2008).

Heterogeneity

Experts rated the heterogeneity of civil society 1.9. In most of the region’s settings, social grievances led to the cultivation of civil society. However, in rentier states, since the extravagant wealth of the majority of the citizenry was subsidized by the government, these countries were devoid of much of the impetus to form civil society organizations that was prevalent in other contexts. As one expert said, “The U.A.E. lacked the yeast that makes bread rise” (Ex1 2008).

However effective the ruling families’ tactics of combining traditional sources of legitimacy with structural and material resources, drawing upon sources of personal legitimacy and fostering a patronage system based on privileges and loyalties (against the backdrop of rapid economic development) had been in preventing voluntary associational participation from growing, it was precisely these policies that gave way to the varieties of civil society organizations that did exist in the U.A.E. (UEx Consensus 2008).

Grievances stemming from two primary sources resulted in the types of voluntary associations to survive. These included the objection of some Emirati and non-citizens to the regime’s repressive structure and the belief of other Emirati and non-citizens that the regime had abandoned Islam. These circumstances provided stimulus to a growing number of highly clandestine rights-based and Islamic associations (UEx Consensus 2008).
Vibrancy

Expert interviewees emphasized that the ruling families’ refusal to cede any political and economic space to Emirati citizens accounted for their intolerance of virtually any autonomous voluntary associational participation in the U.A.E. Their narratives revolved around two themes: structural factors inhibiting Emirati civil society from evolving and the varieties of civil society organizations that emerged in reaction to those inhibitors (UEx Consensus 2008).

Experts also underscored that the formal institutions of the state described in Part VI of this volume were not the only barriers to the development of civil society in the U.A.E. Instead, they said that these institutions combined with the country’s tight family structure, system of patronage to keep families loyal to the ruling sheikhs and the regime’s tactic of utilizing omnipresent images and symbols of Emirati society’s Bedouin roots all worked to eliminate space for civil society to grow and to reinforce the notion that voluntary associational participation was a Western concept, foreign and threatening to the Emirati identity. Thus, the nearly completely sealed structure of the monarchical regime not only influenced the robustness and heterogeneity of civil society; it dictated them. This rendered the U.A.E. with an averaged vibrancy score of 1.85, the lowest of any case in this study (UEx Consensus 2008).

Political Orientation of Civil Society

On a six-point scale, experts rated the liberalism of civil society 1.45. With the U.A.E. only coming into statehood in the 1970s—making its political identity still nascent—the state’s sponsorship of the citizenry’s wealth and the Emirati leadership’s deliberate, pervasive and monopolistic grip on identity formation in the Emirates, even much of the country’s trans-sectarian rights-based trend was relatively illiberal (UEx Consensus 2008).

There were a few individual activists and activist groupings that desired the constitutional rule of law, voting rights and the institutionalization of protections of civil liberties. Some others wanted to press for greater political inclusion because they viewed the ruling families’ stranglehold on the Emirati economy as an obstacle to their economic interests and to sustainable
development in the U.A.E. However, the perspectives of most trans-sectarian rights-based activists revealed a seemingly entrenched trust in Emirati Bedouin exceptionalism that was cloaked in liberalism, showing that these activists sought protection of civil liberties, but otherwise viewed the Emirati polity as legitimate (UEx Consensus 2008).

Finally, although some Emirati Islamic associations such as al-Islah—the Emirate’s largest Islamic association—were fairly pluralistically oriented, others were not. Having either escaped persecution for expressing their beliefs in other countries or simply critical of the U.A.E.’s development priorities, as well as its closeness to Western powers, many Emirati Islamic associations rejected the concept of democracy and subscribed to salafist visions of an Islamic state, guided by clerical leadership (UEx Consensus 2008).

**Ideological Orientation of Civil Society**

**Trans-sectarian Rights-based Associations**

Experts rated the secularism of civil society 1.65. The regime’s utilization of political and economic exclusion in order to advance its political and economic goals fostered trans-sectarian rights-based activists. Some of these activists sought to agitate for the constitutional rule of law, voting rights and the institutionalization of protections of civil liberties while others were more concerned with enhanced economic rights (UEx Consensus 2008).

However, regime imposed constraints on these associations provided them with no space to advance their interests. Prevented from associating outside of homes, publishing and circulating information, and fearful of government’s retribution, one of the only recourses these activists were afforded was to try to influence public agenda in very subtle ways through the U.A.E.’s governmentally organized associations. Moreover, the devastating punishments that came to trans-sectarian activists (and their families) who agitated for deepening the rule of law versus the personalistic, arbitrary power of the Sheikhdoms also had a powerful influence on sanitizing these groups’ agendas, rendering them highly benign (UEx Consensus 2008).


Sectarian Associations

Experts rated the fundamentalism of civil society 5.5 and militancy at 1.5. While keeping a very low profile, the regime’s cooptation of religion and attacks on independent Islamic associations since the 1990s in an already very pious country generated a multitude of underground Islamic associations throughout the country. Although groups such as al-Islah, various types of Islamic discussion circles and the Muslim Brotherhood predominately sought to simply practice and promote their faith and values without governmental interference, the perception that the ruling families were hypocritical, as they simultaneously touted an Islamic veneer while enriching themselves and entrenching their power by catering to anti-Islamic, Western interests was growing. Consequently, according to experts and some activists, salafist organizations comprised of Emirati citizens and expats that adhered to stricter interpretations of Islam and anti-government persuasions in the U.A.E. were on the rise (UEx Consensus 2008).

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The perspectives of experts and activists on the relationship between the state and civil society in the U.A.E. showed that the ‘more closed’ monarchical system, utilizing the mechanisms of political exclusion and patronage to eradicate or stave-off the possibility of autonomous civil society from developing had been highly effective in the country’s brief history of independent statehood. The Emirates were home to the fewest, most rudimentary voluntary associations of any case in this study. However, critically, at the time of my field research experts and activists indicated that was beginning to change.

According to experts this was true because the regime’s approaches to advancing its first priority of insulating the power of the ruling families and second priority of achieving rapid economic development were combining to aggravate the grievances of the country’s highly clandestine voluntary associations. While both rights-based and Islamic trends were most concerned with advancing social justice, they had very different ideas of what social justice means and how to achieve it. Furthermore, rights-based associations were most susceptible to the
patronage and punishment tactics of the Emirati regime since they had virtually no means by which to advocate for their causes and the fierce punishments they faced for activism helped to prevent them from trying to do so.

However, the regime’s attempted cooptation of Islam, the increasing perception of the ruling families’ hypocrisy, based on their promotion of Western investment and influence in the country, as well as the cooperation of the regime with U.S. foreign policy and counter-terrorism goals were fostering increasingly fundamentalist publics. Islamic groups seeking to practice what they viewed as purer interpretations of Islam and desiring a system of governance aimed at achieving that end were growing and the grievances of these associations that were inextricably tied to their faith were resonating deeply among disaffected cross-sections of Emirati society (Ex Consensus 2008).
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS INFLUENCING THE STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONSHIP IN THE U.A.E.

1968-71
Formerly known as the Trucial States, the U.A.E. achieves formal statehood following the British decision to withdraw from the Gulf. Having installed and protected Emirati rulers from the beginning, the British secure a harmonious relationship with the ruling families.

1972
The union of the emirates is initiated by the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In February, the ruling gulf families of Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quaywayn, Fujairah and Ras al-Khaymah join the federation.

1974
The Federal Social Welfare Societies Law criminalizes any association that is not licensed with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and voluntary associations focused on political issues are banned.

1988
Federal Law #15 disallows any publication that is not approved by the Ministry of Information.

1990s
Upticks in Islamic radicalism throughout the region after the first Gulf War cause the U.A.E. to begin purging and cracking down on suspected Islamists.

2001
The September 11th terror attacks on the U.S. provide justification for crackdowns on people accused of Islamic extremism inside of the U.A.E.

2003
The U.A.E.’s backing of the U.S.-led war in Iraq generates anti-government sentiment in the U.A.E.
The Arab Spring inspires a small amount of pro-reform civic mobilization in the U.A.E. The regime cracks down on suspected activists of all orientations.

CHAPTER V. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN JORDAN

“Jordan has already made the commitment. For good governance, human rights and gender equality. For innovation and partnership with the private sector. For an open, modern civil society rooted in true Arab-Islamic values: peace, tolerance, the rule of law and the pursuit of excellence…”

—King Abdullah, Speech at Matthiae-Mahlzeit Dinner Banquet on February 25th 2005

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1989 the Hashemite dynasty has insisted on its commitment to democratization in Jordan. In a speech delivered on the 10th Anniversary of the Assumption of Powers on June 8th 2009 King Abdullah proclaimed, “Our democratic process is the only insurance of Jordanians' human rights and their freedom and dignity” (Abdullah 2009).

Yet, by all estimations, the last two decades have witnessed democratic retrenchment rather than the expansion of political rights and civil liberties in Jordan (Freedom House 2007-9; Polity IV 2007-9; Russell 2003, 141). Still, many scholars and advocates of democratization are reluctant to criticize the deepening of authoritarianism Jordan, showing sympathy to the regime provided the country’s under-development, fractured national identity, vulnerable position in the volatile region, and its reliance on and hence, obligations to the West (JCSO4 2008; JCSO5 2008; JEx3 2008; JEx5 2008).

Even esteemed regional experts such as Alan George argued, “Most certainly King Abdullah’s vision does not include any development of democracy that would threaten the establishment with too rapid or dramatic change. Yet the elite’s attachment to its privileges is not the only reason for the kingdom’s democratic failings. Much deeper forces are at play. Jordanian
society is simply not amenable to a wholesale transplant of Western-style democracy” (George 2005, 242).

Perhaps owing to the monarch’s persuasive rhetoric, friendliness to the West and its rare usage of brute coercion (as compared to neighboring despots), scholars have primarily emphasized, even lauded the moderating impacts of the regime’s ‘more open’ policies on Jordanian civil society (Stemmann 2010, 56). However, my field research evidenced that while the more open aspects of the regime’s structure did generate greater moderation in some facets of Jordanian voluntary associational participation, conversely, the exclusionary aspects of the regime’s structure combined with the strategies the monarch undertook to co-opt or repress prospective competition served to promote illiberal secularism, fundamentalism and militancy while marginalizing moderate, liberal trends in Jordanian civil society (JCSO3 2008; JCSO4 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

PART II. THE MAKING OF THE JORDANIAN MONARCHICAL REGIME

Historical Background

Early negotiations between the British and Sherif Hussein of Mecca (who belonged to the same Hashemite clan as the prophet Mohammed more than thirteen centuries earlier) set the stage for the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Similar to the experiences of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and other Arabian Peninsula countries, British indirect rule worked by attempting to legitimize and empower social forces that would cooperate with the empire. In the territory formerly known as Greater Syria, members of the Hashemite dynasty had strong incentives to cooperate with the British (Harmsen 2008, 81; Ryan 2007, 292).

The British Mandate

The Hussein –McMahon Correspondence

Between July 1915 and March 1916, several letters were exchanged between the Hashemite Sherif Hussein and Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt. In short, in context of World War I, the Hussein –McMahon Correspondence represented a pact in
which McMahon pledged to turn Arab territories over to the Hashemite dynasty following the War, in exchange for his help in defeating the Ottoman Empire (Ryan 2007, 293).

**Sykes –Picot Agreement**

The Hashemites followed through with their promise to the British, organizing and carrying out the Arab Revolt of June 1916, which proved critical to the Allied Power’s (Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States) decisive victory over the Central Powers (Germany and the Ottomans). But the clandestine Sykes-Picot Agreement, established in May 1916 named after its negotiators, the British Sir Mark Sykes, and French Francois Georges-Picot, superseded the McMahon –Hussein Correspondence, sidelining Sherif Hussein and dividing the Arab Middle East north of the Arabian Peninsula into French and British spheres of influence (George 2005, 5-7).

The Agreement, which culminated in the Paris Peace Conference treaties of 1919 provided for the former possessions of the defeated Germans and Ottomans to be administered as mandates under the supervision of the League of Nations. In turn, the League allocated the areas corresponding to modern Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq to the British and allocated the zones corresponding roughly to modern Lebanon and Syria to the French (George 2005, 5-7).

**The Carving Up of Territory and Establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom**

Historically, Transjordan resided at the crossroads between provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The country’s modern borders were carved up out of a combination of British imperial interests including, accommodating Arab nationalist aspirations, establishing a military strategic bridge between Egypt and the Arab Gulf region and checking French ambitions in the Middle East (Harmsen 2008, 81).

As such, Transjordan came to contain the resource deficient terrain between Palestine, to the west, Syria to the north, the Hejaz and Najd to the south (now Saudi Arabia) and Iraq to the east. The area was sparsely populated by regional merchants, Bedouin tribes and small communities of Circassians, Chechens and Armenians who’d fled persecution elsewhere. This
mosaic also included Hejazis, Druze, Turkomans, Assyrians and Bahais (George 2005, 23; Ryan 2007, 293).

In 1923, seeking hegemony over Transjordan, but unwilling to govern it directly, as a concession to the betrayed Hashemite clan, the British awarded the region to Sherif Hussein’s son, Emir Abdullah, through whom the empire ruled for the next two decades. In return for his loyalty Great Britain allocated generous subsidies to the Transjordanian Emir, providing for most of Abdullah’s fiscal and military necessities. Early on, this arrangement proved critical to Abdullah’s ability to stay in power, since the artificially imposed Hashemite dynasty was perceived as illegitimate by much of the population (George 2005, 14).

When popular dissatisfaction and armed insurgencies ensued they were brutally quashed by the British military and the Arab Legion (Britain’s Arab imperial military; later to become the Jordanian military). In the lead up to Jordanian independence, negotiations between the British and Hashemites demonstrated the latter’s sustained reliance. The resultant Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1946 pledged 12 million British pounds in aid to Jordan, in exchange for the Hashemite’s continued alliance with Britain (Ryan 2007, 296).

**Independence**

Transjordan’s independence was declared by the United Nations on May 25th 1946. Subsequently, Emir Abdullah was crowned king by the Jordanian parliament, and the country was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (George 2005, 15).

From inception the newly born Hashemite Kingdom faced significant challenges. Abdullah was the king of a state that lacked a nation and Jordan’s disparate populous viewed him as an imperial puppet. Thus, the new king set forth to win over his opponents by awarding them high ranking positions in government and the bureaucracy in exchange for their loyalty; promoting a national identity based on Islam that emphasized the Hashemite monarch’s ancestral ties to the prophet Mohammed; and creating a loyal patronage network by expanding employment opportunities in the public sphere (Brand 2005, 156).
The Palestinian Crisis

The influx of Palestinians in Jordan dramatically altered and complicated the state–society relationship in Jordan. In the wake of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, 80% of Palestinians fled their native lands. Palestinian refugees flooded into Jordan, tripling the size of its population and creating competition between Jordanians and Palestinians over scarce resources (Wilson 1990, 190).

Although King Abdullah’s government was the only in the region to grant Palestinians citizenship, Abdullah was hardly viewed as a champion of the Palestinian people. In fact, having formally annexed the West Bank in April 1950, it was widely believed that he incorporated so many Palestinians (2/3 of the Jordanian population) not as a gesture of solidarity with the Palestinian people but as a justification for his own covert plan to lay claim to the rest of Palestine. Indeed, Abdullah came to be despised by many Transjordanians and Palestinians alike, and in July of 1950, he was assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist (Abu Odeh 1999, 60-1).

King Talal’s Brief Reign

Abdullah’s son, Talal’s reign lasted only one year. Although it is believed that Talal was forced to abdicate owing to mental illness, there are also indications that under British pressure the Jordanian monarch ousted Talal due to his liberal nationalist views. Either way, during his short time in power the king amended the Jordanian Constitution—first drafted under his father in 1928—to include several articles providing for greater extensions of democracy and human rights. The Constitution of 1952 remains in place to this day and its substance is discussed in detail later in this chapter (Abu Odeh 1999, 60-1).

Consolidation of the Regime under King Hussein

When Talal’s son, Hussein was appointed king in August 1952 the region was in the throes of political turmoil. Turbulence stemming from anti-Western, pan-Arab nationalism demanding the liberation of Palestine, pan-Arab solidarity, socialism and non-alignment in the
Cold War engulfed the region. Jordan, with its Palestinian majority, border with Israel and location between far more powerful, pan-Arab oriented states was at the center of the upheaval. Intensifying these pressures, Britain and the United States were trying to strong-arm King Hussein into an alliance with the West against the Soviet Union, while the Egyptian President Nasser was launching widely disseminated smear campaigns against the king, criticizing him for Jordan’s close relationship to its former colonizer, Great Britain (George 2005, 27).

These factors culminated in a rash of anti-Hashemite demonstrations and riots in Jordan that Hussein could only contain with military intervention. Embattled by all sides, but keenly aware of Jordan’s strategic significance to powerful external actors, the king played the sides against each other. Key to this strategy was to cut ties with Great Britain (or at least create the illusion), and in so doing, boost his Arab nationalist credentials. In 1956, the king fired Sir John Bagot, the British officer who’d been second in command of the Arab Legion since 1930. Shortly thereafter, he renamed the Arab Legion the Jordanian Arab Army. During Britain, France and Israel’s attacks on Egypt after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, the king refused Britain access to its military bases in Jordan. Finally, in a bold act of asserting self-determination, King Hussein terminated the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of 1946 (Abu-Odeh 1999, 69-73; George 2005, 27-9).

Yet, as a practical matter, the king required external support to stay in power. Therefore, in January 1957, he signed onto an Arab Solidarity Agreement with Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia that promised the same 12 million pounds in annual subsidies Jordan had received from the British. At the same time, in a seemingly contradictory move, the king publicly courted the support of the United States, claiming his allegiance to the West in the fight against communism (George 2005, 29-30).

These conflicting measures only served to sharpen anti-Hashemite, nationalist sentiment inside of Jordan, turning many members of government and elements of the military against the monarch. By April 1957, the king’s opponents and supporters were mobilized in the streets. In
response, King Hussein seized the opportunity to consolidate control over the country, placing several cities under curfew, arresting hundreds of opposition figures (including military officers suspected of disloyalty), dissolving the parliament and banning all political parties. Furthermore, fearing the alternative if King Hussein was deposed, the West rushed to his defense. Underscoring its support to the Hashemite regime, the United States provided the king with a $10 million annual aid package. After the Hashemite King Faisal II of Iraq was overthrown by nationalists in a bloody coup, British paratroopers flew to Jordan to prevent King Hussein from the same fate (Abu-Odeh 1999, 71-86; George 2005, 31).

The Jordanian Civil War

From September 1970 to July of 1971, King Hussein’s rule was once again threatened. Following the second Arab–Israeli War, in which Israeli Defense Forces destroyed the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s headquarters in Karameh, King Hussein allowed the latter to set up a near mini-state inside of Jordan. Although the authorization came with a number of restrictions (as laid out in Hussein’s Seven Point Agreement and Ten Point Edict), the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s presence in Jordan aggravated an already tenuous relationship between East Bank Transjordanians and West Bank Palestinians (Abu-Odeh 1999, 171; Ryan 2007, 297).

In addition, with armed Israeli incursions into Jordan that were aimed at Palestinian guerrilla fighters, Transjordanians’ resentment of Palestinians grew. Furthermore, the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization contributed to radicalizing the Palestinian movement’s cause inside of Jordan. The situation soon led to armed conflict between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Jordanian security forces. In response, King Hussein declared emergency law and began a military campaign against the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The war ended with the purging of the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Jordan, and the country remained under emergency law for nearly two decades (Brand 2005, 155-6).
Political Liberalization

Following the Jordanian Civil War, the king’s efforts to calm the country utilizing a blend of suppression, unifying rhetoric / symbolism and patronage were somewhat successful. However, by the late 1980s Jordanians’ grievances with the Hashemite monarch re-emerged. For decades the king was successful in placating his Transjordanian and Palestinian communities by disproportionately bringing Transjordanians into the private sector, while allowing his non-indigenous Palestinian population to dominate the private sector (Brand 2005, 156).

But as a result of the collapse of international oil prices in the mid-1980s the availability of external rents from Gulf countries to Jordan declined. Economic hardship worsened after 1988, when in response to calls for Palestinian self-determination, King Hussein relinquished the West Bank to Palestinian authorities. This prompted capital flight by Jordanian Palestinian businessmen (the main financiers of Jordan's private sector), sending Jordan into fiscal crisis. As a result, King Hussein sought help from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Owing to the terms of their loans the monarchy was forced to introduce economic austerity measures that led many Jordanians to protest against the resultant cuts in daily subsidies (George 2005, 38).

Bread riots broke out across the country, including in a number of traditional bastions of support for the regime. Yet, instead of using coercion to eradicate the opposition (as he had in the past), King Hussein opted for tactical political opening. In November 1989, the King held the country’s first full parliamentary elections in more than 20 years. In 1990, he called for a National Charter, signed in 1991, in which a broad cross-section of Jordan's elites agreed on plans for institutional reform. Subsequently, the new National Assembly lifted the ban on political parties (which had been in place since 1957) and eased press censorship. The emergency law was formally lifted in 1991, and Jordan appeared to be on a path toward democracy (George 2005 38-9).
However, Jordan’s liberalization process was short lived. After King Hussein sided with Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1991, Jordan —desperately dependent on external rents— was isolated by the West. The King’s first opportunity to rebuild the country’s ties with the West (the United States, in particular) came later that year with the Middle East Peace Conference, in Madrid (Brand 2005, 183; Stemmann 2010, 58-9).

But negotiations at the conference also ushered in the prospect of establishing peace with Israel. This presented the king with a formidable political challenge since United States and Israeli foreign policy toward Jordan forbade the empowerment of Islamists (whose views were hostile toward both) in Jordan. Yet, the Muslim Brotherhood and affiliated Islamist groups were dominant among the loyal opposition in the Jordanian government. Therefore, under intensifying pressure from the United States and Israel, and fearing the gathering momentum of Islamists in the more open political environment anyway, Hussein introduced a series of de-liberalization policies, systematically purging the Islamists from power and replacing them with old guard Transjordanian loyalists. This trend continued under King Abdullah II who ascended the throne in February 1999, following the death of his father. (Brand 2005; 183, Russell 2003, 137).

Roots of Civil Society in Jordan

In order to understand the contemporary state-civil society relationship in Jordan it is necessary to first consider how the policies promulgated by the ‘more open’ monarchical regime ultimately fostered the types of civil society organizations to emerge in Jordan in the 21st century.

Hashemite Co-optation of Ethno-sectarian Trends

Jordan’s organic civil society was rooted in the region’s tribal networks, which were inward looking and distrustful of the Hashemite regime. The exception to this trend was the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (Brand 2005, 163-4; Ex3 2008; Ex7 2008).

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1945 by Abd al-Atif Abu Qura, a wealthy businessman from Salta. Qura had been introduced to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine during the 1930s, and was impressed by Hassan al-Banna’s (the founder of the
Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) condemnation of colonialism and Zionism. Like its counterparts in Syria and Egypt, in its early years, the organization was focused on Islamic education and the struggle in Palestine. Yet, with Jordan in the throes of political turbulence, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood rapidly evolved into a political organization (Brand 2005, 163; Clark 2004, 84; Moaddel 2002, 95; Stemmann 2010, 58).

Unlike its Syrian and Egyptian counterparts, however, the Brotherhood in Jordan emerged an ally rather than an adversary of the ruling regime. This outcome occurred for several interrelated reasons. Having observed the radicalization of Islamists across the region, King Abdullah promoted moderation within the organization by granting it legal status as a charitable association. Supporting the Muslim Brotherhood also bolstered the king’s Islamic legitimacy, while creating a loyal counterbalance to the domestic pan-Arab nationalist opposition, both in elections and on the ground (Moaddel 2002, 95-6; Stemmann 2010, 58).

With few exceptions, until the 1990s, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood firmly backed the Hashemite monarchy. In 1957 the Brotherhood supported the regime in its battle against Pan-nationalist forces. In 1970, it even sided with the Jordanian military against the Palestinian Liberation Organization when the latter tried to overthrow the regime. In return the monarch rewarded the Brotherhood by allowing it to occupy the political and social space left by the ousted Palestinian Liberation Organization. These circumstances facilitated the expansion of the Muslim Brotherhood in universities, professional associations and charitable societies throughout Jordan. In 1989, the Muslim Brotherhood earned twenty-two of the eighty contested seats in the National Assembly. Shortly thereafter, the organization secured the ministries of education, health, justice, social development and Islamic affairs (Stemman 2010, 58-9).

However, after 1991 when the regime turned on the Brothers, the monarch introduced several measures aimed at eliminating the Muslim Brotherhood from government. It gerrymandered Jordan’s electoral districts to reduce the Muslim Brotherhood’s electability. In 1992, it implemented a new law on political parties. The law required the Muslim Brotherhood to
create a political party (the Islamic Action Front), distinct from its social welfare organization (the Islamic Center Charity Society). This served to undermine the Muslim Brotherhood because it helped to disassociate the organization’s popular charitable activities from the political party (Abu Rumman 2007, 18; Wiktorowicz 2001, 87).

**Hashemite Co-optation of Secular Trends**

As an artificial, underdeveloped state lacking a national identity and racked by external and internal conflicts, Jordan did not have an early legacy of secular liberal civil society organizations focused on human rights and democratization. Repression under emergency law also curtailed their emergence. But with the country’s political liberalization, after 1989, these organizations began to flourish. Though their aims came to occupy a central place in the Jordanian political discourse, the regime was able to co-opt many associations belonging to this trend.

During his reign, King Hussein set his sights on securing Hashemite power by building legitimacy in the country. With the goal of achieving the image of the ultimate arbiter of the common good in Jordan, the king founded dozens of charities development associations and cultural centers. He staffed their upper echelons with members of the royal family, propagated their Islamic credentials and publicized the Hashemite monarch’s commitment to facilitating the growth of civil society in Jordan. In subsequent years, the regime’s de-liberalization policies combined with these well-resourced, state-led voluntary the organizations—set up to compete with their independent counterparts—ultimately limited the role of the latter in voicing public demands for reform (Harmsen 2010, 164; Jarrah 2009, 5; Talal 2004, 114).

**Historical Summary**

The previous section explained the processes leading to the evolution and consolidation of today’s Jordanian regime. By virtue of British strategies undertaken during the Mandate King Abdullah of the Hashemite dynasty came to rule Jordan. Critically, the Hashemite monarch’s
ability to survive rested on its: relations with Jordanians of Transjordanian and Palestinian
descent; involvement in Palestine; and dependence on the West (Brand 2005, 153).

Although Jordan experienced a short period of time when King Hussein attempted to rule
as a constitutional monarch, in April 1957 he cracked down on nationalist, pan-Arab opposition
parties and concentrated power in his own hands. All political organizations were banned and the
king staffed the government and military with loyal, primarily Transjordanian personnel. After
the Jordanian civil war the king declared a state of emergency that lasted more than two decades.

In response to the political upheaval that unraveled in the late 1980s, however, the king
was able to pacify the population with promises of political reform. But when greater political
openness brought Jordan’s Islamists to power, the king’s own anxieties over their growing
strength as a political force and Western pressure to eliminate the Islamists from government
caus ed Hussein and Abdullah II to reverse the liberalization processes (Stemmann 2010, 59).
Most political rights and civil liberties were again restricted and much of civil society was
repressed (Freedom House Report 2012).

PART III. JORDANIAN REGIME TYPE INDICATORS

Polity IV indicators characterized the ‘more open’ Jordanian regime as ruled by a largely
unconstrained hereditary monarch. Political participation was tightly ‘managed,’ as were many

Jordanian Executive Authority Characteristics

Polity IV characterized the Jordanian system of executive recruitment as regulated, the
competitiveness of the process as selected, and the openness of the selected executive as
ascription – designation. In the case of Jordan, the position of the chief executive (de facto head
of government) was shared and executive recruitment was determined both by hereditary
succession and designation by the country’s ruling monarch. That is, members of the monarch
assumed their positions of power by right of descent, while the institutional power of the prime
minister was dependent on the continued support of the monarch (Polity IV 2007-2009).
Jordanian Executive Constraints Characteristics

Constraints on King Abdullah II’s authority were characterized as slight to moderate. This indicates that the prerogative of the King went entirely unchecked by the will of the population he governed and only slightly to moderately by the Jordanian government (Polity IV 2007-2009).

Jordanian Political Participation Characteristics

*Polity IV* characterized political participation in Jordan as political liberalization-democratic retrenchment with persistent overt coercion. The regulation of participation in the country was sectarian and the competitiveness of participation was described as transitional. Political liberalization-democratic retrenchment with persistent overt coercion was described by *Polity IV* as a system in which liberal political participation in an otherwise procedurally democratic polity remained unconsolidated. *Polity IV* utilized this coding to describe polities where national elections for the executive and legislative branches of government were deemed to be free but not necessarily fair. This means that some social groups were routinely excluded from the political process by government repression and / or government committed substantial violations of the population’s civil liberties. Persistent—albeit relatively limited use of coercion by government and opposition forces—was a pronounced feature influencing political participation (Polity IV 2007-2009).

Jordanian Civil Liberties Characteristics

*Freedom House* rated extensions of civil liberties by the ‘more open’ Jordanian monarchical regime with a score of 4, which indicates that the Jordanian regime protected some civil liberties while neglecting others (freedom of association, in particular). Although Jordanians enjoyed relatively high levels of freedom of belief and expression (9) and personal autonomy and individual rights (8), equitable rule of law (6), and, freedom of association (5) were suppressed (Freedom House, 2007-2009).
Jordanian Composite Variable Regime Score

*Polity IV* rated the ‘more open’ Jordanian regime with a polity score of -3 and *Freedom House* rated civil liberties in the Jordan with a score of 4. This makes the Jordan’s composite variable regime score a -6.
PART IV. MODEL OF THE JORDANIAN REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS,
STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

5. Model of the Jordanian State and Civil Society Relationship: Co-optation and Repression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type Characteristic</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dual Executive: Ascription + Designation</td>
<td>Insulate Executive Recruitment from Societal Influence</td>
<td>Civil Society Cannot Influence Executive Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Executive Constraints</td>
<td>Endow the Regime with Nearly Absolute Power</td>
<td>Civil Society is Not Protected from Arbitrary and Despotic Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Competition</td>
<td>Encourage Political Participation of Regime Loyalists, Discourage Political Participation of Opposition Parties</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations Can Scarcely Influence the Public Agenda / Currents Seen As Friendly and Loyal to the Regime Have Freer Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective Civil Liberties</td>
<td>Attempt Co-optation and Repression of Oppositional Voluntary Associational Participation</td>
<td>Moderate Levels of Robustness, Heterogeneity, Secular Liberalism and Fundamentalism. Moderate Levels of Militancy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jordanian state-civil society model depicted in Table 1 demonstrates that King Abdullah II came to power by designation. Very weak executive constraints endowed the King with nearly absolute power, rendering Jordanian civil society unprotected from arbitrary rule.

Managed competition evidences that the regime sought to undermine the associations that challenged the Jordanian political system, while encouraging the growth of those that were loyal to it. Selective regulations on civil liberties allowed for a strategy of obstructing or co-opting civil society organizations seen as threatening to the regime, while bolstering those viewed as cooperative with the status quo. This served to reduce the vibrancy (robustness and heterogeneity) of independent civil society organizations and to obviate independent secular liberal and moderate Islamist associations, while fostering illiberal secular and militant fundamentalist associational trends (JEx Consensus 2008).
PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL

I conducted field research in Amman, Jordan, beginning in May 2008 and ending in July 2008. The relative openness of the Jordanian polity and general ease of physical mobility in the country provided for the most hospitable environment to conduct interviewing with experts and members of Jordanian civil society organizations of any case in this volume, second to Lebanon.

I began my research by interviewing the Chair of the Political Science Department at Amman University, who subsequently put me in touch with leading academics, journalists and practitioners who specialized in the Jordanian state–civil society relationship. The Chair even facilitated an interview with a former Jordanian prime minister. However, many of these initial interviewees made their loyalty to the regime explicit. It was not until the snowball interviewing process led me to interview non-partisan experts (mainly non-aligned professionals specializing in the fields of social science and human rights) that I was able to ascertain the polemics of voluntary associational participation in Jordan.

I interviewed ten experts and members of ten civil society organizations inside of Jordan. The permissiveness of the security environment in Jordan allowed for open coordination and conduction of interviews with experts and members. I interviewed experts and activists in their offices and in public spaces, depending upon their preferences. Furthermore, interviewees’ preferred meeting points seemed to be more tied to convenience than safety concerns.

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES

Given that power was densely concentrated in the ascribed-designated, nearly unconstrained executive, and that Polity IV characterized participation in Jordan as managed, this section of the chapter examines the institutional structures of the regime that were used to exercise the co-optation and repression of participation and civil liberties. Part VII provides descriptions and narratives of Jordanian civil society organizations, and Part VIII assesses the impacts of the ‘more open’ monarchical regime’s policies on the vibrancy and ideological orientations of civil society in Jordan.
Ascribed-Designated, Unconstrained Executive, Managed Participation and Selected Civil Liberties

According to experts and activists, King Abdullah II utilized a number of institutions to maintain his status as the final arbiter in Jordan, while allowing for some political participation and civic space for activists to operate. These institutions included the absolute power of the king over the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and specific laws and policies aimed at coopting and repressing independent civil society organizations (JEx Consensus 2008).

Political Institutions

Executive

By virtue of the Jordanian constitution executive power was vested in the king who had discretionary power to appoint and dismiss the cabinets that promulgated laws, the upper house, and the parliament, as well as the authority to establish public policy by decree (JEx Consensus 2008; Zaki 2007, 74).

Parliament

The parliament was made up of a fifty-five member upper house, appointed by the king and a popularly elected one hundred-ten member lower house. However, parliament’s elected lower house had little independent legislative authority and was counterbalanced by the royally appointed upper house (Freedom House Report 2012; JEx8 2008; JEx10 2008).

National elections exhibited systemic flaws that distorted competitive outcomes. The country’s forty-five electoral districts are apportioned to guarantee low, urban Muslim Brotherhood and Palestinian representation by giving greater weight to voters in Transjordanian dominated rural districts where the Hashemite monarch enjoys more support. Fraudulent practices such as vote buying, ballot stuffing, and illegal busing of voters were well documented and the government frequently interfered by giving financial and organizational support to preferred candidates (JEx8 2008; Freedom House Report 2012).
Judiciary

Although the constitution provided for an independent judiciary, all judicial decisions were subject to review by the regime. The Ministry of Justice and the Higher Judicial Council, whose members were appointed by the king, regularly applied pressure and interfered in judicial matters (JEx Consensus 2008; Zaki 2007, 75).

State Security Court

Although normal civil and criminal courts in Jordan operated with some independence, the Jordanian State Security Court, which was set up in 1959 under Legislative Statute #17 operated outside of the constitutional judicial system. In writing this court only had jurisdiction over crimes considered harmful to Jordan’s internal and external security, involving terrorism, espionage, treason and narcotics. But in practice the State Security Court also prosecuted people who criticized the regime’s policies in trials that lacked basic guarantees of due process (JEx2 2008; JEx10 2008).

Intelligence Agencies

The General Intelligence Department was officially designed to carry out intelligence operations in order to protect the security of the state. However, it also performed internal security operations, often bringing independent civil society organizations under investigation for corruption and other economic crimes. It was this agency that had virtually unlimited authority to carry out arrests, searches, interrogations, and detentions dealing with civil activists involved in what the authorities considered political activities. Thus, much more than a national security service, in practice Jordan’s General Intelligence Department was an autonomous entity answerable only to the king (JEx10 2008).
Laws Specific to Rights to Association

The Ministry of Social Development and Law #33 on Social Societies and Institutions

Similar to Syria, Egypt and the U.A.E., Law #33 of 1966 criminalized any association that was not licensed with the Ministry of Social Development. Specifically, Articles 159 to 163 of the Jordanian Penal Code made membership in an unlicensed group a criminal offense, punishable by up to two years in prison (Jordanian Penal Code, Law # 16, Articles 159-163). The law explicitly prohibited associations with so-called political goals and required civil society organizations to obtain approval for all domestic and foreign funding. The review process for licensure involved the Ministry of Social Development’s district manager, the director for the Ministry of Non-Governmental Organizations Affairs, in the Ministry of Social Development, and provincial governors, who reported directly to the Ministry of Interior. According to law, the authorities could issue or deny a license, as deemed appropriate, without having to give cause (Law #33 on Social Societies and Institutions, 1966, Article 7), and the law did not provide for appeals, judicial or administrative, against the authorities’ decision (JEx5, 2008).

Law #7 on Public Gatherings

Law #7 2004 defined public gatherings as any “gathering, which is held to discuss a matter of public interest.” Therefore, any type of meeting required organizers to request and obtain advance written approval from Jordanian authorities (Human Rights Watch Report 2007, 5-6; Law #7, 2004; Article 2). Under Law #7, Jordanian officials were granted unchecked authority to deny approval to requests for public gatherings, even if all conditions were properly fulfilled, and the authorities did not have to provide any reason for their refusal (HRW Report 2007, 5-6; JEx4 2008; Ex5 2008).

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF JORDANIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Interviews with members of Jordan’s civil society organizations provide important anecdotal insights to the Jordanian state - civil society relationship. During the time of my
research, the voluntary associational participation that took place in Jordan was comprised of a fairly robust spectrum of three main types of voluntary trends. They included state-led Hashemite, secular and Sunni Islamic sectarian trends (JCSO Consensus 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

**State-led Hashemite Trends**

**Background**

As discussed in the historical section of this chapter, a leading aspect of the monarch’s legitimacy formula included founding and funding a number of Hashemite-led charity organizations. These associations were very prominent throughout Jordan, boasting the Jordanian government’s dedication to address and ameliorate poverty and numerous social problems in the country.

**Descriptions**

My initial meeting with members of two of Jordan’s oldest and largest Hashemite founded and funded development organizations took place at one of the association’s many community development centers in Amman. The groups’ members explained that these organizations were originally founded as a result of King Hussein’s initiatives to provide assistance to Jordanians living in abject poverty. However, according to the activists, since then, they had evolved into a comprehensive sustainable development groups (JCSO1 2008; JCSO2 2008; JCSO3 2008).

With hundreds of Jordanian and expatriate staff working in the fields of social, economic, cultural, environmental and technological empowerment, the members also noted that these organizations were home to large networks of thousands volunteers, and said that they

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27 Examples include the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development and Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization.
29 Examples include some small mainstream Islamic associations, the Islamic Center (the social wing of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood) and salafi organizations.
coordinated their operations through partnerships with hundreds of local schools, other community based groups and key stakeholders. With dozens of centers throughout Jordan’s rural and urban regions, members of these associations said that their specific aims were to contribute to community development, build capacity and implement sustainable development projects in Jordan (JCSO1 2008; JCSO2 2008; JCSO3 2008).

Interactions with the State

Hashemite led and government subsidized civil society organizations praised the role of government in supporting the growth of civil society in Jordan and in facilitating the ability of civil society organizations to advance their aims. Members of government supported associations insisted that they could effectively access government to press their agendas and that the monarch was highly receptive to advancing their aims. They said that the government helped to sponsor and protect their development goals, while maintaining stability in Jordan, which they viewed a prerequisite to conducting their work. Moreover, these associations saw the Ministry of Development and regime imposed constraints on civil society organizations, as necessary to preserving the “integrity” and “civility” of voluntary associational participation in Jordan. They also believed that these institutions facilitated the ability of civil society organizations to effectively vocalize their priorities and streamline their requests to the government (JCSO1 2008; JCSO2 2008; JCSO3 2008).

For example, one member of a Hashemite founded and funded development organization emphasized her perception that it was the monarch, the late King Hussein himself, who deliberately undertook the cultivation of Jordanian civil society, in a context of crippling economic underdevelopment and deep social cleavages. She argued that without the state, Jordanian civil society would have never emerged and could not function. In fact, she said, “With all due respect, I’ve seen recent reports claiming that Jordan is becoming more authoritarian. But what most Westerners can’t seem to understand is the careful balance the King
must maintain between extending freedoms to the Jordanian people and protecting them from the destabilizing effects freedom can bring to a poor socially divided country” (JCSO1 2008).

Secular Trends

Background

During the 1980s when pressures for democratic reforms were mounting in Jordan, a number of human rights and democratization organizations emerged to press secular liberal agendas. In addition, with Jordan’s scarce natural resources, uneven economic development, poverty and ever-growing population several development organizations emerged in the country. Activists in these associations explained that at that time, while enjoying a great deal of autonomy from the regime, the monarch was firmly behind their efforts helping to remove unnecessary barriers to their initiatives and often seeking consultation from their members (JCSO3 2008; JCSO4 2008).

Descriptions

Human Rights and Democratization Associations

I interviewed members of two human rights and democratization organizations in Jordan. The first was the Jordanian branch of a very large network of Arab human and women’s rights activists that was active throughout the country. Interviews with members of this organization were originally coordinated through their counterparts in Syria. They put me in contact with members of a second, smaller Amman based association.

Volunteers in these organizations (men and women) came from diverse demographic backgrounds, including Hashemite, Transjordanian and Palestinian. They explained that their key goals were to advance meaningful democratic reforms in Jordan, i.e. equality under law, transparency and greater accountability on the part of government. These groups were highly active and visible in Jordanian society and their leadership was well known to government officials, since they regularly petitioned government for political reform, attempted to host
meetings on democratization, human rights and civil society, as well as gather data on, and as publish criticism of the regime's human rights abuses (JCSO3 2008; JCSO6 2008).

Development Associations

I interviewed members of two small, independent Jordanian development groups. The leadership of these associations was made up of highly educated development practitioners who said that the reason they’d founded the organizations was to try to advance more meaningful sustainable development programs in Jordan. They argued that although the Jordanian government claimed to prioritize badly needed sustainable development programs in the country, the monarch’s initiatives—which were guided by members of the royal family and their patronage networks, instead of trained professionals—only ended up perpetuating the status quo and deepening the population’s dependence on the government in order to meet basic needs (JCSO4 2008; JCSO5 2008).

Members of these development groups said that their primary activities included providing free education and consultation services. They regularly held workshops on college campuses and for development focused businesses. Owing to the reputable membership of these associations, their members said that they were also able to access relevant governmental officials and even members of the monarch in order to try to push their agendas (JCSO4 2008; JCSO5 2008).

Interactions with the State

Members of Jordan’s secular associations explained that early on they enjoyed a harmonious relationship with the Jordanian government. However, with King Abdullah’s increasing emphasis on controlling these organizations and silencing their dissent against controversial government policies that relationship had grown highly antagonistic. Both human rights and democratization and development groups said that a standard tactic the regime used to marginalize the voices of independent activists while still giving the appearance of supporting
their causes was to set up competing organizations that benefited from government resourcing and endorsement.

For example, according to members of one human rights and democratization association, the Jordanian government had recently decided to host an international conference on civil society in the Middle East. Outraged by the regime’s hypocrisy and disgusted by the government’s selection of only government-led voluntary associations to represent Jordanian civil society at the conference, the association applied to hold their own conference in parallel. At first, Jordanian authorities refused their request without providing an explanation. Then a day before the conference was scheduled to take place, government officials reversed their decision and authorized the organization to hold the event. But by that time the activists said it was too late for them to make many necessary arrangements. They held the conference anyway but the activists explained that owing to their inability to plan and coordinate in advance, many of the events’ expected speakers were not able to appear, the conference was disorganized, and it did not receive the press coverage the activists had hoped (JCSO6 2008).

While this less overt tactic of obstructing the activities of reform-minded civil society organizations were common, members of civil society organization said that the regime also relied on provisions of Jordan’s laws on associations (especially those pertaining to financing), in order to co-opt its critics (JCSO3 2008; JCSO4 2008; JCSO5 2008; JCSO6 2008).

Members of a different secular liberal organization said that after they published and circulated a document critiquing the government’s restrictive laws on non-governmental organizations, the association was brought under investigation on charges of financial impropriety. The interviewees noted that on the day the association received notice of the investigation from the Ministry of Social Development, police and Ministry of Social Development officials descended on their headquarters. The authorities blocked staff from entering their offices, raided the building, confiscated the organizations’ documents and charged some of its members with economic crimes (JCSO5 2008).
The activists said they were also targeted personally. They reported that the authorities rand-sacked their homes, froze their personal assets and banned them from travelling. Government suspended the organization’s board of directors and replaced them with authorities in the Ministry of Social Development (JCSO5 2008).

After the association was absolved of any wrongdoing, the suspension of the association’s board of directors was terminated. Yet, the interviewees said that these actions on the part of government were highly destructive, stripping the association resources and damaging its reputation (JCSO5 2008).

**Sectarian Trends**

**Background**

Experts and members of Jordan’s Islamic associations told of the key role Islamic societies, schools, development centers and charities played in the historical development of Jordanian associational life. Although until recently the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood along with other Islamic societies had distinctly different priorities from the country’s more radicalized Palestinian and salafist movements, with government crackdowns on the Brotherhood, the Hamas and other groups accused of jihadist plots these groupings were increasingly coming together in opposition to the regime (JCSO7 2008; JCSO8 2008; JCSO9 2008; JCSO10 2008).

**Descriptions**

I interviewed members of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, two Islamic charities and one salafi group. Coordination for conducting interviews with members of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was facilitated by members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Jordanian expert interviewees. From there, Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members were able to put me in contact with other Islamic associations.

Unlike the Brotherhood in Syria and Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan was legal and operating. Members of the Islamic Center said that the social wing of the Brotherhood primarily carried out work in the health, education, and other charitable causes. They maintained
that until recently the Center operated fourteen healthcare clinics and two large hospitals in Amman and Aqaba, fifty schools at all levels of education and fifty-six centers for orphaned children. Unlike the Islamic Action Front, members of the Society insisted that the organization did not seek or engage in the sphere of politics and that rather than pursuing an Islamist agenda the organization offered services to all citizens equally (JCSO7 2008).

Members of Jordan’s smaller mainstream Islamic associations were mainly focused on highly localized initiatives. They were geared toward providing very basic community services such as meals, small employment opportunities, and Islamic education, as well as espousing Islamic values such as piety, generosity, modesty and austerity. Most of these community advocates said that they carried-out their work in lieu of opportunities or support available to people by the Jordanian public and private sectors. Yet, their perspectives generally reflected an empathetic view of the development challenges faced by the Jordanian government (JCSO8 2008; JCSO9 2008; JCSO10 2008).

However, members of Jordan’s salafist Islamic movement were emphatically critical of the monarch and even the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, as well as other mainstream Islamic associations. These activists viewed the government and those who cooperated with its policies as complicit in what they viewed as Israel and the West’s war on Muslims in the Palestinian territories, Iraq and Afghanistan and blamed the Jordanian monarch, in particular for the injustices faced by Palestinians. This grouping’s activities centered on purifying Islamic education and Jordanian Muslims’ way of life, fighting for Sunni Islamic and Palestinian nationalist causes and recruitment to that end (JCS06 2008; JCSO102008).

**Interactions with the State**

As discussed in the historical section of this chapter, in the past, the monarch and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed a cooperative relationship. The Brothers even backed the government against Transjordanian and Palestinian nationalist threats and on an account of their
loyalty the organization was allowed to cultivate widespread social and even political influence in the country.

However, since the monarch undertook de-liberalization policies and began its campaigns to marginalize the Muslim Brotherhood’s growing political influence tensions between members of the Brotherhood and the monarch intensified. Experts and Brotherhood activists said that this tension came to a head following the Muslim Brotherhood’s vocal protests against the monarch’s refusal to recognize the democratically elected Hamas in the Palestinian territories (2006).

According to the activists, the government brought the Brotherhood’s social wing, the Islamic Charity Center Society, under investigation by the Ministry of Social Development on charges of financial impropriety. Accused of fund raising and directing resources to support the Hamas, members of the Islamic Center insisted they’d shared their books with government as required under law, and received permission from Jordanian authorities for all of their financial transactions (JCSO7 2008; JCSO10 2008).

However, similar to the experience of their secular human rights and democratization counterparts, Jordanian authorities raided the Islamic Center’s offices and confiscated their computers and documents. All but one member of the board of directors was suspended and the board was replaced with government officials. In this instance, the results of the Ministry of Social Development’s investigation ignored the original purpose of the investigation (e.g., economic crimes). Brotherhood members said that the report concluded that the Islamic Center had deliberately refused the membership applications of Islamic moderates and women, and therefore, it was guilty of discriminatory practices (JCSO7 2008; JCSO10 2008).

The interviewees insisted that the government had utilized this accusation as a means to infiltrate the association. They noted that without any legal explanation, for over a year after the investigation ended, the authorities continued to stall and refused to close the case against the Center. This, the Brotherhood said, allowed the government to prolong the suspension of the Center’s board of directors, while the temporary board of government agents issued Islamic
Center memberships to hundreds of regime loyalists. The Center’s original members and experts explained that this tactic of co-opting, infiltrating and repressing Jordan’s largest moderate Islamic association had devastating results. They emphasized the deep suspicion and hostility it generated between Brotherhood members and the deadlock it created in organizational decision-making. This they said caused many members to split-off and form or join more radically anti-Hashemite, Islamist associations (JCSO7 2008; JCSO8 2008; JCSO9 2008; JCSO10 2008).

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF THE JORDANIAN ‘MORE OPEN’ MONARCHICAL REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Robustness

On a six-point scale, experts rated the robustness of civil society 3.2. Experts explained that the Jordanian political system and the monarch’s offensive survival strategies served to constrain the development of autonomous voluntary associational participation in Jordan. These institutions worked to insulate the Hashemite monarch, by allowing the government to intervene in the activities of associations that criticized its policies. This reduced the space for independent voluntary associations to operate and minimized their numbers (JEx Consensus 2008).

Heterogeneity

On a six-point scale, experts rated the heterogeneity of civil society 2.6. The regime’s exclusionary policies also determined the variety of civil society organizations to emerge in Jordan. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the monarch’s liberalization process allowed a variety of secular liberal organizations to surface, advocating the deepening of democracy, greater respect for human rights and humane development planning in Jordan. But when these organizations came to represent a viable threat to the regime’s legitimacy they were systematically co-opted or repressed. This strategy was particularly effective with secular liberal organizations since they were relatively new to the country and lacked the institutionalization, as well as the breadth and depth of constituencies compared to their Islamic sectarian counterparts (JEx Consensus 2008).
However, widespread grievances in Jordan’s Islamic and Palestinian communities made this strategy less effective with the associations representing their causes. In fact, the regime’s attempted co-optation and repression them only intensified their broad-based constituencies’ anger toward the Hashemite monarch. This, rather than reducing their numbers, led to the proliferation of anti-regime Islamist oriented associations in Jordan.

**Vibrancy**

Expert consensus held that Jordan’s ‘more open’ political environment allowed for greater voluntary associational participation than many other regimes in the region. But experts also explained that de-liberalization in country mandated that the only civil society organizations allowed to flourish were those loyal to the monarch’s prerogative. While Hashemite-led civil society organizations were made highly visible both domestically and internationally most independent voluntary associations were systematically repressed making the averaged vibrancy score a 2.9 (JEx Consensus 2008).

**Political Orientation of Civil Society**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the liberalism of civil society 3.35. Although much of Jordan’s mainstream, independent secular and Islamic civil society exhibited highly liberal ideological orientations, the monarch’s financing and empowerment of development-oriented, ‘apolitical’ Hashemite-led civil society organizations significantly reduced the influence of the former. In addition, as a point of fact, they were not apolitical. Instead these associations were illiberal and loyal to the monarch, defending the regime’s exclusionary policies as necessary to maintaining stability in Jordan (JCSO1 2008; JCSO2 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

Moreover, regime imposed obstacles made it difficult for the country’s nascent, genuinely pro-reform organizations to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the state. By mandating political apathy by voluntary associations, the monarch precluded their primary role as interlocutors between citizens and the government. Prohibiting liberal secular associations’
access to political processes also prevented them from engaging in and reproducing democratic politics (JEx Consensus 2008).

**Ideological Orientation of Civil Society**

**Secular Associations**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the secularism of civil society 3.05. Most state-led and independent democratization and human rights and development associations in Jordan advocated for secularist policies. In addition, in a context of growing constraints on rights to association in the country, the majority of organizations to remain above ground were those that sided with the regime against the real or perceived threat of Islamic radicalism in Jordan, ultimately rendering a large number of these groups secular and illiberal in nature (JEx Consensus 2008).

**Sectarian Associations**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the fundamentalism of civil society 3.8 and militancy 2.7. As the primary Islamic movement in Jordan, the regime’s relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood deteriorated after 1989. Early on, when the Brothers were more focused on social rather than political issues, the Muslim Brotherhood and the monarch enjoyed an alliance. Even after the organization grew in political strength the Jordanian regime supported the Brothers and used them as a bulwark against liberal nationalists and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Under emergency law, the Muslim Brotherhood was one of the only associations permitted to function, allowing its members to climb to positions of power in the country’s professional syndicates and monopolize the independent social services sector (JCSO7 2008; JCSO8 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

But the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood as a term of United States and Israeli tutelage, the ousting of Hamas from Jordan, and the Jordanian monarch’s refusal to recognize Hamas’s electoral success in the 2006 national elections, combined to create fissures between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian monarch (JCSO7 2008; JCSO8 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).
As the Brotherhood took a harder line on the sides of political Islam and Palestinian nationalism, the regime felt threatened and cracked down, disassembling the Muslim Brotherhood and attempting to co-opt the Islamic Center. This served to heighten the Brotherhood’s belligerence toward the regime, and caused some of its members split off, forming or joining more radical organizations (JCSO7 2008; JCSO8 2008; JCSO9 2008; JCSO10 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

Experts believed that –above all –the monarch’s early, more inclusive policies toward the Muslim Brotherhood had accounted for both the organization’s moderation and its support for the Hashemite regime. In their view, the regime’s new, more exclusive approach toward coping with the organization was deepening fundamentalism and also militancy in Jordan.

**PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In Jordan the perspectives of experts and activists on the relationship between the state and civil society made explicit the variation between the regime’s treatment of Jordanian Hashemite organizations - loyal to the monarch - as compared to the country’s independent secular liberal and Islamic trends. While the former were founded and subsidized by the government, over time the latter were systemically excluded, which served to foster a highly politically and ideologically polarized civil society in Jordan (JCSO Consensus 2008; JEx Consensus 2008).

In addition, the regime’s strategy of attempting to prevent oppositional currents from challenging its legitimacy by co-opting or repressing civil society organizations that criticized its policies served to significantly harden opposition to the monarch. Though the regime’s selectively liberal policies fostered moderation in the trends that were loyal to it, the systematic political exclusion of the country’s secular liberal and Islamic oppositional currents acted to foment anti-regime sentiment. It also undermined the growth and durability of viable independent secular liberal associations, while deepening fundamentalism and Palestinian nationalist zeal in the country. This had the ultimate impact of reproducing the very conditions
the monarch relied on to qualify democratic retrenchment in Jordan, namely the dearth and
disorganization of secular liberal trends, as compared to widespread, Islamic and Palestinian
nationalist currents prone to radicalization.
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN JORDAN

1915

British High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon pledges to turn Arab territories over to the Hashemite dynasty following the World War I, in exchange for Sherif Hussein’s help in defeating the Ottoman Empire.

1916

The Hashemites follow through with their promise to the British, organizing and carrying out the Arab Revolt of June 1916, which proves critical to the Allied Power’s (Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States) decisive victory over the Central Powers (Germany and the Ottomans). But the clandestine Sykes-Picot Agreement, established in May 1916 named after its negotiators, the British Sir Mark Sykes, and French Francois Georges-Picot, supersedes the McMahon–Hussein pact, sidelining Sherif Hussein and dividing the Arab Middle East north of the Arabian Peninsula into French and British spheres of influence.

1919

The Sykes-Picot Agreement culminates in the Paris Peace Conference treaties of 1919, and provides for the former possessions of the defeated Germans and Ottomans to be administered as mandates under the supervision of the League of Nations. In turn, the League allocates the areas corresponding to modern Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq to the British and allocates the zones corresponding roughly to modern Lebanon and Syria to the French.

1923

Seeking hegemony over Transjordan, but unwilling to govern it directly, as a concession to the betrayed Hashemite clan, the British award the region to Sherif Hussein’s son, Emir Abdullah, through whom the empire rules for the next two decades. In return for his loyalty Great Britain allocated generous subsidies to the Transjordanian Emir, providing for most of Abdullah’s fiscal and military necessities.
1946

Transjordan’s independence is declared by the United Nations on May 25th. Emir Abdullah is crowned king by the Jordanian parliament, and the country is renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

1948

The influx of Palestinians in Jordan dramatically alters and complicates the state – society relationship in Jordan. In the wake of the 1948 Arab – Israeli War, 80% of Palestinians fled their native lands. Palestinian refugees flood into Jordan, tripling the size of its population and creating competition between Jordanians and Palestinians over scarce resources.

1950

Having formally annexed the West Bank in April, it is widely believed that King Abdullah incorporated so many Palestinians (2/3 of the Jordanian population) as a justification for laying claim to the rest of Palestine. In July 1950, King Abdullah is assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist.

1957

A number of the monarch’s international and domestic policy decisions produce a rash of anti-Hashemite sentiment. In April, King Hussein cracks down on nationalist, pan-Arab opposition parties and concentrates power in his own hands. All political organizations are banned and the king staffs the government and military with loyal, primarily Transjordanian personnel.

1966

Law #33 is enacted. The law criminalizes any association that is not licensed with the Ministry of Social Development. It explicitly prohibits associations with so-called “political goals” and requires civil society organizations to obtain approval for all domestic and foreign funding.

1970-1971
Armed conflict between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Jordanian security forces ends with the purging of the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Jordan. King Hussein declares emergency law, which remains in place for nearly two decades.

1989

In response to growing demands for reform, King Hussein initiates political liberalization.

1991

A National Charter promising democratic reform is signed, and emergency law, as well as the ban on political parties is lifted. However, after political liberalization brings Islamists into government, Hussein introduces a series of de-liberalization policies, systematically purging the Islamists from power and replacing them with old guard Transjordanian loyalists.

1992

A new law on political parties requires the Muslim Brotherhood to create a political party (the Islamic Action Front), distinct from its social welfare organization (the Islamic Center Charity Society).

2001

The September 11th terror attacks on the U.S. provide justification for crackdowns on people accused of Islamic extremism inside of Jordan.

2003

Jordan’s backing of the U.S.-led war in Iraq generates anti-government sentiment in Jordan.

2004

Law #7 2004 is enacted. The law requires written approval from Jordanian authorities for any type of public gathering.

2006

As a term of U.S. and Israeli tutelage, the Jordanian monarch ousts the Hamas from Jordan and refuses to recognize Hamas’s electoral success in the 2006 Palestinian national elections. This increases Islamist and Palestinian nationalist belligerence toward the monarch.
In Jordan, the Arab Spring protests never reach the scale of those in the praetorian states, nor are they met with similar brutality. This combined with the Jordanian monarch’s broad patronage network also manages to assist the regime in maintaining greater legitimacy than its autocratic praetorian counterparts, allowing the monarch to stave off demands for regime change. However, ongoing activism aimed at achieving democratic reforms in Jordan since the Arab Spring began continues to present challenges to a monarch that is very reluctant to undertake them.
CHAPTER VI. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN LEBANON

“The important difference between Lebanon and other countries in this region is that here we have too little state and too much civil society.”

Lebanese Expert, 2007

PART I. INTRODUCTION

With its blustery history of sectarian strife, regional scholars have often credited the Lebanese ‘confessional’ democratic system for holding Lebanon’s factious polity and civil society together. As William Harris argued, “the ‘confessional democracy’ that flourished through the 1950s and 1960s had virtues. It reflected the reality of sectarian allegiances, but softened their impact” (Harris 2007, 242). Even Oussama Safa wrote “the 1943 pact [National Pact] worked well for a time, helping to make Lebanon the ‘Switzerland of the Middle East’ and a popular tourist spot with a booming (if asymmetrically distributed) service-based economy and one of the most open societies that the region has ever seen” (Safa 2006, 25).

Scholars have long linked the relative peace and prosperity of the first three decades of Lebanon’s independence to the country’s confessional system, blaming the region’s communalist culture for sectarian rivalries and the growth of fundamentalism and militancy in the country. While my field research in Lebanon indeed evidenced that the openness of the polity helped to foster vibrancy and liberalism in Lebanese civil society, I also found that rather than promoting pluralism and tolerance, Lebanese confessionalism combined with low rule of law induced, reproduced and coarsened sectarianism in the country. Since the measure of political inclusion citizens experienced depended on their sectarian communal identity, much of the country’s civil society continued to organize along sectarian lines. This served to elicit fundamentalism and militancy within Lebanon’s embattled confessional groups (LEX Consensus 2007-9).
PART II. THE MAKING OF THE LEBANESE SEMI-DEMOCRACY

Historical Background

The groundwork for the contemporary Lebanese confessional system was set during the Tanzimat era (tanzimat means reordering in Turkish) of Ottoman state building in the 19th century. These reforms that culminated in the 1876 adoption of an Ottoman, republican constitution established an indirectly elected parliamentary regime, wherein Ottoman authorities allocated seats in the governing council of Mount Lebanon in proportion to the territory’s various sects. European powers (especially France) were involved in designing the system, which helped to open the way for the growth of direct French influence in the region (Safa 2006, 25).

However, from its inception under the Ottoman Empire, the Lebanese confessional system was exploited by regional, European and old feudal order political entrepreneurs seeking to deepen sectarian communal divisions as a way of strengthening their access to patronage opportunities that were vital to maintaining a clientistic hold over local populations. Over time, the confluence of these internal and external interests tied to sectarian communal identities calcified the sectarian contours of Lebanon’s socio-political landscape (Kingston 2013, 26).

Thus, underpinned by elite-driven political power associated with newly emerging and factionalized forms of political clientelism, the political dynamics associated with sectarian practices grew in salience over the remainder of Ottoman rule. However, the political dynamics unleashed by the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the imposition of French mandatory policies served to formalize an even less equitable system of political sectarianism in Lebanon and profoundly damaged the relationship between the regions’ various identity groups (Kingston 2013, 28).

The French Mandate

After France was granted Greater Lebanon as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the addition of surrounding territory brought a larger number of Sunni and Shi’a Muslims into the polity. Under the French Mandate, nineteen confessional groups received official recognition,
with Christian Maronites forming the largest of these sects, according to the results of a 1932 census (Lebanon’s latest to date) (Ex Consensus 2007-9).

Faced with overwhelming Muslim opposition to the Mandate, the French undertook a comprehensive strategy of harnessing control that ultimately institutionalized the factious, sectarian politics that remain pervasive today. First, with the country’s alleged Christian Maronite majority and France’s historical commercial and political ties to the Maronites, France re-imposed a confession-based parliamentary system that privileged Christians over Muslims; providing for a six-to-five ratio of legislative seats and cabinet posts (Harris 2007, 239-41).

Second, France cultivated the support of regionally based elite families, especially those in the outlying areas of the country that were initially seen as resistant to French rule. This was accomplished by facilitating the ability of these families to consolidate large land holdings and by designing electoral laws that boosted these families’ political standing: constituencies were made local; multiple seats were distributed on a communal basis; and all Lebanese were required to vote within their village of origin (Harris 2007, 239-41). Therefore, as a direct result of creating, co-opting and promoting powerful Lebanese families (Christian Maronites in particular), and promulgating legislation to ensure their political hegemony, France re-established and institutionalized a resilient hierarchical system based on confessionalism and clientelism in Lebanon that was almost certain to endure post-independence (Kingston 2013, 28-31).

**The National Pact and Consolidation of Confessional Democracy**

Indeed, in the lead-up to Lebanon’s independence on November 22nd 1946, with each of country’s communal groupings fearing marginalization and seeking the opportunity to seize a greater share of power, Lebanese Maronite and Sunni leaders (President Beshera Khouri and Prime Minister Riyad al-Solh, respectively) established an unwritten power-sharing agreement. The agreement, later to be codified into law as a “National Pact,” decreed that the president must always be a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni, and the speaker of parliament a Shi’a, with remaining cabinet and senior administrative posts shared among the various confessional groups.
Ostensibly, the Pact was designed to be consociational, ensuring that no single sect would be able to dominate the Lebanese polity. However, in reality, the National Pact institutionalized a state structure that entrenched particularistic interests and could not adjust as demographic and social realities shifted (Safa 2006, 25-6).

Foundations of Lebanese Civil Society: Communalism and Nationalism

High levels of civic activism in Lebanon trace back to the late 19th century Ottoman period when various types of primarily charity-based associations formed, in lieu of a strong centralized government, but within the parameters of communally concentrated local districts. By the time of the late Mandate era, foremost among the organizations representing this growing communalization of Lebanese civil society were the political movements called the Kataib, the Najjada and the Talai associated with the Maronite, Sunni and Shi’a communities, respectively (Firro 2003, 115; Traboulsi 2007, 102).

As demands for independence from France grew in number and strength - constituting the central grievance of many Lebanese – these almost exclusively communal voluntary associations came to take on a second characteristic: nationalism. Thus, following Lebanon’s independence, the country’s confessional political leaders and civil society activists were faced with the challenging, fundamental questions of how to form a state out of multiple competing nations (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

The Drive toward National Unity

Within the newly born state’s Muslim communities many Najjada and Talai politicians and activists continued to press for the expansion of Lebanon’s borders to include the territories, populations and resources of parts of Greater Syria. However, fearing the political, social and economic implications that this could have for them, much of Lebanon’s Christian population (represented by Kataib) rejected that vision, maintaining a heavy, albeit indirect, reliance on France to retain the status quo. Therefore, when President Beshera Khouri and Prime Minister Riyad al-Solh devised the National Pact, the two sides agreed to try to advance national unity,
with Muslim leaders promising to accept Lebanon’s borders and Christian leaders vowing to relinquish their reliance on external support from the West, especially France (LEX3 2008; LEX112008).

The Failure of National Unity

Yet, with the confessional political system favoring Christians over Sunnis and both Christians and Sunnis over Shi’as (as well as excluding members of all other confessional backgrounds from election to high office), leading secular activists and members of disadvantaged confessional groups grew increasingly dissatisfied with the system. Grievances over the government’s exclusionary policies combined with widespread disapproval of the establishment of Israel and its implications for Palestinians, along with the popular perception that the Christian-led Lebanese government was Western leaning (and in support of Israel) led to Lebanon’s first post-independence wave of uprisings. The demonstrations resulted in President Khouri stepping down, to be temporarily replaced by the Lebanese Armed Forces Commanding General, Fouad Chehab, until a new civilian Maronite, Camille Chamoun was elected president the following year (Kingston 2013 34-5).

Although Lebanon was temporarily stabilized, Lebanese grievances continued to simmer under the surface. Growing pressure to ally with either the East or the West during the Cold War, or identify with Egyptian President Nasser’s pan-Arab nationalism contributed to frustrating the problem. By the late 1950s Lebanese sectarian tensions came to a head after France, Britain and Israel attacked Egypt for nationalizing the Suez Canal (1956) and Syria and Egypt formed the United Arab Republic (1958-61). These events, coupled with President Chamoun’s closeness to the United States and his proclaimed allegiance to the Eisenhower doctrine (which was seen as anti-pan Arab nationalist) deepened the rift between Lebanon’s Western and pan-Arab leaning civic actors (Yoqub 2004, 1-2).

Opposition to Chamoun and grievances on the part of those constituencies that were deprived of fair representation swelled. In 1958, after a vocal secular critic and journalist, Nasib
Matni was assassinated during a demonstration the unrest deteriorated into civil war. This resulted in military intervention by the United States who stayed in Lebanon until the situation was stabilized and General Fouad Chehab was once again brought to power (Harris 2007, 243).

**Chehabism and Lebanese Civil Society**

General Chehab came to the helm of Lebanese politics with a view toward ending sectarian violence, developing and reforming the political, social and economic institutions of the Lebanese state and, in so doing, alleviating Lebanon’s underlying confessional-clientelist rivalries. To that end, the General asserted firm neutrality on foreign policy issues, implemented immediate steps to increase Muslim’s share of political power, and undertook infrastructural development that benefitted the country’s remote and underdeveloped regions, many of which had large Muslim populations (Harris 2007, 243).

In addition, owing to President Chehab’s policies the public sector was expanded from 5,421 employees in 1947 to more than 26,000 in 1966, the state budget increased from approximately 60 million Lebanese pounds in 1947 to 585 million in 1966, and the size of the Lebanese Army grew from 6,000 in 1952 to more than 15,000 by the end of 1964 (Hudson 1968, 309-12). The president attempted to overhaul the Lebanese bureaucracy; recruiting new, young technocrats who shared his reformist vision; creating a Civil Service Council to de-clientize the recruitment process; and sponsoring extensive research on the country’s development problems. Chehab also established Lebanon’s first social security institution and created a development fund for public higher education. Finally, as development voluntary associations in particular were viewed as complimentary to the state’s goals, the president encouraged the growth of communal and trans-sectarian Lebanese civil society organizations (Kingston 2013, 39-40).

However, three primary problems coalesced to undermine the General’s policy goals. In order to bring an end to inter-communal violence and facilitate the expansion and capacity of the state, Chehab worked within rather than around the country’s pre-existing clientelist-confessional networks. This meant that the simultaneous expansion of occupational opportunities in the public
sector disproportionately benefitted Lebanese communities that were already enfranchised, having the unintended consequence of widening the gap between Lebanese ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots.’ Finally, the General utilized heavy handed tactics to preclude and cope with opposition to his policies, regularly unleashing security forces to quash dissidence throughout the country. Thus, rather than enhancing the broader Lebanese public’s access to state resources General Chehab’s policies ultimately fortified the confessional-clientelist system he’d sought to reform and galvanized collective civic action in excluded sectors of Lebanese society (Kingston 2013, 40-42).

**Lebanese Civil Society, the Palestinian Crisis and the Progressive Socialist Party**

The influx of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, after 1948, dramatically altered the country’s delicate confessional balance. The problem was exacerbated following the Jordanian Civil War (1970-1) when the Palestinian Liberation Organization was purged from Jordan and set up its headquarters in Lebanon. As it did in Jordan, the Palestinian Liberation Organization established a near mini-state in Lebanon, stirred sectarian alliances, and used the country as a base for guerrilla attacks on Israel (Harris 2007, 244).

These events coincided with a rising nationalist secular movement in Lebanon that boldly criticized institutionalized inequities stemming from the country’s confessional-clientelist system of government. Having served as economic minister in 1946 and several terms as deputy of the largely Druze district of Mount Lebanon (but ineligible for candidacy to the government’s higher offices owing to his Druze identity), in 1949 Kamal Jumblatt officially founded the Progressive Socialist Party. The centerpieces of the party’s manifesto declared its opposition to the confessional political system and the economic inequities it imparted on Lebanese citizens (el-Khazen 2000, 177).

Over the next two decades the aims of Kamal Jumblatt and the Progressive Socialist Party grew in popularity. In 1958, Jumblatt and his party sided with pan-Arab nationalists who accused President Chamoun of tacitly supporting the French, British and Israeli invasion of
Egypt. Following that time Jumblatt became a staunch ally of the Palestinian nationalist cause. However, Jumblatt sought to steer the Palestinian outlook away from violent, anti-Zionist persuasions toward moderate, secular nationalist goals, and harness Palestinians’ support for his expanding oppositional coalition, the National Movement (Kingston 2013, 43-4).

The Lebanese Civil War

Confessional-clientelist Based Political and Civil Society Become Militarized

In the 1950s and 1960s, political upheaval and the failure on the part of the Lebanese government to prevent deep-reaching external intervention in Lebanon led many of the country’s confessional-clientelist groupings to accept external support in order to arm themselves for protection. By the 1970s, insecurity was growing with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (and affiliated Palestinian militias) launching attacks on Israel from Lebanon’s south. After Israel retaliated by shelling southern Lebanese villages, resulting in southern Lebanese flight into and around Beirut, a greater number of displaced, aggrieved constituents joined the National Movement, in opposition to the government (LEx2 2007; LEx52008; LEx142009; LEx15 2009).

Viewing the coalition as a direct existential threat, the Christian Maronite-led government unleashed its militias (primarily, the Israeli backed military wing of the Christian Kataeb, also known as the Phalange) to wage a terror campaign on the opposition. The primary impetus for the escalation of violence leading to the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) was the killing of at least twenty-five Palestinians by the Kataeb in a Beirut suburb in April 1975. Kataeb’s killing of several hundred civilians in December, known as Black Saturday, ushered in all-out fighting and massacres by both sides, in the following January of 1976. As the violence intensified, Beirut was divided into sectarian enclaves. ‘East Beirut’ became nearly homogenously Christian and ‘West Beirut’ predominantly Muslim (LEx2 2007; LEx52008; LEx142009; LEx15 2009).

In addition, many Lebanese communal groups sought help from their counterparts outside of the country. Lebanese Christian leaders asked Israel for assistance, and Israeli Defense Forces invaded Lebanon in June 1982, temporarily disarming the Palestinians before retreating to
the border to establish a security zone. Much of the Muslim leadership, on the other hand, looked to Syria for help. This led to Syrian forces entering Lebanon and occupying the country until the Cedar Revolution in 2005 (Safa 2006, 27).

**The Syrian Occupation**

The Syrian Ba’ath regime had longstanding influence in Lebanon, but the military intervention of 1976 cemented it. As the fighting militias switched alliances enumerable times throughout the war (highlighting the extent of their political uncertainty), Syria expanded its power over the country. By the late 1980s the Syrian regime was seeking hegemony in Lebanon, taking control over the government, military and intelligence agencies (Harris 2007, 240-1).

In 1988, with no candidate elected to succeed him, outgoing President Amin Gemayel handed interim power to the Maronite Commander-in-Chief of the army, Michel Aoun. In a break with the National Pact, Aoun tried to form a six-member interim military government. However, under pressure from Syria the three Muslims he appointed to the council refused to serve, and Prime Minister Salim al-Hoss refused to step down. This left Lebanon with two governments: one in West Beirut, led by al-Hoss and backed by Syria; and one in East Beirut, led by Aoun (Harris 2007, 240-1).

**The Taif Accord**

Subsequently, Michel Aoun declared a ‘war of resistance’ against Syria’s presence in Lebanon. Simultaneously, once again, the interests of powerful external actors came to play a large role in the future trajectory of Lebanon. This time the United States wanted the support of Syria against Iraq (after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait), and Saudi Arabia was trying to expand its influence in Lebanon, as well as counter that of Iran’s (vis-à-vis the Syrian regime). Therefore, in October 1989, these parties along with select members of Lebanon’s surviving politicians convened the Ta’if Accord, in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia with the aim of reaching a political solution to ending the civil war (Harris 2007, 248).
The outcomes of the Ta’if Accord were numerous (a topic discussed in greater detail in Part VI of this chapter). However, most significantly, while in writing the Accord affirmed Lebanese sovereignty and a consensus by all participating parties on abolishing the confessional political system, neither of those aims were realized in the short-term. The latter remains a topic of controversy, with Lebanon’s entrenched stakeholders opposing reforms. Nevertheless, an ostensible step in the direction of leveling the playing field between Lebanon’s confessional groupings was implemented. Since Ta’if, the electoral rules were re-written to provide a Christians and Muslims a five-to-five ratio of legislative seats and cabinet posts (Karam 2012, 36-7).

An End to the Hostilities

Michel Aoun rejected the Ta’if Agreement on the grounds that it did not establish a clear time-table for Syrian withdrawal, and although Syrian authorities replaced him as Commander-in-Chief with General Emile Lahoud, Auon refused to leave the Presidential palace. Eventually, under Syrian air force attacks, Aoun was forced to take refuge in the French embassy, and he was later exiled to France. Armed hostilities in Lebanon officially ended in October 1990, with an Iranian and Syrian negotiated ceasefire between Lebanon’s two rival Shi’a militias, Amal and Hezbollah (Harris 2007, 248).

The Path to Lebanese Liberation

In 1991, Syrian authorities and Lebanese politicians loyal to the Syrian regime (many of whom were ex-militia leaders during the Civil War) formed what was known as the “Government of National Reconciliation.” Shortly thereafter, the Syrian installed Lebanese government and Syria signed a ‘Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination’ that allowed Syria to maintain political control over the country (Karam 2012, 36-7).

In the fall of that year, the first parliamentary elections since 1972 were held, but many Christians boycotted them in protest of Syrian control of the process. As a result a large majority
of pro-Syrian candidates from all denominations were elected, and the Sunni politician, Rafiq Hariri became Prime Minister (LEX2 2007; LEX52008; LEX142009; LEX15 2009).

However, within ten years’ time a highly important event provoked an uptick in Lebanese calls for sovereignty. In May 2001, under heavy international pressure, Israel pulled out of southern Lebanon ending its twenty-two year occupation of the region. With the Israeli withdrawal, many Lebanese politicians (Rafiq Hariri, in particular) came to view Syria’s protracted occupation of the rest of Lebanon (which was often substantiated as requisite to defending Lebanon against Israel) as unnecessary. Furthermore, in October 2001, Hariri became prime minister for a second time, after his coalition gained a parliamentary majority in legislative elections in May and June. At the prime minister’s urging, in December 2003, the United States Congress passes the “Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act,” calling on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. Moreover, on September 2nd 2004, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1559 calling for free presidential elections and all foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon (Zahar 2012, 55-6).

The following day, under Syrian pressure, the parliament voted to extend the Syrian backed President Lahoud’s term by three years. In response, Hariri and his cabinet resigned, and on February 14th 2005, former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and twenty-two others were killed in a massive car bomb explosion in Beirut. Syria was widely suspected of being behind the assassination (Harris 2007, 250).

**The Cedar Revolution**

Over the following weeks, huge demonstrations both against and in support of Syria were held in Beirut; on March 8th in support of Syria and March 14th in support of Lebanese sovereignty. At the start of the demonstrations, Syria maintained a force of roughly 14,000 soldiers and intelligence agents in Lebanon. Following the demonstrations, the Syrian troops completely withdrew from Lebanon on April 27th 2005, and the pro-Syrian government was disbanded. In addition, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1595 calling for
an investigation into the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the establishment of an independent international commission to do so (Harris 2007, 251).

Although the primary goal of the March 14th movement was realized by the Cedar Revolution (i.e., the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon), after thirty-five years of direct influence in Lebanese politics, the Revolution did not end Syrian involvement in the country. The Syrian regime’s confessional-clientelist connections with many Lebanese politicians (some Shi’a and some Christian) and ties to the Shi’a Hezbollah militia group remained strong, allowing Syria to continue influencing the Lebanese political landscape long after its official withdrawal from Lebanon (Majed 2012, 45).

**Historical Summary**

During the two decades preceding the 1975 Lebanese civil war, many Western scholars referred to Lebanon as the "most stable democracy" in the Arab world (Shils 1966, 1-12). However, as the preceding section has shown, the leading source of instability in the country was its inequitable, confessionally-based semi-democratic system of government. This, combined with general lawlessness, paved the way to the country’s bitter, fifteen-year sectarian civil war. The same circumstances also promoted the involvement of multiple external actors (France, the United States, Israel, Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia) who sought to maximize their influence in Lebanon through their Lebanese confessional-clientelist benefactors (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

In sum, sectarianism in Lebanon persisted because the confessional system was never abolished. Instead, sectarianism was re-enforced as powerful, sectarian stakeholders inside and outside of the country sought to either maintain the status quo or expand their power through their confessional-clientelist allies. As the following sections will show, these conditions had powerful impacts on Lebanese civil society (LEx Consensus 2007-9).
PART III. LEBANESE REGIME TYPE INDICATORS

*Polity IV* indicators characterized Lebanon as governed by an elected executive accountable to the parliament. Political participation was factional / restrictive, but the Lebanese enjoyed many civil liberties (*Polity IV* 2007-2009; Freedom House 2007-2009).

**Lebanese Executive Authority Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized the Lebanese system of executive recruitment as regulated, the competitiveness of the process as election and the openness of the selected executive as open. In the case of Lebanon, the position of the chief executive (de facto head of government) was chosen through competitive elections matching two or more candidates from at least two major parties. The electoral process was transparent and its outcomes were institutionally uncertain (*Polity IV* 2007-2009).

**Lebanese Executive Constraints Characteristics**

Constraints on the Lebanese executive were characterized as executive parity or subordination. This indicates that the president, prime minister and the speaker of the Chamber of Representatives were chosen by the Lebanese the Chamber of Representatives and that they depended on the Chamber’s continued support to remain in office. It also means the Chamber initiated much or most of the legislation (*Polity IV* 2007-2009).

**Lebanese Political Participation Characteristics**

*Polity IV* characterized political participation in Lebanon as factional / restricted. The regulation of participation in the country was sectarian and the competitiveness of participation was described as factional. Fractional / restricted competition was described by *Polity IV* as a polity that oscillates more or less regularly between intense factionalism and faction-based restrictions. That is, when one faction secured power it uses that power to promote its exclusive interests and favor group members while restricting the political access and activities of other, excluded groups, until it was displaced in turn. This coding also indicates that when a group or coalition came to power in Lebanon it used central authority to exclude substantial groups from
access to resources and restricted the identity/interest mobilization of groups that may, potentially, seek greater access (Polity IV 2007-2009).

Lebanese Civil Liberties Characteristics

*Freedom House* rated extensions of civil liberties by the semi-democratic Lebanese system of government with a score of 4, which indicates that the Lebanese regime protected some civil liberties while neglecting others (equity under law, in particular). Although the Lebanese enjoyed relatively moderate to high levels of freedom of belief and expression (12), freedom of association (8), and personal autonomy and individual rights (9), equitable rule of law (5) was very low (*Freedom House*, 2007-2009).

Lebanese Composite Variable Regime Score

*Polity IV* rated the Lebanese ‘semi-democratic regime’ with a polity score of 7 and *Freedom House* rated civil liberties in the Lebanon with a score of 4. This makes Lebanon’s composite variable regime score a 4.

PART IV. MODEL OF THE LEBANESE REGIME’S CHARACTERISTICS, STRATEGIES AND IMPACTS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

6. Model of the Lebanese State-Civil Society Relationship: Obstruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type Characteristic</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Impact on Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulated Open Competitive Elections</td>
<td>Recruitment Among Maronite Christian Candidates to the Executive is Inclusive</td>
<td>Civil Society Can Influence the Recruitment of the Executive Within the Parameters of Candidates’ Confessional Eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constrained Executive</td>
<td>Maronite Christian Executive Relies on the Sustained Support of the Parliament to Remain in Office</td>
<td>Civil Society is Protected from Arbitrary and Despotic Executive Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factional / Restricted Competition</td>
<td>Entrench Clientelist-Confessional Power Structure</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations Have Access To the Political System In Accordance With Their Confessional Identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factional / Restricted Competition / Expansive Civil Liberties and Low Rule of Law</td>
<td>Voluntary Associations are Relatively Free to Conduct Their Activities Unobstructed by Government but</td>
<td>High Levels of Robustness, Heterogeneity and Secular Liberalism Within Included Groups. Moderate to High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lebanese state-civil society model depicted in Table 6 demonstrates that the Lebanese executive and Chamber of Representatives came to power by elections deemed free and fair in accordance with Lebanon’s electoral rules. Institutionalized constraints on the executive meant that the president and prime minister were accountable to the elected Chamber of Representatives and relied on the sustained support of the elected Chamber of Representatives to remain in office, providing Lebanese civil society protection from arbitrary and despotic executive rule. However, the factional / restricted competition of candidates based on their confessional denomination meant that a civil society organization’s access to the political system was heavily contingent on its confessional-clientelist identity. The extension of most civil liberties allowed Lebanese civil society to conduct its activities relatively unencumbered by the government. This served to foster a vibrant (robust and heterogeneous) civil society and to promote secular liberal voluntary participation in Lebanese groups that experienced higher levels of inclusion in the political process. However, the institutionalized exclusion of some identity groups, primarily Sunnis, Shi’a and Druze, combined with very low rule of law (at times even anarchical) also fostered highly illiberal secular, fundamentalist and militant associational trends (Ex Consensus 2007-9).

**PART V. INTERVIEWING PROTOCOL**

This section discusses the interviewing protocol I used in Lebanon. Subsequent sections examine expert and activists’ narratives of the strategies of the Lebanese confessional regime

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30 Political grid lock Nov 23rd Emile Lahoud’s controversial extended term came to an end following Doha May 25th President Michel Suleiman commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces elected by parliament hadn’t had a session, as a result of the ongoing political crisis for a year and a half Saad Hariri elected November 9th 2009 outgoing Fouad Siniora Nabih Berri speaker of the Chamber since October 20th 1992 Amal leader Hussein el-Husseini
toward coping with the agendas of Lebanese civil society organizations, and the narratives and strategies of civil society organizations before proceeding to an assessment of the impacts of the government’s strategies on the vibrancy and substance of Lebanese civil society.

I conducted field research in Beirut, Lebanon, beginning in November 2007 and ending in December 2009. At that time Lebanon was relatively stable and the voluntary associational participation that took place in the country was made up of a three-tiered, highly robust spectrum of civil society associations including sectarian and trans-sectarian associations, as well as national level socio-political coalitions.

The openness of the Lebanese polity and general ease of physical mobility in the country provided for the most hospitable environment to conduct interviewing with experts and members of civil society organizations of any case in this volume. I began my research by interviewing the Chairs of the Political Science Departments at the American University Beirut and Lebanese American University, who subsequently put me in touch with leading academics, journalists and practitioners who specialized in the Lebanese state – civil society relationship.

I interviewed twenty-three experts and members of twenty-five activist associations inside of Lebanon. At the time, the permissiveness of the security environment in Lebanon allowed for open coordination and conduction of interviews with experts and members. I interviewed experts and activists in their offices and in public spaces, depending upon their preferences.

PART VI. REGIME STRATEGIES

Given Polity IV and Freedom House’s characterization of the Lebanese regime as a semi-democracy (i.e. regulated open competition and executive subordination, but factional / restricted participation as with low rule of law), this section of the chapter examines the formal and informal institutions of the regime that were used to obviate the goals of Lebanese civil society organizations. Part VII provides descriptions and narratives of Lebanese civil society
organizations, and Part VIII assesses the impacts of the confessional semi-democracy’s policies on the vibrancy and ideological orientations of civil society in Lebanon.

**Regulated Open Executive Competition, Executive Subordination, Factional-Restricted Participation and Low Rule of Law**

Experts and activists said that in writing the formal institutions of the Lebanese state fully protected citizens’ political rights and civil liberties. However, they explained that in practice the country’s informal institutions, including the persistence of the confessional political system and the resumption of policies and practices that immunized Lebanese confessional-clientelist elites to the rule of law (following the civil war and withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon) served to obstruct Lebanese civil society’s ability to influence the public agenda (LCSO Consensus 2007-9; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Political Institutions**

**The Constitution**

According to the letter of the law, Article 24 of the Lebanese Constitution (1926), as amended by Constitutional Law September 21, 1990 (which was based on provisions of the Ta’if Accord), provided for a democratic, proportionately elected, parliamentary system of government, and Article 7 guaranteed the equality of all Lebanese citizens under law (Lebanese Constitution 1926). Critically, Article 95 mandated that the president, prime minister, speaker of the Chamber of Representatives and members of the Chamber of Representatives, together with leading Lebanese intellectuals were to form a national committee tasked with ensuring the abolition of political confessionalism in Lebanon. Article 95 also stipulated that the practice of appointing or electing public servants (in the judiciary, military and bureaucracy) based on confessional quotas was to be terminated (Lebanese Constitution 1926). Furthermore, a ministerial declaration of March 28th 1991 (based on Parts A and B of Section II of the Ta’if Agreement) stipulated the disbanding, disarming and rehabilitation of all Lebanese and non-
Lebanese militias, as well as the integration of militia members into the Lebanese Armed Forces (Picard 1999, 5).

Finally, Article 13 of the constitution guaranteed freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, within the limits of the law (Lebanese Constitution 1926). The 1909 Law on Associations governed the registration of nongovernmental organizations and political parties. According to the Law, associations wishing to be recognized were merely required to inform the Ministry of Interior of their establishment and make their by-laws available (Zaki 2008, 104).

The Constitution also provided for a comprehensive system of checks and balances. On paper, the system worked as follows:

**President**

According to Article 49 of the Constitution, the president was the head of the state and the supreme commander of the armed forces. He was elected by the citizenry by secret ballot, and confirmed by a two-thirds majority of the parliament. The president's term was six years, and by law he could not be re-elected until six years after the expiration of his last mandate. The president could also head the cabinet’s meetings (although he did not possess voting rights). He served as the Head of the Supreme Defense Council; promulgated laws in accordance with the constitution; referred bills presented to him by the parliament; named the prime minister in consultation with the parliament; issued decrees on agreement with respective political bodies; and handled foreign policy matters (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**Prime Minister**

The prime minister was selected by the Chamber of Representatives in consultation with the president. Article 64 of the Constitution stipulates that as such, he was the head of the government and its representatives. He formed and headed the cabinet, and directed the general policy drafted by the cabinet. He also signed decrees, observed the activities of public
departments and institutions, coordinated between the ministers and served as the Supreme Defense Council’s deputy chairman (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**Chamber of Representatives**

Article 22 of the Constitution stated that members of the Chamber of Representatives were “elected on a national, non-confessional basis” that “all religious communities shall be represented” and that the parliament’s authority “shall be limited to major national issues” (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

Following the ratification of Constitutional Law September 21, 1990, Article 24 directed the Chamber to enact new electoral laws on a non-confessional basis. Until that time, the distribution of the Chamber of Representative’s one hundred twenty-eight seats were to be allocated (a.) equally between Christians and Muslims, (b.) proportionally representative among and within confessional groups, and (c.) proportionally representative among geographic regions (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**The Cabinet**

According to Article 65 of the Constitution, after the prime minister formed a cabinet, its nomination was put to a vote of confidence (within thirty days) in the Chamber of Representatives. The cabinet’s roles and responsibilities were to set the general policy of the Lebanese state in all domains. This included writing draft bills and decrees; supervising the implementation of laws and regulations; and overseeing the activities of the state’s civilian, military and security agencies and institutions. In addition, at the request of the president and under rigidly specified circumstances, the cabinet had the right to dissolve the Chamber of Representatives (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**Judiciary**

The Lebanese judicial system was based in part on French civil code. According to Article 20 of the Constitution, the judicial system was independent, and consisted of regular civilian courts and a military court (which tried cases involving military personnel and security-
related issues). By law, religious courts adjudicated most matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**Supreme Council**

According to Article 80 of the Constitution, the Supreme Council’s function was to provide a check on the president and ministers. It consisted of seven representatives elected by the Chamber of Representatives and eight selected by a council of Lebanese judges. Decisions rendered by the Supreme Council required a majority of ten (Lebanese Constitution 1926).

**Informal Political Institutions**

However, in reality Lebanon remained by-and-large governed by its informal institutions. The country’s informal ‘National Pact,’ which provided for a Maronite Christian president, Sunni prime minister and Shi’a speaker of the Chamber of Representatives remained intact. Although the Ta’if Accord provided for a 50-to-50 ratio of Christians and Muslims in the Chamber of Representatives, because this reform was put into place under Syrian tutelage, the practical result was to expand Muslim representation to include the political wing of Syria’s Lebanese proxy group, the Hezbollah and (Ex Consensus 2007-9).

Moreover, owing to the General Amnesty Law of March 28th 1991, which covered all wartime crimes up to that date, Lebanon’s old and new confessional-clientelist political elites came to power with impunity. Once they secured their posts, they had very little incentive to dismantle the sectarian political system that brought them there. As prescribed by Article 95, a national committee headed by Fouad Boutros was finally formed in late 2005. In May 2006, the committee even presented a draft law proposing a ‘mixed’ first-past-the-post and proportionally representative system, along with clauses providing for reforms in electoral expenditure, media campaigns, managing and monitoring elections, voting age and gender quotas. The draft law could have made significant strides toward transforming confessional proportionality into political proportionality, so that different political movements and alliances could be represented according to their level of popular support (Majed, 2012 44-5).
However, it went nowhere. This was largely because the government suffered from several bouts of paralysis in the years to follow. With the new stipulation of a 50-to-50 ratio of Christians and Muslims in the Chamber, each time the government tried to implement electoral reform or enforce the rule of law, (something that worked against the interests of many parties, but the Hezbollah, in particular) Hezbollah’s representatives would resign and then declare the remaining government ‘unconstitutional’ because their resignation reduced the number of Muslims in the Chamber. This cycle continued throughout the time of field research (LEX 5 2008; LEX6 2008; LEX19 2009; LEX20 2009; LEX21 2009; LCSO13 2009; LCSO14 2009).

PART VII. DESCRIPTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY

Interviews with members of Lebanon’s civil society organizations provide important anecdotal insights to the state-civil society relationship. During the time of my research, the voluntary associational participation that took place in Lebanon was highly robust and dynamic. It comprised a rich spectrum of four main types of voluntary trends. They included Shi’a Islamic sectarian, Sunni Palestinian ethnic, secular, as well as two trans-ethnic & trans-sectarian national level coalitions: the March 8th and March 14th movements (LCSO Consensus 2007-9; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

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31 Examples include many small associations supported by the old and new post-war networks of the Christian Kataib, Sunni Najjada, Shi’a Talai organizations, as well as the large and highly influential Amal and Hezbollah organizations and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party.

32 Examples include the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections, Lebanon Conflict Resolution Network, Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, Support of Lebanese in Detention or in Exile and Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women.

33 Examples include Palestinians and advocates for Palestinians’ rights working within the networks of the Palestine Red Crescent, United Nations Relief and Work Agency – Lebanon, Ajial Center and Issam Fares Institute at the American University of Beirut.

34 The primary participants in March 8th included the Shi’a Hezbollah and Amal organizations, along with small a small following of Christians, Sunnis and Druze.

35 The primary participants in March 14th included an array of secular political parties, movements and individuals of Sunni, Christian, Druze and Shi’a backgrounds. The dominant actors in the March 14th coalition were Saad Hariri, the son of Rafiq Hariri and head of Tayyar Mustaqbal (Future Movement); Walid Jumblatt, the leader of Lebanon’s Druze community and head of the Progressive Socialist Party; and Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces.
Sectarian Trends

Background

Experts and activists emphasized how owing to the civil war, Lebanon’s sectarian groupings became highly geographically concentrated. Therefore, in the war and post-war environments, as grassroots organizations cropped up across the country to provide badly needed essential and social services, these voluntary associations were often inextricably linked to their sectarian affiliations. Over time, most of Lebanese civil society evolved into densely identity-based civil society networks (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

Descriptions

I interviewed members of at least two associations belonging to Lebanon’s main sectarian groupings; Christian, Sunni, Shi’a and Druze. The stated aims of these associations were mutual. They sought to restore, preserve, protect and advance the interests of their sectarian communities. Several associations (especially those belonging to Lebanon’s poorest populations) remained concerned with providing basic provisions, such as food, water, shelter and sanitation to their communities. Others were geared toward education, cultural & religious studies and leisure. In addition, because the Lebanese government left many institutions of social justice and (in some cases) local level security to these communal associations, several of them (the Shi’a Hezbollah and Amal organizations, in particular) provided these services (LCSO3 2007; LCSO4 2007; LCSO5 2007; LCSO6 2007; LCSO7 2007; LCSO14 2008; LCSO16 2008; LCSO17 2009; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

Interactions with the State

When asked how the government either helped to facilitate or harm their aims, most members of sectarian based voluntary associations were highly dismissive of the Lebanese government. In fact, they commonly referred to the government as a ‘façade’ altogether. From this perspective, since its inception, the confessional political system was established and continued to only serve the interests of the country’s confessional elites. Therefore, in lieu of any
meaningful representation in government and public services, members of Lebanese sectarian associations argued that their initiatives were vital to the wellbeing and even survival of their respective communities (LCSO3 2007; LCSO4 2007; LCSO5 2007; LCSO6 2007; LCSO7 2007; LCSO14 2008; LCSO16 2008; LCSO17 2009).

The Special Case of the Hezbollah

It is requisite to briefly discuss the special case of the Hezbollah. With funding from Iran and the help of Syrian patronage during Israel’s occupation of southern Lebanon, the Shi’a-dominated Hezbollah (hizb-allah means “party of god” in Arabic) originated in 1982 as an armed Israeli resistance movement, but it rapidly grew into a semi-autonomous mini-state inside of Lebanon (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

In many ways, the Hezbollah’s capabilities were far superior to those of Lebanon’s government and armed forces. Not only did the Hezbollah possess a powerful Islamic-nationalist ideology that resonated deeply with the country’s systematically disenfranchised Shi’a population (and some broader elements of the Lebanese populace), it had military, political and social wings that were stronger and further reaching than the Lebanese government’s. It also either inherited from Syria or built with Iranian sponsorship the lion’s share of Lebanon’s intelligence agencies and competencies (LEx19 2009; LEx20 2009; LEx21 2009, LCSO13 2009; LCSO14 2009).

In terms of social services, the Hezbollah ran several hospitals and clinics, and healthcare was free to its members. It also established a variety of schools, including primary and secondary schools, as well as occupational training programs. Within the mini-state, employment opportunities were greater and more accessible. Finally, the services that the Hezbollah offered in the way of infrastructure also outmatched Lebanon’s public infrastructural programs; providing their constituents better access to water and electricity (LEx19 2009; LEx20 2009; LEx21 2009, LCSO13 2009; LCSO14 2009).

Therefore, much more than an ordinary sectarian communal organization, or even an armed sectarian communal association, the Hezbollah was a state-within-a state. It was for this...
reason that the Hezbollah wielded a great deal of power over the Lebanese government and that
the government was loath to challenge or enforce the organization’s accountability to the rule of

Ethnic Trends

Background

Experts said that by the end of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon the number of
Palestinian refugees in the country had reached a total of approximately 11% of the overall
population. An estimated 1/3 of Palestinian refugees resided in Lebanon’s 11 refugee camps
while the remaining 2/3 lived in concentrated areas outside of the camps or were internally
displaced throughout the small country (LEX Consensus 2007-9).

Experts said that since 1987 when the Cairo Agreement (1969) was abrogated,
relinquishing Palestinians in Lebanon of their rights and ousting the Palestinian Liberation
Organization from the country, Palestinians had become second-class citizens, most of whom—
by law—only possessed quasi-legal status and did not have the right to become citizens, vote,
organize or work legally. These circumstances also precluded Palestinians from equal access to
basic resources including food, shelter, healthcare and education. Owing to the violence
perpetrated by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and its affiliates prior to 1987 and lack of
rule of law, as well as security inside of the camps, the camps and Palestinians in general became
and remained targets for attacks by Lebanese and Israeli authorities, as well as non-state actors.
These conditions made Lebanon’s Palestinian communities particularly vulnerable and led to the
foundation of many Palestinian advocacy associations inside of Lebanon (LEX Consensus 2007-9).

Descriptions

I interviewed members of two large organizations (one international and the other
Lebanese) that serviced Palestinians living in Lebanon and one Palestinian led voluntary
association. Members of these associations said that their primary aim was to achieve equality
under law for Palestinians in Lebanon, since from their point of view the legal inequities facing Palestinians were at the crux of an ever-worsening socio-political and humanitarian problem in the country.

Second to this aim, members of Palestinian advocacy associations noted their tireless efforts to bring safer more sanitary conditions to the camps, as well as to provide improved access to food, shelter, medicine and education to Palestinians living inside and outside of the camps. These activists helped to make the Palestinian cause in Lebanon a highly visible and widely discussed topic among the nation’s liberal intellectuals and academics. Activists and lobbyists frequently petitioned government and demonstrated to try to press lawmakers to seriously address the issue of Lebanon’s systematic disenfranchisement of Palestinians. Conferences, seminars and working groups designed to critically examine and constructively discuss potential solutions to the problem were commonly held on Lebanon’s university campuses and at public cultural events.

**Interactions with the State**

However, experts and activists explained that due to either implicit or explicit (they weren’t sure) agreements between the Lebanese and Israeli governments, Lebanese authorities were unbending in their refusal to reconsider the status quo. When large numbers of Palestinians themselves took part in self-advocacy, whether on their own or as a part of the larger Lebanese pro-Palestinian rights movement, the authorities typically reacted utilizing coercion and claiming that they were inciting unrest in the country. By the time of my field research in Lebanon the number of challenges confronting Palestinians had completely demoralized and demobilized them, a large portion of the Lebanese population dismissed the Palestinian plight as the source of a major socio-political and humanitarian problem in the country rather than an outcome of them and several experts and activists likened the Palestinian situation in Lebanon to that of native Americans in the United States.
Secular Trends

The war and post-war environments, as well as prospects for reforming the confessional political system, as promised by the Ta’if agreement, also generated a large number of secular human rights and democratization associations in Lebanon. When asked what their top priorities were, members of secular human rights and democratization organizations said that they sought to build trust and solidarity between Lebanon’s sectarian communities, as well as their affiliated voluntary associations in order to help advance fair and equal treatment of all Lebanese under law. To this end, Lebanese secular human rights and democratization associations advanced post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation, rights-based advocacy, inter-religious education, and attempted to strengthen Lebanese civil society in order to facilitate the goals of civil society organizations vis-à-vis the state (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO9 2008; LCSO10 2008; LCSO11 2008; LCSO12 2008; LCSO15 2008; LCSO18 2009; LCSO19 2009; LCSO20 2009).36

Post-war Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Associations

Background

Members of post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation associations said that as the state presence during the civil war declined, civil society was called upon to provide humanitarian relief for displaced people, the wounded and the marginalized. They noted that an estimated nineteen humanitarian associations were established to deal with the consequences of the war (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO8 2007).

Descriptions

I interviewed members of three post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation associations. Interviewees explained that during the 1980s some organizations emerged in response to the

36 Please note that the Secular Trends subsection of Part VII. is designed slightly differently from other subsections of Part VII. and its counterparts in the four other case studies in this volume. Here each type of secular association that is discussed includes a “background” and “interactions with the state” section. This is because owing to differences in Lebanon’s past and its more open political structure there was more variation in the circumstances that brought these organizations into being and their interactions with the state.
growth of politically motivated kidnappings and disappearances of people. The activities of these associations primarily included documenting and reporting disappearances and the circumstances surrounding them, and petitioning the government to investigate and prosecute those responsible. However, the activists explained that these efforts were largely ignored because so many politicians were themselves militia leaders, who were directly involved in the disappearances (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO8 2007).

During the 1990s they said that more voluntary associations were formed with the aim of rehabilitating former militia-men and advocating for state-led national rehabilitation and reconciliation programs that could bring Lebanon’s war criminals to justice, and help to facilitate a common, fact-based understanding of the war for all Lebanese (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO8 2007).

Of their own volition, these civil society activists created organizations by which Lebanon’s disparate communities could obtain conflict resolution skills. They conducted training initiatives to familiarize participants with the basic concepts of conflict resolution and sought to provide participants with the tools necessary for implementation conflict resolution. They set up peace building through dialogue and training courses in Lebanese schools, and organized roundtables and debates on the topic (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO8 2007).

**Interactions with the State**

Although the activists insisted that all of these initiatives helped to result in a strong anti-ethno-sectarianism movement in Lebanon and a highly influential secularist discourse in the country, they emphasized that their efforts were only partially successful. Indeed, in 2009, these civil society organizations were still pressing for state-led post-war rehabilitation and reconciliation programs to no avail. They believed this to be true for the following reason. The activists said that the General Amnesty Law of 1991 resulted in the immunization of political elites, who from their point of view were war criminals, from the rule of law. Thus, after securing their power in the post-war environment, rather than helping to facilitate rehabilitation
and reconciliation, Lebanon’s politicians sought to undermine initiatives that could implicate them (LCSO1 2007; LCSO2 2007; LCSO8 2007).

**Human Rights Associations**

**Background**

Members of Lebanon’s human rights associations said that the Lebanese civil war and the aftermath of the Syrian occupation gave rise to dozens of international, domestic, small and large-scale human rights organizations in Lebanon. These associations were geared toward the abolition of the Lebanese confessional system; equality between men and women; and the rights of people with disabilities (especially those injured during the war), labor, minorities (Palestinians in particular) and Lebanese youth (LCSO9 2008; LCSO11 2008; LCSO152008; LCSO20 2009).

**Descriptions**

I interviewed members of five rights-based associations in Lebanon. Human rights activists explained that their main goal was to obtain equality under law for all people living in Lebanon. The primary narrative among these activists was that because the reforms mandated by Constitutional Law September 21, 1990 were never implemented, the Lebanese population remained a victim of the country’s confessional-clientelist elites who prioritized their own political survival over extending and protecting the rights of the people (LCSO9 2008; LCSO11 2008; LCSO152008; LCSO20 2009).

In response to these circumstances, human rights civil society organizations were highly active in researching, documenting and reporting on human rights abuses in Lebanon. They published and circulated their findings, held public forums, conferences and demonstrations, and regularly petitioned the government for reform. Youth activism was particularly visible, with the country’s university campuses holding weekly talks on human rights issues, bearing banners advocating for human rights, and hosting many human rights centered youth organizations (LCSO9 2008; LCSO11 2008; LCSO152008; LCSO20 2009).
Interactions with the State

Yet, human rights activists explained that although they had the freedom to conduct their activities relatively unencumbered by Lebanese authorities, owing to the confessional-clientelist system, and low rule of law, they weren’t able to influence the public agenda. In other words, while their activism was tolerated, even succeeding in persuading some political elites to pay lip service to their causes, the system lacked the necessary mechanisms of accountability to ensure policy reforms (LCSO9 2008; LCSO11 2008; LCSO152008; LCSO20 2009).

Inter-religious Educational Associations

Background

There were several inter-religious educational associations in Lebanon. Members of these associations said that their primary goal was to bridge sectarian divides in Lebanon by pressing for increased interfaith educational reform. The activists pointed to a host of problems with the Lebanese educational system that they believed deepened Lebanon’s confessional-clientelist cleavages by contributing to the reproduction of the conditions that caused these cleavages in the first place (LCSO10 2008; LCSO12 2008).

The activists noted that while the right to free public education was enshrined in the Lebanese constitution, in reality the Lebanese government failed to provide quality education at the primary and secondary levels. Therefore, they explained that two types of non-governmental institutions surfaced to fill the country’s public education vacuum: sectarian communal associations and private schools. The activists argued that the trouble with these circumstances was that they rendered Lebanon’s economically disenfranchised populations few options but to rely on their affiliated sectarian communal associations for education, while the country’s economically enfranchised communities could obtain their educations in secular (often world-class) private schools (LCSO10 2008; LCSO12 2008).

The activists also highlighted the fact that since Lebanese civilians had been forcibly displaced based on their religious backgrounds during the civil war, new generations of Lebanese
attended segregated schools, and grew up mistrusting each other; sometimes viewing each other as enemies. They said that even when children attended integrated schools, educational establishments provided children with religious education that was specific to the religion that they belonged to. As a result, the students grew up lacking an understanding one another’s faiths (LCSO10 2008; LCSO12 2008).

Finally, inter-faith education activists argued that because Lebanon’s confessional-clientelist elites preferred status quo politics to nation-building and meaningful reconciliation they resisted calls for a collective understanding of Lebanese history, and as a by-product, refused to facilitate the establishment of a national curriculum. Therefore, they said that Lebanese students were taught Lebanon’s history through the lens of the sectarian biases of their educators, rather than an empirically based account of Lebanon’s past (LCSO10 2008; LCSO12 2008).

Descriptions

Thus, the activities of inter-faith education associations included organizing and coordinating an enhanced dialogue between Lebanese educators of all backgrounds; holding conferences on the topic of education in Lebanon; sponsoring inter-faith youth programs; trying to empirically piece together and create an archived account of Lebanese history; and lobbying, as well as consulting government officials on rectifying the problems that they saw with education in Lebanon.

Interactions with the State

However, the activists said that for the most part, their initiatives failed to resonate with most representatives in government. They believed that Lebanese officials viewed interfaith educational programs as threatening to their own sectarian narratives or worldview and as a political liability capable of stirring inter-faith rivalries. The exception, they noted, was when sectarian tensions in the country escalated. The activists said that under these circumstances, Lebanon’s secular leaning politicians tended to show an interest in enhanced interfaith education; even calling on the activists for consultation and adding aspects of the activists’ goals to their policy
platforms. But the activists said that as soon as sectarian tensions died down, their causes were once again deprioritized or ignored (LCSO10 2008; LCSO12 2008).

Civil Society Advocacy Associations

Background

This chapter is prefaced with one expert’s quote, signifying the belief that Lebanon was the only Arab Middle Eastern country where there was too little state and too much civil society. This somewhat loaded perspective was widespread in Lebanon. To unpack its meaning, experts and activists in civil society advocacy associations explained that on an account of the dysfunction of Lebanese political institutions, the country was practically governed by civil society associations rather than the state (LCSO18 2009; LCSO19 2009).

Members of civil society advocacy associations viewed this as highly problematic for advancing the goals of the country’s voluntary associations. As one member of an organization that aimed to strengthen Lebanese civil society and empower its position vis-à-vis the state put it:

Early voluntary initiatives during the era of post-war reconstruction were a positive step for Lebanon. Local communities rose up to take care of their own people. But the unintended consequences of these developments continue to divide Lebanon to this day. Since many communally-based associations relied on their sectarian elite counterparts in government or abroad for support, inter-communal rivalries were re-enforced, horizontal relationships between communally-concentrated civil society organizations were prevented from forming and vertical status-quo sectarian politics in Lebanon became more fixed (LCSO18 2009).

Descriptions

These sentiments reflect the most pervasive theme of concern among Lebanese secular civil society activists during the sampling period of this research. In fact, awareness of this problem was so pervasive that the two most prominent universities in Beirut (the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University) had academic departments specifically dedicated to civil society research and advocacy. Seminars and conferences were
regularly held on the topic, and the country’s cultural events (art, music, poetry etc.) were often the hubs of secular civil society advocacy.

**Interactions with the State**

Activists in civil society advocacy associations said that they often consulted government and provided inputs to proposed and even ratified legislation. However, they emphasized that because representatives in the Lebanese government refused to take serious steps toward strengthening and enforcing the rule of law, their initiatives remained unrealized (LCSO18 2009; LCSO19 2009).

Activists in these associations noted a second major obstacle to their efforts. They explained that since much of the country had become bitterly polarized from above into adherents of either the March 8th (communal leaning) or March 14th (trans-sectarian leaning), by virtue of secular civil society advocacy associations’ inclusive agendas, they came to be viewed by March 8th activists as political opponents. The activists said that this phenomenon had a very damaging influence on their ability to help enhance Lebanese civil society’s horizontal linkages (LCSO18 2009; LCSO19 2009).

**Lebanon’s National-Level Socio-Political Coalitions**

**Background**

As discussed in the historical background section of this chapter, intense external intervention, the Lebanese civil war and Syrian occupation had comprehensive and lasting impacts on Lebanon’s socio-political landscape. Even after the Syrian regime’s withdrawal from the country, Syria and Iran on one side, and the West along with Saudi Arabia on the other side, maintained deep-reaching patron-client relationships inside of Lebanon. This resulted in the emergence of two national-level, rival socio-political coalitions that reflected the competing perspectives and interests of their external political patrons and internal political clients (LCSO13 2008; LCSO21 2009; LCSO22 2009; LCSO23 2009; LEx Consensus 2007-9).
**Descriptions and Interactions with the State**

**March 8th Coalition**

The March 8th coalition was a nationalist pro-Syrian, Eastern leaning grouping named after the pro-Syrian rally held on that date in 2005. The rally was initially organized by the Syrian-Iranian proxy organization, the Hezbollah, and presided over by Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s secretary-general. The March 8th rally was the first street rally by pro-Syrian Lebanese following the series of anti-Syrian demonstrations, which were sparked by the assassination of Rafiq Hariri (LCSO13 2008; LCSO21 2009; LCSO22 2009; LCSO23 2009; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

The formation of the March 8th movement was dominated by the militant-fundamentalist Shi’ite Hezbollah and Amal organizations. It was headed by the Amal leader and Chamber of Representatives speaker, Nabih Berri. Long-time rivals over Lebanon’s Shi’a community, Hezbollah and Amal formed a strategic alliance prior to the May-June 2005 parliamentary elections in order to diffuse calls for the dismantling of the former’s military wing. Although the Shi’a of Hezbollah and Amal comprised the majority in the March 8th coalition, it received a small following of Christians, Sunnis and Druze. The main Christian component of March 8th was the Free Patriotic Movement led by General Michel Aoun, who returned to Lebanon in April 2005 from self-imposed exile in France where he had spent the previous fourteen years (LCSO13 2008; LCSO21 2009; LCSO22 2009; LCSO23 2009; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

The leading aims of this coalition (comprised primarily of organizations and individuals who were empowered by Syria during the occupation) were to procure their positions of power following Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon by maintaining Lebanon’s confessional political system. In addition, they viewed themselves as Arab nationalists who were protecting their Arab or Muslim identities against what they saw as the nefarious interests of the West and its allies (primarily, Israel and Saudi Arabia) and their secular, pro-reform counterparts, the March 14th

March 14th Coalition

The March 14th coalition was a nationalist, anti-Syrian, Western leaning grouping named after the massive anti-Syrian rally on that date in 2005, where the beginnings of the Cedar Revolution took place. It embodied an array of political parties, movements and individuals, mainly secular Sunni, Christian and Druze, with a small number of Shi’a. The dominant actors during the formation of the March 14th coalition were Saad Hariri, the son of Rafiq Hariri and head of Tayyar Mustaqbal (Future Movement); Walid Jumblatt, the leader of Lebanon’s Druze community and head of the Progressive Socialist Party; and Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

The leading aim of this coalition was to dislodge Syrian and Iranian influence, as well as their militant-fundamentalist proxies from Lebanon all together. Members of the March 14th movement sought the abolition of the Lebanese confessional system in every branch of government, as well as the implementation and enforcement of civil law in the judiciary, specifically. In addition, members of the March 14th movement viewed themselves as Lebanese nationalists who sought to safeguard the country from external penetration, unify the Lebanese people, and advance equality under law for all Lebanese (LCSO13 2008; LCSO21 2009; LCSO22 2009; LCSO23 2009; LEx Consensus 2007-9).

PART VIII. IMPACTS OF LEBANON'S SEMI-DEMOCRATIC REGIME ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Robustness

On a six-point scale, experts rated the robustness of civil society at 5. Unlike the four other cases in this volume, the Lebanese government was not known for habitually and deliberately obstructing the work of voluntary associations, as a matter of standard policy. In fact, the government’s relatively laissez faire disposition toward Lebanese civil society allowed

212
for highly robust civic participation. Furthermore, with the dysfunction (and often complete lack of reciprocity) of Lebanon’s political institutions Lebanese civil society grew to provide the public services that the government did not (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Heterogeneity**

On a six-point scale experts rated heterogeneity of civil society at 4.5. Political openness, the government’s respect for most civil liberties and low rule of law were also instrumental in producing Lebanon’s diverse, three-tiered spectrum of voluntary associations. These conditions allowed for sectarian communal associations and trans-sectarian associations, as well as large-scale national coalitions to form (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

However, as experts and activists noted, an emerging obstacle to the heterogeneity of Lebanese civil society was the growing tendency for the specific civic aims of voluntary associations to become usurped by the real or perceived affiliation of the association to one of the country’s two polarized national socio-political coalitions. With the positions of the March 8th and March 14th movements hardening, March 8th came to be viewed and identified more strongly with sectarian communalism, while March 14th came to be viewed and identified more strongly with secularism, and civil versus communal justice. This served to reduce the heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Vibrancy**

The withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon represented an unprecedented opportunity for a historic transformation in the relationship between Lebanese civil society and the Lebanese semi-democratic regime. With the Cedar Revolution and return to Lebanese sovereignty, sectarian, ethnic and secular civil society organizations were liberated from Syrian despotism. However, the transition of power from Syrian authority directly into the hands of Lebanon’s post-war confessional-clientelist elites, prior to the full implementation of the Ta’if Accord had the important consequences for the robustness and heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation in the country, effectively dividing civil society into two competing camps. The
Combination of these factors rendered Lebanese civil society with an averaged vibrancy score of 4.75 (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Political Orientation of Civil Society**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the liberalism of civil society at 5.2. As the only Arab country in the region to rank democratic, the openness of the Lebanese polity helped to foster high levels of liberal voluntary associational participation. However, the Lebanese confessional-clientelist system combined with low rule of law served to reduce pluralism and tolerance in Lebanon by continuously reproducing and coarsening sectarianism in the country (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

**Ideological Orientation of Civil Society**

**Secular and Trans-sectarian & Trans-ethnic Associations**

On a six-point scale, experts rated the secularism of civil society at 4.45. Having emerged from one of the bloodiest sectarian civil wars in history, followed by a protracted occupation, in the wake of the Cedar Revolution hundreds of trans-sectarian associations emerged with the goals of rehabilitation and reconciliation, human rights, inter-faith education and civil society advocacy. As fleshed out in the body of this chapter, secular liberal associations dominated much of Beirut’s academic and urban cultural life. They held forums, workshops, conferences and demonstrations. They also lobbied and consulted government officials in pursuit of their goals.

Furthermore, most of these groups viewed Lebanon’s confessional-clientelist system as the primary impetus to the war, and the main impediment to achieving their aims. That plus the threatening agendas of Lebanon’s remaining sectarian fundamentalist and militant groups caused the country’s staunchly and vociferously secular liberal associations to mobilize into the highly influential March 14th national level coalition (LEx Consensus, 2007-9).
Sectarian Associations

On a six-point scale, experts rated the fundamentalism of civil society at 3.3 and militancy 2.9 at Lebanon’s long history of sectarian strife was caused by a combination of the confessional political system’s disproportionate privileging of some sectarian groupings over others, and low rule of law, which allowed for heavy external intervention, and resulted in enduring sectarian patron-client relationships (from the outside in, and from the top of the Lebanese polity down). In the 1950s and 1960s the perceived existential threat that these conditions produced triggered Lebanon’s disparate identity groups to organize and arm themselves along sectarian and clientelist lines (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

With the unraveling of the security environment, forced segregation of Lebanon’s religious groups, and the traumas inflicted by atrocities committed on all sides during the civil war, fundamentalism and militancy within Lebanese sectarian communities intensified. Although the 1989 Ta’if Accord brought an end to the civil war, and promised the dismantling of the confessional political system, the disarmament of militias, and a national commitment to rehabilitation and reconciliation, several factors served to preclude these promises from coming to fruition (LEx Consensus 2007-9).

First, the General Amnesty Law of 1990 allowed all of Lebanon’s pre-war confessional-clientelist elites to return to power, with the important addition of Syria and Iran’s newest proxy party, the Hezbollah. Second, while most of Lebanon’s sectarian groupings were required to disarm, the Hezbollah and some Palestinian militias were not. This was owing to Syria’s insistence that these militias were Israeli resistance groups, who were necessary for protecting Lebanon against Israeli aggression. Third, following the Cedar Revolution, under intense international and domestic pressure, Syrian President Bashar Assad agreed to relinquish direct control over Lebanon. However, according to experts, Syria and Iran vis-à-vis the Syrian regime had no intention of letting go of their indirect influence in the country. They continued to do so
primarily through the Hezbollah, who actively blocked any reform efforts that could harm either
the patrons’ (Syria and Iran) or the client’s (the Hezbollah) interests (LEX Consensus 2007-9).

These circumstances blended to reproduce and re-enforce the country’s sectarian
tensions, once again deepening fundamentalism in Lebanon’s Christian, Sunni, Shi’a and Druze
communities. Low rule of law allowed the Shi’a fundamentalist-militant Hezbollah with its
political, military and social wings to exercise extraordinary influence. The extensive social and
infrastructural services that the Hezbollah provided (in lieu of public services offered by the
Lebanese government) combined with its nationalist, anti-Western anti-Zionist ideology helped
the organization to draw in constituencies even beyond Lebanon’s Shi’a communities (LEX
Consensus 2007-9).

PART IX. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Lebanon, activists and experts on the relationship between the state and civil society
shared the view that the Lebanese government was by-and-large tolerant of voluntary
associational participation. In fact, as they illustrated, civil society often played a larger role in
governing than the government. With Lebanon representing the most open country in this
volume (and the entire Arab Middle East) voluntary associations were able to emerge, organize,
operate (regardless of an association’s political or ideological orientation), and even pressure
representatives in government for their desired policy reforms. This allowed for a highly robust
and heterogeneous civil society.

However, experts and trans-sectarian activists concurred that since independence,
Lebanon’s exclusionary confessional-clientelist political system and low rule of law produced
and reproduced the confessional-clientelist composition of Lebanese civil society. They
illustrated how political enfranchisement based on religious identity, in an environment of near
lawlessness generated voluntary associations that were inextricably linked to their religious
communities. This combined with the fact that the confessional political system was adjusted
(over time) by the interests of internal clients and external patrons, rather than the interests of the
populace as a whole exacerbated the anxieties of Lebanese communal associations, causing them to turn inward religiously and to arm themselves for protection.

The identity groups most affected by this top down phenomenon were of the politically disenfranchised Druze, Palestinian and Shi’a communities. After the civil war hundreds of trans-sectarian associations formed with aim of dismantling the confessional political system and bringing rule of law to Lebanon, which they believed would bridge divides between Lebanon’s sectarian communal associations. However, Syrian stewardship of post-Ta’if Lebanon prevented Lebanese ethno-sectarian associations from realizing their aims.

By the time Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in 2005, the confessional-clientelist political system had been re-institutionalized and even fortified. Although the Cedar Revolution re-energized Lebanon’s trans-sectarian associations, the March 8th and March 14th coalitions that formed in the wake of Lebanon’s liberation once again divided the country into pro-sectarian communal and trans-sectarian camps at the national level. Experts and activists said that this served to return the character of Lebanon’s civil society to something very similar to its pre-civil war composition. Since access to political representation and equity under law remained tied to one’s sectarian identity, so too did civil societies’ political and ideological orientations. This rendered Lebanon with a very vibrant civil society made up of voluntary associations ranging from highly secular liberal, to illiberal, deeply fundamentalist and militant.
PART X. CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: STATE – CIVIL SOCIETY IN LEBANON

1876

Under the Ottoman Republican Constitution, Ottoman authorities allocate seats in the governing council of Mount Lebanon in proportion to the territory’s various sects.

1920–1946

Modern day Lebanon is administered by French authorities under the French Mandate. After France is granted Greater Lebanon as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the addition of surrounding territory brings a larger number of Sunni and Shi’a Muslims into the polity. Under the French Mandate, nineteen confessional groups receive official recognition, with Christian Maronites forming the largest of these sects, according to the results of a 1932 census. France re-imposes a confession-based parliamentary system that privileges Christians over Muslims; providing for a six-to-five ratio of legislative seats and cabinet posts.

1946

In the lead-up to Lebanon’s independence on November 22nd with each of country’s communal groupings fearing marginalization and seeking the opportunity to seize a greater share of power, Lebanese Maronite and Sunni leaders (President Beshera Khouri and Prime Minister Riyad al-Solh, respectively) establish an unwritten power-sharing agreement. The agreement, later to be codified into law as a “National Pact,” decrees that the president must always be a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni, and the speaker of parliament a Shi’a, with remaining cabinet and senior administrative posts shared among the various confessional groups.

1948

The influx of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, after 1948, dramatically altered the country’s delicate confessional balance.

1958
Kamal Jumblatt and the Progressive Socialist Party side with pan-Arab nationalists who accuse President Chamoun of tacitly supporting the French, British and Israeli invasion of Egypt. Opposition to President Chamoun and grievances on the part of those constituencies that were deprived of fair representation swells. After a vocal secular critic and journalist, Nasib Matni is assassinated during a demonstration the unrest deteriorates into civil war. This results in military intervention by the United States. U.S. forces remain in Lebanon until the situation is stabilized, and Chehab is once again brought to power.

1970-1971

Following the Jordanian Civil War (1970-1), the Palestinian Liberation Organization sets up its headquarters in Lebanon. As it did in Jordan, the Palestinian Liberation Organization establishes a near mini-state in Lebanon, stirring sectarian alliances, and using the country as a base for guerrilla attacks on Israel.

1975-1990

Viewing the oppositional National Movement as a direct existential threat, the Christian Maronite-led government unleashes its militias (primarily, the Israeli backed military wing of the Christain Kataeb, also known as the Phalange) to wage a terror campaign on the opposition. At least twenty-five Palestinians are killed by the Kataeb in a Beirut suburb in April 1975. The Lebanese Civil War begins in December after the Kataeb kills several hundred civilians, ushering in all-out fighting and massacres by both sides in the following January of 1976. As the violence intensified, Beirut was divided into sectarian enclaves. ‘East Beirut’ became nearly homogenously Christian and ‘West Beirut’ predominantly Muslim.

1976

Syrian forces enter the conflict. As the fighting militias switched alliances enumerable times throughout the war, Syria expands its power over the country.
1982
The Shi’a-dominated Hezbollah originates as an armed Israeli resistance movement, but it rapidly transforms into a semi-autonomous mini-state inside of Lebanon.

1989
The United States, Saudi Arabia and Syria, along with select members of Lebanon’s surviving politicians convene the Ta’if Accord, in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia with the aim of reaching a political solution to ending the civil war. While in writing the Accord affirms Lebanese sovereignty and a consensus by all participating parties on abolishing the confessional political system, neither of these aims are realized. However, the electoral rules are re-written to provide a Christians and Muslims a five-to-five ratio of legislative seats and cabinet posts.

1990
In October, armed hostilities in Lebanon officially brought to an end. However, the General Amnesty Law allows all of Lebanon’s pre-war elites to return to power, with the important addition of Syria and Iran’s newest proxy party, the Hezbollah.

1991
Syrian authorities and Lebanese politicians loyal to the Syrian regime (many of whom were ex-militia leaders during the Civil War) form what was known as the “Government of National Reconciliation.” Shortly thereafter, the Syrian installed Lebanese government and Syria sign a “Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination” that allows Syria to maintain political control over the country.

2001
Under heavy international pressure, Israel pulls out of southern Lebanon ending its twenty-two year occupation of the region. With the Israeli withdrawal, many Lebanese politicians (Rafiq Hariri, in particular) come to view Syria’s protracted occupation of the rest of Lebanon (which was often substantiated as requisite to defending Lebanon against Israel) as unnecessary. In October, Hariri becomes prime minister for a second time.
2003

In December, at Hariri’s urging the United States Congress passes the “Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act,” calling for Lebanese sovereignty.

2004

On September 2nd the United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 1559, calling for free presidential elections and all foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon. The following day, under Syrian pressure the parliament votes to extend the Syrian backed President Lahoud’s term by three years. In response, Hariri and his cabinet resign.

2005

On February 14th, former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and twenty-two others are killed in a massive car bomb explosion in Beirut. Syria is widely suspected of being behind the assassination. Huge demonstrations both against and in support of Syria are held in Beirut, on March 8th in support of Syria, and March 14th in support of Lebanese sovereignty. Following the demonstrations, Syrian troops completely withdraw from Lebanon, and the pro-Syrian government is disbanded.

2011

At first, the spirit of the Arab Spring inspires many Lebanese activists to support the Arab uprisings, and try to deepen democracy in their own country. However, the ensuing conflict in Syria quickly instills deep fears of a comparable outcome in Lebanon.
CHAPTER VII. THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation aims to make two primary contributions to the comparative politics literature on democratization. The first is to evidence that structural theorists offer more persuasive explanations for laggard democratization in the Arab Middle East than do cultural theorists. A further goal of the project is to provide empirical support to a growing body of scholarship that challenges the prevailing article of faith among many democratization theorists and policy makers of the role of civil society in promoting democratization in the Arab Middle East.

To that end, based on the work of Armory (2004), Bellin (1994), Berman (1997) and Encarnacion (2006), this project argues that owing to the repressive nature of Arab Middle Eastern regimes, civil society is more often a key dependent rather than independent variable. Therefore, in line with the latter proposition, the study utilized Henry and Springborg’s regime typology, Polity IV and Freedom House indicators, as well as interviews with experts and activists in civil society organizations to empirically examine the influence of the formal institutions of the state on civil society in each of the region’s five regime types.

This final chapter first assesses and compares the research findings from each case study against the hypotheses proposed in Chapter I. Next, it draws into focus the 2011 Arab uprisings, analyzing how the dynamics between the state and civil society in the region influenced the trajectory and outcomes of the Arab Spring in each of the region’s regime types. The last section of the chapter endeavors to bring this project’s findings and analyses full-circle to suggest grounded hypotheses for future research on the relationship between the state and civil society in the Arab Middle East.
Hypotheses and Comparative Research Findings

The overarching proposition examined in this study is that the principal reason most theoreticians have had difficulty providing convincing explanations for the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa is because their perspectives reflect an inverted understanding of the state - civil society relationship in the region. As the qualitative analyses fleshed out in the previous five chapters show, across the board interviews with experts and activists in civil society organizations in Syria, Egypt, the U.A.E., Jordan and Lebanon confirmed the validity of this proposition. That is, without exception expert and activist consensus held that the formal institutions of these states had a far stronger influence on their civil societies than vice versa.

However, referencing Table 7 there was not a single case where all four hypotheses proposed in Chapter I were substantiated without nuance or deviation.

7. Comparative Vibrancy and Political & Ideological Orientation Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>U.A.E</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>-12</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robustness</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrancy</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militancy</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis One (H1) stated that I expected to find increased measures of democracy had a strong, positive impact on the robustness of voluntary associational participation in each country. Indeed, with the U.A.E. and Syria scoring highest on the autocracy scale at -12, they had the least robust civil societies, rated at 1.75 (U.A.E.) and 2.2 (Syria), while Lebanon with a

37 A regime score of 10 corresponds to the greatest level of democracy and a score of -16 corresponds to the greatest level of autocracy. All other dependent variables were measured on a six-point scale with a score of 1 corresponding to the lowest level of each.
score of 4 on the democratic scale had the most robust civil society rated at 5. However, contrary to my expectation, with Egypt scoring 1 point higher on the autocracy scale at -7 than Jordan at -6, Egyptian civil society was rated slightly more robust at 3.7 than Jordanian civil society at 3.2.

Hypothesis Two (H2) stated that I expected to find increased measures of democracy had a strong, positive impact on the heterogeneity of voluntary associational participation in each country. Here again, Emirati and Syrian civil society were rated predictably low in heterogeneity at 1.9 (U.A.E.) and 2 (Syria), while Lebanese civil society was rated the most heterogeneous at 4.5. But, contrary to my hypothesis, Egyptian civil society was rated slightly more heterogeneous at 3.2 than Jordanian civil society.

Hypothesis Three (H3) stated that I expected to find increased measures of democracy had a strong, positive impact on increased levels of liberalism and secularism in voluntary associational participation in each country. Here, as expected, Syrian and Emirati civil society were rated lowest in liberalism at 1.4 (U.A.E.) and 1.65 (Syria) with Lebanese civil society rated highest in liberalism at 5.2. However, the liberalism of Jordanian civil society was rated marginally lower at 3.35 than Egyptian civil society at 3.4. On the other hand, in terms of secularism, my expectations were met. Syrian and Emirati civil society were rated lowest in secularism at 1.65 (U.A.E.) and 2.1 (Syria), followed by Egypt at 2.6, Jordan at 3.05 and Lebanon at 4.45.

Hypothesis Four (H4) stated that I expected to find increased measures of democracy had a strong, negative impact on increased levels of fundamentalism and militancy in voluntary associational participation in each country. The research findings showed that this hypothesis yielded the least predictive value. Although the U.A.E.’s civil society was rated the most fundamentalist at 5.5, followed by Egypt at 4.3, Jordan at 3.8 and Lebanon at 3.3, Syrian civil society was rated the lowest in fundamentalism of all five case studies at 2.6. In addition, whereas Syrian civil society was rated predictably high in militancy at 5.05, in drastic contrast to my hypothesis, Lebanese civil society was rated the second highest at 2.9, followed by Jordanian
civil society at 2.7 and Emirati civil society, which was rated the lowest in militancy of all five cases at 1.5.

**Explaining Nuances and Deviations**

With Lebanon representing the only state in this study to rank democratic, scoring a 4 on the scale of democratic governance, its civil society was by far the most vibrant (4.75), politically liberal (5.2) and ideologically secular (4.45) of all five cases. Yet, it scored higher in fundamentalism (3.3) than Syria’s civil society and higher in militancy (2.9) than the civil societies of all of Lebanon’s authoritarian counterparts except for Syria.

As the Lebanon case study analysis illustrated, this was true because the political structures Lebanon inherited following its independence from France set the stage for the entrenchment of an inequitable sectarian political system and very low rule of law. Early on, these factors blended to elicit fundamentalism and militancy within Lebanon’s embattled groups. Militancy unraveled into prolonged civil warfare (1975-1990) and the Syrian occupation of Lebanon (1990-2005). Owing to the fact that Lebanon’s institutional inequities and weaknesses were never mitigated, the country’s political system continued to reproduce and re-enforce only slightly varying dynamics between the state and civil society since the advent of Lebanese statehood.

Nuances and deviations from this project’s four hypotheses were most prevalent in my findings from the Jordanian case study. With Jordan scoring a -6 on the scale of autocratic governance, it was the second most democratic polity represented in this research project. Although in terms of its political orientation, Jordanian civil society was markedly more secular leaning (3.05) than its more authoritarian counterparts, it was less vibrant (2.9), marginally less liberal (3.35) and slightly more militant (2.7) than Egyptian civil society at the time. Jordanian civil society was also rated considerably higher in fundamentalism (3.8) than Syrian civil society.

As the Jordanian case study analysis showed, this was true because over the previous decade the Jordanian government had been undertaking a campaign to co-opt (through patronage)
and repress (by coercion) many of the civil society organizations that it perceived as threatening to the hegemony of the monarch. Thus, these tactics had served to stymie the robustness, heterogeneity and liberalism of voluntary associational participation.

The regime’s post-September 11, 2001 cooperation with the United States, Western and Gulf Cooperation Council states’ anti-terrorism policies, its ouster of the Palestinian Hamas after the latter was elected to government in the Palestinian Territories (2006), and its repression of liberal and Islamic (the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular) associations had important and highly divisive consequences for the political and ideological orientations of Jordanian civil society. Most of the organizations to remain above ground were those that sided with the regime against the real or perceived threat of Islamic radicalism, and practiced loyalty to the monarch as the country’s legitimate hegemonic ruler, ultimately rendering these groups secular and illiberal in nature.

Conversely, the monarch’s abandonment of its cooperative relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and ongoing crackdowns on the Brotherhood and the Hamas, two organizations that were historically distinct from one another in their demographic makeup, missions and priorities, had brought the groups’ adherents closer together and generated higher levels of fundamentalism and militancy than would be expected in Jordanian civil society given its more open regime type.

On the other hand, with Egypt scoring a -7 on the scale of autocratic governance, it was the third most institutionally authoritarian country examined in this project. However, Egypt’s civil society was the second most vibrant (3.45) and liberal (3.4). Although secularism was predictably low (2.7) and fundamentalism expectedly high (4.3), the militancy of Egyptian civil society was relatively minimal at the time (2.3), second only to Emirati civil society.

As the Egyptian case study analysis elucidated, these outcomes were the product of a complex set of interrelated factors. Although since the beginning of bully praetorian rule in the country in 1952, the government institutionalized fiercely authoritarian policies, in terms of capacity, the state was very weak. Therefore, for decades the regime relied on a strategic blend of
tolerating and repressing Egyptian civil society, engaging in a virtual merry-go-round of allowing civil society organizations to perform many of the roles of government that the regime either could not or would not fulfill and then cracking down on these organizations when they grew in strength vis-à-vis the regime.

This fostered a more vibrant civil society than was expected in such a robustly authoritarian country. Fluctuation in the regime’s tactics and the government’s neglect of the social sphere (provided for by the military regime’s presumed belief that all social resistance movements could be eradicated by coercion when they developed) also allowed for a surprisingly high level of liberalism in Egyptian civil society. While the state’s failed nationalist-secularist project and over a half century of government authorities’ brutal repression of Islamic grassroots associations (the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular) produced a predictably high level of Islamic fundamentalism in the country, at the time of my research, militancy against the regime was relatively low. This was because the visible desperation and signs of the weakening of the Mubarak administration had led much of Egyptian civil society to believe that the regime was already on its way out. During that period, secular and mainstream Islamic associations were attempting to coordinate in order to pressure for democratic reforms and provide viable alternatives to Egypt’s National Democratic Party rule.

Finally, with the U.A.E. and Syria scoring a -12 on the scale of autocratic governance, the two countries’ civil societies exhibited predictably low levels of vibrancy (1.85 in the U.A.E. and 2.1 in Syria), liberalism (1.4 in the U.A.E. and 2.2 in Syria) and secularism (1.65 in the U.A.E. and 2.1 in Syria). However, their fundamentalism (5.5 in the U.A.E. and 2.6 in Syria) and militancy (1.5 in the U.A.E. and 5.05 in Syria) scores were polarized. While Emirati civil society scored highest in fundamentalism and lowest in militancy of all case studies, the opposite was true of Syrian civil society.

As the Emirati and Syrian case study analyses explained, these states were so tightly authoritarian that the populations of the U.A.E. and Syria possessed no political rights and very
few civil liberties. Civil society in both countries was explicitly criminalized and the government’s grip on the voluntary associations that were able to survive was extremely oppressive. Therefore, voluntary associational participation in both countries was minimal.

However, owing to radical differences in these regimes’ relationships with the societies they governed, the influence of the formal institutions of the Emirati and Syrian states on the political and ideological orientations of their civil societies was widely divergent. As a young, petroleum rich, rapidly developing country with a very small indigenous Emirati population, the U.A.E.’s ruling families undertook highly effective regime survival strategies. Having faced very little resistance in coming to power in the first place, the Emirati monarch utilized a lavish patronage system along with a unifying identity politics formula (combining modernity with Bedouin-Islamic credentials) that managed to bolster the regime’s legitimacy in the eyes of much of the population.

Although the state’s co-optation of Islamic institutions, crackdowns on independent liberal and Islamic associations since the 1990s, and the growing perception that the ruling families hypocritically touted an Islamic veneer while enriching themselves and entrenching their power by cooperating with Western interests were serving to deepen fundamentalism in the already very pious country, opposition to the regime was still very low. As discussed in Chapter IV, this was largely because the rewards for cooperating with the regime were so great and the punishments for resistance were so devastating.

In Syria, on the other hand, the greatly despised Alawi-dominated Assad regime came to power by way of a series of military coups. From the beginning, the Syrian bunker praetorian regime could only remain in power by using persistent, heavy-fisted coercion and therefore, it was in a perpetual state of war with the populations it governed. Although fierce repression sharpened the desire for freedom among some Syrians generating slightly higher levels of illegal voluntary associational participation than in the U.A.E., because of its excessively repressive tactics, the regime came to be seen as the single greatest problem facing Syrians. Thus, civil
society took on a highly defensive posture and its substance became a product of the mechanisms used to cope with the regime’s strategies, rendering it the most militant of all case studies.

The Arab Spring and Its Outcomes

The above analysis describes the dynamics between the state and civil society leading up to the Arab Spring. As exemplified by the case studies represented in this volume, contrary to conventional wisdom, the Arab uprisings were not merely a spontaneous outpouring of disparate grievances throughout the region that was sparked after a Tunisian fruit vendor lit himself on fire in protest of Tunisia’s socio-economic inequalities. Instead, they were an outgrowth of a culmination of decades of attempted resistance to the myriad of political institutions that obstructed the ability of these societies from exercising basic political rights and civil liberties.

The mobilization and demands of Arab Spring activists directly contradict culturalist theorists’ claims about the region. At the same time, the events of the Arab Spring provide strong evidence to substantiate Eva Bellin’s theory that the principle reason authoritarianism was able to endure in the Arab World for so long was because of the robustness of the coercive apparatuses of these states. After all, large-scale resistance movements were only able to form once the region’s civil society activists found ways to coordinate with one another outside of the purview of their governments through access to cell phones and social media.

In addition, Henry and Springborg’s regime typology helps us to understand why although all of the protests began with peaceful calls for democratic reforms the Arab Spring took an array of different trajectories. In the region’s praetorian states, where the regimes lacked legitimacy and therefore, relied upon pervasive coercion to stay in power, the demonstrators (led by civil society activists) were immediately met with the brute force of the coercive apparatus. Thus, justifiably believing that their governments would never cooperatively undertake these reforms, the protestors’ calls rapidly evolved into demands for regime change.

Eventually, in the bully praetorian states of Egypt and Tunisia the military regimes agreed to relinquish formal political power in favor of preserving their authority over the military.
However, given the fact that the leadership of the two bunker-praetorian states (Libya and Syria) perceived the consequences of defeat to be existential, they refused to concede the fight. The civil war that continues to rage in Syria has now unfolded into the worst humanitarian crisis of the Arab Spring, and its spill-over effects have had a number of devastating consequences for the entire region.

Although, at first the spirit of the Arab Spring inspired Lebanese and Jordanian activists to try to deepen democracy in their own countries, the unraveling of the security environments in Syria and Egypt (owing to both state policies and the unleashing of the social forces that had been shaped by those policies for decades) ended up instilling deep fears of comparable outcomes in their own contexts. In Jordan, the Arab Spring protests never reached the scale of those in the praetorian states, nor were they met with similar brutality. This combined with the Jordanian monarch’s broad patronage network (facilitated chiefly through external rents) also managed to assist the regime in maintaining greater legitimacy than its autocratic praetorian counterparts, allowing the monarch to stave off demands for regime change. However, ongoing activism aimed at achieving democratic reforms in Jordan since the Arab Spring began continues to present challenges to a monarch that is very reluctant to undertake them. Finally, while opposition to the U.A.E.’s repressive policies is growing, in most oil-rich Gulf countries where lavish state-society patronage systems have helped to insulate the legitimacy of these regimes and reduce voluntary associational participation, an Arab Spring has yet to occur.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

Middle East and North Africa researchers often insinuate, if not outright say that the Arab Spring and its outcomes were not (and perhaps, could not have been) predicted. It is my hope that the research contained in this volume helps to cast doubt upon that argument, and shine a light on the theoretical and empirical blind spots that precluded scholars and practitioners from anticipating these events.
An integral facet of comparative politics is asking “the big questions of the day.” Ironically today, the burning question while I was designing this dissertation research was: What accounts for Arab Middle Eastern exceptionalism? In other words, why was the Arab Middle East the only region in world to remain nearly, singularly authoritarian, and why didn’t the region’s populations rebel? As discussed in Chapter I, the most commonly accepted answer was offered by cultural theorists who ultimately argued that for a variety of reasons Arab Middle Easterners were dissimilar to the rest of the populations of the world in that they did not possess the same desire for political rights and civil liberties.

Now that the Arab Spring has exposed the folly of culturalists’ assumptions, the new big question of the day is: Why weren’t the Arab Spring and many of its outcomes predicted? The research and analyses brought by this dissertation strongly suggest that the answer is: Because there were too many researchers who adhered to cultural theorists’ false assumptions. However, a greater contribution of this project is the empirical evidence it provides to substantiate the strengthening body of scholarship which argues that in contexts of robust authoritarianism, civil societies most often act as multipliers of the state’s strategies and tactics rather than representing emancipated social forces capable of pushing forward successful democratization programs from below.

For example, even in the case of Egypt where the military regime ceded control to civilian authorities, the chaotic political opening up that the country experienced resulted in the unleashing of civic activists who became rapidly, bitterly polarized and were unpracticed in democracy, in a context devoid of the moderating constraints of democratic institutions. Within only two years this unrest galvanized enough broad-based illiberal-secular support for the military to justify a counter-revolution, and since then the bully-praetorian regime has once again pursued a strategy of eradicating all oppositional forces.

Therefore, it is evident that any analysis of the civil societies of the Arab Middle East is incomplete without an examination of the role of the state and not the other way around. For civil
society to have analytical value—and I believe this project shows that it does—future research should strive to develop a better scientific understanding of the specific political contexts in which civil society is likely to represent a dependent, intermediate or independent variable, and as vitally, the implications of these relationships, as opposed to presupposing civil society’s causal influence and orientation. Only then can theoreticians develop hypotheses capable of empirically testing civil society’s analytical utility with greater precision than presented here. Secondly, as for assessing prospects for democratization in the Arab Middle East, this dissertation provides substantial evidence to suggest that democratization theorists’ research could yield greater explanatory and predictive power by incorporating the formal institutions of these states into their analyses.

After all, only three years after the Arab uprisings began two bully-praetorian regimes have already taken markedly different paths. As discussed above, Egypt has slid back into authoritarianism while Tunisia continues on a path (albeit rocky) toward democracy. Although it is still early and plenty of schools of thought are weighing-in on why this may be the case, leading democratic institutionalists argue that what were once seen as relatively discrete differences in the roles that the two countries’ militaries played have turned out to be critical in assessing prospects for post-revolutionary outcomes (Henry and Springborg 2011). Thus, drawing hypotheses from the democratization and regimes literature may bring comparative politics scholarship closer to understanding the most analytically powerful variables in determining the politics of the Arab Middle East.
APPENDIX

Questions for Members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Group Narrative Questions

1. Why did you join this organization?

2. How many members does the organization have?

3. How would you describe your organization’s mission?

4. How long has the organization been active?

5. From your perspective, how does the way that your organization operates differ from that of the other voluntary associations?

Project Specific Questions

6. Which social or political forces do you perceive to contribute to advancing the aims of your organization?

7. In which ways do you think that this (or these) force(s) assist in your initiatives?

8. Which social or political forces do you perceive to be obstacles to the aims of your organization?

9. In which ways do you think that this (or these) force(s) undermine your initiatives?

10. What is the role of government in your organization?

11. In your opinion, what should be the appropriate attitude of government towards your group? (i.e., indifference, promotion, moderate control, full control) Why?

12. If you believe that the government controls your organization, what might be the possible reasons for the state to control it?

13. What specific state regulations affect your organization?

14. Which ones help advance your organization’s mission?

15. Which ones hurt?

16. How often do you interact with members of the government?
Could you describe some of these interactions?

If you believe that the government controls the way that your organization operates, can you describe the difficulties/obstacles such control creates regarding the way that your organization operates?

If there are such difficulties, what kind of activities do you undertake to overcome such obstacles?

What specifically does your group do to promote and protect itself?

Hypothetical Questions

In a perfect world what do you think your organization could accomplish?

Since unfortunately, this is not a perfect world what would your group seek to change if it could, in order to advance its aims?

For which reasons?

Take for example, your group sought to advance a popular, new initiative, who would it turn to for support?

Under such circumstances,

Who would your group invest the most trust in?

Who would your group be most distrustful of?

Would your organization most likely take action?

How optimistic would your organization be about exacting change?

If you think that your organization would be optimistic, for which reasons?

If you think that your organization would be pessimistic, for which reasons?

Take for example, your group sought to resist the government in any way (i.e. it sought to challenge or change the law). How optimistic or pessimistic do you think your group would be that its initiatives would succeed?

If your group’s members would be optimistic,

What do you think would be the source of that optimism?
Why do you think that this would be the case?

If your group’s members would be pessimistic,

What do you think would be the source of that pessimism?

Why do you think that this would be the case?
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