

Conference Report

**The Arab Uprisings:
Accomplishments, Failures and Prospects**

Friday, November 15, 2013

Convened at the Castle at Boston University
Boston, MA 02215

Presented by:

Boston University Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies & Civilizations
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Conference Report Editor: Louise Klann

Associate Editor: Martha Lagace

Rapporteurs: Louise Klann, Martha Lagace,
Shree Chudasama, Claire Councilman, Shanti Kapoor, Alexandra Neenan, Sarah Manely

Conference Objectives

Sober assessments of reality have replaced the initial exuberance greeting the Arab transformations that began in early 2011, said co-chair Augustus R. Norton in his opening remarks. This conference was designed to gather scholars from across the world in order to identify impediments to change as well as points of progress in the Middle East.

As fellow co-chair Hani Faris observed, scholars failed to predict the coming of the Arab Uprisings and have not fared any better in explaining their causes, dynamics, accomplishments and prospects since their outbreak. Indeed, the sweeping events are still not easy to define. Did demonstrations and subsequent developments constitute a Spring, a revolution, an “epidemic,” or an “awakening”? Two features remain clear, said Faris. First was the participation of large segments of the population: the mass-based nature of a phenomenon touching all Arab countries without exception. It was the largest demonstration of political protest in human history— affecting countries as diverse as Djibouti, Mauritania, Iraq, and Egypt.

Second was the Arab world events’ clear rejection of existing modes of governance. The demonstrators rejected authoritarian rule. As scholars we need to respond seriously and thoughtfully to the human clamor for freedom and justice, Faris continued. We must acknowledge the sheer courage of the demonstrators whose actions put an end to an intellectually bankrupt thesis called “Arab Exceptionalism”. “These were authentic and popular movements. They were spontaneous national eruptions, although they have not remained solely national nor solely Arab as was the case with Libya, and Syria today. But not only that. We also see an interdependence and connectedness between them. Foreign interventions in the Arab uprisings have had primarily negative consequences and helped radicalize conflicts. They distorted the initial impulse for reform. Moreover, international actors continue to pursue the same destructive policies. Both co-chairs expressed the hope that the conference will inform future insights into otherwise hard-to-decipher internal and external dimensions of the uprisings. All transformations take time, added Faris: Despite worrisome trends, in the long run the uprisings may lead to more democratic conditions for people in the Middle East and Arab countries.

Area experts with considerable time “on the ground” participated in panels and informal discussions in order to offer a realistic perspective on this socio-political evolution. Participants took a clear-eyed view of the uprisings’ achievements as well as political entrenchment and backsliding. While the experience of each country is inevitably different, the conference traced commonalities in the struggle to recapture political order, address economic distress, and redefine national identities in the midst of continuing political and societal strife. Specific attention was devoted to the role of youth, women, external actors, and the old guard in the post-revolutionary context.

While panelists agreed that the Arab uprisings have significantly changed the socio-political landscape in the Middle East, there was also consensus that the revolution is not close to being over and that many dynamics remain troubling: the resiliency of the patrimonial “deep state,” blurred boundaries between internal and international conflict, and halting progress toward freedom and dignity.

Focusing on these issues, “The Arab Uprisings: Accomplishments, Failures and Prospects,” was held at the Castle at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts on Friday, November 15, 2013.

Participants

Ali Abdullatif Ahmida

Professor, Department of Political Science, University of New England

Gilbert Achcar

Professor of Development Studies and International Relations, University of London;
Chair, Centre for Palestine Studies, University of London

Ghanim Al-Najjar

Professor, Department of Political Science, Kuwait University

Betty S. Anderson

Associate Professor, Department of History, Boston University

Sadek Jalal al-‘Azm

Professor Emeritus, Modern European Philosophy, University of Damascus

Melani Cammett

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Brown University

Seif Da’Na

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Farouk El-Baz

Director, Center for Remote Sensing, Boston University

Tamirace Fakhoury

Assistant Professor, Political Sciences and International Affairs, Lebanese American University

Leila Farsakh

Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Hani Faris

President, Board of Directors; Trans-Arab Research Institute (TARI); Adjunct Professor,
Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia

Amr Hamzawy

Founder, Freedom Egypt Party; Former Member, Egyptian People’s Assembly; Professor,
Department of Public Policy and Administration, American University in Cairo, and Department
of Political Science, Cairo University

Mujid S. Kazimi

Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Mechanical Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Director, Kuwait MIT Center for Natural Resources and the Environment

Dr. Haytham Manna

Human rights activist and Deputy Chairman of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change & the Chairman of its network in the Diaspora.

M. Chloe Mulderig

PhD candidate, Department of Anthropology, Boston University

Caryle Murphy

Pulitzer Prize-winner for international reporting for the *Washington Post*; independent journalist and book author

Augustus Richard Norton

Professor, Department of International Relations and Anthropology, Boston University

E. Roger Owen

A.J. Meyer Professor of Middle East History, Department of History, Harvard University
Faculty, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University

Ambassador Robert H. Pelletreau

Former U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, Tunisia and Bahrain; former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs

Hugh Roberts

Edward Keller Professor of North African and Middle Eastern History, Tufts University

Denis Sullivan

Professor, Political Science, International Affairs, and Middle East Studies, Northeastern University

Summary of Conference Proceedings

Session I: In Quest of Freedom & Dignity

The first session of the day defined freedom and dignity in broad terms. Panelists Haytham Manna, Amr Hamzawy, and Melani Cammett warned of excessive militarization in Syria and Egypt. The scholars identified patrimonialism and over-centralized governance as major challenges to achieving political and economic freedom. The decline of the middle class, cuts in public services, corrupt elections, and the lack of institutional development all warrant concern about the viability of democratic change. Overall, panelists challenged the audience to confront worrisome realities as well as trends in public mood in North Africa and the Middle East about the difficulties of achieving freedom and dignity politically, socially, and economically.

The first speaker, Haytham Manna, began by discussing his vision for a “Road Map for a Political Solution in Syria.” Given the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in Syria, in which more than 100,000 people have been killed and nine million displaced since March 2011, Manna outlined steps taken toward a potential political settlement and an end to the crisis. First was the Geneva Communiqué issued in Switzerland on June 30, 2012 by the United Nations-supported Action Group for Syria. The Communiqué contained “the best possible text regarding the Syrian conflict,” he said, adding however that “already the Syrian question was being internationalized.” He said a subsequent attempt to organize a conference on civil states was halted by foreign affairs ministers, whom he did not identify. Manna would like to see broad emphasis on human rights and building “institutional democracy” that would include parliamentary elections.

Manna’s chief concerns were instituting a program of arms control and facilitating the departure of Syrian president Bashar al-Asad through democratic change. Referring several times to “the real majority” of Syrian society, Manna said that a United Nations resolution should prohibit non-Syrian fighters within the country. “We must stop the augmentation of violence,” he said. Asked by one conference participant whether the UN Security Council would call on armed foreigners to leave Syria, Manna replied that Russia and China have only agreed to the proposal while the United States and United Kingdom have agreed to this idea in principle only.

Egyptian political scientist Amr Hamzawy spoke on “Democracy in Egypt: Can We Still Hope?” Focusing on five specific problems, Hamzawy expressed grave concern that Egypt is “backsliding” on a democratic transition that began in 2011. The first problem: Egypt contends with an entrenched military-security apparatus that has penetrated state and administrative bodies, a situation that has changed little since the 1950s, he said. With no effective civilian oversight, the army enjoys veto rights, the government accepts the military-security budget as one figure, and military tribunals predominate. “We see a fascist current in the making—not a desire for democracy” even among political liberals, he warned.

Second, Egypt’s nascent middle class is weakening. Hamzawy sees an increase in nationalist symbolism such as the “hero in uniform” as one symptom of this decline. The hero ideal, he

suggested, reassures Egypt's middle class who cling to 1950's romanticism instead of aspiring to the hard work of citizenship.

Third, Egypt is backsliding because elites at all levels, including in the media, which propagates the "hero in uniform" ideal, embrace a patrimonial system of power.

Fourth, Egypt's centralized state has long dominated the distribution of resources, and this is difficult to change. He would like counterbalance through an independent judiciary and a powerful legislative branch of government. Fifth, even though Egyptians powerfully claimed public space in early 2011, elites since then "have been conspiring to evacuate Egyptians from public space." In addition, Egyptians are coping with profound disappointments, he said: They expected democracy to provide personal prosperity and an improved future, yet the promise of democracy thus far remains unfulfilled.

Melani Cammett then discussed "A Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings." Beyond public perceptions and individual agency, she said, a variety of political, economic, and other structural factors motivated the uprisings. The eroding Arab middle class and welfare system formed an "important backdrop" to the uprisings. Those countries that won independence during the 1950s and 1960s established programs of public provisioning such as jobs, schooling, and health care; infant mortality decreased and educational literacy increased. Citizens' expectations began rising because personal social mobility seemed possible. Yet neoliberal reforms in recent decades have resulted in a painful, even "disastrous," rollback, Cammett observed. The rollbacks entail "a narrowing of authoritarian coalitions."

Cammett cited several polls showing that citizens are deeply worried about inequality and corruption. There is an increasing concentration of business elites around market-oriented reforms that disadvantage the poor and middle class. Such reforms have led to hiring freezes and wage cuts in vital public employment along with attendant declines in educational and health quality. In Egypt, for example, citizens are theoretically entitled to medical care but oftentimes clinic hours are erratic and doctors do not come to work. It is thus crucial to consider how public perceptions and public mood affect politics. The bottom line: If policy makers want to quell the revolution, they must take more seriously welfare regime reform. "We need to focus on material things that affect people's lives," Cammett concluded. "It boils down to politics and achieving political consensus."

Session II: Youth & Women & the Arab Uprisings

Boston University's Farouk El-Baz began the session by addressing "The Revolt of Egypt's Youth." As former Science Advisor to the late Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt from 1970 to 1981, El-Baz compared his experience as a young revolutionary during the Pan Arab movement to today's youth movement in Egypt. Referring to his cohort as a "generation of failure," El-Baz said today's youth will be more successful because they reject the status quo and they do not trust established institutions. While the Pan Arab movement had pushed for four changes—Arab unity, eradication of illiteracy, the liberation of Palestine, and the creation of social justice—the movement's overreliance on established institutions meant that its goals were co-opted. For

example, rather than ending illiteracy the Ministry of Education provided Egypt with many untrained teachers whose primary interest was monetary gain. Corruption further stymied social justice and the redistribution of wealth. According to El-Baz, the major challenge of the current youth generation will be counteracting Egypt's "gerontocratic" political structure and a political culture that rewards stasis and continuity rather than innovation. Nonetheless, he reminded participants that democracy needs time to establish and youth should be supported because they have the potential to change Egypt for the better.

Caryle Murphy then discussed "What do Saudi Twentysomethings Want?" Basing her assessment on several years' worth of interviews in Saudi Arabia, Murphy said that Saudi Arabia's response to the Arab uprisings continues to be muted because Saudi youth differ fundamentally from Arab revolutionary youth. Murphy reminded the audience that Saudi Arabia uses its wealth to effectively buy the consent of a largely complacent population, and the government is increasingly intolerant of dissent. Unlike other Arab youth, young Saudis value safety and security over revolutionary change. They greatly admire the House of Saud and King Abdullah, and feel ambivalent about elections because elections could lead to strife. Murphy argued that there is no critical mass of youth to threaten the Saudi government. However, the situation could change in the coming years. She sees a more polarized Saudi society emerging in the future, one side progressive, the other inward-looking and conservative.

While no significant pressures for reform are imminent, widening opportunities for international education and for self-expression on the Internet show promise for opening Saudi Arabian society, Murphy continued. In addition, she said, Saudi Arabia is experiencing its largest ever youth bulge with children and young people comprising about 60 percent of the population. To employ them the government needs to create 6 million jobs by 2030. She also noted that the Saudi regime is concerned about the potential radicalization of its youth. In response to a question about whether the Saudi government thinks about the possible impact of study-abroad programs, Murphy said the societal impact is less concerning than radicalization and thus the country will soon need more job-training programs because its oil reserves are decreasing.

Saudi Arabia is no longer as isolated as it used to be. Young people with cell phones are constantly connected to one another even at home with their families. As Saudi citizens they are more likely to raise questions about the world. They also say the Internet has given them a new level of freedom of speech. They feel quite invested in social media, even creating satirical videos about the Saudi government. In addition, Murphy found in her interviews that young Saudis are religious: While they want Saudi Arabia to remain committed to Islam, they prefer less state-enforced religion and show more respect for religious differences. This change may eventually pose a threat to the clerical establishment.

Chloe Mulderig then discussed "Adulthood Denied: Implications of Youth Dissatisfaction on Revolutionary Outcomes in the Arab World." Young people are not treated as social adults in Arab societies until and unless they are married, she said. Absent the achievement of marriage, young Arabs turn to demonstrations to express frustrations brought on in part by their inability to prove themselves as adults, she argued. Several factors conspire to delay marriage opportunities: increasing bride prices, the desire of young people to marry for love, and a lack of job opportunities and affordable housing. This delay in marriage and thus in social adulthood is

particularly difficult in conservative cultures where premarital sex is prohibited and adult children tend to live in cramped quarters with their parents. At the same time, however, family structures have also been undergoing major change with more citizens living alone or in nuclear families.

Mulderig emphasized that lack of opportunity and financial security further impedes adulthood. Half of the Arab youth population does not engage the job market since many youth cannot access education. This in turn lowers their marriage prospects. The Arab world needs to produce almost 50 million new jobs to meet the needs of its youth workforce; however, governments have not followed through on promises for job creation. Officially, 26 percent of youth in the Middle East are unemployed, although Mulderig believes that the actual figure is higher. She also found that there is a 70 percent unemployment rate among young people with secondary education, suggesting that schooling does not necessarily lead to job opportunities. In other words, youth employment is inversely related to education.

Ghanim Al-Najjar added to the discussion with “Successes and Failures of Youth and Women Movements in the Gulf.” Al-Najjar reminded the audience that the Gulf region is “an empty quarter of democracy.” Through his work with youth in the Arab World, he found that Libyan youth in particular are creating positive change. However, in the greater Arab region, youth feel their aspirations are not being met and the international system is failing them.

Al-Najjar also emphasized the need for renewed focus on human rights. He advocated establishing a Human Rights Council that would give youth and women in the Arab world a language with which to contest their marginalization. He praised the use of social media in facilitating expression of human rights’ needs among youth and women. Finally, Al-Najjar reiterated that youth unemployment and the lack of affordable housing are serious issues often overlooked by Arab governments.

Debate:

Several participants asked how youth could prosper when some activists are seen as “traitors” and an anti-democracy model is perpetuated. El-Baz replied that Arab youth are not looking for democracy so much as opportunity, self-respect, and recognition. Al-Najjar pointed out that Arabs sometimes view democracy as slow and inefficient: It is “messy” and takes time to develop within a post-authoritarian context. It is unclear whether democracy can fix the security apparatus and court systems. Murphy maintained that democracy and human rights are all on hold. The Middle East is experiencing the most turmoil she has witnessed in her work as a journalist. Without more security, she said, citizens cannot focus on larger issues.

Luncheon Session: Sadek Jalal al-‘Azm, guest speaker: Right to Non Violence

Sadek al-‘Azm commented on the morning presentations. While acknowledging difficulties in predicting the future of Arab politics, al-‘Azm said he would have liked to hear more about the accomplishments of the Arab uprisings and how such accomplishments may be explained. The drama and unexpectedness of the events, he said, poses a challenge to sociologist Max Weber’s

model of the iron cage given the model's emphasis on bureaucratic perpetuation of efficiency and social order. "The Arab Spring broke that cage," said al-'Azm. Furthermore, the uprisings' dynamics suggested how precarious are reigning principles of dynastic succession in which presidents expect automatic renewal of tenure and pass their power on to sons. The events in North Africa and the Middle East demonstrated that "charisma," long assumed the province of a single leader, can be appropriated by the masses: It was the masses who were charismatic, he observed, and what is more they included women "in huge numbers." Just as importantly, the uprisings sparked innovative forms of creative expression heretofore unknown in protest operations in this region of the world: humorous satire, critical graffiti, and festive balloons. For the first time, al-'Azm continued, protest in the Middle East took on a carnivalesque aspect similar to that theorized by literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, where spectacle erupts as a potent challenge to oppression.

Turning to specific presentations from the morning sessions, he suggested that Hamzawy's opposition to deposed president Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood's administration required more explanation. Egypt rejecting Morsi was surprising given how religious Egyptian society is, al-'Azm said. Discussing Manna's plan for Syria, he countered that Syria should not aspire to be like Palestine. In Syria the goal of the Arab uprising was to repair the damage done to the republic by the al-Asad dynasty. However, international discourse about the conflict presents it as a contest of high strategy—"a grand game of nations with Syria as a pawn"—while ignoring internal dynamics particular to the uprising itself. The reality of oppression has thus been diminished or neglected, and there needs to be careful attention paid to vital internal issues, he said. Furthermore, the international community often describes the opposition as extremists or radicals, yet few pundits mention the "systematic extremism" of the regime, he added. Al-Asad used poison gas against his own people, as well as a scorched earth strategy to deal with opposition. Al-'Azm emphasized the fascist and Stalinist historical parallels to Syrian regime and its behavior.

Al-'Azm further argued that the Syrian regime has perpetrated most violence against the Sunni majority. Sunni Arab majority villages have been destroyed while other communities are relatively calm. The dead, wounded, tortured, imprisoned, and missing are majority Sunni Arabs. It is inaccurate to describe the Syrian conflict as a civil war, he continued. Unlike civil wars in Lebanon and Iraq, for example, Syria's does not originate from differences between communities: Civilians are helping each other against the regime. He likened the Syrian conflict to the Hungarian Revolt of 1956, which was crushed by Soviet forces but was not considered a civil war.

Debate:

One participant asked why al-'Azm used the Hungarian model as a comparison for Syria if it was tragically crushed. Several participants argued that Syria is indeed in a civil war because the opposition comes from Syrian society and some people stand with the regime. Al-'Azm responded that the population standing with the regime is neither armed nor fighting. The conflict now has so many outside players involved that it is no longer between Syrians. The Syrian Army is "mostly finished" so Syrian president Bashar al-Asad has brought in others. The

result is a complicated political environment with little hope for a solution that would appeal to the majority and resolve the crisis.

On the topic of the Hungarian model, al-‘Azm argued that in principle the revolution could fail; there are no guarantees of success. “At the end of the day” the Syrian revolution has lasted for two and half years already. The chances of crushing the regime are nearing zero, he concluded.

Session III: The Arab Socio-Political Order: Challengers, Beneficiaries, and Old Guards

Ali Abdullatif Ahmida opened the session with “Post February 17 Revolution: The Challenges of Transitional Justice, Truth and National Reconciliation in Libya.” He identified two major obstacles to a Libyan transition: the rise of armed militia groups in the context of a weak government and the lack of a political compromise to reincorporate persecuted regime supporters.

Ahmida argued that the “impotent” Libyan government couldn’t implement democratic initiatives or build public institutions while well-armed, power-hungry militias prevent it. The kidnapping of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan by armed militia groups sent a clear message: “Resign or follow our demands.” Government efforts to incorporate and disarm these groups compounded the problem. Militias increased their power and took charge of public commodities, even part of the oil sector.

Drawing on the cases of Iraq and Somalia, Ahmida added that beyond the political challenge, reconciliation blocked a Libyan democratic transition. Lacking a democratic transition, Libya will experience long-lasting internal violence and indeed, a Libyan “reign of terror” has emerged. Many regime supporters have left Libya due to fears of vigilante justice. Ahmida advocated for a political reconciliation framework similar to South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Similar publication and debate of atrocities would allow Libyans to rebuild their social fabric and to heal, he said.

Denis Sullivan turned the discussion to Egyptian transition prospects in his talk, “The Resiliency of Egypt’s Deep State: Are There Any Challengers Left?” Sullivan took a fairly pessimistic view and argued that the Ikhwan still present the only credible challenger to the deep state despite being forced underground. Sullivan analyzed current Egyptian politics through Gamal Abdel Nasser’s persistent security system, which he based on the military, Interior Ministry, and National Democratic Party (NDP). The 2011 revolution did not fundamentally change this three-tiered system, which can still block or oust any government that counters its vision. The social contract forged by Nasser undergirds the security-state structure. In exchange for abdicating political representation, Egyptians receive increasingly meager social welfare. Sullivan contended that the recent return to Nasserism has made this exchange even more resonant.

Although the Ikhwan is hardly a unified organization, once it emerges from the current crisis Egyptian power dynamics will return to the Ikhwan vs. the military, predicted Sullivan. Other challengers such as the April 6 Movement do not mount credible threats to the deep state

although they do pressure it on the margins. Opposition groups such as Tamarrud and the National Salvation Front will continue to fracture and lose impact.

Unlike Sullivan, Roger Owen argued that revolutions snowball out of the control of the deep state. In “The Inclusive Principle of Arab Revolutions,” he contended that the progressive involvement of everyone in society has an irreversible effect. Once people are mobilized, more “grievances, interests and reasons to involve themselves appear until practically the entire society is present.” Thicker engagement is sustained by new conceptions of citizenship, debate over nationalist identity, and the direct participation of the diaspora community in the political process: all of which governments struggle to quell. While General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi believes that he, like Napoleon Bonaparte, can demobilize the street, Owen contends that this will prove futile. The Arab Awakening inculcated new conceptions of representation that will be difficult to erase. There are too many people involved with real stakes in their economic, social and political future to pretend that the “revolution” will be over soon.

Constitutional questions also keep populations mobilized. New constitutions bring out socio-nationalist questions of social identity. These deep-seated identity and existential matters draw in more people to the debate, and every group that appears brings additional vested interests.

Gilbert Achcar agreed that the major accomplishment of the Arab Awakening has been the people’s irreversible discovery that they can express and impose their will. However, he added in the “Arab Uprising Between Revolution and Counter-Revolution,” the revolution will continue because it roots itself in stalled development. Since the socio-political structure of the rentier patrimonial state blocks development, stability will remain tenuous. Co-optation and counterrevolutionary actions initiated by the state, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the United States will continue to obstruct revolutionary movements.

The choice for counterrevolutionary action or cooption depends on the divisibility of the patrimonial regime, said Achcar. In countries like Bahrain, where it is impossible to split the patrimonial regime, states use direct action to crush uprisings. In countries with deep states, regime elites coopt uprisings and revolutions. Coopting Islamic fundamentalist forces effectively stalls the revolutionary process exemplified by the Egyptian army’s alliance with the Ikhwan, or by the Syrian regime freeing its preferred enemy, jihadists, while jailing activists. The Gulf Cooperation Council and the United States act as major counterrevolutionary forces by upholding existing regimes. The GCC undermined democratic uprising, and the U.S., after the disastrous dissolution of the Iraqi military, has been averse to fundamentally altering institutional structures, he said.

Drawing on the Egyptian case, Achcar agreed with many presenters that Abdel Fatah al-Sisi cannot be Nasser, and that Bonapartism is a delusion. Nasser’s popularity stemmed from major progressive national achievements based in development while al-Sisi does not have any equivalent prospects.

Debate

Participants pressed the panelists on the inclusion of private media in the Egyptian deep state, the effect of new protest laws on al-Sisi's popularity, and the Ikhwan's rootedness in Egyptian civil society.

Panelists were divided on the protest law's effect on al-Sisi and the role of the Ikhwan in society. On the protest law, Sullivan noted that fear of exile kept Egyptian opposition contained. Achcar argued that al-Sisi would not run for president to protect his image. Leila Farsakh, who chaired the session, suggested that tolerance would be directly correlated to whether security and the economy improved. As for the Ikhwan, Sullivan noted that he did not believe the Ikhwan was not rooted in society: rather, he said, the Ikhwan is currently underground. Achcar countered that even at the time of presidential elections, the Ikhwan barely scraped together enough votes to win, and were further weakened by running the country.

Session IV: External Involvement in Arab Uprisings

Tamirace Fakhoury opened the final session of the conference. She discussed "Migration and Politics: Insights from the Arab Uprisings," and focused on the participation in the 2011 uprisings of the Arab diaspora, particularly the Egyptian expatriate community in the United States. She posed two questions for the audience: How can we conceptualize their engagements, and how much impact do these engagements actually have? While varying estimates of Egyptian expats in the United States have made accurate research difficult, three groups dominated: Mubarak sympathizers, secular pro-democracy sympathizers, and Muslim sympathizers. These groups not only advocated for Egyptian interests in the U.S. political system, but also created epistemic networks of knowledge-sharing. Although these networks have existed for quite some time, their presence and impact have increased greatly since 2011.

Fakhoury then highlighted the importance of transnational digital feeds for avoiding regime censorship and maintaining international advocacy. In the Egyptian case, expatriates sustained online discussion even while Egyptian authorities stopped the Internet for five days. This allowed a continued critical voice to the Egyptian struggle. Fakhoury encouraged other scholars to engage in similarly valuable transnational research in cases beyond Egypt. Minimal research and discussion have been pursued despite an emigration rate for Egyptians that is double the average in Arab countries, she said.

Hugh Roberts turned the discussion to external governments in his talk on "European Attitudes and Policy Responses to the Crises in North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya), 2010-2013." Roberts argued that the European Union wants influence in North Africa more than democratic change. Though the E.U. emphasizes human rights and good governance, this is mainly a tool to chastise unruly regimes. Such emphasis colored the European Union response to the Arab uprisings and resulted in policies prioritizing stability over sustainable political renewal. The intransigence of Muammar Gaddafi led to an outsized external intervention and regime change in Libya without any attempt at negotiation; Egypt and Tunisia cases received a more muted treatment from the E.U., he said.

Roberts further contended that in Libya the opposition of the European Union and NATO to a no-fly zone indicated reluctance among many European states to become entangled in Libyan affairs. Great Britain and France were the sole exceptions since both favored intervention. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 eventually authorized NATO intervention, which Roberts argued was the most “palpable” type of external involvement in the uprisings. The Europeans to successfully oust Gaddafi. As for Tunisia, he continued, Europe also demonstrated its weak commitment to supporting democratic change. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, president of Tunisia from 1987 to 2011, had good relations with Europe such that Europe only supported his ousting in theory. Since Ben Ali’s departure, however, Europe has lent little support to Tunisia’s burgeoning political scene.

Egypt was different, said Roberts. The United States was the main external force; Europe by and large did not intervene. He also suggested that Germany’s role in the Arab world will increase in the future while France’s role may diminish.

Ambassador Robert Pelletreau discussed “The U.S. Diplomatic Response to the Arab Awakenings” in the context of Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain. The United States did not anticipate these revolutions in part because U.S. embassy officials did not understand the importance of social media monitoring nor had they the capacity to do such monitoring. Pelletreau contended that the United States has made no significant overhaul in its diplomatic policy in the Middle East. Increasingly, however, the United States will attempt to resolve issues in the Middle East through coalitions rather than unilateral action.

During the Arab uprisings, U.S. policy makers tried to balance the tension between a history of support for democratic process and aversion to the instability that usually follows the overthrow of an autocratic regime. In Tunisia, the lack of strategic U.S. interests as well as the inclusion and cooperation of secular parties made it easier for the United States to lend economic and political support to Tunisia’s democratization process. In Bahrain, on the other hand, U.S. strategic and energy interests favored maintaining the status quo. Bahrain’s longtime ally, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states that supported the Bahraini government further influenced this choice.

Egypt was a more difficult setting, said Pelletreau. Even though Hosni Mubarak had helped U.S. strategic and intelligence services historically, his despotism had reached such levels that the United States could no longer support him. When Mubarak was ousted and the Muslim Brotherhood prevailed in elections, the United States attempted to build a relationship with the Brotherhood. Doing so proved difficult, however, because of longtime U.S. ties with Mubarak. The U.S. was not the only important player with which the Muslim Brotherhood struggled. It also contended with the Egyptian army, Gulf state Arabs, financial institutions, and Western governments. Overall, the United States was not terribly upset to see President Mohamed Morsi ousted in 2013.

Haytham Manna was the last speaker in Session IV. He closed the conference by comparing Libya with Syria. He said that he hoped Syria could copy the Libyan model. Manna asserted that there have been two periods of foreign intervention in Syria, which he referred to as the non-

coordinated and coordinated periods. During the non-coordinated period, for example, Russia actively supported the al-Asad regime and vetoed any resolution put forth by the United States and other Western governments before the United Nations Security Council. However, at the start of the coordinated period the Arab League cooperated with Russia thanks to a new understanding of its power on the Security Council.

For political progress to be made in Syria, he said, Russia and China must be won over. Manna said he represented the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change in order to garner support in South Africa, India, and Brazil. Conversations in Great Britain and the United States were “very short.” Manna concluded his remarks by reminding the audience that what he referred to as the international community’s insistence on artificially defining which opposition groups are legitimate has seriously circumscribed the political space in which Syrian groups may operate.

In Closing

The co-chairs gave closing remarks at the end of the conference. Hani Faris pointed out that although many conferences have been held on the subject of Arab Uprisings, the sponsoring institutions felt there is a need to continue to examine this momentous phase in the socio-political development of Arab societies given that that the future course of the Uprisings is still being charted and their outcome has not been decided. The conference, Faris said, had four tasks: consideration of the extent to which Arab masses remain attached to their demands for freedom and dignity; examination of the role the agents of change, i.e. youth and women, are playing; assessment of efforts at reform; and finding means to stop foreign powers from inciting internal divisions and supplying tools of destruction to warring factions. In his opinion, Faris said, the conference succeeded in carrying out its mission and called for the dissemination of the deliberations and publication of the conference proceedings.

Augustus Norton closed the meeting after offering a couple of observations: one may not listen to the poignant comments of Haytham Manna without considering the extraordinary costs of the militarization of the struggle in Syria. In an important sense, the armed opposition has played right into the hands of a brutal and pitiless regime. Second, the day has passed without any reference to the role of U.S. scholars, as opposed to U.S. officials, in perpetuating skepticism about the prospects for substantive political reform in the Arab world. Rather than understanding the bankruptcy of muscle-bound, intellectually impotent regimes, U.S. scholars, especially those parlaying ideas “inside-the-beltway”, promoted notions of adaptive, creative authoritarian regimes that betrayed a lack of understanding of on-the-ground realities. While the authoritarian denizens of Middle East politics may cling to power, they are really one-trick ponies with very little to offer the multitudes who filled the streets and squares from 2011 forward and will continue to press their demands with unprecedented vehemence. He closed by emphasizing how very well the distinguished participants served the goals of the meeting, and he extended a heartfelt thanks to the speakers, the chairs, and, not least, to the engaged audience.