For Syria to have ended up in war as it has since 2011, many elements would have been at play in shaping the onset of these baleful events. This conference aims at providing a platform of discussion that may assist in understanding the roots and the dynamics of the ongoing conflict.

In the two-day event on 1 and 2 September 2016, scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds will discuss why and how Syria has gone from tenuous stability to a war-torn society. Since its cumbersome birth as an independent state, through the task of building development by socialist self-reliance, followed by the introduction of neoliberal reforms, Syria has struggled to maintain a modicum of autonomy. From the reforms of its first democratically elected parliament in 1954, and throughout its era of economic dirigisme, Syria had evolved as a secular, relatively prosperous and economically self-reliant model. Starting from a low base, it registered significant advances in conquering illiteracy, improving healthcare and other human development indicators under state-guided policies.

In the late 1980s, Syria gradually embarked on the road to market-led development without ensuring the necessary institutional safeguards that would align economic with social goals. It was a costly mistake for a geostrategic country like Syria to let down its guard on the economic and social front. As soon as the ideological hegemony of Arab regimes over their states loosened at the start of the Arab Spring, the Syrian revolt was ignited and Syria has since become the ground for settling regional as well as international tensions.

Syria’s war has ravaged its citizens and its economic and social infrastructures, a significant part of humanity’s shared historical heritage and nature. Its refugee problem is one of the worst in recent history, with millions forcibly displaced. The grip of the Salafists on the opposition foreshadows a greater problem for states with pluralistic communities. Of course, no single academic discipline can fully explain the extent of this imbroglio. The Syrian case is overdetermined by a variety of interconnected elements that can be traced back to the start of the mandate period in the early twentieth century. Political Islam, Syria’s geostrategic position, the impact of climate change, the rural-urban divide, gentrification, socioeconomic considerations and political intransigence are some of the latent underpinnings of Syria’s downfall. These are issues that challenge the capacity of the received wisdom and to which this conference will attempt to make a contribution.
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<td>Political Economist, Public Health and Member of Common Room</td>
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<td><em>Political Economy of Public Health in Syria: Some Global and Regional Considerations</em></td>
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Bassam Haddad  
Associate Professor, George Mason University  
*The Syrian Uprising: Understanding its Causes and Complexities*

Linda Matar  
Senior Research Fellow, Middle East Institute  
National University of Singapore  
*Macroeconomic Framework in Pre-Uprising Syria*

3.45 - 4.00 | Coffee Break

4.00 - 5.30 | **Panel 3: The Politics of Syria Since 1946**  
Chair: Anthony Teo, Founder Member, Middle East Institute Management Board and Chevalier of the Order Palmes Academiques

Aoyama Hiroyuki  
Professor, Tokyo University for Foreign Studies  
*How Did Syria Develop into a ‘Strong State’? Focusing on Politics on the ‘Social Cleavage’*

Maria Aurora Sottimano  
Lecturer, British University in Egypt  
*Syria in the ‘Resistance Front’: Persistence Through Reconfiguration?*

Steven Heydemann  
Professor, Smith College  
*The Syrian Civil War and the Rise of Wartime Economic Orders*

**DAY 2**

10.00 - 11.15 | **Panel 4: Identity Politics and the Role of Religion in the Syrian Crisis**  
Chairperson: Jeremy Kingsley, Senior Research Fellow Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

Raphaël Lefèvre  
Research Fellow, University of Oxford  
*The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Past and Present*

Mohanad Hage Ali  
Researcher, London School of Economics and Political Science  
*Hizbullah in Syria*

11.15 - 11.30 | Coffee Break
11.30 - 12.45  **Panel 5: Livelihood and Food Security Assessment**  
Chairperson: Mattia Tomba, Visiting Senior Research Fellow  
Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore  
Myriam Ababsa  
Associate Researcher, Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO)  
*Syria Food Security, 2000-2016: From Self-Sufficiency to Hunger as a Weapon*  
Max Ajl  
Development Sociologist, Cornell University  
*The Political Economy of Thermidor in Syria: National and International Dimensions*  
12.45 - 2.00  Lunch  
2.00 - 3.30  **Panel 6: The Syrian Humanitarian Crisis and its Global Impact**  
Chairperson: Su-Ann Oh, Visiting Fellow  
Institute of South-East Asian Studies  
Nabil Marzouk  
Researcher, Syrian Center for Policy Research  
*Economic and Social Factors on the Background of the Popular Uprising in Syria: Causes and Effects*  
Sanam Naraghi - Anderlini  
Co-founder, International Civil Society Network (ICAN)  
*Displacement, Discrimination and the Drive to Survive: Syrian Women and Girls in Turkey*  
Philip Proudfoot  
Researcher, London School of Economics and Political Science  
*Revolutionary Subjectivity and Syrian Rebel Workers in Beirut*  
3.30 - 3.35  **Closing Remarks**  
Linda Matar  
Senior Research Fellow, Middle East Institute  
National University of Singapore  
3.35-3.40  Group Photo with Speakers  
3.40  Closing Refreshments
Syria Food Security (2000-2016): From Self-Sufficiency to Hunger as a Weapon

Self-sufficiency was a pillar in Syria's Ba'thist economy due to the agrarian reform launched in 1958 until the neoliberal economic opening of the country in the 2000s. After Turkey, Syria had the most productive agricultural sector in the Middle East, and was self-sufficient from 1991 until the drought of 2008. Agriculture was highly subsidized and counted for one-third of gross domestic product, employing a third of the working population. Syria became self-sufficient in wheat in 1991, thanks not only to its state irrigation projects, but also to the multiplication of private wells, for most illegal. In Jazîra, 80% of irrigation depended on underground wells and rivers. The overuse of underground water resources led to a depletion of the water table and the death of historic rivers such as the Balikh, and the Khabour River which dried up in 2001. Syria was hit by a severe drought in 2008-2009. For the first time in its history, the country had to receive international aid and food supplies for one million farmers, herders and their families. The drought accentuated the destruction of the agrarian sector, already weakened by the dismantling of the socialist structures. Even before the drought, between 2002 and 2008, Syria had lost 40 percent of its agricultural work force, which dropped from 1.4 million to 800,000 workers, because of mismanagement of water and land resources. This was partly due to the implementation of the new agrarian relation Law 56 of 2004, which allowed landowners to terminate farming contracts. This law was highly contested as it was a highly capitalist, anti-socialist one, in favour of landowners, and thus constituted an element of agrarian counter-reform. At war, Syria's food production has been under new major constraints (in terms of access to seeds, fertilizers, distribution). Since the war started in 2011, especially after the emergence of the Islamic State in 2013, food and water have been used as weapons and leverages by all war parties. Access to food has been the main problem faced by the majority of Syrians, both in the state-controlled areas because of inflation and scarcity, and within the 46 besieged areas, where people are victims of war profiteers and the black-market. In Homs and Eastern Ghouta, citizens have managed to produce bread under civilian control. The UN Humanitarian food assistance has been mainly conveyed by the regime, while Gulf charities have tried to reach opposition held areas. People under the Islamic State are living under awful pressure as wheat is lacking, part being sold double the price to Iraq. Starvation is a new threat in Syria.
Max Ajl is with the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University. He is based in Tunis, where he is researching state agricultural development policy and the politics of price fixing during the era of state-directed development. His fields of expertise include comparative international development, world-systems theory, Middle East political economy, and rural political economy. His academic writing has been published in many venues, including *Historical Materialism*, *MERIP*, and the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. He has presented at universities in Tunisia and across North America, including Cornell, Columbia, and the University of California – Berkeley. He co-edits the Palestine page at Jadaliyya. He is also a member of the Political Economy Project, linked to the Arab Studies Institute, and works on the pedagogy project. His most recent piece was “The Hypertrophic City versus the Planet of Fields,” in *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, edited by Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis Verlag).

The Political Economy of Thermidor in Syria: National and International Dimensions

By now it is widely understood that the social base for discontent with the Syrian government emerged both amongst impoverished Sunni rural areas, and amidst the peri urban slums surrounding mid-level cities. The common link is a process of developmental decay in Syria’s countryside, producing both in situ poverty and rural flight to slums. Yet this social fact sits oddly with the social pact upon which the Ba’ath Party traditionally stood – a class alliance between army officers and the rural poor. This essay traces the disembedding through which the social policies which the Ba’ath initially emplaced were slowly rolled back, in a gradual process of Thermidor - passive-revolution-in-reverse. It first offers a political economy of the Ba’ath pact with the peasantry, situating it in the world-historical context of Arab nationalism and the spirit of Bandung, and identifies how that social pact allowed for a stable if politically repressive developmental compact. It proceeds to trace the course of developmental decay, identifying the policy changes and the political ecology through which the Ba’ath party gradually broke its alliance with the peasantry as well as the urban working class, as well as the social effects of those changes. However, instead of limiting this passive revolution on the national plane - a methodological nationalism - I situate this process in a wider and longer historical arc within which the gains of the Arab nationalist movements all slowly evaporated in sync and in synergy. Included in that arc are not merely the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of fixed currencies and the gold standard, leading to debt and hot currency flows, but more importantly the social solvent of war and preparation for war, a crucial mechanism of development decay, particularly in states sharing an armistice line with Israel.
The Syrian Uprising: Understanding Its Causes and Complexities

After more than five years since the start of the uprising, Syria continues to find itself divided and embattled, with no satisfactory end in sight. More than half of the Syrian population has been displaced and the death toll has surpassed 300,000 by all counts. The Syrian tragedy persists and, more than any other case of mass uprising in the region, continues to be shrouded in political power-plays and contradictions at the local, regional, and international levels.

Over the past five years, the Syrian uprising has been transformed from a democratic protest against dictatorship to a regional and international contest to redraw the political, and at times territorial, map of the region. Defined increasingly by an absence of a clear favourable outcome, considering existing parties to the conflict, the logic of the lesser evil reigns supreme. In other words, all the significant players involved in the Syrian conflict, are actually quite bad, as in, not likely to lead Syria into a better future. Indeed, this configuration is an essential part of the Syrian tragedy. Not only is a victory of any one player difficult, but even if at hand, victory has lost all meaning. Instead, sober hopes have regressed from a democratic victory against dictatorship all the way to simply ending the conflict. In practice, this means that which was unacceptable throughout the conflict, might be the only way out of it.

This presentation addresses the complexities of the Syrian uprisings, starting with the turbulent decade that preceded it and ending with the Russian intervention.
MOHANAD HAGE ALI
Researcher
London School of Economics & Political Science

Mohanad is an academic, political journalist and journalism trainer. He has a PhD and Msc. in Conflict Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science. As an academic and journalist, Mohanad specialized in the study of Islamic Movements. His Arabic and English proficiency allowed him to accumulate a professional experience in both Middle Eastern and Western media outlets. For eight years, he worked for the pan-Arabic newspaper al-Hayat while freelancing for news outlets including the Guardian, the Washington Post, CNN and NBC. Mohanad’s PhD thesis looked at Hizbullah’s identity construction, while his publications include a much quoted article on the Abu Musab al-Suri and the new alQaeda.

Hizbullah in Syria

This paper will look at the development of Hizbullah’s relations with the Syrian regime throughout three phases. I will argue that the organisation’s relations with the Syrian regime, were in the initial turbulent phase, a factor of Damascus’s negotiations with Tehran over the latter’s role in post-War Lebanon. The paper will demonstrate that Hizbullah’s institutional phase, from the 1990s onwards, played a crucial role in developing the organisation’s relations with the Syrian regime. The third and last phase, entails both the deployment and replicating of the organisation’s institutions to build a Syrian branch for the country’s Shi’i minority. The Syria-Hizbullah relationship is a result of the interplay between institutional links and geopolitics.

When the institutional links were absent, the Iranian-Syrian relations/competition were the major factor in determining the organisation’s interaction with Damascus. This was evident in the turbulent phase of the 1980s and early 1990s, which culminated in the Syrian Arab Army’s Fath-Allah massacre against Hizbullah’s members in West Beirut.

The institutional phase resulted in a more stabilised and filtered alliance, based on restricting the organisation’s participation in government to Parliamentary representation, alongside its fight against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

From the earliest stages of Hizbullah’s deployment alongside regime forces in the Syrian conflict, Syria’s relatively small Shi’i minority was at the heart of its long term strategy. The paper will argue that the organisation’s intervention in the Syrian conflict, religiously mobilised the previously secular Shi’i minority in Syria, creating a growing militia that replicates Hizbullah’s experience and propaganda. The paper will outline how the organisation’s military involvement entailed establishing the Syrian Hizbullah, with two major regional branches, in Homs and Damascus.
The Syrian Civil War and the Rise of Wartime Economic Orders

After more than five years of violent conflict, Syria’s national economy no longer exists. The country’s economic infrastructure has been devastated, its currency has collapsed, its workforce decimated and displaced, and its territory fragmented among competing armed forces. In its place, local economies are emerging, driven in part by the exigencies of survival, and in part by the economic opportunities created by conditions of conflict, including the absence of state authority and empowerment of non-state armed actors. Over time, these local conflict economies have become increasingly consolidated, giving rise to new, typically informal, frameworks of economic governance in rebel-held areas of Syria. These frameworks encompass legal and illegal forms of economic activity, develop patterns of economic exchange that cut across conflict lines, and are often embedded in transnational networks of economic exchange that flow into the region and beyond. Even as these local conflict economies become an increasingly prominent and potentially durable feature of the Syrian landscape, however, with significant implications for Syria’s post-conflict economic recovery, they remain poorly studied and poorly understood. Drawing on the sparse literature on the wartime economies of Syria, and on the literatures concerning the political economy of insurgencies and civil wars, and on rebel governance, this paper will examine the political economy of rebel governance in opposition-held areas of Syria, focusing on localities that have been under opposition control for an extended period of time.
RAYMOND HINNEBUSCH  
Professor  
University of St. Andrews

Raymond Hinnebusch is Professor of International Relations and Middle East Politics at the University of St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland. He is Founder and Director of the Centre for Syrian Studies. His major works include *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester University Press, 2003, 2nd ed, 2015) and *Syria: Revolution From Above* (Routledge, 2001). He co-edited *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, with A. Ehteshami, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2nd edition, (2014); *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*, with Ozlem Tur, (Ashgate Publishers, 2013); *Sovereignty after Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*, with Sally Cummings, (Edinburgh University Press, 2011); *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences*, with Rick Fawn; and *Syria: From Reform to Revolt: Politics and International relations*, with Tina Zintl, (Syracuse University Press, 2014). His current interests focus on state formation and conflict in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings. Specifically, he is working with Dr Morten Valbjorn at Aarhus University on the project, “Sectarianism in the Wake of the Arab Revolts.”

Syria: What Went Wrong?

The Syrian conflict raises many puzzles that allow us to throw light on multiple aspects of our theoretical understanding of politics and particularly Middle East politics. What made the Assad regime vulnerable to the uprising? Why and how did people mobilise against the regime? Why did peaceful protests not lead to democratic transition? Why did anti-regime mass mobilisation lead to stalemate rather than revolution from below? Why did peaceful protests turn into armed civil war framed in sectarian terms? Why has the conflict proved so violent and intractable? What has the consequence been for governance in Syria. This lecture will pose and try to provide some answers to these questions. They have bearing for a wide range of fields of study including authoritarian resilience, democratization, social movement theory, sectarianism, and civil and new wars.
How did Syria Develop into a “Strong State”? Focusing on Policies of “Social Cleavage”

The Struggle for Syria and Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East written by Patrick Seale provide reasonable hints to understand the process of political development of Syria after independence. They briefly indicate the historical political background of Syria, when unstable domestic politics became normalised by repeated coups and when Syria was bombarded by the interference of neighbouring countries from 1940s to 1960s, but after which it developed into a stable “strong state” under the administration of the ex-president, Hafiz al-Asad after 1970.

It is not easy to find out the remnant of a “strong state” in Syria after the spread of the Arab Spring. The country has become a “major battlefield” where various domestic and foreign parties argue as though it has reverted to the past conditions as indicated by the title The Struggle for Syria. However, in that case, looking back on the political history of Syria - when it developed from a “weak state” into a “strong state” - may provide hints for resolving the current crisis.

This presentation interprets the process by which Syria after independence enjoyed political stability as a “strong state” with the key word of “social cleavage”.

Aoyama Hiroyuki is Professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He was an Associate Researcher at IFEAD (Institut Français d’Etudes Arabes de Damas, 1996-1997, 1999-2001) and researcher at IDE-JETRO (Institute of Developing Economies- Japan External Trade Organization, 1997-2008), and before assuming his present post. His specialty is political thought in Syria and Lebanon. His academic writings include “Spiritual Father of the Ba’th: The Ideological and Political Significance of Zaki al-Arsuzi in Arab Nationalist Movements” MES Series No. 49, (Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies-JETRO, March 2000), co-written with Wafik Khansa and Maher al-Charif); "History Does Not Repeat Itself (Or Does It?!): The Political Changes in Syria after Hafiz al-Asad’s Death", MES Series No. 50, (Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies-JETRO, March 2001), “Political Bias Lurking in Fatality Statistics”, published by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and CMEPS-J Report No. 1, July 2015, co-written with Hamanaka Shingo. He also runs the site “Facts on the Arab Spring in Syria” (http://syriaarabspring.info/).

Da’ash: The Struggle for Syria Continues

The rise of Da’ash has been widely seen as an unprecedented challenge to the Syrian state that throws into question both its external borders and the political regime that dominates the territory encompassed by these borders.

The presentation argues that Syria has faced similar challenges in the past. Since political independence after World War Two major changes have transformed the political and economic regime of the country; initially at least marked by large scale external interference, the same period has also witnessed several attempts to redraw the country’s external borders and even to merge it into larger political entities.

These events reflect the continued internal and external fragility of the Syrian state whose territorial limits and institutions remain contested. For a few decades, favourable circumstances allowed the rulers around Hafiz al-Asad to mitigate internal divisions by a strategy combining repression, selective co-optation and the emphasis on Ba’thism as a legitimating ideology. Less affected by the centrifugal forces and their external allies forces which had heavily influenced politics in earlier periods, Syria nonetheless continued to combat them proactively beyond its borders and partly for these reasons attempted to shape its external environment to its own advantage.

The end of the Cold War and the dynamics of globalization reduced the resources available to the Syrian regime and its capacity to manage internal divisions and external challenges. Old and new societal divisions and their external ramifications (re)emerged and weakened political arrangements that had never been sufficiently consolidated. In other words, the country and its rulers were caught in a new edition of the classical ‘Struggle for Syria’. Da’ash is only the most visible illustration of the continued fragility of the Syrian state in terms of borders and political regime. The defeat of the ‘Islamic State’ as a military organization is unlikely to overcome this fragility, and Syria may face similar such challenges in the future.
Raphaël Lefèvre is the Rank-Manning Junior Research Fellow at University of Oxford (New College) where he specializes on the historical and contemporary evolution of Sunni Islamist movements in Syria and Lebanon. He completed his PhD in 2016 at Cambridge University where he was a Gates Scholar and was awarded the 2015 Bill Gates Sr. Prize for his research on Syrian politics. He is the author of a book tracing the history of Syria’s branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, entitled *Ashes of Hama* (Oxford University Press & Hurst, London, 2013), which was ranked as “2nd Best Book of 2013 on Middle East Politics” by Foreign Policy. Since 2014 he has been a Non-Resident Research Fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. His research has been funded through the generous support of the Gates Cambridge Trust, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS).

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria: Past and Present

This paper will trace the roots of the current Syrian crisis in the history of the 1979-1982 Islamist rebellion which was led by the Muslim Brotherhood. It will explain how the crisis of the 1980s fuelled a contemporary narrative favouring the role of Islamist opposition forces but simultaneously also led to the Brotherhood’s exile. It will move on to analyse the various ways in which the Brotherhood, now in exile, is seeking to take advantage of this trend by rebuilding its base inside Syria and by supporting rebel groups that share its ideological and political leanings such as Faylaq al Sham and Ajnad al Sham. This, in the process, has pit the Brotherhood against Salafi and Jihadi groups - and the product of this intra-Islamist fighting could well determine Syria’s future.
Nabil Marzouk, has been a researcher in the Syrian Center for Policy Research in Damascus since 2012. Marzouk studied Economics at the Arab University of Beirut, and earned his Ph.D degree in Analysis and Economic Policies from the School for Advanced Studies in Social Science in Paris in 1981. He was a National Strategic Planning Specialist for the 11th five-year plan in Syria (2011- 2015), and team leader for the 10th five-year plan (2006- 2010), as well as consultant for the State Planning Commission (2004- 2007). He was a lecturer in Macroeconomic Analysis at the Institute of Planning in Damascus, (1989 – 2008), and a lecturer in Planning in the ENA Institute (National School of Administration) in Damascus (2005- 2016). He has published a number of studies and articles, and three books.

Economic and Social Factors on the Background of the Popular Uprising in Syria: Causes and Effects

2016 marks the sixth year of the Syrian conflict. A horrific picture is drawn. Thousands of people killed or injured, 2 million families displaced, not to forget the overall destruction of the country. Fighters from around the world are fighting in Syria. Internal and external subjugating powers are fuelling the fighting under ideological, religious and/or "national interests" banners. In the meantime, the Syrian people’s interests are absent from the priorities of the belligerents, remaining victims of causes that are not theirs.

Recently, due to the continuity of external interventions and the intensification of armed operations, accompanied with the extension of terrorism, the international community has been pushing for a political solution, through negotiations between the belligerents, under the umbrella of two superpowers. Such a potential solution, however, risks neglecting the Syrian people’s priorities, and seems to serve the interests of the subjugating powers.

A number of factors led to the uprising of 2011, ranging from the absence of civil liberties and lack of social dialogue that led to marginalisation and social fragmentation. Following neoliberal economic policies initiated in the late 1980s, average real expenditures and household consumption declined, poverty rates rose and a large segment of the population suffered from economic and social exclusion.

The economic growth during 2000-10 failed to generate enough jobs, while corruption and crony capitalism paralysed the socioeconomic environment. The liberalisation that accelerated after 2005 added pressure on the living conditions of various social groups, aggravating economic conditions and exacerbating regional disparities, and resulting in high rates of unemployment.

Syria is in immense need for rehabilitation and reconstruction of its social capital. Future policymaking should focus on inclusive growth and make sure that the Syrian citizens are worthy of all legal rights.
Macroeconomic Framework in Pre-Uprising Syria

This paper examines the macroeconomic policy setup during the pre-uprising period and looks into the adjustments that took place between 2000 and 2010, which accentuated the social cleavages that may have contributed to the destabilisation that followed. The work relies on an analysis of macro policies supported with data available from national and international sources.

The interrelated workings of fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies channelled resources in a socially inefficient way. Unrestrained liberalisation distorted the path of capital accumulation and generated price shifts that resulted in an inequitable form of income distribution. The fiscal regime, which targeted the necessary consumption bundle via indirect taxation and subsidy removal, swerved the purchasing power of the people into a lower path. The neoliberal monetary regime and pegged exchange rate measures broadened money creation to inflate the assets of the holders of capital while the working population faced inflation. In view of the risk and the small market size, the dollar-pegged exchange rate regime along with a relaxation of capital account openness drew financial resources away from the national economy. Similarly in trade, unconditional openness undermined key components of the manufacturing sector. Over the last three decades that preceded the uprising, the share and productivity of the manufacturing sector in Syria had consistently declined despite several measures of economic liberalisation targeting an improvement in its performance. The mantra of liberalisation that advocated short-term stabilisation while, at the same time, undercut the basis for long-term growth resulted in a crisis similar to the shock therapy experienced by post-Soviet economies, but with worse results, given the militarised conflict.
Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the International Civil Society Network (ICAN) and spearheads the development and coordination of the Women’s Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL). She is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, and between 2005-14 she was a Research Associate and Senior Fellow at the MIT Center for International Studies. In 2000, she was among the civil society drafters of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and she became the first Senior Expert on Gender and Inclusion on the UN’s Mediation Standby Team in 2011. For nearly two decades she has been a leading international advocate, researcher, trainer and writer on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. She was the 2014 recipient of the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area Perdita Huston Award for human rights and the 2016 Greeley Peace Scholar at the University of Massachusetts.

Displacement, Discrimination and the Drive to Survive: Syrian Women and Girls in Turkey

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict nearly five years ago, millions of Syrians have sought refuge in Turkey. They are residing in camps as well as in towns and communities close to their country’s border. Their situation is dire. Many have lost everything and are in need of shelter, clothing, food, as well as care to address deep traumas and violations including sexual violence. Children are in urgent need of schooling and are doubly challenged by the lack of facilities for Syrians as well as the language differences.

Yet despite the overwhelming difficulties, many Syrians arriving in Turkey have also taken up the challenge of supporting their community. They have been at the frontlines of providing relief and humanitarian assistance, attempting to fill the education gap and offer economic recovery opportunities. Many are also actively building grassroots capacities for peacebuilding, and organizing to advocate for a nationally owned inclusive peace process. Increasingly they are also active in efforts to prevent recruitment into extremist movements by providing youth with alternative avenues for activism. In other words, they are self-empowered and committed to helping their society cope with and recover from the devastating effects of the war.

Understanding the scope and depth of the capacities that exist among Syrians in Turkey is critical both to sustain them and to draw on their strengths in tackling the growing needs of the population. It is also essential to understand the challenges they face, as well as the opportunities they have experienced in working in Turkey and interacting with the host government and communities. The organizations involved on the ground have a deep knowledge of the communities they are seeking to support, develop projects that cater for their needs and are on the ground. They might face challenges such as the inability to register, receive funding or have access to premises to organize activities. The paper I hope to present will offer an assessment and analysis of these experiences with the aim of identifying key opportunities for supporting them. It will also highlight the failures of the international community in allocating and disbursing funds in a timely and flexible manner to enable early self-recovery.
Is Syria an Artificial State? or: Why the Sykes-Picot Narrative Asks the Wrong Question

To the extent that public debate considers the historical context of today’s crisis in Syria, it does so in terms shaped by what we might call the ‘Sykes-Picot narrative’. According to this narrative, the root cause of Syria’s troubles is the artificiality of the Syrian state, carved from the carcass of the Ottoman Empire by external powers, grouping together different social and cultural communities with little in common. The underlying tensions between Syria’s religious and ethnic groups, in this analysis, could only be restrained by a ‘strongman’ such as Asad; the weakening of the Syrian state therefore leads inexorably to the sectarian conflict underway today.

In contrast, this paper argues that the ‘Sykes-Picot’ narrative is fundamentally incorrect for three reasons. First, it focuses on colonial intervention to the exclusion of earlier and subsequent waves of state-building activity. Projects of Ottoman reform and more importantly the statist policies of post-independence governments are overlooked in this account. Second, it erroneously directs attention to Syria’s external borders instead of the reach and function of institutions within those borders. Third, it neglects the social transformations that have taken place within Syrian politics and society since French rule: state and society are not discrete phenomena, but are mutually constitutive. By offering a broader interpretive analysis of state formation in Syria over the twentieth century, this paper suggests that asking whether Syria is an artificial state is not only a misleading question, but also prevents us from obtaining a clear understanding of the nature of today’s crisis.
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Philip Proudfoot completed his ESRC funded doctoral research at the London School of Economics in the Department of Social Anthropology. His thesis concerns the emergence, materialization and transformation of revolutionary subjectivity amongst male Syrian migrant workers in Beirut. As an anthropologist his work focuses primarily on how these processes surfaced within, and impacted on, daily lives. Drawing on over twenty-four months of participant-observation, semi-structured interviews and oral history collection, he identifies some of the key mechanisms through which the Syrian uprising was experienced by those at a distance.

Revolutionary Subjectivity and Syrian Rebel-Workers in Beirut

For a time, Lebanon maintained a significant population of Syrian migrant workers. Men undertook largely seasonal work and extended labour abroad. There was little evidence of permanent settlement, and few signs of second-generation Syrian workers making homes across the border. This pattern of migration and return was not wholly determined by structural factors, like economic decline in rural areas, nor by sheer will of the migrant, who seeks fortunes abroad, but by the overlapping interactions of agency and control. This paper builds on over 24 months of participant-observation, semi-structured interviews and oral history collection to identify how the pattern of temporary labour migration from Syria to Lebanon has fallen into a period of deep uncertainty and precariousness. It thereby reveals how the uprising was experienced and lived-out at a distance. The often neglected perspective of Syria’s labouring diaspora is important because for these men the same socio-economic pressures that structured their initial decisions to migrate from the countryside to sell their labour power in the city resembles what many have identified as the material foundations for the uprising itself. Many arrived in Beirut prior to the first rumblings of the uprising and when it broke, some temporarily returned to Syria hoping to participate via peaceful protest or, later, armed resistance. Yet many found space in Beirut, through new communication technology and face-to-face interaction, to participate in the uprising. But now, against the realities of the present, most are just trying to survive.
Political Economy of Public Health in Syria: Some Global and Regional Considerations

The uprisings in the Arab world and the current conflict in Syria are widely viewed as popular demand for political voice against repressive regimes. This view ignores the political economy of several Arab states where growing economic inequalities and economic dysfunction played a major role as triggers for conflict than is commonly acknowledged. Tunisia, Egypt and Syria all implemented policies of liberalization leading to the worsening of living standards for the majority, particularly those in rural areas. Liberalization over two decades played a significant role in embedding social division, contributing to the gradual dismemberment of nascent welfare on which lay the foundations of political populism. Despite regular riots over food prices, job losses and land expropriation, Egypt for example was viewed by the World Bank as an economic “best performer” whilst Tunisia was praised for “weathering well” the global economic downturn through ‘sound macroeconomic management’ prior to its uprising in 2010.

In Syria, the focus of this paper, the market economy made its mark over the 1990s, but macroeconomic adjustment policies were implemented in a bilateral agreement with the European Union and approved by the International Monetary Fund in 2003. The economic stabilisation program which followed had little political concern for social impacts such as job losses, price rises and national debt premised on speculative investment that caused immense hardship for the population at large and acted as a trigger for protests in 2011. Since the health sector was a key part of reforms initiated after 2003, this paper will focus on the health sector and set it in the context of the political economy of neoliberal Syria. It will describe the achievements of health services during the Syria’s state-controlled experience and the ensuing challenges posed to it as part of global restructuring of the health sector and its subsequent manifestations in Syria.
Peter Sluglett is a Visiting Research Professor at the Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore. He has a BA from Cambridge (1966) and a PhD from Oxford (1972). He has taught Middle Eastern History at the University of Durham (1974-1994) and at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City (1994-2011), where he was Director of the University’s Middle East Centre. He has published widely on the modern history of Iraq, including *Iraq since 1958: from Revolution to Dictatorship*, 3rd edn., (2001, with Marion Farouk-Sluglett), and *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (2007). He has also edited and contributed to *The Urban Social History of the Middle East 1750-1950* (2008), *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule: Essays in Honour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, (2010, with Stefan Weber), and *Writing the Modern History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges* (2012). He recently completed an *Atlas of Islamic History* (2014, with Andrew Currie).

### From Bad to Worse: A Bird’s Eye View of the Syrian Economy in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries

This paper outlines the traditional agricultural and trading economy of Syria between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, going on to describe the centralising/étatist turn of the 1950s and 1960s. Like Algeria, Egypt and Iraq, Syria was transformed into a command economy, although it is clear that Hafiz al-Asad was not as profoundly committed to this as some of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, since the state became by far the largest employer, the population became deeply dependent upon it. For reasons beyond the control of the Syrian regime, it was not possible to transform a weak state into a quasi-autonomous state. Even the discovery of oil in commercial quantities could not achieve that transformation.

At the same time, Hafiz al-Asad’s state was extremely insecure, and partly for that reason extremely repressive. By 1990, it was in crisis largely because of the fall in the price of oil (since 1986), and because of the political events in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states, which had been important economic partners for Syria. At this point, to keep itself afloat, the regime turned to privatisation, which proved ever more disastrous the longer it was applied. The most profitable economic activities of the regime were sold, or in some cases given, to powerful business networks made up of close relatives of those running the state. This gradually brought about high levels of unemployment; public sector wages were frozen between 1994 and 2004. This process continued under Bashar al-Asad, whose initial apparent eagerness to reach out to ‘reformers’ crashed on the rocks of the reality that this would inevitably open up discussions of corruption and mismanagement in the economy. By 2011, popular sentiment made it clear that the state’s failure to provide had become intolerable; Syrians began to think the unthinkable, that if the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia could be overthrown, why not the regime in Syria. Sadly, they soon learned how extremely difficult that would be.
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Aurora Sottimano is a Lecturer in Political Science at the British University in Egypt and a Fellow of the Centre for Syrian Studies (St Andrews University, UK). Her research and expertise lie in the politics, political economy and international relations of the Middle East. Her research projects include the policies of development and economic reform in Ba’athist Syria and the resistance axis of Syria-Iran-Hezbollah (forthcoming books). She has conducted field research in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Bahrain. Her recent publications include “Nationalism and Reform under Bashar al Asad: Reading the ‘Legitimacy’ of the Syrian Regime” in Raymond Hinnebusch and Tina Zintl (eds.), Syria from Reform to Revolt, Volume 1: Political Economy and International Relations, (Syracuse University Press, 2015); and “Building authoritarian ‘legitimacy’: Domestic compliance and international standing of Bashar al-Asad’s Syria” in Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought (February 2016).

Syria in the ‘Resistance Front’: Persistence through Reconfiguration?

This paper examines Syrian politics within the “resistance front” (comprising Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and, until 2012, Hamas) and its trajectory from the original anti-Israel formulation to its reconfiguration during the Syrian conflict. Syria embraced the resistance front as a continuation of its nationalist policy of “steadfastness”, with a renewed anti-imperialist stance against regional (Israel) and international (U.S.) interference. This posture had been a key element of Syria’s regional strategy and authoritarian upgrading.

The onset of the Arab Spring has revealed a variety of complexities in the front, yet its “resistance” discourse - though in a twisted form - has shaped the trajectory of the Syrian uprising in a decisive way. The Syrian regime and its allies have linked the repression of the uprising to their counter-hegemonic discourse whilst expanding a range of repressive measures against Syrian opposition groups, gaining greater strategic depths (Hezbollah) and reinstating the “regional alignment” (Iran).

With the adoption of the western “war on terror”, we are seeing a re-articulation of the Syrian nationalist discourse and foreign policy as well as the transformation of the front into a transnational counterinsurgency coalition, including the introduction of new de facto partners. These developments require a reconsideration of the ideological assumptions, capabilities and persistence of the resistance front.

Within this context, the paper examines the trajectory of the Syrian politics of “resistance” at the intersection of foreign policy and domestic strategies, and explores the prospects of Syria - as a resistance front partner - in a post-conflict environment.
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Jeremy Kingsley is a legal scholar and anthropologist. He is a lawyer who blends anthropology into his scholarship, thus bringing an interdisciplinary approach to his work. He received his BA and LLB from Deakin University and his LLM and PhD degrees in Law from the University of Melbourne. His research has focused primarily upon religious and political authority in Indonesia and how this affects local governance. He is now looking at similar notions of authority in the context of the interconnections between Southeast Asia and the Middle East. He has completed a two-year Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the Asia Research Institute at NUS, as well as having lectured at Tembusu College. Jeremy has undertaken extensive field research on the eastern Indonesian island of Lombok. His work has been published in academic and public affairs journals. At MEI, he is undertaking a research project on ‘Interpreting Justice–Islam, Law and Politics in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.’

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Anthony Teo has been a member of the Middle East Institute’s Management Board since the Institute was founded in 2008. He is a former ex-officio member of the Senate and a member of the University Cabinet of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), as well as Secretary to the University and an Advisor to the President of NTU. In 2010, he was awarded the Chevalier of the French Order of the Palmes Académiques and in 2009 he was a Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University. As an alumnus of Harvard University, he is emeritus governing councillor of the HBS Global Alumni Governing Council in Boston & Advisor to HBSA-HKSAR. Mr Teo is a respected member of the business community, an investor & collaborator with Mehta & Hamilton in the trilogy - Fire, Earth and Water (Oscar nominated for best foreign film), is founding director of Greenship Holdings and Greenship Gas, shipping Mid East gas to Asia; and an Adjunct Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and at the SIM University’s School of Business and Human Development and Social Services.
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