THE COMMUNITARIAN ARAB STATE

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Introduction

The flare up of violent communitarian conflicts in Arab countries begs the question as to whether the concept of "nation-state" in the 21st century Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains viable, or whether it requires major scaffolding and reconstruction. Answering this question, in light of post-Arab Spring politics, necessitates fundamental reconsiderations of classical theoretical governance models, particularly those that have provided traditional justification for the Arab nation-state system. Such theoretical discussion is not only beneficial but also necessary, as political developments in the MENA region appear to challenge fundamental aspects of regional politics. Anomalies are fast eroding the structural foundations of states. Of particular note are those states that have constructed their legitimacy on homogeneity of their national constituencies.

This report discusses contemporary debates of Arab nationalism amid transnationalism and declining state power. It examines communitarian political discourse in multicommunitarian states and entertains different political inclusion propositions for Arab societies undergoing state legitimacy deficits. Thus, the main question that guides this research is what constitutes a legitimate and viable state given communal diversity. Specific questions entertain the means to integration and accommodations, such as constitutional revisions, electoral systems, and power sharing in various Arab countries. Accordingly, main governance options for multicommunal constituency-states are articulated and projected.

In the course of examining this question, this report revisits the discussion surrounding foundational theoretical propositions of legitimate national government. It suggests that neoliberal views have encountered serious anomalies in forecasting states' inventible transition toward democracy. Robust Arab authoritarianism is a case in point where autocratic rule has been consolidated based on a unification and security pretexts across different states. But this report reveals that the Arab Spring deconstructed the national models as globalization exacerbated interdependency and interconnection, thus removing the essential requirements that have sustained post-independent autocratic states. Simultaneously, this report considers that globalization forces have unleashed transnational communitarian dynamics across the Middle East and North Africa, prompting new requirements for state legitimacy. It suggests that contemporary state foundations transcend liberal and realist nation-state requirements in favor of a transnational multicommunitarian state paradigm. At the end of this report, alternative power-sharing options for an inclusive and pluralist state in the MENA region are articulated and proposed.

Theories of State Power and Legitimate Government

Political theorists have long debated the foundations for a sustainable and legitimate political order. The 15th century thinker Thomas Hobbes argued that a regime's legitimacy rests on its preservation of citizens' lives. Thus, absolute governmental authority is

rationalized in countering individual ambitions for power and, consequently, in preventing conflicts and war.

The mainstreaming of Hobbesian commonwealth in nationalistic discourse was culminated in suspicions of political and cultural diversity. Nationalist ideologies exerted efforts to find "commonalities" rather than "diversities" among national groups with the aim of melding them together as "one" cultural, economic, geographic, religious, or racial group. "Sophisticated" nationalism attributed to the collective imagination is a common denominator that molds groups together in a national union (Anderson 1991), while reluctant groups are "anomalized" and marginalized.

Decades after Hobbes, John Locke attempted to moderate Hobbesian philosophy with a state order that preserved property, with liberty being a critical component. Without liberty, Locke argued, neither property nor life can be protected from tyranny (Locke 1690).

Nonetheless, Locke and Hobbes agreed that body politics is an association that produces a contractual relationship between the ruler and the individual. Thus, in many ways, national liberalism owes its individualism and citizenship foundations to those early thinkers who required individuals' consent for legitimate political order and the realization of civil society.

Locke and Hobbes contributed to the tenets of nationalism by attributing to common traits of body politics. First, society is composed of individuals not collectivities. Second, the state serves two primary purposes: establish internal peace and provide for the common defense. Third, political legitimacy is established by a contractual agreement to preserve life and property through the citizenry's total or majoritarian consent. Cumulatively, the world is made up of different sovereign states established over demarcated territories and defined citizenry.

The Hobbesian-Lockean dichotomy divided Western liberalism between proponents of security and realpolitik on the one hand, and advocates of liberty and limited government on the other. The security-liberty nexus has fueled divisions and different policy outlooks for centuries.

Throughout the 20th century, these visions of state power were instrumental in the foundation of a global nation-state system. Following the demise of the League of Nations and the devastation of World War II, the United Nations applied these principles by asserting state equality and sovereignty as membership prerequisites. The preservation of security and justice among sovereign states and the philosophical tenets of political realism became the UN's fundamental aims (United Nations 1945).

Fearing that nation-states could become absolute tyrannies, the UN's Lockean outlook supplemented its initial support for state sovereignty with human rights declarations in an attempt to inject liberal justice at the domestic level (United Nations 1948). International courts were also established in order to provide litigation against crimes against humanity and genocides. Thus, states have drawn their legitimacy from their ability to protect the

life, liberty, and the property of their citizens, while submitting themselves to international rules of conduct (Waltz 1979).

Neoliberalism moved the discussion further by envisioning an inventible historic determinism toward democracy. National economic development is destined to expand the middle class, entrepreneurship, and consequently drives toward democratization. It envisioned that the homogenization of world states through democratic transition would ultimately achieve global harmony. As nations move toward democracy, according to this perspective, their common interests expand. Internal causes of war and threats of external enemies cease to exist. The notion that similarities unite and varieties antagonize is a common political proposition. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the perceived victory of liberal democracy, Francis Fukuyama prophesied an end of world anarchy and the near realization of world peace. His enthusiasm and vision for the "end of history" was inspired by the democratic peace theory, which claims that democracies around the world need not, and do not, fight one another (Fukuyama 1993).

However, the remaining 60% of the world's population living under illiberal states (Freedom House Index 2015) would require encompassing reform packages to instigate their democratic transformations. Fukuyama's vision aligned with progressive liberalism, which had long projected a transition toward world democracy. Proponents of progressive liberalism long proposed that as nation-states develop under ripe prerequisites (Lipset 1959), their respective populations mature and become democratic. Samuel Huntington captured this in his democratic wave theory, arguing that the number of democracies is steadily increasing through periodical transitions (Huntington 1991).

The Arab National Unification State Model

Post-World War II liberal aspirations, however, faced many challenges in the Arab Middle East, preventing most Arab countries from joining the ranks of democratic countries at the global level. Despite various unification and Arabization projects, Arab states continued to be plagued by instability. Post-World War II Pan-Arab nationalists blamed political deformation on skewed territorial demarcations of countries in the region by colonial design. Others suggested that post-colonial states conspired against their own populations to serve compradorial elite cartels (Luciani 1990). Consequently, post-World War II states in the Middle East and North Africa—mostly run by dictators disguised as secular nationalists or monarchs— confronted a chronic state of instability where civil unrest, repression, military coups, and popular uprisings have imprinted their life cycles. In the 1960s and 1970s, many governments in Iraq and Syria were overthrown by popular unrest and military coups. Since the 1980s, internal conflicts—most notably in multiethnic or sectarian communities of countries like Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, and Yemen—have come at the expense of human rights, peaceful alternation of power, and economic and social development.

Democratic transition was not of primary concern for the post-World War II Arab states. After half a century of Arab nationalism, the Arab state derived its legitimacy from an

articulation of foreign threats— be they Zionist, colonialist, or imperialist. National unification ("*al-Wahdah al-wataniah*") was advocated as the path for state-building and national liberation. Thus, Arab states found comfort in Hobbesian-style regimes headed by charismatic and inspiring leaders such as Gamal Abdul Nasser, Saddam Hussein, and Muammar Qaddafi. Like Charles XV of France, their arguments bore similarity to "*après moi, le deluge*" ("after us the deluge"). They further used the pretext of solidarity against external enemies as foundations for their authority and suppressing of dissent.

Various iterations of Arab and neo-Arab nationalism found their way into contemporary discussions. Still, most of these perspectives viewed diversity and ethno-sectarian pluralism with suspicion. Socio-cultural differences within the broader Arab society are often perceived as part of an orientalist construct (Abu Khalil 1992) and as a means to undermine Arab nationalism. For As'ad AbuKhalil as well as like Neo-Arabists such as Faysal Darraj, Western views of Arab nationalism assert fragmentation rather than unity in a desperate attempt to undermine Pan-Arabism (Darraj 1991).

Asad AbuKhalil went further in his considerations of Pan-Arab national revival following the first Gulf War to suggest that popular support for Saddam Hussein in confronting Western invasion was a testament to a new Arab ideology. He posited that such mobilization demonstrates a new Arabism, one that expresses a shared cultural heritage and views state borders as artificial and undesirable (AbuKhalil 1992). He claimed that the new Arab nationalism aspires for democracy as a means to unification.

But since its inception in the 1950s, the idea of Arab nationalism faced not only external challenges but also internal ones. Monarchies, for example, have been suspected of preserving antiquated patrilineal rules in defiance of modernity and popular consent. Extensive wealth has undermined the eagerness of Gulf citizens to unify with less fortunate Arabs while their regimes have subsidized public consent by oil rents (Luciani 2009). Meanwhile, Arab republics failed to assert a national or region-wide Arab ideology. On the contrary, fragmentation along ethnic, sectarian, or class lines have prevailed (Barakat 1993).

A deep-rooted conviction among secularists such as Sadeq Al-Azm is that the nation-state system has emerged to end sectarian war and religious interference in politics. The perception is that the state model denies plurality of citizenship in favor of unification under a singular authority. Thus, such secularists have leaned toward denying alternatives to state singularity, whether in consociationalist or federal power-sharing designs.

Democratic Transition and the Flare-Up of Post-Arab Spring Communitarian Conflicts

The complexity of MENA states and the powerful coercive apparatus of authoritarian regimes were significant factors in obstructing democratic transformations for many years (Salamey and Pearson 2012). Regional transitional challenges have been immense due to the robustness of Hobbesian-styled security-based states; only 5% of the total Arab populations are deemed "free" (Freedom House 2012). Several decades after the collapse of

the Soviet Union, most regimes have sustained their rule without submitting to liberal nationalism. The preservation of autocratic regimes incited some scholars to suggest a Middle Eastern "exceptionalism" thesis that attributes the illiberalism in the Arab world to Arab societies by way of indigenous cultural and situational constrains (Bellin 2005).

The 2011 Arab Spring offered hope for change as a possible fourth wave of democracy (Howard and Hussain 2013). Between 2011 and 2017, six Arab presidents in Egypt, Yemen, Tunis, and Libya were forced out of office by mass protests or military takeovers. Governments in almost every Arab state have been reestablished or reorganized, some formulating new electoral systems and inaugurating new prime ministers. Many countries introduced new constitutions or major legislative bills in the wake of Arab Spring protests. These reforms, complemented with promises of greater democratization efforts, created a wave of anti-authoritarian public sentiments.

These revolutionary upheavals in the wake of the Arab Spring have important theoretical implications for the debate surrounding the driving forces of political change and the foundations of an inclusive state. Such developments indicate that autocratic regimes were struggling in their efforts to cope with global changes and to maintain their ability to govern under the banner of nationalism. Hence, the Arab Spring protests provided ample opportunity to reassess regional prospects for "new" models of pluralistic and inclusive state alternatives to national authoritarian regimes.

Post-Arab Spring politics attest to the fact that the structural Hobbesian-foundations of these states have remained intact through the phase of "transitionalism" while Arab states continue to operate with low levels of popular support and legitimacy (Abdo et al. 2016). At the same time, militant opposition movements have gained unprecedented transnational momentum that set in motion powerful forces, mostly Islamic and sectarian. These countervailing currents attest to the failing of the social contract amid widening communitarian rifts. Among the major lessons to be drawn is that Arab states' survival has grown increasingly contingent upon the accommodation of diverse communities with allegiances often transcending territoriality (Salamey 2017).

The outburst of ethnic, sectarian, and tribal conflicts since 2010 has reignited the old Hobbesian-Lockean debate, giving each side a fresh crop of recruits. The collapsing political order was hardly replaced by a democratic alternative. The violent sectarian conflicts have strengthened the appeals for a security-based Hobbesian state to restore civil peace. Still another outcome of the Arab Spring is an assertion of nationalist, leftist, and Islamist actors that foreign meddling through traditional and primordial affiliations as seen in Iraq and Syria has been a major gateway for foreign interventions at the cost of stable states.

It is evident that a deeper sociopolitical and cultural identity crisis is now storming all the region's societies. Once united by nationalism and protected by authoritarian rule, these communities are finding themselves vulnerable to the contestation of multipolar and multiregional power struggles. The future of the region is placed in limbo and, therefore,

the reformulation of state structures that would gain the consent of the multicommunitarian constituency are of primacy.

The Double Movement and Transnationalism in the Arab World

Scholars across different disciplines have challenged the ability of states to function along the 20th century's nationalistic framework, whether small or large, colonially constructed or home grown, exclusive or inclusive (Salamey 2017). A new global political environment has been overwhelmingly reshaping the regional politics and determining a state's ability to survive new challenges.

Global integration, for example, has been a major shaper of a new world environment, represented by global economic and political interconnectedness that deconstructs the traditional functions of the nation-state. Economic indicators such as the trade balance of major productive sectors in Arab countries demonstrate growing exposure to imports and market interdependence (Salamey 2017).

Simultaneously, a global momentum has expedited the fast growth of transnational movements, particularly that of communitarian orientation in the most fragmented states. Major rising political movements such as ISIS, Muslim Brotherhoods, Salafists, Kurdish, and Shiite militant groups throughout the Arab world have become the expressions of growing transnational communitarian allegiances along cultural, economic, and military affiliations. Where states have historically struggled with diversity and ethnic pluralism, ever more demands for such diversity and pluralism have emerged in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, and Sudan.

Under these circumstances, transnational and militant movements have demonstrated significant appeal, offering arenas for contentious politics, identity frameworks, and social solutions. Presenting a span from communitarian to universalistic in cause, character, and solutions offered, a diverse range of social movements has become an integral part of regional dynamics.

There are two lenses through which to investigate the relationship between these transnational actors and the current configurations of reform, governance, and state in the Arab world: transnational communitarian resentment and multicommunitarian and inclusive state.

It is evident that the actions of communitarian groups have come to contest collective aspects of national coexistence while disputing shared boundaries, values, customs, historical accounts, and religious interpretations. The Kurdish people, for instance, have come to dispute national account of their affiliations to the Iraqi, Syrian, Turkish, or Iranian communities. Sunni Salafists have also shed serious doubts about their belonging to the nation-state throughout the Arab region. Such contentions have embedded external interventionism and foreign sponsorship of local groups in the region (Salamey 2018).

Thus, one of the critical ramifications of the Arab Spring has been the transformation of states' territorial and demographic demarcations to stretch beyond realism's "Middle Eastern exceptionalism" and liberalism's "transitionalism" theses. Communitarian groups such as adherents to Welayat Al-Faqih Shiism and Salafism have been seeking to reconstruct political allegiance along universal lines rather than within the geographic confines of a state.

In fact, contemporary regional upheavals attest to the fast deterioration of national legitimacy amid widening communitarian rifts. The state's survival emerges contingent upon the accommodation of diverse communities with affiliations transcending territoriality. Thus, state legitimacy challenges have increasingly emerged neither as a matter of sovereignty (geographically bound state-citizen construct) nor as political transnationalism (liberal-inspired reform-driven legitimacy), but more critically as foundational (power sharing between communities). Various developments in this process carry notable implications for the future of the region:

a) Radical Mobilizations: Legitimacy-deficient, nationally fragile, and communitarian-diverse states, such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain among others, have increasingly been facing radical mobilizations, including those associated with transnational extremism. Relative deprivation and the rise of social movements are key catalysts for communitarian radicalizations, prompting "economic interests and ideological allegiances to be established collectively rather than individually, strengthening communitarian group cohesion" (Salamey 2017, 13). In addition, communitarian contestation has set a region-wide struggle where groups' survival has increasingly appeared as contingent upon transnational support. This has been particularly the case where "cultural affiliations to communitarian networks are formed based on religious, ethnic, local, or patrimonial adherence, collective security and communitarian solidarity extend beyond allegiance to the nation-state" (Etzioni 2004). Direct and indirect Iranian support to militant Shiite groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain can be noted in this regard. Likewise, Turkey's support for Sunni Islamist groups in North Africa, Palestine, and Syria can follow similar parameters.

Since security is no longer solely a matter of state's jurisdictions due to the rising prominence of transnational communitarian militant actors, communitarian groups have resorted to their own means of self-help. In order to achieve their goals, such groups resort to extreme measures that include demographic transfer, massacres, genocide, and terrorism. Though these groups may not directly instigate violence, relative deprivation, social movements, and collapsing states may provide hospitable environments for the proliferation of violent communitarian extremism.

b) Islamization: Jorg Friedrichs considers "global Islamism" to be a major outburst of Karl Polyani's double movement. For him, this refers to a "strong communal engagement and the unapologetic exclusion of dissidents and outsiders"

(Friedrichs 2013). Veldhuis and Staun also complement this view, as they consider that "with globalisation, the Muslim *ummah* becomes more accessible, through technology and the internet. Hence Islamic ideologies including radical ideologies can spread more widely internationally" (Veldhuis and Staun 2009). In that sense, contemporary double movement can be defined as the simultaneous global integration and communitarianization of world politics.

c) Weak States: As Arab states in transition continue to experience turmoil, transnational social and militant movements have emerged as new key players that may more forcefully outline the directions for reform and state formation. The upheaval triggered by the Arab Spring shows little sign of abating. Across the region, brittle institutional structures collapse, exacerbated by the inflow of populations fleeing conflict, along with the partial implosion of weak states.

d) New Contract: Undoubtedly, the Arab uprisings signaled a crisis in social pacts between societies and their governments that were forged in the 1950s—social pacts that kept marginalized communitarian groups from obtaining an equal share of political influence. While most MENA countries experienced significant economic growth prior to the Arab Spring, economic liberalization policies were implemented without parallel political reforms; the level of women's participation increased but insignificantly, and the issues of marginalizing less privileged groups were left untouched. Consequently, these policies further deepened inequalities. The Arab Spring underscored the need for a new social contract premised on pluralistic and inclusive institutions.

e) Predicament of national liberalism: Among the challenges of examining post-Arab Spring regional political developments, however, are the shortcomings of liberal discourse as well as that of realpolitik in diagnosing contemporary state failures. Liberalism and realpolitik depart from the assumption that the nation-state represents the working model for international affairs, and that it forms an independent entity presiding over a confined geopolitical sovereignty of law-abiding citizens. Both fail to capture communitarian regional dynamic that defies post-colonial national construct and the individual-inspired state paradigm.

Realpolitik leans toward justifying coercion for political stability and preservation. Despite asserting citizens' rights, liberal perspectives do not account for communitarian fragility and collective mobilization along sectarian, ethnic, and tribal lines. Nor can they advocate for international laws to preserve rights of communities. Conventionally, reforms in this vein emphasized strengthening the state along a unified rule of law and centralized national authority as a prerequisite for democratization and legitimacy (Salamey 2018). However, post-Arab Spring politics has brought state's ability to protect its citizens into question. In many ways, it has liberated politics from strict geographical confinements and expanded communitarian mobilization across borders (Salamey 2017). Lorin Yochim suggests that "the history of the past three decades has been formed at the nexus of pro-systemic movements that support the expansion of the capitalist mode of accumulation

and anti-systemic counter movements that seek to mitigate the consequences of such expansion" (Yochim 2006). Put differently, "the laissez-faire movement to expand the scope of the market, and the protective countermovement that [emerged] to resist the disembodying of the economy" militate against each other (Block 2001). The countermovement encompasses a new consciousness fostered by globalization.

In this sense, a "globalization double movement" best illustrates contemporary political developments, especially developments associated with the Arab Spring (Salamey 2017). The fallout of national autocratic states and the rise of communitarian transnational movements are strongly associated with such a phenomenon.

Nation-States in the Age of Transnational Communities

Globalization's repercussions on the notion of nation-state in this framework are as follows. First, nation-states, and particularly pre-Arab Spring centralized autocracies (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya), lost significant power leverage. By the turn of the 21st century, globalization appears to have exacerbated the rise of non-state actors, open borders, a global economy, global information systems, and transnational military networks, eroding and compounding nation-states (Heywood 2011). The implications have been devastating to the point where many autocratic states have lost the ability to command national protection functions. This also indicates that the Hobbesian state is no longer a functional model and that the population is unwilling to submit to state order. The Arab Spring manifested the erosion of state ability to maintain legitimacy while failing to provide for its own citizens.

The second observation is that the deterioration of traditional protection functions of the nation-state, such as those responsible for the well-being of the national economy, security, and cultural preservation, have contributed to a widespread public resentment as expressed in street protests during the Arab Spring. At the same time, failing state services have been substituted by communitarian networks that have assumed traditional state provisions. Religious banks, schools, hospitals, orphanages, housing projects, cultural centers, political parties, and even security forces have been increasingly falling into communitarian domains. From Kurdistan to the Golan Heights, the pattern is very much the same.

More importantly, communitarian and sectarian groups have ultimately expanded their mobilization across borders to gain leverage against contending domestic groups. In that sense, the Arab Spring expanded the horizon of local national groups to seek the support and backing of kin groups across the borders. In multisectarian, multiethnic constituency states such diversity undermined national cohesion in favor of transnational affiliations. This became apparent as Sunni groups such as the Muslim Brotherhoods and Salifists, as well as Hezbollah and other Shiites groups, strengthened their cross-national affiliations with their brethren elsewhere. Thus, the national model emerged to attract treaters structural challenges by the global interconnectedness of political communities.

The third observation is that given such communitarian challenges, states have been forced to reformulate to accommodate communitarian diversity. In Iraq, federalism has been introduced despite ongoing contentions. In Morocco, a revised constitution recognizes communitarian rights, particularly toward the Amazigh. Similar integration moves can be observed in Egypt where Coptic and Nubian communities have been granted a greater yet modest share of power. Where states have rejected global forces, or have followed skewed liberalization reforms, the consequences have devastated domestic cohesion, leading to deep state legitimacy crises and, consequently, communitarian power struggles (Salamey 2017; Salamey 2018). Libya, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia are among the states undergoing violent communitarian struggles. This drives the question as to what possible political arrangement can complement the Middle East's multicommunitarian constituencies amid global changes.

Communitarianism and Inclusive States in the Arab World

A range of models has been suggested for pluralistic societies. Some of these models propose a nationalist ideology to resurrect cohesion, while others suggest a split of states into autonomous regions based on ethnic or religious groups. Still others point to the consociational power-sharing model to secure stability and democratically elected representatives. Lastly, it has been argued that a liberal democracy can best undermine communitarian differences and pave the way for global citizenship (Haddad 2009).

Among the propositions that claim to address the challenges of state legitimacy amid transnational communitarian mobilizations is that of a communitocratic state or a communitocracy. A state based on communitocracy distributes power among communities rather than individual citizens. Such a state structure differs from democracy in at least two ways. First, it provides for pluralism rather than majoritarian rule. Second, it allows for the "expression of communal interests in a state's policy outlooks" rather than strictly that of the individual constituency (Salamey 2017). State communitocracy has been implemented in various countries around the world, particularly those with clearly marked communitarian groups. The MENA region need not view such an arrangement with suspicions as a source of weaknesses and division. On the contrary, world experience with power sharing demonstrates the opposite, as is the case in the most powerful countries that implement federalism as their choice for a political system, including the United States, Germany, Canada, Russia, and Switzerland. Others utilize consociationalism with relative success, such as Belgium and Malaysia. Lebanon and Iraq have utilized consociationalism and federalism consecutively. Such arrangements may need to be considered elsewhere in countries such as Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, and Somalia among others.

One of the major remaining predicaments confronting Arab societies is establishing alternative governance foundations to prevent the growing rifts between communities. An unprecedented challenge is the restructuring of state foundations to accommodate communitarian diversity while transcending "sovereignty" beyond territoriality. Communitocracy appears as a potential power-sharing arrangement that can preserve

communitarian political autonomies with margins of cultural and economic affiliations extending beyond state borders.

What is needed is to further examine whether a "foundational" state approach can address transnationalism through restructuring MENA polity in the direction of an inclusive multicommunitarian state. Whether state legitimacy can be consolidated by communitarian plurality rather than homogeneity and national hegemony remains among the primary challenges.

Prospective Models for Inclusive and Pluralistic States in the Arab World

The 21st century's political communities may no longer be constrained by traditional political boundaries, but rather by the prevalence of cultural identity affiliations that serve groups in collective bargaining. This growing trend is shifting political discourse from the confines of nationalism toward communal modes of collectivism (Salamey 2017).

Arend Lijphart argues that plural societies require power-sharing arrangements other than democratic majoritarianism, which may only be suitable for culturally homogeneous societies (Lijphart 2002). An alternative political design, he suggests, is required to accommodate the autonomy and cultural peculiarities of pluralistic polities. Lijphart proposes a "consociational democracy" as a plausible arrangement for plural societies, particularly for countries whose demographic distributions prevent geographic separation or federalization (Lijphart 1969; Salamey 2017).

Despite the many criticisms of consociationalism for its tendency to fragment societies (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972), its attraction lies in its capacity to undermine authoritarianism and communal repression. Power sharing in a consociational order distributes state spoils among groups while protecting the social and cultural distinction of each. Consensus assures every group a representative quota, autonomous rights, and veto power, while the majority is prevented from practicing tyranny. Power sharing can provide a framework for multicommunitarian and pluralist politics, while embedding the various shortfalls of identity-based mobilizations.

The attractiveness of integrative consociationalism is in forging a power-sharing arrangement that can help diffuse growing geopolitical contentions. This is particularly the case as Arab states have been subjugated to intermestic politics, irredentist movements, and globalization. Consociationalism ensures collective security and mutuality in coexistence while undermining threats of marginalization due to relative size and spatial location through a solid share in power.

Different sectarian, ethnic, and tribal groups in the region have continued to present contrasting claims over the identities of towns and cities like their brethren in various MENA states (Anderson and Stansfield 2009). Consociational power-sharing options, therefore, appear relevant for governance considerations in a multicommunitarian environment because such arrangements recognize communal diversity.

Thus, the fact that most Arab states were established within relatively small and highly contested geographic areas with varying communitarian demographic realities that transcend associations beyond national borders is an additional reason for why a consociational power-sharing arrangement may be viable.

In addition to struggles over space, the varied sizes of ethno-cultural groups within a society often attract communitarian contentions. For instance, Sunni and Kurdish groups in Iran are minorities, while Shia, Alawi, Druze, Turkmen, and Amazigh communities are minorities in Arab states (Longva and Roald 2015; Weitz 2015). Such definitions have exacerbated feelings of deprivation and fear of domination by larger groups (Boie and Rae 2015). Integrative forms of communitarianism offer a means to diffuse demographically driven contentions by ensuring representative quotas.

The suitability of Lijphart's consociational governance arrangement for Syria has yet to unfold. Whether such an allocation of power distribution would serve for the foundation of permanent or transitional regimes is undetermined as of yet (Butenschøn et al. 2015). The major advantages of consociationalism, however, lie in its ability to mitigate communal conflicts that are territorially, demographically, and internationally insinuated. It ensures the preservation of communities irrespective of spatial allocation, size, or transnational associations (Salamey 2017).

In this regard, consociationalism can prove instrumental in a future political transition in Syria. Sectarian and ethnic divisions as well as foreign influences in the country would require a delicate distribution of political offices among Alawis, Sunnis, Christians, and Kurds. One aspect of consociationalism that might be particularly fitting for Syria could be the establishment of bicameralism, where communitarian interests are expressed in the upper house while national representations are preserved in the lower house. Such distribution not only ensures communitarian power sharing but also guarantees autonomy, whether sectarian or regional.

Consociationalism might also serve well in Yemen. A combination of tribal and sectarian communitarian power sharing through a balance arrangement is among the prerequisites for an acceptable political agreement. Houthi, Zaydi, and Sunni distribution of power that accommodates both Northern and Southern tribes provides an entry point for any political settlement. Such a distribution would allocate public seats along communitarian lines, particularly in the highest posts. Electoral systems would provide proportional representation to accommodate different groups.

Conclusion: The Feasibility and Challenges of Communitarian Rule in the Arab Region

Almost every Pan-Arab nationalist republic has witnessed a similar course of rising political contestations between identity groups. Iraq paved the way, whereby Kurdish and Shia discontent with the Ba'ath regime led to a legitimacy crisis, prompting international interventions and eventually violent confrontations. Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, and

Syria have experienced a similar fate with societal fragmentation and divergence along sectarian, tribal, and regional lines.

Syria's ethno-sectarian social fabric, for example, has burst out in unprecedented inter- and intra-violent conflict over the fate and nature of political power. Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Druze, Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian groups now dispute not only Bashar al-Assad's rule, but also Syria's Arab, Islamic, secular, and federal nature. These multiple conflicts do not only reflect Syria's regional and international affiliations but also the proximity of various international actors to the conflict such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Europe, and the United States. Many factors led to the eruption of conflict and the fallout of the social contract, sharing important similarities with other Arab autocracies. Common to all is the half-century-old practices of nationalization projects that sought to undermine communal differences in favor of a unified national identity.

Many minority groups were co-opted by secular Arab nationalists to establish majoritarian ruling coalitions based on political and ideological discourse rather than ethnic or religious identity that ultimately aimed to undermine communitarian differences. Pan-Arabism was prophesied as an encompassing national affiliation that could accommodate regional subgroups under a secular state. Yet this projection has hardly succeeded and the reign of nationalists attests to how communitarian elitism and forced assimilation have only exacerbated domestic contentions.

While the idea of "united we stand and divided we fall" was imprinted in the Arab nationalist ideology, in practical terms it revealed itself as a means to justify repression and marginalization. In most Arab republics, a state of emergency was sustained for decades under the pretext of fighting external enemies. The militarization of society became fully consumed with confrontations and conviction of urgency as the phrase "*La Sawta Ya'alou Fawka Sawt Al-Maarakh*" ("no voice prevails over the barrel of the gun") legitimized autocratic reign: one party, one leader, one citizen.

Still, "unification reductionism" drastically failed to achieve its objectives. The short-lived United Arab Republic formed in 1958–1961 between Syria and Egypt was followed by a series of similar failed attempts between Libya and Egypt, while major disputes erupted between Libya and Algeria and factionalism created rivalry between the Syrian and Iraqi branches of the ruling Ba'ath parties. Similarly, these Arab countries failed to prevail over their common enemy, Israel. Instead, Israel emerged triumphant in the 1967 Six-Day War and subsequently signed the Camp David Peace Accords with Egypt in 1978, followed by Jordan and the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s.

The Arabism project under Saddam Hussein sought to change the ethno-sectarian demographic composition of cities such as Kirkuk and Baghdad and engage in population engineering in Mosul and Basra to undermine Kurds and Shias. The fallout from the U.S. military intervention in 2003 accompanied by multiple Shia and Kurdish insurgencies signaled a new political reality.

In an increasingly globalized world, groups' affiliation with the nation-state may take on diverse and even contradictory paths. Geography may no longer be an essential factor in determining a group's identity; national borders seem to have lost relevance as groups discover commonalities beyond the confines of national borders. A sectarian and ethnic resurgence among Middle Eastern groups with irredentist aspirations is an important development where groups such as Sunni, Shia, Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, Houthis, and Amazigh discover advantageous transnational associations (Salamey 2017).

But when communitarian groups reach out to their brethren beyond national borders, they often discover new powers and strategic relevance, a situation that strengthens their political positions and heightens their particularities in relation to other national groups.

Groups in Arab countries have come to recognize that their relevance in any political settlement and power arrangement is contingent upon foreign backing. Iran's support of the Shiites in Iraq and Saudi support for the anti-Houthi government in Yemen are demonstrations of growing communitarian transnationalism.

Evidently, the contemporary political reality reveals the social pacts that have governed the multicommunitarian societies throughout the post-independent Arab nation-state formation have come under increasing challenge by marginalized groups. Post-Arab Spring national contracts in most MENA states encounter serious breaches that require urgent rearrangements. Reformulations seem to require fundamental reconstructions of state foundations.

The urgency of such a new state restructuring as part of a post-conflict agreement stems from its potential to provide a mutual understanding among contending groups regarding a new regional realism. Contemporary conflicts in the region are arguably due in part to the absence of a political agreement that can provide an accommodating distribution of power. Perhaps the ability to devise such a post-conflict power-sharing agreement can determine the ability of many MENA societies to navigate paths toward conflict resolution.

Admittedly, there are serious ramifications associated with the external sponsorship of local communal groups. "Critical-consociationalists" like John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary highlight the potential dual role of external parties in exacerbating conflict and facilitating power-sharing agreements (McGarry and O'Leary 2007). Similarly, Michael Kerr emphasizes foreign countries' imposition of power-sharing arrangements as instrumental tools in framing "consociationalism" (Kerr 2005). Lijphart also observed that "the stability of Lebanon is partly due to its productive economy and the social equilibrium it has maintained so far," while also noting that it "may not be able to continue its successful consociational politics when the burdens on the system increase" (Lijphart 2008). Donald Horowitz suggests that an identity-based distribution of power may consolidate politics among divergent and competing cleavages (Horowitz 1993).

After all, external involvement in local affairs is an intervening factor in shaping political outcomes in plural societies. It becomes rational for communities to strengthen their

domestic bargaining powers through the extraction of transnational alliances. Consequently, power-sharing arrangements may continuously require the ratification of sponsoring regional and global interests. But in an increasingly interconnected region, this can be viewed in positive terms. External sponsorship for peaceful settlement and economic cooperation may provide a safeguard to long-term peace (Kerr 2005).

Still more challenging to communitarian conflict is the engagement of non-state transnational militant actors such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, as well as the large number of foreign fighters in their ranks. While their military defeat may be difficult, their inclusion in political negotiations may prove impossible. However, power-sharing agreements may undermine the hospitable environment that has favored extremists' recruitment. Diffusing tensions between communitarian groups under the auspices of international and regional sponsorship is sure to pull the rug from under the extremists' feet.

Lastly, power sharing may consolidate identity politics and deepen communitarian differences, as has been the case in consociational states like Lebanon, Iraq, Ireland, and Belgium. A fragmented polity and weak government is typically the most common negative externality of such arrangements. At the same time, attaining peace in complex contexts such as Syria may not come easily. Devising short-term and transitional conflict mitigation strategies is of utmost urgency. Eventual negotiations between groups within an environment devoid of conflict may pursue avenues that favor greater integration and less fragmentation. Deconfessionalization of public posts, for instance, as well as mixed constituency electoral districts and proportional representation, may prove essential for lasting peace in such contexts.

To reach long-term goals of inclusionary states that accommodate pluralistic governance, Arab governments must engage in reforms that combine communitarian coexistence and gender equality with shared-governance. Fundamental policy reforms that would strengthen governmental response to transnational and radical communitarian networks in the region are among the priorities. Rising transnational movements and their repercussions on the foundation of an inclusive multicommunitarian and accommodating state remain among the primary challenges of contemporary states.

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