CHAPTER 1

Comparative Post-conflict Power Sharing Models for Syria

Imad Salamey, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Elie Abouaoun

The Dilemma of Post-"Arab Spring" Transition

Arab states founded post-World War II (WWII) have struggled to establish legitimate foundations. First, monarchies have been suspect of preserving antiquated patrilineal rules in defiance of modernity and popular legitimacy. Second, national republics have embraced a non-inclusive Arab nationalism that they opted to implement with brutality.

A skewed territorial demarcation of republics and monarchies, largely blamed on the colonial construct modeled after the Sykes Picot's arrangement, is among the many factors that claimed to have caused the

I. Salamey (✉)
Institute for Social Justice and Conflict Resolution,
Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon

M. Abu-Nimer
Peacebuilding and Development Institute, American University,
Washington, DC, USA

E. Abouaoun
United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, USA

© The Author(s) 2018

I. Salamey et al. (eds.), *Post-Conflict Power-Sharing Agreements*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-60104-5_1

political deformation.[1] States have been suspect of conspiring against their own populations to serve compradorial elite cartels (Luciani 1990). Consequently, states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, mostly run by kleptocratic dictators disguised as secular nationalists or monarchs, confronted a chronic state of instability where civil unrest, repression, domestic violence, military coups, breakups, and, lately, popular uprisings have chronically imprinted their life cycles. The regimes created during this period, and the personalities behind them, managed to sell the idea, however, that they had achieved stability in their countries. However, the suppression of internal conflicts, notably in multi-ethnic or sectarian communities' in countries such as Syria or Iraq, came at the expense of human rights, peaceful alternance of power, and economic and social development, among others.

Efforts to scaffold the legitimacy deficit in Arab states under the "transitionalism" project coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Third Wave theory (Huntington 1991). The project aimed to inject gradual reform mechanisms that can, cumulatively, spark a gradual democratic transformation. International development and empowerment projects overwhelmed many countries through a variety of political contexts, most recently articulated under the "Theory of Change" (Rowland and Smith 2014; Collins and Clark 2013). Tenants of this theory vary and include driving assumptions such as economic developments, gender equity, transparency, youth empowerment, efficient government, and electoral reforms.

Yet, the structural foundations of these states have remained intact through this "transitionalism" and the Arab states have continued to lack legitimacy and have seen declining popular support (Abdo et al. 2016). At the same time, militant opposition movements have gained unprecedented transnational momentum that have set in motion powerful forces, mostly Islamic and other sectarian groups, vowing to eradicate Arab regimes.

Post-"Arab Spring" politics and contemporary political upheavals in the MENA region attest to the breakdown of the social contract amid widening communitarian rifts over the very nature of the state. A state's survival, and legitimacy, is increasingly emerging as contingent upon the accommodation of diverse communities with affiliations and allegiance often transcending territoriality (Salamey 2017).

Between 2011 and 2017, 5 Arab presidents were overthrown, 7 constitutions were drafted or amended, and 20 new governments and prime ministers were inaugurated. Scholars and researchers remain inquisitive as

of the drivers of political change in the region. The intriguing question is why have societies in the MENA region, who have for decades accommodated autocratic regimes, one party governments, and single leader-rule, suddenly emerged as defiant? Is the region indeed undergoing a democratic transformation?

However, this is only part of the question. The region has also experienced devastating waves of violence and turmoil. Six years after the eruption of the so-called Arab Spring, more than half a million people have lost their lives, several millions have been injured, close to 15 million have been forcibly displaced, while major towns and cities have been destroyed.

Unprecedented foreign military intervention and buildup in the region surged the role of non-state armed actors and brought more than 30 armies including those of the United States and Russia to battle for spheres of influence in separate attempts to preserve or undermine states.

Across the political map, post-independent states no longer appear the same: Sudan has split in two. Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya have splintered apart. Drives toward Kurdish independence have gained momentum while the Islamic State (ISIS) has expanded, fought to maintain territorial control, and assumed state functions in part of Syria and Iraq. Samuel Huntington would have attributed intra as well as inter clash of civilizations to contemporary Middle Eastern multi-layered conflicts (Huntington 1996).

Amid regional volatility, states are experiencing deep legitimacy crises, a situation that has driven many communities in the region to resort to their own means for self-help and preservation. And thus, perhaps, the comprehensive question to ask is whether the concept of "nation-state" in the twenty-first-century MENA remains viable? Or whether, and alternatively, it requires major scaffolding and fundamental reconstruction?

This volume is published while the structural transformation assessment of states in the MENA remains lacking. For fragmented states undergoing violent confrontations, such as Syria, a vision for a post-conflict political arrangement may help catalyze agreements for peaceful settlements and/or transition.

Thus, the urgency of this work stems from the fact that, since the eruption of the "Arab Spring", Syria along with the rest of the Middle Eastern states have slipped toward a deeper socio-political and cultural identity crisis. The decline of post-"Arab Spring" nation-states has left many communities in duress. Once united under the banner of nationalism and protected by republics and monarchies, these communities have found themselves vulnerable to the contestation of multi-polar and multi-regional power

struggles spilling onto their homelands. The future of the MENA region is placed in a limbo and, therefore, the reformulation of state structures that would gain the consent and approval of the multi-communitarian constituency are of primacy.

Since 2011, to the date of writing, political violence among ethnic and sectarian groups in Syria has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and led to the displacement of millions. It is now unthinkable to seek an end to this conflict without forecasting a political roadmap that provides for a new "model" of inclusive governance for the Syrian state and includes solutions for the displaced populations, retribution to the victims, community-based reconciliation, and reconstruction—all within the perspective of building a viable peace.

Declining States and Rising Communitarianism

Among the challenges in the examination of post-Arab Spring political developments in the Middle East, however, are the shortcomings of liberal discourse as well as that of *Realpolitik* in diagnosing contemporary state failures. Liberalism as well as *Realpolitik* depart from the assumption that the "nation-state" represents the fundamental working model for international affairs, and that it forms an independent entity and presides over a confined geopolitical sovereignty consisting of law-abiding citizens.

Realpolitik leans toward justifying coercion for the sake of political stability and state preservation. Despite the assertion of human and political rights for citizens, liberal perspectives do not account for deep communitarian fragility and collective mobilization along sectarian, ethnic, regional, and tribal lines. Nor can they advocate international laws to preserve and protect rights for communities outside of the jurisdiction and approval of superpowers. The strengthening of the state along a unified rule of law and centralized national authority have persisted as prerequisites for political reforms and democratization.

However, post-"Arab Spring" politics attest to the fact that globalization has dramatically transformed the essential function of protection of its citizens from the hands of the state into the hands of the community. It has liberated politics from the strict confinement posed by geography while helping expand communitarian mobilization and outreach across borders: a double movement that simultaneously stimulates globalization and communitarianization (Salamey 2017).

The repercussions for the model of the "nation-state", in general, and for Syria are the following:

First, nation-states, and particularly centralized autocracies, appear to have lost the fundamental power leverage that had traditionally sustained their rules. The rise of non-state actors, open borders, global economy, trade and finance, transnational companies, global information systems, global advancements in transportation and technologies, and transnational military networks are among the globalization forces eroding and compounding nation-states (Heywood 2011). The implications have been devastating to the point where states have lost the ability to command national protection functions.

In Syria, for instance, liberalization policies that coincided with the commencement of President Bashar Al Assad's presidency in 2000, contributed to a growing trade deficit that reached 3.7 billion dollars in 2008 compared to a surplus of 1.7 billion dollars in 2004 (UNSD 2014). Syria's trade imbalance continued to increase throughout the decade. National economic sectors, particularly agriculture, were most badly damaged due to these uneven trade flows.

The exposure to world economic market forces and foreign investment has been responsible for the rise of new economic sectors. Selected globalization-driven industries linked to foreign domestic investments and connected to transnational companies have risen. Heavily centralized states have been confronted with unprecedented pressure by global lending and financial institutions to liberalize their economies (Heywood 2011, p. 116), but given the centralized authority, most liberalization activities have been driven by elites and close associates through nepotistic and political patronage networks.

For instance, a range of multi-national real estate enterprises, tourism, and hotel industries began to thrive in Damascus and other major cities, such as Aleppo. This is best demonstrated in the type of investments that came under the control of Al Assad's close confidant and cousin Rami Makhlouf.

According to a 2011 *Financial Times* report, Makhlouf is thought to have controlled as much as 60 % of the Syrian economy through his web of business interests (Peel 2011). These investments included the two-leading licensed mobile phone companies in Syria (Syriatel & MTN Syria), in addition to a majority share in Cham Holding: a holding company with a portfolio including luxury tourism companies (Al Mada'in), restaurants, real estate (Sourouh, Fajr, Al Batra, and Al Hada'iq), and Syrian Pearl

Airlines—Syria's second national carrier after Syrian Air. In the banking sector, Makhlouf invested in banks including the International Islamic Bank of Syria, Al Baraka Bank, the International Bank of Qatar, Cham Bank, the Bank of Jordan in Syria, and in the oil sector. He profited from deals with the British Oil company Gulf Sands Petroleum. Makhlouf's further investments included a major share in media companies such as the daily newspaper *Al Watan*, radio/television station Ninar, and satellite station Dunya TV. He also held shares in the advertising companies Promedia, educational companies such as the Chouwayfat schools, telecommunications giant Eltel Middle East, and Public Works company Ramak TP (Badran 2013).

The second observation is that the deterioration of traditional protection functions of the "nation-state", such as those pertaining to national economy, security, and the preservation of culture have been substituted by communitarian networks and political parties. Ethnic, sectarian, religious, tribal, and faith-based organizations have been fast growing across borders while assuming traditional state provisions. Religious banks and investments, religious and ethnic schools, hospitals, orphanages, housing projects, real estates, cultural centers, political parties, and even militias and security forces have been increasingly falling into communitarian domains. From Kurdistan to the Golan Heights, the pattern is very much the same.

Communitarian, sectarian, and ethnic groups have, thus, expanded their outreach and mobilization across borders to gain power leverage against perceived contending domestic groups. In Syria, alliance formations and regional support have implicated its Alawi, Sunnis, Kurds, Druze, and Orthodox communities among others.

The third observation is the fact that given such regional and national communitarian contestation, states have been forced to reformulate in order to complement and accommodate communitarian diversity and rising powers. Where states have rejected global forces, or have followed skewed liberalization reforms, the consequences have come to devastate domestic social and political cohesion, leading to a deep state legitimacy crisis and, consequently, to communitarian power struggles (Salamey 2017). This drives the question as to what possible political arrangement can complement the Middle East and that of Syria's multi-communitarian constituencies given the global reality and ongoing violent conflict.

The Syrian Conflict and Prospective Resolutions

In 2017, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 12 million Syrians have been forcibly displaced, of which close to 5 million have been registered with the agency (UNHCR 2017). Practically, the entire country's population has been directly implicated by the violence with spillover felt in neighboring states.

Territorial fighting over cities and towns has resulted not only in the destruction of main cities such as Aleppo, Homs, Deir Al-Zour, Idlib, and many of Damascus's suburbs but also in a systematic cleansing, population transfer, and destruction of entire communities due to sectarian and ethnic violence: a situation that has only helped produce an environment that breeds and incubates sectarian extremism and foreign military interventionism.

It can be recognized that what began as peaceful protests for political reforms, part of the mass movements against corruption that swept many Arab states in 2011, turned into civil war and has since spiraled into a highly complex and multi-faceted conflict involving many political and social groups, as well as regional and international actors. In addition to the initial parties to the conflict—the government and armed opposition forces—violence has spurred along inter and intra sectarian and ethnic lines.

Adding to the complex diversity of Syrian society, ethnic groups often have adherents to different faiths or denominations across the region. This is made further complex by the involvement of international actors, whether they be formal, such as other states, or informal, such as non-state violent extremist groups. Hence, regional and international powers—such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, the United States, and Israel among others—are directly implicated, prompting their intervention in the conflict.

Thus, any conflict mitigation requires consideration of the political aspirations and power interests of not only the regional and international powers, but most importantly the diverse groups within Syrian society, such as Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Circassians, Kurds, Syriacs, and Turkmen (Saleh 2013), and several religions including Alawites, Druze, various Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox denominations, Ismaili, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Shia, Sunni, and Yazidi.

In such an environment, a power sharing formulation to the satisfaction of contending groups may express an essentialism for conflict resolution. The end of the Lebanese sectarian civil war as well as that

of Bosnia-Herzegovina are cases in point, attesting to a simultaneous confidence and peacebuilding process emerging alongside a post-conflict agreement that stipulated power sharing arrangements and guarantees.

Historic and international experiences, as well as recent examples, provide important clues for power sharing in Syria.

The prevailing reality in the region is one of weak national identities compared to the sub-national communal identities whether tribal, ethnic, sectarian, or otherwise. This is a legacy of years of inappropriate political governance models imposed by the "secular-colonial" powers who decided to enforce "a national identity" on the inhabitants of the newly found countries. Chronic instability and political division in most post-colonial independent states can be attributed to such deformations. In fact, this "colonial" design appears to have instigated the cause for transnational militant movements (Islamists, socialist, and Pan-Arabist) to justify its proclamation for armed resistance against Western domination.

As with many other conflicts in the region, the Syrian conflict appears to be an upheaval against the regime. However, it entails many additional dynamics, some of which are regional while others are national, communitarian and intra-group, or an extension of anti-colonial discourse.

In 2010, General Raymond Odierno declared that the United States "came in naïve about what the problems were in Iraq. I don't think we understood what I call the societal devastation that occurred". After deposing Saddam Hussein, the US-led coalition constructed a political system that ignored class, nationalist, and other dynamics in favor of a simple calculation based on Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish groupings. The result was a major driver of resentment and sorrow among the Iraqi population leading to the entrenchment of violence and political crises.

In 1943, Lebanon devised an informal power sharing agreement between dominant sectarian groups, namely Shiite, Sunni, Maronite Catholic, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, ethnic Armenian, Druze, and other Muslim and Christian minorities known as the National Pact (Salamey 2014). The agreement meant to establish a temporary distribution of political power while the country was undergoing a transition away from direct French colonial rule. Yet, despite its initial "transitional" intention, it became deeply rooted in the country's political tradition while establishing the fundamentals of electoral rules in the distribution of power. The sectarian-based arrangement has attracted wide controversy and debate between proponents and opponents. The former have attributed to this form of Lebanese consociationalism communitarian safeguards and plurality while the latter has blamed it for insinuating fragility and civil war.

Examining the failures and success of such experiences and their potential adaptation in Syria is a fundamental research task to devise future political settlement agreements.

Moreover, the diversity of the Syrian nation as well as the numerous different parties involved in the conflict and those affected by it, whether it be those inside Syria or those who have been forced to flee, need to be taken into consideration in any power sharing projection in order to be acceptable and implementable. After all, the attainment and consolidation of peace can only be achieved if agreements are accepted and reinforced by citizens of the society through their participation and integration in the process (Racioppi and See 2007). This includes not only a multi-ethnic and multi-religious approach but also multi-level, incorporating the political and religious elite, middle and grassroots levels of Syrian society (Abu-Nimer et al. 2001).

Furthermore, post-conflict agreements need to include certain provisions (political and legal) to ensure that marginalized and minority group rights are addressed. Though such clauses can be embedded in constitutional guarantees, power sharing, and allocation of public offices would serve as assurance to minorities and/or historically vulnerable groups. The reestablishment of a Syria multi-communitarian identity that would guarantee the inclusion of all groups, however, may need to avoid segregation options, such as those utilized in Kosovo during the early 2000s (Simonsen 2004).

Warning from experiences that have produced separation and exclusionary discourse needs to alert post-conflict arrangements as they may quickly help plunge the country toward renewed cycles of violence. Instead, cooperation and integration through the affirmation of joint interest may need to be asserted: “If interest in the other group is not present, shared interests may be used to bring together people from different ethnic [or religious] groups” (Simonsen 2004). Inter-communitarian dialogue activities may be a requirement in order to consolidate reconciliation processes (Abu-Nimer et al. 2001).

Of course, it will be futile to speak about power sharing and reconciliation in Syria without addressing or recognizing the role of religious communities and respective leadership. The transformation of religious groups’ roles toward peacebuilding and reconciliation away from that of polarization and violent mobilization is a critical prerequisite for conflict resolution (Abu-Nimer 2008). In fact, religion may help “rebuild injured relationships (healing and closure) and meet the needs of conflicting parties (in other words, to achieve reconciliation)” (Abu-Nimer et al. 2001).

This will particularly be the case in Syria where religious texts, symbols, and rituals have been misused to advocate violence and commit atrocities, knowing full well that the same sources can be utilized to promote peaceful coexistence. This is particularly the case because "for individuals and societies who view the world primarily through their religious identity, there is a strong commitment, ability, and conviction that their conflict is religious and therefore its resolution can only be processed through religious tracks. Second, religious identity has provided for thousands of years sources of energy and guidance for most humans on ways to handle their lives" (Abu-Nimer 2008).

Thus far, the international responses to the Syrian conflict have fallen short of providing a power sharing agreement to resolve political disputes that have soaked the country in an ethno-sectarian conflict, embedding multi-faceted complexities, as well as different forms of regional and international military intervention.

Fueling the fear of implementation of such a communitarian power sharing solution is the concern that the empowerment of local actors may reinforce tribal, religious, and other hierarchical power structures and bolster fragmentation. It is problematic to legitimize and politically recognize communal groups who often act as autonomous collectivities unbound by external regulations or common rules.

This is the reason why inter-communitarian peace, invariably means more than the settlement of the major national issues (Odendaal 2013). It requires, among other things, dialogue and deliberation among groups to prepare the ground for common and mutual interests that the state can uphold. In many circumstances, such as those in Syria, local conflicts do not mirror those widely perceived as national. In many ways, they embed their own peculiarities, histories, conditions, and complexities. Thus, a sustainable post-conflict power sharing agreement requires sufficient local ownership, mainstreaming, and support. It includes a sufficient level of communitarian protection that can encompass cross-communitarian mutuality and collective interests (Reese 2016; Wilson 2014).

Peacebuilding in Syria

Peacebuilding has no universally accepted definition and, subsequently, there is no universal approach to building peace in societies affected by protracted conflicts (MacGinty and Williams 2009, 99). In its most generic sense, peacebuilding is defined as an "action to identify and support

structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali 1992, para 21).

Most peacebuilding theories include at least two components: reducing direct violence and transforming relationships (Schirch and Sewak 2005). Obviously, both approaches are highly relevant to any Syrian power sharing context.

After all, the Syrian conflict has many root causes, stemming from both local and regional dynamics. They range from political and social exclusion, a shift in social paradigms toward an increased acceptance of violence, a deconstruction of an artificially maintained social contract and a decline of a national identity that was forcefully forged over several decades of autocratic rules. While bringing an end to the direct violence prevailing today in most of Syria is crucial to any peacebuilding effort, maintaining stability is mostly contingent on addressing other generators of violence, the first of which comes from the shifting norms in most of Syria's communities toward considering violence as a legitimate means to address grievances and exclusion. This grassroots approach is aggravated by the "fear of the other" cynically mainstreamed by various parties to the conflict among their respective constituencies. Such prevalent conceptualization of others impedes any attempt to build peace in Syria.

Addressing the "fear of the others" must be accompanied by countering the "legitimization" of violence as an integrated conflict resolution approach to the reduction of violence.

Violence, terrorism, corruption, discrimination, and violations of rights are endemic problems to Syria (and the entire MENA region). They certainly have many causes. However, among the major drivers is the lack of inclusive social contracts. Inclusive social contracts need to regulate the relation between various collectivities forming the population of the country and inspiring inter- and intra-group relations. This is apparent in the fact that the conflict in Syria has raged among different religious, ethnic, or sectarian groups while hammering intra-group cohesion.

Among the prescribed resolutions for the Syrian conflict is, therefore, the rebuilding of inter- and intra-group relations as a fundamental approach to peacebuilding. A "cultural transition" appears to be a prerequisite alongside that of political agreements. Failing to trigger such a transition makes any peacebuilding attempt short-lived, if not set to fail, from its inception. Still, power sharing that assures the inclusion of all groups in state decision-making provides an encompassing strategy that can help defuse suspicions and provide a hospitable environment to drive cultural transition.

In the evaluation workshop of a pilot community dialogue initiative conducted by the US Institute of Peace in Northeastern Syria,[2] an elderly tribal leader considered that the successful dialogue initiative he was part of allowed him to realize that the non-violent methods he used for the last 40 years (as a tribal leader) were still conducive despite the widespread violence in the country. Obviously, this observation was not the result of a sudden emotional surge. It stemmed from the mere fact that he, and the group of 20 other leaders who were instrumental for the success of this dialogue initiative, were able to recover rights and preserve the interests of a community they claimed to represent/defend. Thus, the key element in the much-needed cultural transition is not simply raising awareness or preaching nonviolence. It is actually showing Syrians that non-violent conflict resolution tactics can also help communities recover their rights and preserve their interests in a setting of inclusion and mutuality, in other words bringing the game back to the realm of "politics".[3]

On another note, the conflict, with its local and regional ramifications, deepen an already existing "fear" among Syrians, namely the risk of losing local identities. Simplistic approaches to this problem always preach the formation of a unified and secular national identity as a rampart against violence and fragmentation. However, this has only proven to have generated autocratic rules, repression, and subsequent violent ramifications as exemplified by the experiences of Baathism in Syria and Iraq, an approach that has played well into the hands of violent and transnational extremist groups who have portrayed secular nationalism as a conspiracy against Islam. Islamists' calls for the restoration of *ummah* and the golden age of Islam under "the caliph" have inspired recruits among young jihadists convinced that their martyrdom will help reunite Muslims.

Thus, secularism without appropriate power sharing mechanisms and political as well as religious assurances would only help exacerbate the current perception of an anti-Islamic conspiracy by the secular West. The accommodation of multi-culturalism and religious diversity while advocating compassion and tolerance have been widely practiced in countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United States and, therefore, should not be denied to countries in the region themselves. Religious mainstreaming may be instrumental in denouncing violence and extremism rather than the contrary. This is where the interaction between peacebuilding efforts in Syria and moderate religious figures is essential in deconstructing the discourse on the "war against Islam".

Power Sharing as Peacebuilding

Still among the most crucial aspects of any negotiated agreement is the foundation of a political agreement that provides for power sharing among different rival groups contesting power. On the table, however, is the potential split and break-up, particularly in the absence of a satisfactory agreement. Alternatively, the proposition of a confederation, federation, or consociational power sharing arrangement is among the alternative options. Each appears to require a complex set of perquisites including regional and international endorsement as well as that of a domestic consensus. Each entails advantages and pitfalls to reconciliation and peacebuilding. This work examines the suitability of different possible postures derived from comparative experiences and analyses and highlights opportunities and challenges embedded in every scenario within the Syrian context.

Political developments in Syria have witnessed the rapid formation of identity politics. Because of shared cultural and political traits, Syria is often observed through the lens of Lebanon or even Iraq but not as the case *sui generis* that it is. But Syrian society was much more secular and liberal than many other countries in the region. Therefore, any Islamist radicalization in Syria must be evaluated from the context of war, brutality, traumatization, proxy wars, disillusionment with Western politics, and Islamist influence from a shattered Iraq and beyond.

A historic assessment would clearly point to the nationalist discourse that Syria underwent under Hafez Al Assad where "Syrianness" as an identity option gained ground, whereas his son Bashar Al Assad's failed reform initiatives paved the ground for a much-polarized sectarian discourse.

Hafez Al Assad adopted a hybrid approach in many aspects. While he positioned himself as a staunch enemy of Israel, Syria remained, for decades, the only country that claimed to be on the forefront of the fight against Israel while preserving an optimal pacification of its border with its alleged "enemy". Al Assad heavily promoted a so-called secular Syrian identity while at the same time fueling fears among demographic minority groups (Alawites, Christians, and Druze) about the dangers of Sunni hegemony. Another ambiguity in the Baath regime doctrine lies in the establishment of a strong centralized system while simultaneously mobilizing and empowering proponent local tribal and religious groups in its efforts to assert its authority as well as monitoring and curbing dissenting elements. In part, this explains the deeply rooted mistrust among Syrians, including those affiliated with the anti-Al Assad coalitions.

As Syria's political establishment moved toward a closer alliance with Iran, the ruling elite became more visibly Alawite than ever before, resorting to pre-modernization and pre-nation-state rhetoric while rooting itself in sectarian and ethnic discourse. Yet, political solutions were required to address contemporary communitarian rifts and pave the way toward an inclusionary state and society, rather than deepening already existing divisions.

Among proposed conflict resolution scenarios for Syria is the formation of exclusionary communitarian pockets where one community dominates, represses, or even cleanses competitors to maintain its grip on power within a particular territory. Contributing convictions to this scenario is the increasing number of agreements between the Syrian government and opposition groups to exchange and transfer populations in besieged areas, such as Al-Zabadani, Madaya, and Al-Qusayr among many others. This will drive the region and Syria to greater fragmentation and divisions that undermine coexistence and prepare the ground for ongoing disputes. Such a model can hardly be sustainable and would lead to a permanent situation of war and instability. This arrangement, however, may include a temporary military disengagement over highly contested areas. In this volume, Cortés and Merheb explore such possibility and reveal its prospects.

The second possible articulation is the formation of a secular state where residents are treated as equal citizens under the law regardless of their communitarian affiliations. Such an arrangement, though it is highly inspired by liberal intellectuals, it is too idealistic to accommodate the reality of Syria's complexities, at least in the immediate and short term. Sectarian and ethnic grievances, and fear of marginalization and repression undermine the prospect of a civil state without a serious communitarian protection and safeguards. Arab secular nationalism as advocated by the Baath party has hardly yielded accommodation and equity among sectarian and ethnic groups in Syria and Iraq.

The construction of an inclusionary multi-communitarian Syrian state where power is shared to accommodate the economic, cultural, and political peculiarities of the diverse groups may perhaps be among the most plausible power sharing formulations. This can address the immediate communitarian concerns and offer assuring political protection mechanism during the short and transitional period. Thus, forecasting power sharing arrangements represents a first step in providing for political settlements and ultimately preparing the ground for a post-conflict transition.

Negotiating a political solution to the impasse in Syria, therefore, must admit to the fact that the resurrection of secular national rule amid deep sectarian divisions is a highly unlikely scenario. In any post-conflict transition, sectarian and ethnic grievances need to be directly addressed. This is not only because of the wide-scale atrocities and the deeply entrenched sectarian Alawite-Sunni divide but also due to the inability of any party to single-handedly rebuild the country, resettle its refugees, reattribute confiscated lands and valuables, and reinvent its Arab and international diplomatic stances.

Transition to a post-conflict Syria requires the endorsement of regional as well as international power players. Russian military and strategic interests in Syria are among the vital factors to be considered. In addition to Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Iran is another regional sectarian power holding direct stakes in any political arrangement. These countries have fought both directly and through asymmetric warfare to preserve their footholds in the country and prevent their perceived sectarian and ethnic rivals from gaining an upper hand in any final negotiated agreement. Apparently, the interests of major international and regional players have guided negotiation and determined their relative successes.

Such interlocking and "intermestic" crisis-laden variables are not exclusive to Syria. Iraq and Lebanon have experienced similar circumstances. Sectarian and ethnic power sharing arrangements have been established to divert conflicts and reconfigure international spheres of influence within each country. When alternative options are exhausted, Syria will most likely follow a similar course.

The increasing sectarianization and ethnicization of the Syrian conflict require resolutions that recognize these divisions and build inter-communitarian spheres of interest. With the Kurdish province of Hasakah already autonomous, future settlements may contain aspects of ethnic federalism, modeled after Iraq, as well as sectarian coexistence in geographically mixed enclaves, modeled after Lebanese consociational model of power sharing. What remains to be negotiated are the forms and weights of power distribution along the various sectarian groups.

Most critical in such a power sharing arrangement, especially from the vantage points of Russia and Iran, is the recognition of a special political and strategic status of the Alawites and, to a lesser extent, the Syrian Christian Orthodox. The situation would compare well with the special position granted to Lebanese and Iraqi Shiites in securing the alliance with Iran and maintaining a regional sphere of influence. In fact, sectarian power sharing

arrangements in Iraq and Lebanon have proven to provide a cooptation of converging domestic as well as wider interests in the region.

Much work and research are required to examine rising communitarian politics that is being increasingly interlocked with state building and peacebuilding.

For instance, several challenges might impede state and peacebuilding processes in a context of heightened communitarian politics. Historic examples (Lebanon, Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen, etc.) show that just brokering a power sharing agreement is no guarantee for stability or durable peace; especially that in the case of Syria, there is a quasi-consensus that the Syrian State structure—including the military organization—should not be dismantled, for fear of creating a vacuum and widespread chaos as witnessed in Iraq after 2003.

Therefore, irrespective of the nature of the political agreement, post-war Syria must deal with the fact that political and cultural remnants of the autocratic regime may not wither away, but may instead be transformed toward greater accommodation and pluralism. Examples from Egypt and Tunisia demonstrate that inherited practices and customs from the old regime continue to prevail for some time in shaping and implicating political agreements. Even when prominent old regime's figures disappear, for the sake of political transition, autocratic traditions often prevail. Thus, a genuine transitional process must instigate fundamental reforms that change the ways "things are done" compared to how things "were done". Reforms need to be concerned about approaches utilized to reach agreements rather than being strictly overwhelmed by the participation of individuals and figures.

Such a challenge is well demonstrated in Iraq where despite the toppling of Saddam in 2003 and the election of a new government, deeply rooted authoritarian traditions have denied a true transition. This is particularly the case where new-found leaders were mostly previously detained figures who have been tortured and whose families were assassinated or disappeared. Those victims of the old regime, however, have hardly succeeded in advancing accommodating or tolerant practices that adhere to human rights and the protection of freedom. Politicians such as vice-presidents, prime ministers, deputy prime ministers, speakers, and members of parliament have continued to assert their power by utilizing strict rules that assure their monopoly of power while marginalizing critics. Despite the dismantling of the Baath security apparatus and its alternative replacement, it is difficult to claim radical changes

from traditional authoritarian behavior and conduct. The conspiring approach toward the civilian population and the uncountable practices being adopted by the Iraqi political elite hardly express democratic institutionalism. Human rights violations remain widespread and security agents continue to utilize old regime practices in making abusive and arbitrary arrests. Illegal detentions and torture are widely practiced (Human Rights Watch 2017).

In 2005, Lebanon moved from the fictional *PaxSyriana* era to a new one characterized by a takeover of political decision-making by local parties. Two decades later, the Lebanese still confront a *PaxSyriana* tradition. Political corruption and human rights abuses, amid a flawed and politicized judiciary, continue to be the norm. Evidently, there are many requirements for the foundation of good governance beyond national independence and the establishment of social pacts. A culture of political transparency and accountability that abides by human rights principles remains among the essential requirements for societal stability and communal coexistence.

The profound changes and upheavals that stormed the Arab region since 2011 appear to have been ignited by such resentments against political practices. Yet, alternatives have not accomplished a radical transformation that can reshape political and social practices. With the relative exception of Tunisia, none of the countries affected by the Arab Spring has realized either comprehensive stability or a durable peace.

While it is unrealistic to expect quick and radical transformation over an abbreviated period of time, it remains difficult to point to a noteworthy transition without new traditions and practices instated.

On a different note, it remains premature to draw analogies between the current changes in the MENA region and those of Eastern Europe following the startling collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. First, changes in Eastern Europe were accomplished without much bloodshed. This occurred despite the high political tension and controversial and complicated issues faced, such as Soviet's forced demographic transfers, repression of minority rights, the challenges related to transitional justice, the rebuilding of economies, and the reformation of state institutions and the military. Second, in Eastern Europe there was a palpable progress that people experienced during transition, sometimes achieved within a period of a few months or years, a feeling that threw a blanket of legitimacy on the process of reforms. This sense of accomplishment is yet to be noticed in the transitions in the MENA countries.

This comparison is instructive as it sheds light on the challenges for possible post-conflict peace agreements in Syria. Syria seems to require a radically different path for change than the one currently pursued. Among the critical aspects for the sought political reform is the foundation of a "social pattern" that can embed peaceful approaches within the political tradition. Perhaps this precludes incentives that can favorably shift attitudes and behavior away from the use of violence as a means to achieve political or collective ends. This practically implies that even in the scenario where a power sharing agreement is realized, the failure to change the social practices associated with the use of political violence, the chances for a peaceful settlement will remain dim. Country experiences in Lebanon, Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen, Libya among others attest to the fact that the attitude to violence, even at the sub-national or local level, may easily help ignite nationwide, interethnic or inter-religious confrontations regardless of political agreements.

It is, therefore, essential for Syria to complement any political agreement with the consolidation of grassroots level peacebuilding approaches that denounce violence and praise dialogue and peaceful means for conflict resolution.

Such an understanding must continue to alert peacebuilders while forging political agreements. This volume attempts to devise realistic strategies and visions that can help pave the ways for the mitigation of contemporary disputes and to project road maps for conflict resolution through power sharing. Yet, the authors well recognize other essentials that must be comprehensively utilized to achieve a permanent and durable peace.

Comparative Power Sharing Agreements

The contributions provided in this work present comparative case study analyses derived from different identity politics, nation building, and power sharing models' experiences in different deeply divided societies. This methodology is utilized to induce lessons learned from international experiences as well as potential suitable arrangements for Syria. The comparison highlights aspects of difficulties, optimism, and benefits of various possible power sharing agreement options for Syria.

Contrasting the success and failure of consociationalism in Iraq and Lebanon, for example, Ghais considers in Chap. 2 that power sharing has an inherited conceptual as well as institutional weaknesses and that it must integrate guaranteeing mechanisms that ensure minority rights in plurality

settings. For Ghais, Syrian consociationalism must, therefore, articulate greater assurances of minority rights as it lacks a communitarian demographic balance between the different sects and ethnic groups.

In Chap. 3, Khoury and Ghosn explore mechanisms that are currently utilized in Syria via local initiatives toward reconciliation and peacebuilding. Citing the fact that several grassroots initiatives have been successful in achieving varying steps toward peace at the local level, their evaluation asserts that the fundamentals of conflict mitigation in Syria is contingent on the ability to bridge the gap between power sharing and local peacebuilding efforts.

Still, Aga in Chap. 4 finds that despite the many shortcomings of consociationalism as implemented in Lebanon, it continues to serve as a viable model for power sharing. In exemplifying the strengths of the system in Lebanon and consociationalist characteristics that helped strengthen Indian democracy, she underlines its suitability for a post-conflict Syria.

Gender inclusion mechanisms are also explored by Ray in Chap. 5 where women's role in mediation and ultimately in power sharing in Syria are projected. Highlighting the example of the Philippines, Ray explores the value of including women in peace processes.

The role of religion and religious groups can influence the potential success or failure of achieving either peace or any power sharing agreement. From this perspective, the peculiar role of Islamic fundamentalists in any power sharing arrangements in Syria is further explored by a comparative study of Mali and Lebanon. This examination is carried out by Bøås and Gade with recommendations for Syria in Chap. 6.

In Chap. 7, the possible failure of power sharing as a model for Syria is illustrated, with separation and split projected as inevitable outcomes. Cortes and Merheb present a case for conflict mitigation through the division of Syria into separate entities, while also exploring the possible positive and negative implications of such a divide on the MENA region itself.

The different views and propositions compiled in this book bring international power sharing experiences and articulate contemporary discussions surrounding the suitability of such governing arrangement in Syria. In Chap. 8, Salamey and Rizk revisit the various comparisons and assert the beginning of a new era, claiming that neither partition nor strong nationalization are plausible options for Syria any longer. Alternatively, power sharing along a permanent peacebuilding process and regional consensus must be imbedded in any political solution.

Conclusion

This scholarly collection provides a modest contribution to the debate surrounding the future of the Syrian state and society. Its importance stems from the fact that it examines diverse comparative propositions that can help instigate discussion and forward thinking toward merging research and practices within effective post-conflict power sharing and peacebuilding agreements. While much research is still needed, these contributions are part of an ongoing effort to politically address ways and means to mitigate identity-laden conflicts in post-autocratic nation-states. After all, identity conflicts have proven among the major challenges for regional and international security, thus the articulation of identity based political design. Therefore, the ramification of the Syrian conflict as well as its satisfactory political settlement may underscore the importance of devising a post-conflict power sharing agreement. Such a task remains among the major undertakings required to defuse causes of future communitarian conflicts and wars.

Notes

1. The agreement of 1916 divided the Middle Eastern region between British and French direct and indirect colonial spheres of influence.
2. USIP evaluation workshop for the pilot initiative in Northeastern Syria, Erbil, September 2015.
3. Politics is the "activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live" (Heywood 2011, p. 2).

References

Abdo, Geneive, Nathan Brown, and Frederic Hof. 2016. *Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism*. Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council.

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. 2008. The Role of Religious Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies: From Withdrawal to Forgiveness. In *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*, ed. Barry Hart, 239–261. Lanham: University Press of America.

Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, Abdul Aziz Said, and Lakshitha S. Prelis. 2001. Conclusion: The Long Road to Reconciliation. In *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, 339–348. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Al-Saleh, Asaad. 2013. *Dissecting an Evolving Conflict: The Syrian Uprising and the Future of the Country*. Clinton Township: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding and the New American Foundation.

Badran, Dany. 2013. Democracy and Rhetoric in the Arab World. *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4 (1): 65–86.

Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. 1992. An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping. *UN Documents*, June, 2017. http://www.un-documents.net/a47-277.htm

Collins, Eoin, and Heléne Clark. 2013. *Supporting Young People to Make Change Happen: A Review of Theories of Change*. Sydney: Act Knowledge and Oxfam.

Heywood, Andrew. 2011. *Global Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Human Rights Watch. 2017. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/iraq#950b3d. Accessed Apr 2017.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Vol. 4. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Huntington, Samuel. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Luciani, Giacomo, ed. 1990. *The Arab State*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Mac Ginty, Roger, and Andrew Williams. 2009. *Conflict and Development*. London: Routledge.

Odendaal, Andries. 2013. *A Crucial Link: Local Peace Committees and National Peacebuilding*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Peel, Michael. 2011. Assad's Family Picked Up by the West's Radar. *Financial Times*, April 27.

Reese, L. 2016. Peace from the Bottom Up: Strategies and Challenges of Local Ownership in Dialogue-Based Peacebuilding Initiatives. In *Shifting Paradigms: Humanity in Action Senior Fellows on Policy and Pluralism Across Borders*, ed. Johannes Lukas Gartner. New York: Humanity in Action Press.

Racioppi, Linda, and Katherine O'Sullivan See. 2007. Grassroots Peace-Building and Third-Party Intervention: The European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland. *Peace & Change* 32(3): 361–390.

Rowland, Nicolas, and Claire Smith. 2014. *Rebuilding State-Society Relations in Post-War States: Assessing a Theory of Change Approach to Local Governance Reform in Timor Leste. JSRP Paper 15*. London: JSRP and the Asia Foundation.

Salamey, Imad. 2014. *The Government and Politics of Lebanon*. London: Routledge.

———. 2017. *The Decline of Nation-States After the Arab Spring: The Rise of Communitocracy*. London/New York: Routledge.

Schirch, Lisa, and Manjrika Sewak. 2005. *The Role of Women in Peacebuilding*. Issue Papers by Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. European Centre for Conflict Prevention.

Simonsen, Sven Gunnar. 2004. Nationbuilding as Peacebuilding: Racing to Define the Kosovar. *International Peacekeeping* 11 (2): 289–311, 304.

The Syrian Center for Policy Research. 2017. *Forced Dispersion, Syrian Human Status: The Demographic Report 2016*. http://scprsyria.org/publications/forced-dispersion-syrian-human-status-the-demographic-report-2016/ (June, 2017).
The Syrian Conflict: A systems conflict analysis, ARK group DMCC. 2016.
United Nations High Commission for Refugees. 2017. Syria Regional Refugee Response. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (January 2017).
UNSD. 2014. *UN Trade Statistics*. Retrieved July 2015, from Annual Totals Table for Imports and Exports. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/annual%20totals.htm
Wilson, J. 2014. *Local Peace Processes in Sudan and South Sudan*. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Peaceworks.