



**The Correlates of Civil Conflict and
Instability in the West Asia-North Africa Region
Conflict Resilience Model Background Paper**



“Knowledge from the region, action for the region”



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Executive Summary

One of the principal findings of this research is that against clear global trends, conflict in the West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region is intensifying. There are four reasons to be concerned about this situation beyond the death and suffering that conflicts cause. Wars are devastating to national economies; the costs of conflict — both economic and humanitarian — spillover onto neighbours; conflicts spread; and they have global spillover effects including refugees, disease, international crime and extremism.

The approach utilised drew from Grounded Theory; extant research on civil wars and instability was surveyed, and a range of environmental, political and economic risk factors for civil conflict and instability in the WANA region were identified. These ‘categories of thought’ will form the foundations of the next stage of the proposed research.

The next step in this work is to undertake quantitative testing to establish whether the civil conflict and instability risk factors identified by the research are statistically significant. Then risk factors will be brought together in a Conflict Resilience Model. While this model will not prevent conflict and instability, it may create more opportunities to raise policies and interventions that can heighten resilience. Governments have incentives to make changes; and donors and programmatic agencies can support policies that reduce the potency of drivers, undertake actions to make conflict more difficult, and use aid to spearhead development in ways that reduce conflict risk. The broader aim is thus to provide evidence-based guidance on specific areas of vulnerability in a timely manner with a view to building the region’s resilience.

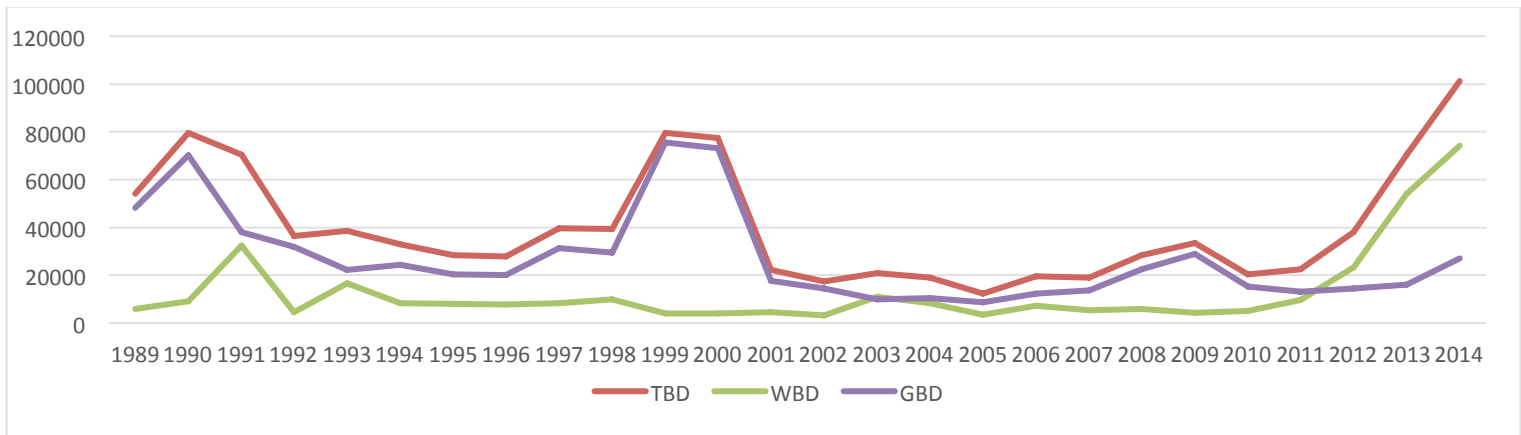
Introduction

The good news for people all over the world is that conflict is on the decline. Numbers of conflicts, as well as conflict-related deaths have fallen steadily since 1991.¹ The nature of conflict is also changing. Oxford University Professor Paul Collier predicts that the type of political violence that the 21st century will be remembered for is civil conflict. These conflicts will principally be internal and involve low-income, poor-growth states. Middle-income countries and countries that neighbour each other will also be affected, but to a lesser extent, with internationalised wars involving wealthy states steadfastly on the decline.²

The bad news is that these global gains are not being shared by the people of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), nor are they likely to in the years to come. As demonstrated in the table below, conflict is intensifying in the region vis-à-vis global trends.

- In 1989, WANA accounted for 10.9 percent of battle deaths globally. By 2014, the number had risen to 73.3 percent.
- Since 2010, battle deaths in the WANA region have climbed steadily.
- In 2013 and 2014, the number of battle deaths in the WANA region was more than double the number in the rest of the world combined.³

Table 1: Global and WANA Region Deaths in Conflict 1989 – 2014



TBD: Total Battle Deaths WBD: WANA Battle Deaths GBD: Global Battle Deaths

Note: the WANA region includes all the States in the Arab League, in addition to Turkey, Israel and Iran.

There are several reasons to be concerned about the disproportionate incidence of conflict impacting the WANA region. The most obvious is that wars have horrific consequences. They

¹ P Collier, *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (2010) 4-5. This paper adopts the broadly accepted definition of civil war i.e. internal conflict resulting in 1,000 or more conflict-related deaths per year with a minimum of 5 percent deaths shared by each side.

² *ibid* 6-7.

³ Data taken from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset v.5-2015, Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Uppsala University <www.ucdp.uu.se>

cause fear, death and suffering, the heaviest share of which is shouldered by society's most vulnerable members.

Wars are also devastating to national economies. On average, civil conflict reduces a country's growth by 2.3 percent per year, a typical seven-year war leaving a country 15 percent poorer than it would have been without conflict.⁴

The cost of conflict

Syrian economic performance in the decade before 2011 was considered impressive; between 2000-2010 real growth averaged nearly 4.5 percent, inflation was running at less than 5 percent and positive external balances allowed an accumulation of international reserves to USD18.2 billion.⁵ Today, it is estimated that Syria's economy has been cut in half,⁶ throwing the country back to its economic status in the 1970s.⁷ Another striking example is Yemen; when conflict engulfed the region in 2011, the economy slipped into recession with GDP contracting by 12.7 percent.⁸ Likewise in Iraq, breakdowns in governance, civil unrest and the rise of ISIS shrank the economy by 2.7 percent in 2014 alone.⁹

At the domestic level, such costs accrue in the forms of direct asset and infrastructure destruction, increased spending on health, policing and security, reduced productivity, and the opportunity costs that flow from governments diverting funds earmarked for socially useful forms of investment to cover military and other conflict-related expenditures.¹⁰ Externally, disruption to trade and reduced investment are the main explanations for lost growth. The World Bank has found that investor risk perception in the first year of a war can reduce trade by between 12-25 percent, and up to 40 percent for severe civil wars (those with a cumulative death toll greater than 50,000, as is the case in Syria).¹¹ The presence of terrorist violence has a particularly sharp relationship with foreign investment;¹² in Lebanon it reduced foreign direct investment by 26.6 percent between 2012-2013.¹³ The influence of these factors last long after fighting subsides; recovering to original growth paths takes around 14 years of peace.

Third, the costs of conflict — both economic and humanitarian — spill over onto neighbouring countries. A country making development advances loses an estimated 0.7 percent of GDP every

⁴ Research by Collier based on cross-country panel data in the last 50 years suggests that the cost of civil wars range from 1.6 percentage to 2.3 percentage of GDP per year of violence; P Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries in the World are Failing and What Can be Done About It?* (2007) 27.

⁵ M Khan and S Milbert, 'Syria's economic glory days are gone', *The Atlantic Council*, April 3 2014 <<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/syria-s-economic-glory-days-are-gone>> at 8 August 2015.

⁶ S Heller, 'The Cost of Civil War: Syria's Economy After Four Years of Conflict', *Global Envision*, 1 April 2015 <<http://www.globalevision.org/2015/03/25/cost-civil-war-syria-s-economy-after-four-years-conflict>> at 6 July 2015; see also D Butter, *Syria's Economy: Picking Up the Pieces*, Chatham House 2.

⁷ M Lobel, 'Syria's economy cut in half by conflict', *BBC News*, 23 June 2015.

⁸ The World Bank, 'Country Overview: Yemen' <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/yemen/overview>> at 11 August 2015

⁹ 'Iraq's economy: an empty chest', *The Economist*, 21 March 2015.

¹⁰ Military spending typically increases by 2.2 percent during civil war; a civil war reduces a country's average rating on the International Country Risk Guide by around 7.7 points (on a 100-point scale); World Bank, *World Development Report* (2011) 64-65.

¹¹ World Bank, *World Development Report* (2011).

¹² *ibid* 65.

¹³ International Monetary Fund, *UNCTAD World Investment Report* (2014). A key reason why conflict impacts growth so severely is that the costs of war do not end with a cessation of hostilities. Three years after peace, investor risk perception remains 3.5 points lower than non-conflict affected countries and, on average, it takes 20 years for trade to recover to pre-conflict levels; *ibid* 64.

year for each neighbour in conflict, bringing the cost of war on one country and its neighbours to a staggering USD64 billion.¹⁴ Other spillover effects include disease and refugees — neighbouring countries host nearly 75 percent of the world's refugees.¹⁵ Syria, for example, once home to over one million Iraqi refugees, now has four million refugees of its own,¹⁶ which are hosted principally by Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.

Fourth, there is evidence of a phenomenon called conflict contagion: that the presence of a civil war in a neighbouring country increases the probability of conflict outbreak domestically.¹⁷ Recent research by the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council for West Asia suggests that the concept of neighbourhood may be more extensive than originally thought. They find that 'neighbours' are not only geographical, but can also be countries that have cultural, ideological or economic connections. This is important for Arab states because of their shared history, the multiplicity and intensity of transmission channels, and the regional dimension of contemporary events. Examples include the Arab-Israeli and Iraq conflicts, proxy wars in Lebanon and Yemen, civil war in Syria and the shared burden of conflict-driven displacement.

Finally, conflicts cause spillover effects that are global in nature. The instability, weak rule of law and unreliable law enforcement associated with conflict provides these countries with a comparative advantage in organised international crime and terrorism.¹⁸ Criminal networks are better able to mobilise, recruit and gain strength in such environments, and public assets and resources can more easily be seized. These conditions likewise provide a fertile recruiting ground and organisational platform for extremism. The economic pressures associated with war mean that organised crime and radical groups not only feed off the conflict economy, they also accelerate its growth. Their operation and actions are almost exclusively financed by illicit activities, including the seizure of state resources (extractive industry, oil fields, agricultural production), extortion (taxes levies, ransom), money laundering, people trafficking, and illicit trade (drugs, light arms, weaponry).

¹⁴ The cost of a typical 7-year civil war on countries and their neighbours is USD64 billion; Collier, above n 4, 31-37.

¹⁵ *ibid* 37.

¹⁶ *Syria Regional Refugee Response—Regional Overview*, UNHCR, 5 July 2015.

¹⁷ Y Chaitani and F Cantu, *Beyond governance and conflict: measuring the impact of the neighborhood effect in the Arab region*, Economic and Social Council for Western Asia October (2014)

<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecri_editor/Download.asp?table_name=ecri_documents&field_name=id&FileID=272>

¹⁸ Collier, above n 4, 31.

The financing of violent extremist groups

The financing structures of radical groups are diverse, tailored to a specific operating environment and dependent on natural resource endowments. ISIS derives its profits mainly from oil sales (in Iraq), drug trade (Afghani cocaine shipped through territories it controls), conquests (assets such as vehicles and arms), illicit taxation systems, and smaller revenue sources such as ransom and extortion. Of these, oil represents the greatest challenge to law enforcement; not only is it generating revenues of up to USD1 million per day, it is also creating a source of dependence between the group and civilians in terms of its capacity to supply oil at below market prices. The Taliban has relied more on illicit drug trade, kidnapping, extortion and foreign donations, while Al Shabab profits from money laundering; the control of port cities in Somalia that export charcoal; poaching and selling ivory; and trading primary food commodities such as sugar.

1. Conflict Traps and Conflict Drivers

The disproportionate incidence of conflict in the WANA region, and its pernicious consequences — its cost, spillover effects and the fact that conflicts spread — should direct researchers to explore the factors underlying this phenomenon. One explanation for the WANA region's glut of conflict and instability is that the region is experiencing a 'glitch'; a temporary deviation that will self-regulate over time — one probably driven by a combination of oil endowments, identity politics and specific historic events. Or there may be something explicit happening in the region — certain characteristics or forces that are working to keep countries in a heightened state of conflict. Some scholars refer to this set of circumstances as a conflict 'trap'.¹⁹

(i) Is the WANA region caught in a conflict trap?

One of the most well-known conflict traps is the cause-and-effect relationship between conflict and poverty (other examples of conflict traps include the relationship between conflict and inequality, governance or institutional development). There are three key elements to the process. First, conflicts disproportionately affect poor countries — those with low incomes and weak or declining growth rates. Whether this is due to grievance (political, economic or historical) or circumstance (a combination of unemployment, hopelessness and institutional weakness) is an area of contention between experts, and is explored in greater detail below.

Second, not only do conflicts tend to affect poor countries, they also have severe economic implications. As explained above, the price of conflict on a society's asset base and development is clearly established; at a conservative estimate, a typical seven-year war costs a country USD20 billion.²⁰

¹⁹ 41 percent of all Arab countries have experienced at least one internal conflict in the five years between 2009-2013.

²⁰ Collier, above n 4, 27.

Third, the destruction, slowed growth and weakened civic cohesion that accompanies conflict manifests in increased poverty.²¹ Social and economic development is near impossible in the context of war, and war tends to create legacies of crime and violence that are profitable and hence difficult to shed.²² This relationship has evidential support. Countries experiencing conflict have, on average, a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than those that are conflict-free; they also perform worse on a range of development indicators including primary school enrolment, infant mortality and nutrition.²³

Herein lies the conflict trap: slow growth and poverty — the *consequences* of conflict — are also key *predictors* of conflict. Conflict, reduced growth and poverty hence work in a destructive and mutually constituting cycle. This theory is supported by strong data on conflict recurrence; 39 percent of states emerging from conflict return to war in the first five years, and another 32 percent return to conflict in the following five years.²⁴

But while a conflict trap seems to neatly explain the persistent unrest affecting WANA countries, the region, as a whole, is not low-income. This suggests that a traditional conflict trap is not a complete explanation and that the scholarship on other drivers of political violence must be examined.

(ii) Grievance or greed?

One line of thinking is that conflict is driven by grievance, be it political repression, inequality, ethnic discrimination, and/or lack of opportunity. This theory has gained significant traction in the WANA region. The widely held view is that the Arab uprisings were driven by poor access to basic resources and limited opportunity, coupled with weak accountability.

Not all scholars accept this grievance theory and studies have struggled to establish a statistically relevant causal relationship between political oppression and war.²⁵ Collier and Hoeffler, for example, reject grievance as a mono-causal driver of conflict and present circumstance (or greed) as a more robust explanation. They argue that under the correct conditions — sufficient resources, a militarily weak state, and perceptions of something to gain — an enterprising group of rebels will mobilise to take advantage of the situation.²⁶ Collier's research isolated eight circumstances that make states statistically more prone to conflict:

1. Low incomes and slow or declining growth rates. Over a five-year period, a typical low-income country faces a 14 percent risk of civil war; each percentage point of growth, however, equally reduces the risk of conflict.²⁷

²¹ The World Bank has established that “a country that experienced major violence over the period from 1981 to 2005 has a poverty rate 21 percentage points higher than a country that saw no violence” Saferworld *Addressing Conflict and Violence from 2015* (2013); see further Figure 1.6, The World Bank, above n 10, 60-62.

²² Collier, above n 1, 138; Collier, above n 4, 33-34.

²³ “People in fragile and conflict-affected states are more than twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries, more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school, twice as likely to see their children die before age five, and more than twice as likely to lack clean water” World Bank, above n 10, 5; “Poverty reduction in countries affected by major violence is on average nearly a percentage point slower per year than in countries not affected by violence. After a few years of major violence, the contrast can be quite stark: countries affected by violence throughout the 1980s lagged in poverty reduction by 8 percentage points, and those that had experienced major violence throughout the 1980s and 1990s lagged by 16 percentage points” Ibid 60.

²⁴ Ibid 57; “90 percent of the last decade's civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a civil war in the last 30 years” Ibid 2.

²⁵ Collier, above n 4, 23; Fearon and Laitin find that while grievance can be a contributing factor it is not *necessary* for the ‘technology of insurgency,’ see J Fearon and D Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’ *American Political Science Review*, 97(1) (2003), 75-90.

²⁶ Collier, above n 1, 121-140; Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner ‘Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War’ (2006).

²⁷ Collier, above n 4, 20.

2. Dependence on natural resources. The main natural resources prevalent in WANA are oil and gas. In Algeria, Iraq and Syria, oil has played a role in conflicts, either by providing a source of finance for rebels (as in the case of Syria) or a 'prize' to fight over (as in the case of Iraq and Algeria). It is important to note that when natural resources are sufficiently abundant, the risk of conflict drops, perhaps explaining the stability of the oil-rich Gulf states. This is not to say that over-dependence on natural resources is a good thing; rents cause local currency appreciations, making other exports uncompetitive.²⁸ This retards the growth of labour intensive exports that otherwise have the potential to grow rapidly and further technological progress.²⁹ Rentierism also enables government "to function without taxing the incomes of citizens, which gradually detaches it from what citizens want".³⁰
3. Previous civil war. Over a 10-year period, the rate of conflict recidivism is around 50 percent.³¹
4. Diversity within the population. Some research suggests that ethnic and religious diversity compound the risk of conflict; other research is less conclusive.³²
5. A high proportion of young men in the population. A doubling of the proportion of men aged 15-29 years increases a country's risk of conflict over a five-year period from 5 percent to 20 percent. This bodes ominously for WANA, which is experiencing its highest youth-to-adult population ratio in the region's history; with 108 million persons aged 15-29 years, 28 percent of the population is now classified as youth. When coupled with the world's highest youth unemployment rate (28.2 percent in the Middle East and 30.5 percent in North Africa), youth 'bulge' may prove to be a region-specific driver of conflict.³³
6. A country's size increases the risk of conflict, but at a decreasing rate, possibly because there are economies of scale in providing security.³⁴
7. Geography. Mountainous terrain seems to be positively associated with civil conflict, perhaps because it gives extra-legal militant groups a safer place to operate; increases the cost of patrolling, or because it makes it hard to provide the population with public services thus fuelling grievances.³⁵
8. Polity. As discussed below, in low-income countries political violence seems to be more frequently associated with democracy whereas in middle and high-income countries, dictatorships seem to be more dangerous.³⁶

The WANA Institute's research suggests that a *combination* of grievance and greed drivers are at work. Returning to the example of ISIS, while the group has clear political and ideological motivations, its evolution did not take place in a vacuum. Space and opportunity were required to attract a constituency and enable ideas to take root in a functional sense. This was provided in Iraq where, following the bungled de-Ba'athification process, a combination of authoritarian

²⁸ Collier, above n 4, 39-40, see also Collier, above n 1, 127.

²⁹ *ibid* 121, 162.

³⁰ Collier, above n 1, 126.

³¹ Collier, above n 4, 27.

³² Collier, above n 1, 130.

³³ 'Global Trends for Youth 2015: MENA region retains highest youth unemployment rate in the world', *International Labour Organisation*, 8 October 2015 <http://ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_412797/lang-en/index.htm>

³⁴ Collier, above n 1, 131.

³⁵ C Hendrix, 'Head for the Hills!' or This Hard Land? The Direct and Indirect Effects of Rough Terrain on Civil Conflict Onset', Paper presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 22-25 March (2006), 2.

³⁶ Collier, above n 1, 132.

repression, a disbanded but highly capable armed military³⁷ and escalating chaos catalysed the formation of Al Qaeda in Iraq,³⁸ which later became ISIS. This also explains how the group was able to quickly move into Syria; it capitalised on poor law and order, and played into popular uncertainty about the future of the state and Sunni fears about their shrinking political footprint. In short, widely held grievances (political disenfranchisement and humiliation) aligned with specific conditions (fragmentation, unrest and military weakness) that allowed ISIS to form and spearhead the conflicts engulfing Iraq and Syria today.

(iii) Polity: Should the WANA region democratise?

Another popular explanation — a variation on the grievance argument — links conflict with governance or polity. The theory is that autocracy provides insufficient protection to citizens in terms of basic rights, freedoms and economic interests, thereby creating inroads for civic unrest and rebellion. Democracy, by contrast, is a safer and more legitimate form of government because it allows for greater civic participation, and is more likely to uphold the interests and rights of citizens because of inbuilt checks and balances and accountability mechanisms. Some experts feel that this too simplistic an explanation and that, when conflict is the benchmark, democracy is not for everyone. They cite the findings mentioned above that in low-income countries democracy is more positively associated with political violence, whereas in middle- and high-income democratic countries (those with per capita annual incomes of USD2700 and above), the risk of political violence decreases.³⁹

The WANA region is largely undemocratic. Polity IV, a comprehensive dataset measuring democratic governance, ranks 13 states in the WANA region as closed anocracies, autocracies or failed states; three are ranked as open anocracies; and three are ranked as democracies and full democracies. Might this explain the WANA region's disproportionate incidence of conflict? The current research seeks to answer this question. Transitioning to democracy is a slow and structural process and effectiveness depends on the uptake of checks and balances on power, accountability and modalities to ensure legitimacy.⁴⁰ Additionally, transition itself can be a conflict risk: especially when the transition is from autocracy to democracy.⁴¹ A façade of democracy may even be more dangerous than severe repression; current-day Iraq is a prime example. Unless the governance model integrates limits on power and legitimate protections for all minorities political violence can quickly result.⁴²

³⁷ The dissolution of the Iraqi army in 2003 left thousands of professional and well-trained army officers without a job. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that many of ISIS's senior command structure is made up of former Iraqi army officers.

³⁸ H Abu Hanieh and M Abu Rumman, *The Islamic State Organization; The Sunni Crisis and the Struggle of Global Jihadism* (2015) 41.

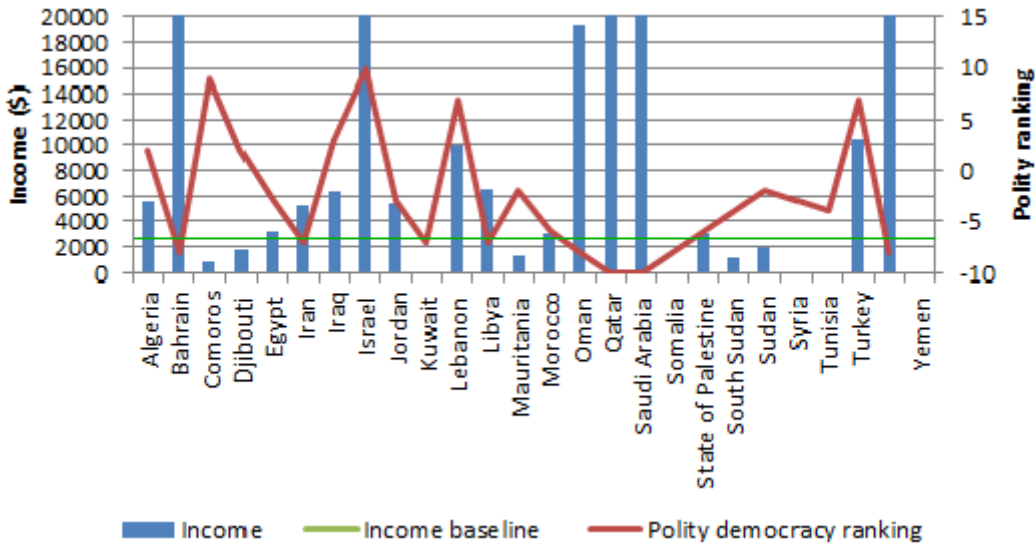
³⁹ Collier, above n 1, 20-21, see also 146; Research also indicates that conflicts are more likely to occur in hybrid political systems.

⁴⁰ *ibid* 8.

⁴¹ E Mansfield and J Snyder, 'Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War' *International Organization*, 56(2) (2002).

⁴² Collier, above n 1, 24.

Table 2: WANA states' average income in relation to Polity democracy rating



(iv) Institutional functionality

A less controversial and widely accepted theory is that weak and dysfunctional institutions drive conflict. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that the difference between wealthy conflict-free states and poor conflict-ridden states lies in their political, and thus their economic, institutions. In short, wealthy countries enjoy *inclusive* economic and political institutions that encourage productive growth and innovation by providing secure property rights and opportunities, and distributing political power widely and income fairly equally. This creates a virtuous circle and reinforces these institutions, reducing the likelihood that they will be contested or overthrown.⁴³ In poor countries, leaders rely on *extractive* institutions to channel wealth and power into a few sets of hands; they have few incentives to promote the opportunities or innovation that creates growth as this risks a diminution of their power.⁴⁴ These countries are more prone to conflict because, with wealth, power and control narrowly concentrated, there is much to gain by occupying the controlling seat.⁴⁵ As other researchers have found, not only does such conflict have devastating consequences, all too often extractive leaders are simply replaced with new ones cut from the same mould.⁴⁶

This thesis is largely supported by World Bank studies; a central conclusion of its Development Report (2011) was that strengthening institutions and governance to provide citizens with security, justice and jobs is crucial to breaking cycles of violence.⁴⁷ Institutional dysfunction is also very important in explaining conflict recidivism. Peace processes are inherently fragile, and can rarely be sustained in the absence of legitimate state and society institutions that can absorb the shocks that accompany the reforms required during a fledgling peace, deliver necessary services and generate a level of trust and confidence in the state. Governance and institutional

⁴³ D Acemoglu and J Robinson, *Why Nations Fail* (2013), 430, 308-9

⁴⁴ Acemoglu and Robinson, above n 43, 68, 84

⁴⁵ Acemoglu and Robinson, above n 43, 143, 150, 332

⁴⁶ Acemoglu and Robinson, above n 43, 143, 366-7, 458; for example China, Cuba, the Bolshevik revolution, and Zimbabwe. This can be contrasted to France, England and US where revolution led to inclusive political institutions; the difference was that these revolutions were (i) led by a broad coalition (ii) succeeded in empowering a broad cross-section of society. In these cases the people overthrew elites and created a society where rights were more broadly distributed, government was accountable and responsive to citizens and used these to create economic opportunities (4-5).

⁴⁷ World Bank, above n 10, 2.

functionality in the region is clearly weak, and almost certainly plays a role in conflict incidence. But governance and institutions are broad areas; this research tries to isolate with greater precision which institutions matter, what controls are needed and how dysfunction manifests.

2. Isolating WANA-Specific Civil Conflict and Instability Drivers

This paper seeks to identify civil conflict and instability risk factors that are WANA specific. It is beyond its scope to explore risk factors for inter-state conflict (i.e. conflict between states). Included in this analysis are thus intra-state conflicts, and instability and upheaval including popular mobilisation (e.g. strikes, protests, riots), coups and revolutions. The approach that is utilised draws from Grounded Theory; this stage of the process does not involve ranking risk factors per se, the task is to survey the research and identify a range of risk factors for civil conflict and instability in the WANA region, and to develop 'categories of thought' (see the table of risk factors the WANA Institute has developed listed in Annex 1). The WANA Institute approached this task by aiming to cast a 'wide net,' to encompass civil conflict and instability risk factors that may have been neglected by the literature.

It is important to note that simply identifying, or even proving the causality between different drivers and conflict cannot reduce the incidence of war or even a state's vulnerability to conflict. Driver identification might even have pernicious implications if autocratic governments use such tools to react to and contain likely flashpoints; or data on drivers could set in play self-fulfilling prophecies. Most likely, however, understanding how and to what extent different state characteristics, conditions and events drive conflict is positive. Governments have incentives to make changes to avoid a loss of power. Donors and programmatic agencies can also support policies that reduce the potency of drivers, undertake actions to make conflict more difficult, and use aid to spearhead development in ways that reduce conflict risk. If anything, policy-makers and programmatic agencies do not pay sufficient attention to the evidence on drivers and ways of responding to them.

To what extent then are the abovementioned drivers relevant for explaining the incidence of conflict in the WANA region? Having established that the WANA region is experiencing a different conflict trajectory to global trends, it seems logical that the drivers are also region-specific. The research that follows suggests that this is the case, for instance, the WANA region's water, food and energy insecurity may predispose the region to conflict and instability related to this factors. It also suggests that risk factors interact and conflate in ways that are not well understood.

The next step in this work will be to undertake an empirical analysis to assess whether, after accounting for common and reverse causality, the drivers identified by the research are positively correlated with conflict in the region. Drivers that are proven to be statistically significant will be brought together in an empirical model capable of measuring and tracking risk over time.

Again, this model will not prevent conflict, but it may create more opportunities to raise policies and interventions that can heighten resilience. The aim is to provide evidence-based guidance to states, donors and development and humanitarian actors on specific areas of vulnerability in a timely manner. Clearly, such aversive actions must take place alongside positive development

interventions aimed at promoting equal opportunity, participatory governance, economic opportunities, employment and growth, improved health and education outcomes, and protection against violence.

A broader aim is to empower states to realise resilience. The pattern in the region to date has been one of reacting to and extinguishing threats, and containing omnipresent humanitarian disasters. Understandably, states, donors and the citizens of the region, are tiring of this. More advanced scholarship and associated tools are needed for states to be able to take on shocks and grow stronger as a result of them. In short, the goal should not be for a state to receive a shock, react and contain it, and then return to normal; but to receive a shock, learn from it, make relevant changes, and as a result become more resilient.⁴⁸ Teasing out, proving and developing a platform to process and pragmatically react to risk factors, is a first step towards realising this goal.

One important caveat must be highlighted. This research is solely concerned with civil conflict and instability risk. It makes no attempt to explain or assess whether some conflicts are good or bad, justified or unjustified. It is acknowledged that conflicts can have positive outcomes — for example if an autocratic ruler is removed — and likewise that stability can be bad, such as in the case of a repressive regime that discriminates, plunders and uses extreme violence against its population. The evidence, however, is that conflicts have broadly negative consequences. The ends — when taking into account death, suffering, cost, recurrence and contagion — rarely justify the outcome. Only 20 percent of rebellions are successful in achieving regime change,⁴⁹ and then there is a 50 percent chance of falling back into civil war within a decade. Moreover, the Policy IV data on whether regime change brings about improvements in governance is disappointing. The factors motivating bad governance — what Acemoglu and Robinson call extractive institutions — generally outweigh the incentives to govern well. Until these problems are resolved, when weighed against the consequences of war, the data strongly supports the benefits of peace. Probably, the most viable path to a wealthy, peaceful and developed state is by way of small, slow (and sometimes painful) reforms — the process through which most modern wealthy democracies evolved. This is not to say that the paths for today's poor and conflict-ridden states must be identical or equally as long and difficult. It is reasonable to expect that under the right conditions governments will respond to cues and incentives to improve performance, and the international community can play a role in this regard. It is hoped that this work will be a valuable tool in such transition.

⁴⁸ N Taleb, *Antifragile: Things that gain from disorder* (2012).

⁴⁹ Collier, above n 1, 144.

1: A Short History of Conflict and Instability in the WANA Region

This chapter examines major civil conflicts and periods of instability in the WANA region. The analysis is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead aims to identify key issues in each of the conflicts and insights into how they have evolved over time.

1.1 The Israel-Palestine Conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict, one of the world's longest running conflicts, is renowned for its disproportionality. One side possesses incredible military might and enjoys a quality of life commensurate with the developed world, while the other subsists in poverty, with irregular energy and clean water provision, and incomparable military capability. The conflict has experienced different levels of intensity, from full-blown inter-state conflict, to irregular skirmishes and proxy engagement by other Arab States. Even as this paper was being finalised, the conflict has resurfaced, with outbreaks of violence between Israelis and Palestinians manifesting in stabbings, shootings, and clashes between protesters and security services.⁵⁰

The conflict began and endures due to disputes over sovereignty and territorial control. Zionist claims to the land they know as Israel stem from the Old Testament. This biblical promise became an active endeavour in the late 1800s when Zionist settlement began. However Palestinian Arabs have inhabited the same land for centuries and have significant historical ties to the territory. With little middle ground between these two “equally determined protagonists”,⁵¹ a situation has developed whereby even the acknowledgement of one's right to exist weakens the other's position and claim.⁵² This has been a key factor in perpetuating the conflict for over 60 years.

But the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot be reduced entirely to territorial issues. The role of Jerusalem, home to sacred spaces within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and overlaps on sacred ground, particularly the Temple Mount where the Al Aqsa Mosque is situated on what Jews consider 'the holy of holies', adds a religious element to the conflict. Further, the conflict extends into a broader Arab-Israeli conflict, with Arab nationalism combined with geopolitical strategy driving regional involvement.

1.1.1 The origins of the conflict

The Balfour Declaration of November 1917 signified British approval of a Jewish right to a national home in Palestine, openly contradicting the territorial promises of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence to the Arab people. This set the stage for the first phase of violence between Palestinians and the Jewish newcomers, which occurred during the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. This first instance of violence was likely driven by Palestinian fears of being

⁵⁰ 'UN: Israeli-Palestinian violence nears 'catastrophe', *Al Jazeera*, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/israeli-palestinian-violence-151029060544251.html>> at 3 November 2015.

⁵¹ J Eriksson, *Small-state Mediation in International Conflicts: Diplomacy and Negotiation in Israel-Palestine* (2015) 49.

⁵² *ibid.*

outnumbered and ousted as a result of further immigration of European Jews.⁵³ Indeed, the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe on the eve of the Second World War propelled a surge in Jewish settlers immigrating to Palestine.

1.1.2 Partition and the war of 1948

When the British mandate ended in November 1947, the UN passed Resolution 181, a partition plan forcefully opposed by the Arab delegation. The Arab League and the Arab Higher Committee boycotted the partition plan negotiations on the basis that they “violated the basic rights of the Palestinian people”.⁵⁴ Following the proclamation of the state of Israel, five Arab countries deployed troops in a bid to assert dominance over the new state and ‘rescue’ Palestine.⁵⁵ The ensuing battle, referred to as *al-Nakba* (the Catastrophe) by Palestinians, displaced over 700,000 people.⁵⁶

1.1.3 The 1967 Arab-Israeli war

As tensions lingered between Israel and Palestine post-1949, the Arab states competed amongst themselves to champion the Palestinian cause.⁵⁷ The newly formed Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) took advantage of this support and began launching attacks on Israel from neighbouring states, including from the Jordanian occupied West Bank. When Israel retaliated with airstrikes, relations with the PLO's host states soured. But it was not the PLO, but Egyptian President Nasser's May 1967 declaration that the Straits of Tiran were closed to Israeli shipping, that provided the catalyst to propel animosity into full-scale war. Calling Nasser's declaration an ‘act of war,’ Israel launched a pre-emptive strike: Operation Focus. What became known as the Six Day War resulted in an Israeli victory, with Israeli Defence Force (IDF) troops assuming control of the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.

1.1.4 The Intifadas

Intifada derives from the Arabic verb ‘to shake’ or ‘to shake off’, though it is commonly translated into English as ‘uprising,’ ‘resistance’ or ‘rebellion.’⁵⁸ While the immediate triggers of the Palestinian intifadas were seemingly minor events, they occurred in the context of longstanding socio-economic grievances and perceptions of social injustice resulting from Israeli occupation.⁵⁹

The first intifada was sparked by the controversial deaths of four Palestinians hit by an Israeli vehicle in December 1987. Described as a tragic accident by the Israeli establishment, Palestinians considered the killings an act of retaliation for the murder of an Israeli in Gaza. These events took place against a backdrop of growing hostilities. Lebanon's civil war had taken on clear proxy elements, with the PLO and their Lebanese allies fighting Israel from within Lebanon. This fuelled harsh Israeli treatment of Palestinians within the Occupied Territories.

⁵³ N Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine conflict: contested histories* (2011) 2.

⁵⁴ I Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006) 32.

⁵⁵ J Beinun and L Hajjar, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer*, Middle East Research and Information Project primer, February (2014) <<http://www.merip.org/primer-palestine-israel-arab-israeli-conflict-new>>

⁵⁶ UNRWA, *The United Nations and Palestinian Refugees*, January (2007), 2 <<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011791015.pdf>>

⁵⁷ B Gidron, S Katz and Y Hasenfeld, *Contextualising Peace and Conflict-Resolution Organisation in South Africa, Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine* (2002).

⁵⁸ J Collins, *Occupied by Memory: The Intifada Generation and the Palestinian State of Emergency* (2004) 231.

⁵⁹ J Pressman, ‘The second intifada: Background and causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 23(2) (2006).

Particular flashpoints included roadblocks,⁶⁰ overcrowding, particularly in Gaza where many lived three to a room,⁶¹ and a broader lack of housing for Palestinians.⁶² The Rehabilitation Program that began in 1971 came to a standstill in the early 1980s, with hardly any construction taking place in the years leading up to 1987.⁶³ An IDF study of Gaza just prior to the intifada predicted that the situation would break records for population density, water scarcity and land shortage: a “human time bomb ticking in Israel’s ear”.⁶⁴

By 1993, despite the optimism that accompanied the Oslo Accords,⁶⁵ the factors that drove the first intifada remained largely unaddressed and many aspects had intensified, particularly with respect to Palestinian socio-economic conditions and freedom of movement.⁶⁶ Over one million were living with little water or natural resources, and the Gaza strip was classified as one of the most densely populated and poorest areas in the world.⁶⁷ The 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the failure of the Camp David negotiations gave way to further violence, and by 2000 both sides felt that diplomatic routes were close to exhausted.⁶⁸ But it was Ariel Sharon’s politically charged visit to the Temple Mount on 28 September that sparked the second intifada. Between October 2000 and July 2005, sniper squads and 138 suicide bombings unleashed a new wave of violence and destruction.⁶⁹ Whilst Palestinian officials insisted that the violence was caused by Sharon’s deliberate provocation, later admissions by Imad Faluji, Communications Minister for the Palestinian Authorities, suggest that the violence was planned in advance.⁷⁰

1.1.6 The Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip has been a recurrent flashpoint since IDF withdrawal in 2005 and Hamas’s 2006 election victory,⁷¹ which resulted in divided governance: the Palestinian Authority (PA) controlling the West Bank and Hamas authority in Gaza. In 2008, Israeli forces launched Operation Cast Lead against armed groups united under Hamas in Gaza. Israel justified this and a similar offensive in 2012 as retaliation against rocket fire originating from Gaza, and as an attempt to end Hamas’ capability to launch attacks. In July 2014, Operation Protective Edge commenced following the murder of three Israeli teenagers, allegedly by Hamas. The disproportionate nature of these events cannot be ignored; the 2008, 2012 and 2014 conflicts resulted in a combined total of 3495 Palestinian deaths, many of which were civilian, compared with 80 Israeli deaths, the majority of which were soldiers.⁷² Until today, Israel imposes tight restrictions on the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, on the basis of state security.⁷³ As a result Gazans suffer from dire sewage and waste problems, water and food

⁶⁰ R Cohen-Almagor (1991) ‘The Intifada: causes, consequences and future trends’ *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 2 (1), 12-40.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ B Sumantra, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmire, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka* (2007) 208.

⁶⁵ T Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to end the war of 1948* (2nd ed, 2011.) ch. 1.

⁶⁶ Pressman, above n 59, 14.

⁶⁷ Reinhart, above n 65.

⁶⁸ Reinhart, above n 65.

⁶⁹ R J Brym and B Araj, ‘Suicide bombing as strategy and interaction: The case of the second intifada’ *Social Forces*, 84(4) (2006), 1969-1986.

⁷⁰ Encyclopedia of the Middle East, ‘Second Intifada’, <http://www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/second_intifada.htm> at 27 April 2015.

⁷¹ ‘Gaza-Israel Conflict: Is the fighting over?’, *BBC News*, 26 August 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28252155>> at 10 April 2015.

⁷² ‘Gaza crisis: Toll of operations in Gaza’, *BBC News*, 1 Sept 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28439404>> at 27 April 2015.

⁷³ *ibid.*

insecurity and severe overcrowding. Palestinians cite these reasons, along with the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as key drivers of the militarised violence.⁷⁴

The Israel-Palestine conflict can be described as an example of cyclical conflict, with both sides citing self-defence to justify their actions and retaliations against each other. While the conflict is undeniably about contested territory, there are obvious religious and geopolitical elements and socio-economic grievances in play. As will be shown in the next chapter, the conflict also carries a 'neighbourhood' dimension, the instability having spilled over into Lebanon in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

1.2 Lebanon

Lebanon has been affected by civil conflict and internal strife since 1975. A closer look at this violence demonstrates the deleterious impact of foreign interference, arms build-ups, and weak institutional structures.⁷⁵

1.2.1 The Lebanese Civil war

The Lebanese civil war was a complex conflict with multiple participants, making the causal factors difficult to discern. Academics diverge on whether it was a domestic war that involved external actors or a war fought through Lebanese proxies.⁷⁶

The three main parties were the conservative Christian alliance, the revisionist Muslim grouping and the Palestinian forces, with each comprising several separate militias. At first glance the war appears to have been fuelled by sectarian divisions long prominent in Lebanese society. Many of these militias, however, began arming as early as 1969. The Tigers, the military wing of the primarily Christian National Liberal Party, were designed to defend Lebanon in times of crisis, as the Party believed the national army was incapable of doing so alone.⁷⁷ As concerns over the weakness of the state increased, so did the preparation of militia forces. It can even be argued that the perceived security dilemma contributed to the early stages of conflict.

There was also a definitive non-Lebanese element to the war. The autonomous armed Palestinian presence that created a base in Lebanon following its expulsion from Jordan in 1971 has often been held responsible for fuelling the conflict. Indeed the first violent clashes in Beirut erupted between Christian and Palestinian forces in April 1975. Others view Israel's very existence as a driving factor in the war.⁷⁸

As the conflict progressed, fights over control and access to strategic routes escalated, and influence consolidated along sectarian lines.⁷⁹ Syrian troops entered Lebanon in June 1976 to restore peace and curb Palestinian military strength. In March 1978, Israeli troops entered south Lebanon and occupied territory on the Litani River. This acted as the precursor to the South Lebanon war that was effectively fought between Israeli and Palestinian troops, triggered by the attempted assassination of Israel's ambassador to Britain in June 1982.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ B Rubin (ed), *Lebanon: liberation, conflict, and crisis* (2009) 1.

⁷⁶ T Badran, 'Lebanon's Militia Wars' in B. Rubin (ed), *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis* (2009) 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁸ J Spyer, 'Israel and Lebanon: Problematic Proximity' in B. Rubin (ed), *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis* (2009) 196.

⁷⁹ Badran, above n 76, 36-37.

The Ta'if Agreement of 1989 brought the civil war to an end, but Hezbollah — the Iranian backed militia — was exempted from disarmament due to Israel's continued presence in South Lebanon. Hezbollah has since become an influential party with seats in the Lebanese government and continued to grow, even after Israeli forces withdrew from the south in 2000.

1.3 Israel-Hezbollah Conflict of 2006

The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict fits within the classification of an internationalised conflict. While it was the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers that triggered the violence, the conflict was to some extent precipitated by the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, following Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri's assassination in 2005, and the history of hostility between the two parties.⁸⁰ This assertion must be understood in context. Hezbollah was in a defensive stance following the withdrawal of its allies. Thus when the election took place, the first one free of external interference since 1972,⁸¹ Hezbollah sought to destabilise the new majority.⁸² Kidnapping Israeli soldiers triggered an easily anticipated reaction. Additional underlying factors should not, however, be ignored. The tense relationship between Iran and Israel also played a role. Anti-Semitic notions had pervaded Iranian politics since the revolution and from the 1990s Khamenei had been funding the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad.⁸³ Relations with Israel deteriorated further when Iran began training and equipping Hezbollah, leading some to label the 2006 conflict as a war between Iran and Israel fought through proxies.⁸⁴

Although Palestinian forces in Lebanon have been subdued, several factors remain that leave Lebanon vulnerable to conflict. These include the existence of a powerful, armed non-state actor with strong links to Iran, confessional divisions and state weakness.⁸⁵ These fissures — particularly the compromised capacity of the Lebanese state — were exposed recently in the 'garbage crisis.'⁸⁶

1.4 Iraq

While the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf war, as conventional conflicts, fall outside the scope of this research, they were significant in paving the way for future conflict and instability. These contexts saw Saddam Hussein's repression of Iraqi Kurds intensify, and the deleterious implications of the UN-imposed sanctions on the Iraqi population. Denis Halliday, former UN humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, said that in implementing the sanctions: "[w]e are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that".⁸⁷

⁸⁰ W Harris, 'Lebanon's Roller Coaster Ride' in B. Rubin (ed), *Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis* (2009) 63.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Harris adds that, in addition, Hezbollah may have aimed to disrupt the inquiry into the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri, *ibid.*

⁸³ S Simon, *Iran and Israel*, United States Institute of Peace <<http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-israel>> at 14 April 2014.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, *Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing Out of the Abyss*, 25 July (2006).

⁸⁶ T Perry, 'Beirut's mounting trash reflects crisis of government', *Reuters*, 23 July 2015 <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/07/23/uk-lebanon-government-idUKKCN0PX15Z20150723>>

⁸⁷ cited in D Rieff, 'Were Sanctions Right?', *New York Times*, 27 July 2003

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/27/magazine/27SANCTIONS.html?pagewanted=all>>

1.4.1 Allied invasion of Iraq

Gause has claimed that although the Gulf War eroded the capacity of the Iraqi state, the allied United States (US) invasion was the *coup de grace*.⁸⁸ First, through its process of de-Ba'athification,⁸⁹ the US effectively destroyed the three pillars that had propped up the Iraqi state: the ruling Ba'ath party, the military and the experienced bureaucracy.⁹⁰ This weakened the state, led to a collapse of law and order and ultimately the breakdown of essential services. Demonstrations that occurred in 2003 calling for an end to US-led occupation and an Islamic State with no Sunni-Shi'a divide, illustrate that early on the US army were not regarded as the liberators they had promised to be.⁹¹

Second, the empowerment of Iraq's Shi'a majority upset the sectarian balance within Iraq and created the perception of a government influenced by its allies in Iran.⁹² The head of the transitional government, Nouri al-Maliki, exacerbated these national divides. His narrow stance saw him leading the Shi'a community first and the state of Iraq second as he manipulated the threat of the Sunni insurgency to expand his own power base, ensure Shi'a loyalty and justify aggressive counteractions.⁹³ Maliki's crackdown contributed to the rejuvenation of Sunni extremism that endures today,⁹⁴ and compromised the state's ability to suppress sectarian violence.⁹⁵

The civil war that emerged in 2004 but intensified in 2006, with Shi'a militias against Sunni insurgents, has been described as "urban guerrilla warfare and militia-based conflict".⁹⁶ Like in Lebanon, it was inherent state weakness — driven by sanctions and de-Ba'athification — that allowed fissures to develop between different ethnic and sectarian groups in Iraqi society. Today the Iraqi state faces severe internal challenges from both ISIS and a popular mobilisation of Iraqis angered by electrical blackouts and corruption.⁹⁷ This trajectory of events reinforces the literature on conflict recurrence — that the experience of civil war increases its likelihood in the future.⁹⁸

1.5 The Arab Spring

Virtually no government in the WANA region emerged untouched by the series of sudden and simultaneous protests of 2011, known alternatively as the Arab Spring and the Arab Uprisings.⁹⁹ Beginning in Tunisia with the self-immolation of a young street vendor, protests against corruption, police brutality, low wages, unemployment and high food prices¹⁰⁰ spread to Oman,

⁸⁸ F G Gause III, *Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War*, Brookings Doha Centre Analysis Paper (2014), 10.

⁸⁹ V Nasr, 'When the Shiites Rise' *Foreign Affairs*, 85(58) (2006), 59.

⁹⁰ Gause III, above n 88.

⁹¹ A Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq* (2005) 19.

⁹² D Byman, 'Sectarianism Afflicts the New Middle East' *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56(1) (2014), 81.

⁹³ *ibid*; 'The Arab World: Tethered by History', *The Economist*, 5 July 2014 (Cairo), 7 <<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21606286-failures-arab-spring-were-long-time-making-tethered-history>>

⁹⁴ S. Simon et al., 'The Crisis in Syria: What are the Stakes for its Neighbours?' *Middle East Policy*, 20 (3) (2013), 5.

⁹⁵ Simon, above n 93, 84.

⁹⁶ J Fearon, 'Iraq's Civil War', *New York Times*, 26 February 2007

<http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/20070301faessay_v86n2_fearon.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

⁹⁷ 'Thousands of Iraqis protest against corruption and power cuts', *BBC*, 7 August 2015

<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/07/iraq-protest-corruption-power-cuts>>

⁹⁸ UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, cited in *Conflict Relapse and the Sustainability of Post-Conflict Peace*, *World Development Report 2011 Background Paper* (2010) 1.

⁹⁹ L Anderson, 'Authoritarian Legacies and Regime Change - Towards Understanding Political Transition in the Arab World', in F. A. Gerges (ed), *The new Middle East: protest and revolution in the Arab World* (2013) 50.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria and Bahrain. More severe demands for regime change escalated in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. By mid-June 2011, the governments of Algeria and Saudi Arabia had bought-off dissent with major infusions of money and broad wage increases. Other states, for example Jordan and Morocco, were more responsive and made concessions in the form of full Cabinet resignations and legislative reforms. However regimes fell in Egypt and Tunisia, and Libya, Yemen and Syria descended into violent conflict.¹⁰¹

Although the uprisings were geographically diverse and wide-ranging in composition and strategy, there are commonalities across the affected states. Breakdowns in public services were broadly attributed to corrupt governments who diverted resources to the security services and elsewhere, as opposed to the general population.¹⁰² Political representation was another common theme. A final feature was that the protests were largely united across religious and ethnic divides, and were missing the ideological element characteristic of other uprisings that have taken place throughout history.¹⁰³

In the four years since 2011, Tunisia probably represents the region's best chance for achieving pluralistic, representative government. Other outcomes range from disappointing to tragic. Egypt, at best, has stagnated in implementing reforms, but egregious human rights violations and the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood and alleged affiliates indicate a backwards slide. The fallen dictators of Yemen and Libya left chaos in their wake, and while Syria's President Assad has maintained control of portions of his nation, this has been at a terrible cost.

The factors driving the uprisings and their outcomes offer valuable insights. They demonstrate the Arab people's aspirations for economic opportunity and social justice. They also reveal the importance of political institutions, not just in terms of regime resilience, but also as foundations for state reconstruction. Finally, they showcase the influence of civil society and national identity in making post-revolutionary societies work.

1.5.1 Tunisia's revolution

Although Tunisia may have been well off compared to many of its African and Arab neighbours, popular frustration with political corruption, police violence and economic inequality had long-simmered. Unemployment riots in 2008 hinted at growing marginalisation, with Human Rights Watch noting a rise in acts of political defiance since the early 2000s, and particularly the participation of those who felt they had nothing left to lose.¹⁰⁴ How rapidly protests spread following Bouazizi's self-immolation on 4 January 2015 reiterates how ready Tunisians were for reform. And change took place rapidly. By 14 January, President Zine El Abidine ben Ali had abdicated, ending his 23-year rule, and fled to Saudi Arabia.

The features that made Tunisia an unlikely candidate for revolution — its strong, well-functioning institutions, active civil society, and economic prosperity — became assets in the post-Ben Ali era, with the country making steady progress towards pluralist democracy. The finalised 2014 Constitution garnered international acclaim for being the most progressive in the

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰³ M Sariolghalam, 'Transition in the Middle East: New Arab realities and Iran' *Middle East Policy*, 20(1) (2013), 121.

¹⁰⁴ E Goldstein, *Before the Arab Spring: The Unseen Thaw* (2011) Human Rights Watch <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/arab-spring-unseen-thaw>> at 20 April 2015.

Arab world. Despite some lingering issues with respect to freedom of expression and social justice,¹⁰⁵ reformed institutions work to maximise political pluralism. A strong parliament and Prime Minister operate within the semi-presidential system to counterbalance presidential overreach, and a zero-percent threshold for political parties allows for participation by even the smallest of groups.¹⁰⁶

1.5.1.1 Drivers of Tunisian success

Four pre-existing conditions facilitated an easier transition period in Tunisia than in other Arab nations. First, the country already had well-functioning institutions, albeit replete with patronage and graft. Tunisia's military was not only independent of the state but had generally stayed out of politics.¹⁰⁷ Second, the population is predominantly Sunni Muslim and lacks strong religious or ethnic divides. Third, while political parties were severely limited, civil society was strong and considered an authentic voice of the common interest. Since the early days of the Islamic Republic, women's contribution in labour markets was encouraged, and this carried over into their active participation in civil society. Moreover, a long history of dialogue between the secular state and Islamist civil society actors created a legacy of religious consultation. This empowered Tunisian Islamist party Ennahda to operate pragmatically and cooperatively within the political system after Ben Ali's departure. Last, despite income disparities and wide corruption, Tunisia had and continues to have a relatively high GDP per capita and a strong middle class. Between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 periods, Tunisia was the only North African nation to avoid decline on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index.¹⁰⁸

But Tunisia's challenges are far from over. Nidaa Tounes, who defeated Ennahda in recent elections, is closely tied to the former regime. The country also faces both internal terrorist threats and spillover impacts from neighbouring conflicts, especially Libya. While the country is unlikely to descend into violent disorder, stagnation of progress and a resurgence of corruption remain a real possibility.

1.5.3 The Egyptian revolution

The conditions in pre-revolution Egypt mimic those in Tunisia. They included deteriorating governmental provision of basic services, inaction against staggering poverty and weak economic opportunities. The ostentatious consumption habits of the business elite, particularly those tied to the President, was a further cause of frustration.¹⁰⁹ Thus, when Tunisia transformed nearly overnight, large segments of the Egyptian populace stood ready to learn from the example; the slogan *aysh, hurriya, adala ijtimai'ia* or 'bread, freedom and social justice' rallied the masses.

Hosni Mubarak stepped down weeks after the revolution began on 25 January 2011, ending over half a century of military rule. His removal started a hasty process of political reform. Lamentably, Egyptian institutions needed extensive revision and genuine change required

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of Tunisia's battles over freedom of speech, post-Arab Spring, see: <<http://freespeechdebate.com/en/discuss/who-is-threatening-free-speech-in-post-revolutionary-tunisia/>>

¹⁰⁶ Y Sezgin, 'Why is Tunisian democracy succeeding while the Turkish model is failing?', *The Washington Post*, 8 November 2014.

¹⁰⁷ L Mudhoon, 'Opinion: Tunisia is a Model for What the Arab Spring Can Achieve', *Deutsche-Welle*, 23 December 2014 <<http://www.dw.de/opinion-tunisia-is-a-model-for-what-the-arab-spring-can-achieve/a-18148234>>.

¹⁰⁸ Gallup, *Tunisia: Analyzing the Dawn of the Arab Spring* (2011) <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/157049/tunisia-analyzing-dawn-arab-spring.aspx>> at 19 April 2015.

¹⁰⁹ L Anderson, 'Demystifying the Arab Spring' *Foreign Affairs*, May/June (2011).

patience and strategic planning. Instead, reconstruction progressed rapidly in which the military, perhaps Egypt's most entrenched institutional body, played a major role.

The actions of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) interim government presaged later developments. Violent crackdowns and the notorious Mohammad Mahmoud Massacre in November 2011 alarmed the international community, but even more insidious initiatives were to come. These included the dissolution of the Lower House and enactment of non-democratic amendments to the interim Constitution. These reforms handed the first president after Mubarak an office "devoid of all powers" and hinted at the armed forces' ultimate aspirations.¹¹⁰

The situation did not improve. The newly elected president, Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammad Morsi, concentrated on consolidating his power and failed to address Egypt's economic needs, driving the people to again take to the streets. On 3 July 2013, the armed forces suspended Morsi's presidency and the Islamist-supported Constitution in what has been described alternately as a 'coup,' 'democratic coup' and a 'revolution.' Their subsequent crackdown on Brotherhood supporters and the *Rabaa al-Adawiya* massacre, however, revealed the true face of the movement.

Today, Egypt looks much like it did before the revolution. Former General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi won the 2014 presidential election by a landslide and his latest electoral reforms seem designed to favour individual candidates with old establishment or military ties, while actively discouraging the formation of new political parties.¹¹¹ Under the auspice of a security crisis stemming from the Sinai (and now Libya), the government banned religious and religious-affiliated parties, imposed new restrictions on the media and civil society, and introduced a law severely limiting protests.¹¹² But it is perhaps the actions of the judiciary that are most worrying in terms of authoritarianism and flagrant politicking. They dropped charges against President Hosni Mubarak for the deaths of protesters, but sentenced President Morsi to death, alongside 683 Brotherhood supporters, mostly through mass trials.¹¹³

1.5.3.1 Forces shaping post-Mubarak Egypt

There is no question that the current government differs vastly from the one envisioned by the protesters of 2011. Indeed, Egypt faced many more hurdles in establishing a democratic state than its neighbour Tunisia. First, while eradicating corruption in Tunisia could largely be accomplished by ridding the nation of the Ben Ali family, Egyptian corruption was deeply entrenched.¹¹⁴ More importantly, while Tunisia's army had long been marginalised, Egypt's powerful armed forces were accustomed to extensive influence in national politics. Its economic role is particularly noteworthy; estimates of military control over the economy range from 5-40 percent, with the International Monetary Fund reporting that the military oversaw half of Egypt's manufacturing.¹¹⁵ In terms of demographics, Egypt is not as homogenous as Tunisia. A

¹¹⁰ L Sadiki, 'Egypt: From 'Election first' to 'SCAF first'', *Al Jazeera*, 18 June 2012 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/201261882355312597.html>> at 28 April 2015.

¹¹¹ K Dawoud, 'Egypt's Parliamentary Elections Law: A Setback for Democracy', *The Atlantic Council*, 26 June 2014 <<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/egypt-s-parliamentary-elections-law-a-setback-for-democracy>> at 20 April 2015.

¹¹² D Kirkpatrick, 'New Law in Egypt Effectively Bans Street Protests', *New York Times*, 25 November 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/world/middleeast/egypt-law-street-protests.html?_r=0 Accessed 26 September 2015>

¹¹³ 'Court confirms Egypt Muslim Brotherhood death sentences', *BBC News*, 21 June 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27952321>>

¹¹⁴ Anderson, above n 109.

¹¹⁵ J Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2012) 61.

religious divide runs between the 90 percent Muslim (predominantly Sunni) majority and the Coptic Christian minority.¹¹⁶ This rift occasionally flares into violence. Finally, Egypt had higher national GDP than Tunisia going into 2011, but income distribution was highly skewed and GDP per capita was much lower.¹¹⁷

Where Egypt seemed to have an advantage was its zealous civil society community and, relative to much of the region, free press.¹¹⁸ The revolution and reconstruction period featured wide-ranging political debates and protesters seemed manifestly dedicated to non-violence. This suggests that Egyptians were prepared for the serious and sustained conversations needed to accomplish comprehensive reform.¹¹⁹ Thus while the consequences of other revolutions may be more tragic, Egypt's return to authoritarianism is possibly the most disappointing outcome. The rushed reform process simply never gave Egypt's revolutionaries a chance to utilise the characteristics that disposed it towards effective political change.

1.5.4 Revolutions that descended into civil war: Yemen and Libya

While Egypt and Tunisia were viewed as the most likely candidates for successful reform, Yemen and Libya inspired little by way of hope. These revolutions triggered violence from the outset, and in each nation power struggles undermined the people's early demands and aspirations. In Libya's case, the international community was relatively united in support of ridding the nation of its 42-year ruling President Colonel Gaddafi. Indeed, NATO implemented a no-fly zone and assisted rebel forces in taking Tripoli under the pretence of UN Security Resolution 1973 to "protect civilians and civilian populations under threat of attack".¹²⁰ Yemeni President Saleh's 33-years in office ended with less drama; he resigned and passed authority to his vice president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. But the violent aftermath that followed the fall of both regimes demonstrates the challenge of reconstruction in inherently weak states.

In August 2014, a coalition of militias named Libya Dawn seized Tripoli and derailed any progress that had been made overhauling Libya's decimated government infrastructure. Libya Dawn went on to establish a government, the General National Congress, but it remains unrecognised by the international community. The official parliament and Prime Minister escaped to the eastern city of Tobruk, but they lack the ability to govern in the most critical capacities.¹²¹ Despite UN attempts to encourage dialogue, the two governments have made little effort to negotiate and remain locked in a violent struggle for territory and resources. As Libya is Africa's oil richest country, the stakes are high for the rival governments, as well as for the many non-state actors, mostly tribes and Islamist groups, attempting to carve out a place amidst the

¹¹⁶ Index Mundi, *Egypt Demographic Profile 2014* (2014) <http://www.indexmundi.com/egypt/demographics_profile.html> at 22 April 2015.

¹¹⁷ Gallup, *Egypt: The Arithmetic of Revolution* <http://www.gallup.com/poll/157043/egypt-arithmetic-revolution.aspx?utm_source=MUSLIM_STUDIES&utm_medium=topic&utm_campaign=tiles> at 15 April 2015.

¹¹⁸ M Dunne, *Storms of the Arab Spring*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 3 December (2013). <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/12/03/storms-of-arab-spring>>

¹¹⁹ Anderson, above n 109.

¹²⁰ Security Council, "Security Council Approves "No-Fly Zone over Libya Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 4 Abstentions", 17 March (2011).

¹²¹ K Mezran, *In Libya, Push for War is Stronger Than Push for Peace* (2014) The Atlantic Council <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/in-libya-push-for-war-is-stronger-than-push-for-peace?utm_content=buffer61a3d&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer> at 15 April 2015.

chaos.¹²² The most concerning non-state actor is ISIS, which now has a Libyan offshoot and occupies the city of Derna.

Yemen's legitimate government was similarly forced from the capital by an Islamist challenger in what can best be described as a coup against Saleh's replacement, President Hadi.¹²³ The Houthis, a Shi'a movement, seized Sanaa in September 2014. They originally claimed to have an interest only in reforming Yemen, but in February 2015 they took power.¹²⁴ President Hadi fled to Aden and continues to enjoy legitimacy within the international community and among Yemen's Arab neighbours. The conflict is further complicated by Iran's backing of the Houthis; this external involvement propelled what was a domestic conflict into a regional power play. On 25 March 2015, Saudi airstrikes began the largest bombing campaign in Yemeni history.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, already an active force within Yemen, has capitalised on the disorder and captured the valuable port town of Markulla.¹²⁶

1.5.4.1 Drivers of the Yemeni and Libyan disasters

An examination of conditions within Yemen and Libya before their respective Arab Spring experiences helps to explain these states' weak resilience and the likelihood of protracted conflict into the near future. One major parallel is that Yemen and Libya had both survived under strong-man dictatorships. To permit 'direct democracy' Gaddafi rid Libya of all representative institutions, effectively forcing Libyans to rely on kinship bonds for social protection.¹²⁷ His corrupt, kleptocratic government bought loyalty from those in power and left the rest of the country cowed into submission. With the loss of Gaddafi and his unifying, if repressive, strategies, Libya fell apart; the tribal and regional divides that riddled national institutions, including the military, left the country unable to function.¹²⁸ Yemen's President Saleh also recognised the dangers of inclusive formal institutions that could have diminished his power and flexibility to shape the government as he chose. But what little institutional infrastructure that did exist under Saleh was held together by a combination of corruption and nepotism that encouraged loyalty among family members and any others benefitting from the graft.¹²⁹ Saleh provided kickbacks and political power to powerful tribes to ensure their support, and enjoyed assistance from Saudi Arabia who wanted to stabilise its neighbour and maintain a friendly authority in power. As in Libya, when Saleh left power, there was insufficient substance to hold key institutions together.

While Libya's religious homogeneity — nearly 100 percent are Sunni Muslim¹³⁰ — has not manifested in social cohesion, it does allow religious sectarianism to be ruled out as a factor in the violence. But diversity comes in many forms. Besides the many tribal divides, the Berbers,

¹²² G Cafiero and D Wagner, *Four Years After Gaddafi, Libya is a Failed State* (2015) FPiF <<http://fpif.org/four-years-after-gaddafi-libya-is-a-failed-state/>> at 15 April 2015.

¹²³ "A coup d'etat is a violent challenge to the state, analogous to a rebellion," in P Collier and A Hoeffler, *Coup Traps: Why does Africa have so many Coup d'Etat?* Preliminary Draft, Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, University of Oxford, August (2005).

¹²⁴ 'Yemen Profile – Timeline', *BBC News*, 1 April 2015 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14704951>> at 20 April 2015.

¹²⁵ F Al Muslimi, *Saudi Airstrikes Against Yemen a First* (2015) Carnegie <<http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/04/02/saudi-airstrikes-against-yemen-first/i5x9>> at 15 April 2015.

¹²⁶ P Bolopian and B Welkis, *Bleeding in Yemen* (2015) Human Rights Watch <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/15/bleeding-yemen>> at 15 April 2015.

¹²⁷ Gelvin, above n 115, 71.

¹²⁸ Anderson, above n 109.

¹²⁹ Gelvin, above n 115, 69.

¹³⁰ PEW Forum, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population*, October (2009) <<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>>

who represent 10 percent of Libya's population, constitute a significant ethnic challenge.¹³¹ Yemen's demographic composition is more complex. According to Pew Research Center, 35-40 percent of Yemen's (nearly entirely) Muslim demographic is Shi'a.¹³² The Houthis are also Shi'a, but their branch of Shi'a Islam, Zaydi, is considered one of the closest to Sunni Islam, and it differs from Iran's Shi'a tradition.¹³³ Nonetheless, the long history of inter-sect cooperation and intra-sect fighting among Yemen's Sunni and Shi'a populations suggests that the conflict has distinctly political origins. The Houthis were primary victims of Saleh's repressive policies and they had joined with opposition groups from varying religious backgrounds to oppose him and the Yemeni establishment.¹³⁴ It is only recently, with the influx of Iranian support to the Houthis, that sectarian divides have appeared on the battlefield.

Another divisive factor in both Libya and Yemen is geography; in both countries the natural landscape does little to encourage national cohesion. Yemen is home to diverse landscapes that have long fostered isolationism among the nation's regions. Two-thirds of the population live in scattered, isolated villages beyond state authority.¹³⁵ Separatist movements in the south, where Yemen's oil resources are located, have faced fierce opposition. Libya, on the other hand, consists of a massive desert territory, with a long strip of Mediterranean coast housing the vast majority of the population. But the people are divided among coastal settlements spread between wide swaths of uninhabited land. Territory is also of major consequence in the current geopolitical violence; Libya's eastern Cyrenaica region is home to four-fifths of the country's oil and thus plays a critical role in on-going instability.¹³⁶

Pre-revolution, Libya's structures of political alliances, economic associations and national organisations were non-existent; Gaddafi severely restricted civil society and any political participation evaporated within the regime's opaque and bureaucratic system.¹³⁷ In *Foreign Affairs*, Lisa Anderson describes the uprising in Libya not as a revolution, but as an "all-out secession — or multiple separate secessions — from a failed state."¹³⁸ Despite widespread efforts to organise post-Gaddafi Libya, pervasive social divisions pose a major challenge. Similarly, conditions in Yemen, both geographic and political, had long stifled civil society. According to UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia research, while there were hundreds of youth groups in pre-revolutionary Yemen, most had fewer than ten members. They faced a formidable organisational challenge both during and after the uprising.¹³⁹ While unions in Saleh's Yemen were permitted in theory, they were toothless in practice, and limitations on media hindered information sharing.¹⁴⁰ Finally, whereas Egypt and Tunisia have long, dynamic histories that encouraged a sense of a national unity, neither Libya nor Yemen enjoy strong social cohesion or national identity. The modern Libyan state is derived from an Italian

¹³¹ Gelvin, above n 115, 92.

¹³² PEW Forum, *Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population*, October (2009) <<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>>

¹³³ K Fattah, *Yemen's Sectarian Spring* (2012) Carnegie Endowment <<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2012/05/11/yemen-s-sectarian-spring/fbo2>> at 28 September 2015.

¹³⁴ C Schmitz, *The Huthi Ascent to Power* (2014) Middle East Institute <<http://www.mei.edu/content/at/huthi-ascent-power>> at 28 September 2015.

¹³⁵ Gelvin, above n 115, 74.

¹³⁶ S Berdikieva, *In Libya, One Region's Stability Is Key to Oil Supply* (2012) National Geographic <<http://energyblog.nationalgeographic.com/2012/09/04/in-libya-one-regions-stability-is-key-to-oil-supply/>> at 18 April 2015.

¹³⁷ J Lansing, 'Civil Society in Transition', *UNESCWA*, June 2014 <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_14_P-3_E.pdf> at 4 May 2015.

¹³⁸ Anderson, above n 109.

¹³⁹ Lansing, above n 137.

¹⁴⁰ Freedom House, *Yemen* (2010) <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2010/yemen#.VUPTWLPfGS0>> at 4 May 2015.

conglomeration of several colonies while Yemen has spent most of its short lifespan as a divided nation.¹⁴¹ In short, the two nations' fragile internal bonds were unable to sustain the upheavals of modern politics.

Although Libya is significantly wealthier than Yemen, the two nations share some economic commonalities. About 95 percent of Libya's pre-2011 economy came from oil revenues, which it spread among loyal state clients.¹⁴² Its high GDP per capita left analysts optimistic about economic recovery, especially as none of Libya's main oil wells were severely damaged during the early days of the revolution.¹⁴³ But Libya's oil glut soon became a security risk; not only did oil serve as a 'honey pot' for militias to fight over, violent actors like ISIS have taken to sabotaging oil fields to aggravate the chaos.¹⁴⁴ By contrast, even before the revolution, Yemen was one of the poorest Arab nations. In 2011, nearly 50 percent of the population lived on less than two dollars a day. But of the little money the government did have, 75 percent came from oil. Adding to Yemen's rentierism, the population is the largest recipient of remittances in the Middle East, mainly coming from oil labourers working in Gulf nations.¹⁴⁵ The risks attendant on this situation must be considered against future income projections. Not only is Yemen's reliance on oil excessive, its oil production is unimpressive; it is the world's 32nd largest exporter of oil and faces "terminal decline".¹⁴⁶

In terms of their future outlooks Libya and Yemen need to rebuild as states before they can develop inclusive and representative governance. As long as they suffer rival claims to power, their violent territories are fertile zones for militant Islamist actors. While Libya threatens to become a gateway for ISIS into Europe, the increasingly sectarian nature of Yemen's conflict has regional implications for rising Iranian-Saudi tensions.

1.5.6 The revolutions that weren't: Syria and the Arab monarchies

The majority of Arab nations withstood the Arab Spring without experiencing regime change, but this should not imply that these nations were unaffected. The most extreme example is the war that has consumed Syria and claimed more than 200,000 lives.¹⁴⁷ Syria is unique in the extent of its devastation; the Arab monarchies, with the exception of Bahrain, withstood the tremors of the Arab Spring with relative ease. This section examines the Syrian context and then discusses the factors that allowed the persistence of kings when presidents fell.

After a few feeble attempts, Syria's revolution began mid-March 2011. Protests ignited in the city of Daraa after the arrest and torture of a group of school children for anti-regime graffiti.¹⁴⁸ Families, frustrated by their inability to address the injustice through legal channels, took to the streets, soon joined by thousands of supporters. The government's attempts at reform were superficial and force remained the most significant element of the regime's response. Troops

¹⁴¹ Gelvin, above n 115, 74.

¹⁴² Gelvin, above n 115, 76

¹⁴³ 'Libya's Revolution: Messy Politics, Perky Economics', *The Economist*, 8 October 2011.

¹⁴⁴ 'Libya Says 11 Oil Fields Non-Operational After Attacks from ISIS', *Fox News*, 5 March 2015

<<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/05/libyan-state-oil-corporation-declares-11-oil-fields-non-operational-after/>> at 1 May 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Gelvin, above n 115, 76.

¹⁴⁶ P Salisbury, *Yemen's Economy: Oil, Imports and Elites*, Chatham House (2011)

<http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/1011pp_yemeneconomy.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2015: Syria*, (2015) <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/syria>>

¹⁴⁸ Gelvin, above n 115, 103.

besieged cities, violently quashed peaceful protests and dumped bodies on the sides of streets.¹⁴⁹ As the fighting intensified, the government strategically targeted its moderate Islamist and secular opposition, allowing their more violent, extremist opponents to gain momentum and complicating the context for the international community. Since late 2012, these militant extremists have dominated the opposition with two organisations, al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, at their forefront.

1.5.6.1 Drivers of the Syrian civil war

Certain conditions contributed to a high propensity for violence once the uprising began, in particular, religious sectarianism. Although President Assad represents the secular Ba'athist party, the Assad family is Alawite, a small religious sect that is controversially categorised as an offshoot of Shi'a Islam. Their minority stance helped curry favour with Syria's other religious minorities but left the Sunni majority underrepresented.

Focusing on religious sect and family alliances, however, overlooks much of the complexity of the Syrian conflict. To blame sectarianism is to ignore the critical influence of external powers. Syrian ties to Iran originate from the nations' shared animosity towards Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the Islamic Republic along with its ally Hezbollah have staunchly supported the Assad government. Iran's effort to uphold its regional influence via Assad has transformed Syria's civil conflict into a proxy war for Iran and its rival powers. Raising the stakes for international actors was a planned Iran-Iraq-Syria oil pipeline to Europe. This threatened to compete with a Qatar pipeline to Europe that, critically for a few Western actors, skipped Russia.¹⁵⁰

Discussion of sectarian divisions in Syria also ignores its 10 percent Kurdish population and 10 percent Christian population.¹⁵¹ The Kurds have used the disorder to further their own independence movement but are mistrustful of rebels and have avoided targeting the Assad regime; their fight to protect Kobani from ISIS led headlines internationally.¹⁵² Christians involved in the conflict are split; some have sided with the government, some with the Kurds and others with the 'moderate' Islamist rebels.¹⁵³

Another contributory factor is Syria's history of violent repression. Bashar al-Assad's father was notorious for dozens of massacres, most infamously in Hama and Tadmor prison in 1982 and 1980 respectively.¹⁵⁴ Assad earned the reputation of a reformer during his early days in office, but has since demonstrated a willingness to follow in his father's bloody footsteps. Moreover, the preference for stick-over-carrot carries a certain logic; the Alawite-dominated regime has an unusually thin claim to legitimacy. Genuine democratic reforms would have likely led to an Assad-Alawite demise.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Gelvin, above n 115, 105.

¹⁵⁰ N Ahmad, 'Peak Oil, Climate Change and Pipeline Geopolitics Driving Syria Conflict', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2013 <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/may/13/1>>

¹⁵¹ S Eldar, 'The Kurdish Minority Within the Syrian War', *Al-Monitor*, 10 March 2013 <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/05/the-kurdish-minority-within-the-syrian-war.html>>; 'Syria's Beleaguered Christians', *BBC News*, 25 February 2015 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22270455>>

¹⁵² 'Striking Out on Their Own', *The Economist*, 28 October 2014.

¹⁵³ H Smith, 'Christians, Kurds Join Forces Against IS', *Deutsche-Welle*, 5 May 2015 <<http://www.dw.de/christians-kurds-join-forces-against-is/a-18429178>>

¹⁵⁴ 'The al-Assad's Syria: A History of Violence', *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 17 March 2012 <<http://www.aawsat.net/2012/03/article55242799/the-al-assads-syria-a-history-of-violence>>

¹⁵⁵ G Gambil, 'Assad Knows What He's Doing' as featured in 'What is Behind Syria's Violence? Three Opinions', *Syria Comment*, 23 August 2011 <<http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/what-is-behind-assads-violence-three-opinions/?print=true>>

1.5.6.2 Drivers of the Arab monarchies' endurance

The Arab world's monarchies withstood 2011's revolutionary currents; Morocco, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) royals maintained their power. Only Bahrain suffered significant violence. Speculation regarding the monarchies' stability typically focuses on the influence of hydrocarbon wealth. Oil allows some Arab monarchies to act as rentier states, using natural resource wealth to fund government instead of tax revenues. These riches enabled the kingdoms to bypass reforms by flooding billions into development projects and job creation since 2011.¹⁵⁶

In Bahrain, monetary support was insufficient to quell dissatisfaction. Here, the demographic context is as ripe for exploitation by sectarian interests as Syria's, only in reverse. The nation has a Shi'a majority while the Royal Family, the al Khalifas, are Sunni. The uprising followed decades of protests pushing for political reform and human rights protection led mostly by the Shi'a population. Arab Spring protesters pragmatically left religion out of their demands, focusing instead on equal representation. Unfortunately, opposition stemmed not just from the Royal Family but the dynasties of Bahrain's Sunni neighbours, who saw the movement as an opportunity for Iranian encroachment. Saudi Arabia and the UAE deployed armed forces to support Bahraini troops' violent suppression of peaceful protests in March 2011.¹⁵⁷ An armed Saudi presence remained at-ready in Bahrain long after the peak of demonstrations.

One monarchic tactic varied based on the types of internal institutions. The largely dynastic Gulf monarchies could little afford to change governments when family members dominated every element of the system. Morocco and Jordan, on the other hand, have systems that separate government structures from the royal family. This allowed Muhammad VI of Morocco and Abdullah II of Jordan to implement real reforms and offer greater parliamentary power as a bargaining chip.¹⁵⁸

1.6 Conclusion

This section provided an overview of the major civil conflicts and periods of instability in the WANA region's recent history. The following chapters provide more depth, integrating theory in an analysis of the environmental and geographic, political and economic risk factors for conflict and instability.

¹⁵⁶ S Yom, 'The survival of the Arab monarchies', *Foreign Policy*, 12 December 2012 <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/12/the-survival-of-the-arab-monarchies/>>

¹⁵⁷ Gelvin, above n 115,137.

¹⁵⁸ F Gause, *King for All Seasons: How the Middle East's Monarchies Survived the Arab Spring*, Brookings No. 8 September (2013) 15

2: Environmental and Geographic Risk Factors for Civil Conflict and Instability

This paper posits that there are environmental characteristics that distinguish the WANA region from other parts of the world, and that these factors are not adequately represented in global models of civil conflict and instability. Much of the research examining conflict and the environment focuses on the role of natural resources.¹⁵⁹ However, while resource endowments have a relationship to conflict (potentially contributing to conflict outbreak and conflict duration), other factors should not be neglected. Food, water and energy insecurity — and the ways in which these insecurities interact and conflate — also create the conditions for civil conflict and popular unrest. This chapter considers the theory on resources and conflict, before discussing food, water and energy insecurity in the region. Lastly, the role of geography — namely the ‘neighbourhood effect’ and the role of rough terrain — will be addressed.

2.1 The Role of Resources

Environmental risk factors for conflict have attracted scholarly attention. Some follow a neo-Malthusian approach, arguing that due to population growth and scarce resources, conflict is inevitable. Collier and Hoeffler find that resource endowments are statistically correlated with the occurrence of civil war.¹⁶⁰ This is supported by Weinstein who argues that rebellions are motivated — not just facilitated — by ‘greed,’ namely the desire to accrue resource rents.¹⁶¹ Some argue that ‘greed’ trumps ‘grievance.’¹⁶² Others find that the greed-grievance dichotomy is not useful, and that civil conflicts are caused by a combination of these factors. An example of this is the work of Bellentine and Nitzschke.¹⁶³

2.1.1 The role of oil in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria

Oil has played a considerable role in the conflicts currently affecting Iraq and Syria. It is a key revenue source for many groups, with ISIS bringing in as much as USD50 million per month from crude oil sales.¹⁶⁴

[t]he ISIS economy and its fighters predominately rely on the production and sale of seized energy assets.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ W Zartman, ‘Need, Creed and Greed in Intrastate Conflict’ in C Arnson and W Zartman (eds), *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed and greed* (2005); J Weinstein, ‘Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment’ *Journal of Conflict Research*, 49 August (2005), 598-624; P Collier and A Hoeffler, *On Economic Causes of Civil War* Oxford Economic Papers (1998); P Collier and A Hoeffler, ‘Greed and Grievance in Civil War’ *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004); P Regan and D Norton, ‘Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49(3) (2005), 319-336.

¹⁶⁰ Collier and Hoeffler, above n 159 (1998); Collier and Hoeffler, above n 159 (2004).

¹⁶¹ J Weinstein, ‘Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment’ *Journal of Conflict Research*, 49 August (2005), 598-624.

¹⁶² see P Regan and D Norton, ‘Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49(3) (2005) 319-336.

¹⁶³ K Ballentine and H Nitzschke, *Policy Lessons from Studies in the Political Economy of Armed Conflict*, IPA Policy Report (2003).

¹⁶⁴ H Hendawi and Q Abdul-Zahra, ‘ISIS is making up to \$50 million a month from oil sales’, *Business Insider*, 23 October 2015 <<http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-making-50-million-a-month-from-oil-sales-2015-10>>; Oil is not ISIS’s only revenue stream, it also derives revenue from private sources and the tax it extracts from the populations living in territory it controls.

¹⁶⁵ J di Giovanni, L McGrath Goodman and D Sharkov, ‘Jihadis with money to burn; Inside the Isis financial empire’, *Newsweek*, 14 November 2014, 29.

However it remains to be seen if ISIS will be able to continue to exploit the resources they have control over. In terms of oil extraction, ISIS will have to maintain the equipment and recruit skilled technicians, while oil transportation has been successfully targeted by air strikes.

As Carnegie researcher David Butter writes, oil has also caused conflict between rebel factions vying to control this resource.¹⁶⁶ Resources can thus have a major impact in the way wars play out; they can make war more attractive than peace because those benefitting from war economies have an economic interest in prolonged instability.

2.1.2 Relative deprivation

It is not only the availability of resources that matters, but also the ways they are distributed. Gurr's work on 'relative deprivation' posits that it is not poverty but unequal wealth *distribution* that causes civil conflict.¹⁶⁷ The relative deprivation argument has received widespread support among political scientists, including Kandeh and Munkler.¹⁶⁸ According to conflict analyst Ernie Regehr:

It's not poverty itself that leads to war. It's economic injustice and imbalance. You have very low incidence of violence in poor countries where people at least think they're being treated fairly.¹⁶⁹

Relative deprivation can also apply to resources such as water, food or access to electricity.¹⁷⁰ It works in complement with political ecology scholarship such as Ribot and Peluso's theory of access,¹⁷¹ which emphasises that it is not rights to resources that should be the focus, but the extent to which people can access them. With respect to water, access to a water resource may be mediated by a number of factors; property rights, for instance, are not necessarily synonymous with access.¹⁷²

2.2 WANA's Food-Water-Energy Nexus

The WANA region is particularly arid and water scarce and the majority of states are net food importers, not exporters. Additionally, energy provision is unequal, both within the region and within individual states. This 'water-food-energy nexus' positions the region as particularly susceptible to conflict and instability engendered by environmental factors.

2.2.1 Water wars?

Munther Haddadin, the former Jordanian Minister of Water Affairs, declared in 2003 that "water... is used to extinguish fires, not to ignite them".¹⁷³ While Haddadin employs this analogy to suggest water should be a force for cooperation between states, it would be misleading to say

¹⁶⁶ D Butter, *Fuelling Conflict: Syria's War for Oil and Gas*, Carnegie Endowment, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55195>>

¹⁶⁷ W Zartman, 'Need, Creed and Greed in Intrastate Conflict' in C Arnsen and W Zartman (eds), *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed and greed* (2005) 257.

¹⁶⁸ J Kandeh, 'The criminalization of the RUF insurgency in Sierra Leone' in C Arnsen and W Zartman (eds), *Rethinking the economics of war: the intersection of need, creed, and greed* (2005) 97; H Munkler, *The New Wars* (2005) 7.

¹⁶⁹ S MacLean, 'Fighting Locally, Connecting Globally' in A Nhema and P Zeleza (eds), *The Roots of African Conflicts* (2008) 168.

¹⁷⁰ Relative deprivation in terms of food security is addressed in: H Brinkman and C Hendrix, *Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Addressing the Challenges*, Occasional Paper No. 24 (2011) 5.

¹⁷¹ J Ribot and N Peluso, 'A Theory of Access' *Rural Sociology*, 68(2) (2003).

¹⁷² *ibid*, 160.

¹⁷³ M Haddadin, 'The War That Never Was' *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, XI(2) (2003), 332.

that water has not been an enduring concern — and in some instances a divisive force — in WANA states and communities.

In the 1980s, scholars such as Starr and Stoll warned of impending ‘water wars’ in the region.

[M]any of the wars of this century were about oil... wars of the next century will be over water.¹⁷⁴

While much of this debate focuses on conflict between states, and hence falls outside the scope of this research paper, it seems that the statistical evidence is thin. Wolf tested for interstate violence involving water as a driver of the conflict and found only seven “minor skirmishes” in the twentieth century;¹⁷⁵ conversely, he identified 145 water related treaties during the same timeframe.¹⁷⁶ This does not discount the role of water in conflicts; water has still been a target of conflict, a weapon, and a prize, as well a driver of popular unrest in the WANA region. In short, while water wars have not come to fruition, this should not imply the absence of conflict over this resource.

2.2.2 *Water as a target and a prize*

With increasing frequency, non-state actors in the WANA region have sought to sabotage states’ water resources as a warfare tactic. Attacks on Turkey’s dams in the Euphrates by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) are an example of water being used as a target. This is consistent with the Strategic Foresight Group’s argument that water becomes a more attractive target as scarcity is exacerbated.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has sought to gain control over water sources or alternatively, target them.

Control of water supplies gives strategic control over both cities and countryside. We are seeing a battle for control of water. Water is now the major strategic objective of all groups in Iraq. It’s life or death. If you control water in Iraq you have a grip on Baghdad, and you can cause major problems.¹⁷⁸

2.2.3 *Water at the local level*

Water has been a source of social friction on a local scale in several WANA states. While the Egyptian revolution may be perceived as a Facebook Revolution, it can also be understood as the outcome of on-going political contestations.¹⁷⁹ A major source of popular discontent was access to water. In July 2007, thirst motivated 3,000 citizens from Burg al-Burullus in Kafr al Shaykh to take to the streets. They were protesting 20 days of having no safe drinking water,¹⁸⁰ as their water allowance had been reassigned to tourists for consumption. The resulting unrest caused a 14-hour traffic jam. By the end of the month, the water shortage had spread to other governorates. Ali notes:

¹⁷⁴ Ismail Serageldin cited in J Selby ‘The Geopolitics of Water in Middle East: Fantasies and Realities’ *Third World Quarterly*, 26(2) (2005), 330.

¹⁷⁵ A Wolf, ‘Conflict and cooperation along international waterways’ *Water Policy*, 1 (1998), 251.

¹⁷⁶ Wolf recognises the limitations of this study, noting that: “Both internal disputes, such as those between interests or states, as well as those where water was a means, method, or victim of warfare, are excluded”.

¹⁷⁷ Strategic Foresight Group, *Water and Violence: Crisis of Survival in the Middle East*, (2014) 2.

¹⁷⁸ cited in J Vidal, ‘Water supply key to outcome of conflicts in Iraq and Syria, experts warn’, *The Guardian (Online)*, 2 July 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/02/water-key-conflict-iraq-syria-isis>> at 4 February 2015.

¹⁷⁹ “Repertoires of contention” is a theory developed by Charles Tilly. Gerbaudo applies this theory to the events leading up to the January 25 Revolution in P Gerbaudo, *Tweets and the Streets; Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (2012) 52.

¹⁸⁰ K Ali, ‘Precursors of the Egyptian Revolution’ *DS Bulletin*, 43(1) (2012), 21.

The water demonstrations surprised the cultural elite, the intelligentsia, who had not imagined that there were non-labour social sectors still able to protest. Yet, here they were faced with what looked like a broad civil disobedience movement led by farmers, the socially excluded and the destitute, from whom for years the government had denied one of their most basic rights to life: the right to clean drinking water. The thirsty had exhausted all other means of complaint and appeal.¹⁸¹

In the lead up to the January 25 revolution, water became increasingly political. In November 2010, Egypt fell below the UN's water poverty line of 1000 cubic meters of water per person per year.¹⁸² The bulk of Cairo's citizens, many of whom live in impoverished conditions in informal or *ashwai'yat* neighbourhoods, had their water diverted to the periphery of Cairo where the wealthy and elite lived.¹⁸³ This arrangement mirrored other asymmetries, such as the divide in economic opportunities and concerns over corruption. In short, Egypt on the brink of revolution was also in a water crisis. Therefore, rather than a spontaneous event the revolution might instead be understood as a response, at least in part, to persistent water issues.

The West Bank has also been the site of local conflicts over water. Those at the end of a pipeline are beholden to up-pipeline users, and illegal activity such as water siphoning can jeopardise access to water. Stolen water makes its way into the shadow economy, spilling over into violent disputes between community members with water and those without:

... [I]t should be no surprise that, while there have been no 'water wars' between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, there are regular, small-scale and violent skirmishes between and within Palestinian towns and villages.¹⁸⁴

This state of affairs corroborates Wirkus and Bogardi's observation that at the sub-state level water conflicts are rife, and supports their prediction that conflicts like water riots will feature more prominently in the future.¹⁸⁵

2.2.4 *Virtual water as a conflict mitigation tool?*

Given the region's water-scarcity and vulnerability to food insecurity it is necessary to understand the concept of 'virtual water.' As Allan explains, while the region has a comparative disadvantage because of its water scarcity,¹⁸⁶ states have been able to turn to virtual water: "the water embedded in key water-intensive commodities like wheat".¹⁸⁷ Specifically, because they cannot sustain water-intensive farming, WANA states have used the water available in other countries to produce their food products, accessing this virtual water via international markets. Hakimian argues that the virtual water solution "has played an effective role in softening and

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² S Amin, 'Egypt's farmers desperate for clean water' *CNN*, 10 November 2010 <<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/11/09/egypt.water.shortage/>> at 3 March 2015.

¹⁸³ K Piper, *Revolution of the Thirsty* (2012) *Places Journal* <https://placesjournal.org/article/revolution-of-the-thirsty/#ref_4> at 3 March 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Selby, above n 174, 344.

¹⁸⁵ L Wirkus and J Bogardi, 'The Global Water Crisis – Are Water-related Violent Conflicts Becoming More Likely?' In Bonn International Center for Conversion, *Monitoring Environment and Security: Integrating concepts and enhancing methodologies*.

¹⁸⁶ T Allan, 'Virtual water': a long term solution for water short Middle Eastern economies?' (paper presented at the British Association Festival of Science, University of Leeds, 9 September 1997, 1).

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

even deferring the political impact of water scarcity”.¹⁸⁸ But while virtual water may enable states to defer conflict in the short term, access to products on the international market is not a given; the state must have the purchasing power to do so and price shocks can compromise this. Virtual water might hence be a short-term answer but has serious destabilising potential.¹⁸⁹

2.3 Food Security and Conflict Resilience

Food security has been defined as “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.¹⁹⁰ WANA states are particularly susceptible to food insecurity as most are net food importers and are thus vulnerable to international price fluctuations. Small changes in commodity prices can have a disproportionate impact on the cost of staple foodstuffs, and this price volatility most severely impacts the poor. The 2008 food price hike created an additional four million undernourished people in Arab countries¹⁹¹ and drove an estimated 44 million more people into poverty.¹⁹² Brown describes what he calls the new geopolitics of food:

...for the planet’s poorest 2 billion people, who spend 50 to 70 percent of their income on food, these soaring prices may mean going from two meals a day to one. Those who are barely hanging on to the lower rungs of the global economic ladder risk losing their grip entirely. This can contribute — and it has — to revolutions and upheaval.¹⁹³

The literature emphasises that food insecurity increases the likelihood of — and can intensify — particular types of conflict. As Brinkman and Hendrix write: “food insecurity — especially when caused by a rise in food prices — is a threat and *impact multiplier* for violent conflict”.¹⁹⁴ Specifically, it increases the likelihood of democratic collapse, civil strife, protest and rioting, as well as communal conflict, however there is less evidence linking it to interstate war.

Brinkman and Hendrix add the qualifier that in some cases acute food instability “can also significantly diminish an aggrieved population’s ability to prosecute their war aims” because it reduces resources available to militants, can hinder political participation and because food denial is a counter-insurgency tactic.¹⁹⁵ They acknowledge that food insecurity might not be the direct cause of conflict, but when added to other political or economic drivers, a potent mix is created. Certainly, it is not difficult to find examples of the link between food security and instability; there have been numerous subsidy-related riots across the WANA region, particularly in Egypt.

¹⁸⁸ H Hakimian, ‘Water Scarcity and Food Imports: An Empirical Investigation of the ‘Virtual Water’ Hypothesis in the MENA Region’, 4; M Zeitoun and J Warner, ‘Hydro-hegemony – a framework for analysis of trans-boundary water conflicts’ *Water Policy*, 8 (2006).

¹⁸⁹ Other WANA states, especially in the Gulf, have pursued a ‘land grab’ strategy; securing rights to agricultural production in other countries. This strategy has, thus far, been relatively ineffective see: J Sowers, ‘Water, Energy and Human Insecurity in the Middle East’ *Middle East Report*, Spring (2015).

¹⁹⁰ World Health Organisation, *Food Security* <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/> at 3 March 2015.

¹⁹¹ International Fund for Agricultural Development, *Improving Food Security in Arab Countries*, (2009) xii.

¹⁹² The World Bank, *The Grain Chain; Food Security and Managing Wheat Imports in Arab Countries*, (2012) 1.

¹⁹³ L Brown, ‘The New Geopolitics of Food’, *Foreign Policy (Online)*, 25 April 2011 <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/04/25/the-new-geopolitics-of-food/>> at 5 March 2015.

¹⁹⁴ Brinkman and Hendrix, above n 170, 2.

¹⁹⁵ H Brinkman and C Hendrix, ‘Food Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages and Complex Feedbacks’ *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 2(2) (2013), 3-5.

Egyptians are the biggest consumers of bread in the world. *Baladi* bread is referred to as *a'ish*, meaning life, leading many to see it as a right. Egypt imports much of the wheat it uses to make this *baladi* bread (between 45-55 percent of its total wheat needs), making it the world's largest wheat importer.¹⁹⁶ Given Egypt's reliance on food subsidies, and bread in particular, it is no surprise that when this social security is imperilled there is outcry. In 1977 there was a bread riot in which 79 people were killed, spurred on by Sadat reducing subsidies on staples such as flour and oil, as prescribed by the International Monetary Fund.¹⁹⁷ More recent protests occurred in 2008 in Burg al-Burullus, the same town that demonstrated against water restrictions in 2007. Tear gas and batons were utilised to break up the protests, and nearly 100 were arrested.¹⁹⁸ Similar 'bread riots' occurred in Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria in 2007.

It is impossible to understand the Arab Spring without recognising the influence of persistent food insecurity.¹⁹⁹ In January 2011, when the Egyptian revolution began, the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Food Price Index had increased 3.4 percent since December 2010, reaching its highest level since the index was developed.²⁰⁰ As Gelvin describes, at this point "the question of vulnerability to food crisis was no longer theoretical".²⁰¹ This corroborates the literature that higher consumer prices, especially for food, can cause an upswing in urban popular mobilisation such as protests and rioting. It is likewise important to note that the reciprocal relationship — that conflict drives food insecurity — is well recognised.²⁰²

The tables below demonstrate that large fluctuations in the Global FAO's Food Price Index correspond to the periods when there were food protests in the WANA region in 2007, 2008 and 2011. The computation of decreases/ increases in points was conducted by WANA Staff. The data comes from the FAO Food Price Index.

¹⁹⁶ C Breisinger et al., *Tackling Egypt's Rising Food Insecurity in a Time of Transition*, World Food Programme (2013) 1; G Ahmed et al., *Wheat Value Chains and Food Security in the Middle East and North Africa Region*, Duke Center on Globalization Governance & Competitiveness (2013) 14.

¹⁹⁷ A Al-Arian, 'Egypt: Reducing the Past', *Al Jazeera (Online)*, 1 February 2011, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/02/20112110358461902.html>> on 4 March 2015.

¹⁹⁸ M El-Ghobashy, 'The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution' *Middle East Report*, Winter (2014).

¹⁹⁹ Gelvin, above n 115, 22.

²⁰⁰ G Joffé, 'The Arab Spring in North Africa: origins and prospects' *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16(4) (2011), 509.

²⁰¹ Gelvin, above n 115, 23.

²⁰² Brinkman and Hendrix, above n 195, 5.

Table 3: Fluctuations in the Global FAO Food Price Index 2000 - 2015

Year	Food Price Index	Decrease/ Increase (Points)
2000	91.1	
2001	94.6	3.5
2002	89.6	-5
2003	97.7	8.1
2004	112.7	15
2005	118	5.3
2006	127.2	9.2
2007	161.4	34.2
2008	201.4	40
2009	160.3	-41.1
2010	188	27.7
2011	229.9	41.9
2012	213.3	-16.6
2013	209.8	-3.5
2014	201.8	-8
2015	181.2	-20.6

Table 4: Fluctuations in Global FAO Food Prices by Food Type 2000 - 2015

Year	Meat	Decrease/ Increase	Dairy	Dec/Inc	Cereals	Dec/Inc	Vegetable Oils	Dec/Inc	Sugar	Dec/Inc
2000	96.5		95.3		85.8		69.5		116.1	
2001	100.1	3.6	105.5	10.2	86.8	1	67.2	-2.3	122.6	6.5
2002	89.9	-10.2	80.9	-24.6	93.7	6.9	87.4	20.2	97.8	-24.8
2003	95.9	6	95.6	14.7	99.2	5.5	100.6	13.2	100.6	2.8
2004	114.2	18.3	123.5	27.9	107.1	7.9	111.9	11.3	101.7	1.1
2005	123.7	9.5	135.2	11.7	101.3	-5.8	102.7	-9.2	140.3	38.6
2006	120.9	-2.8	129.7	-5.5	118.9	17.6	112.7	10	209.6	69.3
2007	130.8	9.9	219.1	89.4	163.4	44.5	172	59.3	143	-66.6
2008	160.7	29.9	223.1	4	232.1	68.7	227.1	55.1	181.6	38.6
2009	141.3	-19.4	148.6	-74.5	170.2	-61.9	152.8	-74.3	257.3	75.7
2010	158.3	17	206.6	58	179.2	9	197.4	44.6	302	44.7
2011	183.3	25	229.5	22.9	240.9	61.7	254.5	57.1	368.9	66.9
2012	182	-1.3	193.6	-35.9	236.1	-4.8	223.9	-30.6	305.7	-63.2
2013	184.1	2.1	242.7	49.1	219.3	-16.8	193	-30.9	251	-54.7
2014	198.3	14.2	224.1	-18.6	191.9	-27.4	181.1	-11.9	241.2	-9.8
2015	190.2	-8.1	173.8	-50.3	177.4	-14.5	156	-25.1	217.7	-23.5

2.3.1 Food insecurity and regime type: Divergent outcomes

Government responses to food insecurity, including efforts to mitigate price fluctuations, are varied and, according to Hendrix and Haggard, can be attributed partly to regime type. Democracies' interventions tend to target the poorest households, such as food for work programs. Autocracies, however, implement strategies such as export bans, controlling prices and subsidies, which broadly benefit urban populations. Hendrix and Haggard found that in democracies, popular unrest resulting from price hikes does not necessarily lead to crisis; however because autocracies' basis for support rests on their ability to maintain order, and the expectation that they will manage prices via controls and subsidies, serious unrest is more likely in autocratic or mixed regimes.²⁰³ Another study by the same authors, however, could find no increased incidence of protests and riots in autocracies as the food price index increased.²⁰⁴ It is clear that more research should be conducted to tease out the exact relationship between these variables.

2.4 Energy Security: A Sister of Food and Water Security

In one of Egyptian cartoonist Mostafa Hussein's drawings, a former Minister of Electricity is depicted entering his home with a candle in hand; the cartoon is captioned: "On his birthday, instead of blowing out the five candles on the cake, he blew out five areas".²⁰⁵ Regular blackouts are not restricted to Egypt; Lebanon holds the record for the country with the highest rate of annual blackouts, "translating into daily disruptions of 3-12 hours",²⁰⁶ closely followed by Iraq. Energy poverty can exist even within countries that are net exporters of oil and gas, Yemen being a prime example. Energy poverty is thus "... effectively a domestic distributive problem..." and not one caused by an overall lack of resources.²⁰⁷ In Iraq, energy security has been further compromised by war, civil strife and sanctions. Likewise, Lebanon had a poorly functioning electrical supply prior to 2006, but the Israel-Hezbollah war compounded its infrastructural problems. Egypt's energy issues, by contrast, derive mostly from mismanagement.

Energy security has a historic relationship to instability in the region. In Yemen, fuel price hikes in 2005 led to riots resulting in 36 deaths.²⁰⁸ Moreover, on the eve of the Arab Spring, energy costs rose alongside the price of food: from USD16/barrel in December 2010 to USD18/barrel in March 2011.²⁰⁹ Like food price fluctuations, fuel price volatility impacts the poor most severely as they are less capable of absorbing fuel price fluctuations.

²⁰³ *ibid* 8.

²⁰⁴ C Hendrix and S Haggard, 'Global food prices, regime type, and urban unrest in the developing world' *Journal of Peace Research* 52(2) (2015), 152.

²⁰⁵ R Saleh, 'Political Cartoons in Egypt' *International Journal of Comic Art*, 9(2) (2007), 204.

²⁰⁶ L El-Katiri, 'The energy poverty nexus in the Middle East and North Africa' *OPEC Energy Review*, 38(3) (2014), 307.

²⁰⁷ *ibid* 296.

²⁰⁸ B Whitaker and agencies, '36 die in riots after Yemen fuel price hikes', *The Guardian (Online)*, 23 July 2005 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jul/23/yemen.brianwhitaker>>

²⁰⁹ Joffé, above n 200, 509.

2.5 Climate Change and Other Environmental Drivers

As climate change transforms the natural environment, it exacerbates water and food scarcity. The region is particularly at risk from drought, with regional temperature rises between 0.5°C-1.5°C degrees predicted by 2029,²¹⁰ and a 10-30 percent decline in water resources by 2050.²¹¹

One example of the nexus between climate change and food insecurity is provided by the Russian heat wave of 2010. The heat wave decreased the yield of the wheat harvest and, as the world became aware of the disaster, the price of grain spiked.²¹² In an attempt to protect local consumers and producers, Russia stopped exporting grain, which drove prices higher again.²¹³ This event has been associated with rising bread costs, felt most severely by the poorest citizens, and in the WANA region, where countries import a large percentage of the cereals they consume.

Climate change induced migration is another example of how rising temperatures are impacting the food-water-energy nexus. Wodon and Liverani's research²¹⁴ illustrates that worsening weather conditions are correlated with increased migration; climate change migration makes up 10-20 percent of total migration in the region.²¹⁵ Such migration places pressure on other scant resources, among other effects. As Werz and Conley note "... the cumulative overlays of climate change with human migration driven by environmental crises, political conflict caused by this migration, and competition for more scarce resources will add new dimensions of complexity to existing and future crisis scenarios".²¹⁶

2.6 The Neighbourhood Effect

Of all the risk factors for conflict onset, 'the neighbourhood effect' has particular resonance in the WANA region. Carmignani and Kler find that "...neighbourhood wars are significant predictors of spatial conflict spillovers, even after controlling for a number of geographic, economic, and institutional characteristics of the home country."²¹⁷ Goldstone et al. also identify neighbourhood as particularly significant, including 'conflict-ridden neighbourhood' as one of the four independent variables in their Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability.²¹⁸

2.7 Rough Terrain and Conflict

Fearon and Laitin's 2001 study isolated rough terrain as among the drivers of civil war:²¹⁹ "[m]ountainous terrain and non-contiguous territorial holdings appear to significantly raise the risk [of conflict onset]...".²²⁰ Importantly, many WANA states have rough terrain, with cities separated by desert and mountains. Libya is a good example of this, as is Yemen. Collier and

²¹⁰ IPCC, cited in M Zeitoun et al., *Water Demand Management and the water-food-climate nexus in the Middle-East and North Africa region*, Water Demand Management Research Series (2010), 5

²¹¹ P Milly, K Dunne and A Vecchia, 'Global pattern of trends in streamflow and water availability in a changing climate' *Nature*, 438 (2005).

²¹² G Welton, *The Impact of Russia's 2010 Grain Export Ban*, Oxfam (2011) 3.

²¹³ 'Russia ban on grain export begins', *BBC News (Online)*, 15 August 2010 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-10977955> >

²¹⁴ Q Wodon and A Liverani, *Climate Change and Migration: Evidence from the Middle East and North Africa (World Bank Studies)* (2014).

²¹⁵ *Ibid* xxxiii-xxiv (based on a five country study).

²¹⁶ M Werz and L Conley, *Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict; Addressing complex crisis scenarios in the 21st Century*, Centre for American Progress (2012) 3.

²¹⁷ F Carmignani and P Kler, *Surrounded by wars: quantifying the role of spatial conflict spillovers*, Griffith Business School, Discussion Papers Economics No. 03 (2013).

²¹⁸ J Goldstone et al., 'A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability' *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(1) (2010).

²¹⁹ J Fearon and D Laitin, *Ethnicity, insurgency and civil war*, Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, 30 August - 2 September (2001), Abstract.

²²⁰ *ibid* 3; Importantly, Fearon and Laitin define insurgency as "...a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas." (Page 7).

Hoeffler also found a positive correlation between mountainous terrain and conflict onset, but found that forested terrain was not significant.²²¹ Reasons for this likely go back to the basic tenets of guerrilla warfare: because insurgents are usually outmatched in terms of the number of fighters and weaponry possessed by conventional forces, they need to hide, and mountains provide good terrain for this.

Hendrix has also examined civil war onset and the role of geography. He found that desert and rainforest exert no direct effect but, like Collier and Hoeffler, and Fearon and Laitin, that mountainous terrain is a significant predictor of conflict onset.²²² He suggests, however, that it is how rough terrain impacts attributes of the state that is important, and specifically how rough terrain impacts per capita income, reliance on oil exports and regime consolidation. Thus while there is a strong body of research implicating rough terrain — specifically mountainous terrain — as a conflict risk factor, there is contestation about why it is significant.

2.8 Urbanisation

Finally, some researchers have linked rapid urbanisation with an increased risk of violence and conflict.²²³ Moreover, Kilcullen predicts that urbanisation will be a mega-trend shaping the conflict ecosystem in the future.²²⁴

2.9 Conclusion

In the WANA region climate change conspires to exacerbate water scarcity and food insecurity. At the same time, energy security has been undermined by regional conflicts, mismanagement, and poor infrastructure. A number of these environmentally linked issues contributed to the Arab Uprisings; these factors should not be looked at separately as they are interconnected in nuanced ways, particularly in how they impact those already marginalised.

While water cannot be argued to be a primary driver of interstate conflict, it has been a target (of the PKK and more recently ISIS) and a prize. It is at the substate level, within communities, that water insecurity seems to have the most impact. In Egypt, the relative deprivation between the water 'haves' and 'have nots' was stark, leading the thirsty into the streets to protest, while in the West Bank water stealing has caused friction between community members in an environment of uneven water distribution and scarcity. Selby concludes that water security has not been of geo-political interest to states or ruling classes.²²⁵ This may have been true pre-Arab Spring and may account for the lack of interstate conflict over this resource.

Despite the overthrow of leaders such as Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi in Libya, there has been little improvement in securing 'freedom from want.' Until inequalities in water, food and energy provisions are comprehensively addressed it is likely that they will continue to fuel conflict, especially at the sub-state level, in the WANA region for years to come.

²²¹ Collier and Hoeffler, above n 159.

²²² C Hendrix, 'Head for the Hills!' or 'This Hard Land? The Direct and Indirect Effects of Rough Terrain on Civil Conflict Onset', Paper presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 22-25 March (2006), 2.

²²³ R Patel and F Burkle, 'Rapid Urbanization and the Growing Threat of Violence and Conflict: A 21st Century Crisis', *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, (2012).

²²⁴ D Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains; The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (2013).

²²⁵ Selby, above n 174, 344-345.

Table 5: Environmental and Geographic Civil Conflict and Instability Risk Factors

WANA Environmental and Geographic Risk Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Water insecurity- Natural resource endowments- Rough/mountainous terrain- Neighbourhood- Food insecurity – vulnerability to food price fluctuations- Energy insecurity - vulnerability to oil price spikes- Unequal access to (water/food/energy) resources- Vulnerability to climate change/ extreme weather events- Rapid urbanisation

3: Political Risk Factors for Civil Conflict and Instability

Until the Arab Spring there were a number of generalisations that could safely be made about the WANA region: typically regimes had an authoritarian flavour and were often highly personalised, while corruption and nepotism were the norm.²²⁶ Though challenged by economic and political crises, regimes were mostly able to maintain themselves — until recently. This chapter will explore the links between different political models and conflict. It examines social justice and governance issues, and how when these are left unaddressed, they can combine with other risk factors to fuel conflict and instability.²²⁷ It also includes a discussion of regional conditions that have forestalled civil conflict and instability, usually a mixture of co-optation and coercion. It does not attempt to cover the entire spectrum of literature on governance, institutions and conflict, but instead identifies potential risk factors for further examination. It also does not examine historic factors such as the impact of colonialism or the significance of agreements such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Treaty of Sèvres,²²⁸ and the role these played in shaping political institutions.

3.1 Regime Type

Although the WANA region is host to a range of political regimes, there are symmetries between them. Many took on authoritarian features as their ability to maintain their ruling bargains diminished over time. Geddes distinguishes between military regimes, personalist regimes and single (or dominant) party regimes,²²⁹ all three of which exist in the WANA region. Syria, for instance, is a clear cut example of a personalist authoritarian regime.²³⁰

The features of authoritarianism in the region include strict restrictions on political participation and acceptable societal discourse.²³¹

[In Syria] ... the operation of state power can be seen most thoroughly in its ability to enforce public compliance with ideas and rhetoric that almost all know to be false.²³²

In another explanation of the strength of authoritarianism in the region The 2004 Arab Human Development Report describes most Arab states as ‘black holes’:

The modern Arab state, in the political sense, runs close to this astronomical model, whereby the executive apparatus resembles a “black hole” which

²²⁶ B Whitaker, *What's Really Wrong With the Middle East* (2014) 93.

²²⁷ On the relationship between social justice and the Arab Spring see: J Foran, ‘Taking Power, Re-Making Power: The Threads of the Cultures of Resistance behind the Arab Spring’ in *The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East*, Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Summary Report No. 9 (2013) 5.

²²⁸ See the WANA Institute’s *Sykes-Picot* fact-sheet <http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/fact_sheets/Sykes-Picot.pdf>

²²⁹ cited in A Hadenius and J Teovell, *Authoritarian regimes: stability, change, and pathways to democracy 1972 – 2003*, Working Paper No. 331 November (2006) 3; Later, theorists built on these conceptualisations adding to Geddes’ classifications.

²³⁰ Q Fares, *The Syrian Constitution: Assad’s Magic Wand* (2014) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace <<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55541>> at 29 July 2014.

²³¹ M Lynch, *The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (2013) 11-12.

²³² *ibid* 12.

converts its surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes.²³³

In some states political parties are entirely banned, while in others they are permitted but their activities severely constrained. Elections are routinely engineered, with incumbents — or their family members — most often securing victory. In Tunisia, Ben Ali was successful in achieving re-election five times, always with the vast majority of the votes (between 89–98 percent).²³⁴ Other democratic processes were largely perfunctory or were calculated ‘pressure value’ moves, designed to reduce public frustrations while at the same time not representing any real regime threat.

3.1.1 Reasons for the pervasiveness of authoritarianism

The pervasiveness of authoritarianism in the WANA region has been a subject that many scholars have enthusiastically applied themselves to.²³⁵ The Arab Spring took many analysts by surprise; across the board it appeared that regimes were stronger than ever only a few years before the uprisings.²³⁶ However a closer look at ruling bargains helps to explain regime robustness in the region and how a space opened for democratic contestation in 2011.

These bargains have broadly involved the exchange of political participation for various goods, services and socio-economic benefits. They are, however, structurally flawed as they rely on the state’s financial largess; these ruling bargains have begun to break down as states’ economic commitments could not be upheld. In response, states employed fear and coercion to maintain themselves, coupled with occasional bouts of political liberalisation.²³⁷ Such willingness to adapt explains, at least somewhat, why authoritarianism has been able to persist.

Political economy is another useful tool to understand the durability of authoritarianism. In some WANA states regimes attempted to fracture the private sector, because they recognised that economic power can easily transfer to political power. In Syria, Sunnis dominated the business community and the Alawite regime felt threatened by this.²³⁸ Thus when the state finally liberalised, it did so in a fashion that did not pose a threat to its interests.²³⁹ Likewise in Egypt, the military is highly invested in the economy and, although their exact stake is unknown, they can be described as possessing de facto power. Their refusal to attack protesters may have been a deciding factor in the revolutionaries’ ability to overthrow Mubarak. However, after Morsi was elected, the army transferred its de facto power to de jure power, culminating in the election of Abdel Fattah Al Sisi.

²³³ UNDP, *The Arab Human Development Report 2004; Towards Freedom in the Arab World* (2005) 15.

²³⁴ Gelvin, above n 115, 38.

²³⁵ E Bellin, ‘The Robustness of Authoritarianism Reconsidered: Lessons of the Arab Spring’ *Comparative Politics*, 44(2) (2012); E Bellin, ‘The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective’ *Comparative Politics* 36(3) (2004); S Heydemann, ‘Social Pacts and the Persistence of Authoritarianism in the Middle East’ in O Schlumberger (ed), *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes* (2007); S Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria: Institutions and Social Conflict, 1946-1970* (1999); S King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* (2009); L Weeden, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols of in Contemporary Syria* (1999).

²³⁶ However some experts were aware of political contestation. For instance in Egypt, there had been an upswing in mobilisation in the years prior to the Spring.

²³⁷ M Kamrava, ‘The Rise and Fall of Ruling Bargains in the Middle East’ in M Kamrava (ed), *Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East* (2014) 18.

²³⁸ B Haddad, ‘Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of authoritarian Resilience’ (2012).

²³⁹ V Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Assad* (1997).

Gelvin adds two — by themselves incomplete — explanations for why authoritarianism has endured: foreign interference and rent availability.²⁴⁰ Western powers have certainly given support to Middle Eastern regimes because of their geo-political significance and assistance in the so-called war on terror. The role of rent, in facilitating both repression and co-optation, will be examined in the next section.

3.1.2 Regime type and violence

According to Brinkman and Hendrix, regime type has “complex effects on political violence”.²⁴¹ With a nod to the significance of ruling bargains, they argue that incentive structures — what is needed for regime survival — affect the way regimes operate and respond.²⁴² Goldstone et al.’s Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability²⁴³ relies on four independent variables: regime type, infant mortality, conflict-ridden neighbourhood (four or more bordering states with major armed civil or ethnic conflict), and a binary measure of state-led discrimination.²⁴⁴ Their model finds that regime type is extremely significant in predicting instability onset, and the most powerful of all the indicators:

Indeed, once regime characteristics are taken into account, most other economic, political, social, or cultural features of the countries in our sample had no significant impact on the relative incidence of near-term instability. In our view, this finding should encourage scholars in this field to redirect their attention from the economic to the institutional foundations of political instability (Snyder and Mahoney 1999).²⁴⁵

3.2 How WANA States Have Dealt With Contestation

3.2.1 Co-optation

The availability of rent in the region has enabled regimes to attempt to buy off or co-opt dissenters. Oil is a well-known form of rent, but other resources including gas reserves, indirect taxes such as customs duties and revenue from infrastructure, such as Egypt’s Suez Canal, operate in similar ways. Alianak explains how oil, backed-up by religion, has had a powerful effect in the Gulf:

The monarchies and hereditary rulers of the Gulf States survived [the Arab Spring] because the diversionary method of co-optation, coupled with the use of religion, prevailed.... There was hardly any dissonance between the values of the Saudi royal family and Saudi citizens, since the economic needs of the people were *more than adequately met by the massive infusion of subsidies from the coffers of a regime*

²⁴⁰ Gelvin, above n 115, 7.

²⁴¹ Brinkman and Hendrix, above n 170, 9.

²⁴² They make the point that overall, disregarding regime type, governments tend to disproportionately focus on urban populations, the military and the upper and middle classes. However, as discussed in the environmental section of this paper, democracies respond differently to autocracies when facing crises, such as those induced by price volatility in international markets, see: Brinkman and Hendrix, above n 195, 7.

²⁴³ Goldstone et al., above n 218.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Goldstone et al., above n 218; The researchers add: “One of our most striking results is the extraordinarily high relative risk of instability onsets in partial democracies with factionalism. Because this effect is so powerful, it deserves closer scrutiny.”

*that enjoyed immense wealth generated by oil revenues. Also, co-optation was backed up by the Wahhabi Islamic ties of the kingdom (emphasis added).*²⁴⁶

By contrast Morocco, not possessing any oil wealth, was able to co-opt protestors with promises of democratic reform.²⁴⁷ The regime offered increased power for the Prime Minister and Parliament and later raised the minimum wage.²⁴⁸ This 'adaptive contestation' can help to explain why there was no Spring in the Kingdom,²⁴⁹ however as Maghraoui notes, "[c]onstitutional reforms become paradoxical when authoritarian structures of rule establish the conditions for the reform".²⁵⁰

3.2.2 Coercion

The 2004 Arab Human Development Report remarks that chronic legitimacy crises have prompted regimes to also employ the use fear. This has been possible in many WANA countries, where expansive intelligence services are present:

[W]hat distinguished the Middle East was not the absence of democratic prerequisites but rather the presence of conditions that fostered robust authoritarianism, specifically, the presence of an *exceptionally muscular coercive apparatus endowed with both the capacity and will to repress democratic initiatives originating from society* (emphasis added).²⁵¹

Bahrain is an example of where coercion was implemented in the face of the Arab Spring protests. Concerned neighbours (particularly Saudi Arabia) and regional powers quickly put their support behind the government. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces were sent in to reinforce the Bahraini security forces, composed of 1000 Saudi troops and 500 police from the UAE.²⁵² A day later, the regime instituted Emergency Law.²⁵³ The International Crisis Group's July 2011 report outlines the fallout from the protests:

In February and March 2011, Bahrain experienced peaceful mass protests followed by brutal repression, leaving a distressing balance sheet: over 30 dead, mostly demonstrators or bystanders; prominent opposition leaders sentenced to lengthy jail terms, including eight for life; hundreds of others languishing in prison; torture, and at least four deaths in detentions; trials, including of medical professionals, in special security courts lacking even the semblance of due process of law... a parliament left without its opposition; and much more.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁶ S Alianak, *The Transition Towards Revolution and Reform; The Arab Spring Realised?* (2014) 165.

²⁴⁷ It is worthy of noting that post-Arab Spring there has been investment in the Kingdom, which is thought to have potential oil reserves; see 'Oil firms step up exploration in Morocco's Atlantic waters', *Reuters*, 18 October 2013 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/18/morocco-energy-idUSL6N0I61NY20131018>> at 25 August 2015.

²⁴⁸ Joffé, above n 200, 7.

²⁴⁹ L Chomiak and J Entelis, 'The Making of North Africa's Intifadas' *Middle East Report*, 259 Summer (2011), 11-12.

²⁵⁰ D Maghraoui, 'Constitutional reforms in Morocco: between consensus and subaltern politics' in G Joffé (ed), *North Africa's Arab Spring* (2013), 176.

²⁵¹ Bellin, above n 235 (2012), 128.

²⁵² 'Gulf states send forces to Bahrain following protests', *BBC News (Online)*, 14 March 2011 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12729786>>

²⁵³ International Crisis Group, *Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VIII): Bahrain's Rock Road to Reform*, Middle East/North Africa Report No. 111 28 July (2011) 3.

²⁵⁴ *ibid* i.

The violence left the country divided by sect, coercion having been successful in achieving the regime's short-term objectives. However unless underlying grievances, especially relating to political representation, are addressed, the potential for further popular mobilisation should not be ruled out.

One factor that distinguishes the region's security services is that they are usually located "directly under the control of the president or king and possesses powers greater than those of any other organ."²⁵⁵ In the case of Syria, the President controlled three apparatuses: the bureaucracy, the party and the military.²⁵⁶ It was such control that enabled Hafez Al Assad to brutally quell the 1982 rebellion in Hama. Before the fighting, there were raids on Muslim Brotherhood positions; the Brotherhood retaliated, torching the police and Ba'ath party headquarters and an airfield.²⁵⁷ Assad responded by methodologically subduing each neighbourhood, with estimates of the number of people killed ranging from 10,000-25,000.²⁵⁸ Without his ironclad grasp on the military, such a move would not have been possible.²⁵⁹

The combination of coercion and co-optation appears to have served WANA regimes well; they have been largely able to forestall large-scale protests and rebellion. However, as explored below, the potency of such methods has been called into question. Assad's scorched earth tactics in the 1982 Hama rebellion were successful in quelling the uprising, but some have referred to the more recent Syrian uprising as the "revenge of Hama".²⁶⁰

3.2.3 When repression backfires

Overreliance on the use of force and coercive apparatus has had some unexpected results. For one, the security services relied upon by the Egyptian regime to prevent protests of the sort that occurred in January 2011, contributed to de-securing the regime. This is because it became so large that it "undermined [the government's] ability to gauge public opinion and react appropriately".²⁶¹ Additionally, some sections of the population, due to their frequent interactions with security services, became well schooled at fighting them. The Ultras, for example, a group of soccer fans who had regular encounters with Egyptian security, were able to combat them on an almost equal footing.²⁶² Writing about their engagement in "The Battle of Muhammad Mahmud Street," but equally applicable to their earlier confrontations, Lucie Ryzova notes:

They [the Ultras] know how to maneuver collectively, how to engage the police, and how to and play "hide, seek and hit" with the security forces. Crucially, they have a long-standing "open account" with the security forces; they had suffered at the security forces' hands, and wanted payback. Ultras often provided the "leadership" (however improvised) as well as the communicational and

²⁵⁵ UNDP, above n 233, 15.

²⁵⁶ See Perthes, above n 239.

²⁵⁷ F Lawson, 'Social Bases for the Hama Revolt' *Middle East Report*, 110(12) (1982).

²⁵⁸ Amnesty International, *Syria: an amnesty international briefing* (1983), November, 4; D Kenner, 'Massacre City', *Foreign Policy*, 5 August 2011 <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/08/05/massacre-city-2/>> at 19 August 2011.

²⁵⁹ It is also important to bear in mind that at the time the armed forces were headed by Hafez's brother Rifaat.

²⁶⁰ L Sadiki, 'Syria: the revenge of Hama, 30 years on', *Al Jazeera*, 3 February 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/20122382325175537.html>

²⁶¹ Robert Springborg, paraphrased by J Sowers 'Egypt in Transformation' in J Sowers and C Toensing (eds), *The Journey to Tahrir: Revolution, Protest, and Social Change in Egypt* (2012) 5.

²⁶² L Ryzova, *The Battle of Muhammad Mahmud Street: Teargas, Hair Gel and Tramadol* (2011) Jadaliyya <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3312/the-battle-of-muhammad-mahmud-street-teargas-hair-> at 10 August 2015.

organizational know-how to survive major and prolonged exposure to teargas and shotgun fire and to make sure fighters changed and rested periodically.²⁶³

The threat of the use of force is a powerful deterrent, and in authoritarian environments the structural and psychological barriers to opposing the regime are considerable.²⁶⁴ However in some states where there were Arab Spring protests, the use of force against peaceful protesters was counter-productive. The decision to employ *baltagiya* (or thugs) against protesters in Egypt, in what became known as ‘The Battle of the Camel’, is an example of this; as was Assad’s detention and abuse of the children suspected of penning counter-regime graffiti in Daraa, and their excessive use of force against protesters.²⁶⁵ This illustrates the Achilles heel of such an approach; using repression builds resentment, and once a certain threshold had been reached, it loses its utility as a deterrent and can instead fuel civic unrest.

3.3 Social Justice and Human Rights Risk Factors

Foran refers to the Arab Uprisings as “new types of progressive experiments”, suggesting that they might be conceived as social justice revolutions.²⁶⁶ It is true that the revolutions were not ideological in nature; protesters largely cut across faith and ethnic groups and did not discriminate based on age, despite the uprisings being labelled as youth movements (mainly because of the large number of young participants and use of social media).

Social justice can certainly be seen as one of the triggers for the revolution. In Egypt, the case of Khaled Said was a clarion call for change. The 28 year old was tortured by two police officers, resulting in his death.²⁶⁷ He was targeted after publishing a video online that showed the officers handling drugs. The police alleged that he suffocated after he tried to swallow the drugs he was carrying.²⁶⁸ This was proven to be a fabrication after images of Khaled’s beaten face were leaked. Resulting anger culminated in the creation of the Facebook group ‘We are all Khaled Said’, which both advocated for action and became a forum for anger against the regime.²⁶⁹

Said became the human face of Egypt’s tragedy, but also the galvanizer of its digital youth.²⁷⁰

Likewise in Syria, 13-year-old Hamza Ali Al-Khateeb, who was mutilated and murdered by the Assad regime, became a martyr for the revolution.²⁷¹ A similar Facebook group, ‘We are all the child martyr Hamza Ali Al Khateeb,’ galvanised protesters who carried posters with his image at rallies.

These events resonated with young people because they seemed to encapsulate the difficulties they were facing: police brutality, corruption and a lack of transparency. Limited economic

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ C Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (2002) 204.

²⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Syria: Government Crackdown Leads to Protester Deaths: Authorities Should Halt Use of Excessive Force on Protesters* (2011) 21 March <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/21/syria-government-crackdown-leads-protester-deaths> at July 31 2015.

²⁶⁶ J Foran, above n 227.

²⁶⁷ K Ali, ‘Precursors of the Egyptian Revolution’ *DS Bulletin*, 43(1) (2012), 22.

²⁶⁸ ‘Egypt police jailed over 2010 death of Khaled Said’, BBC News, 3 March 2014 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26416964>

²⁶⁹ L Herrera, ‘V for Vendetta’: *The Other Face of Egypt’s Youth Movement* (2011) <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1723/v-for-vendetta-the-other-face-of-egypts-youth-move> at 2 August 2015.

²⁷⁰ A Ali and D El-Sharnouby, ‘Distorting Digital Citizenship: Khaled Said, Facebook, and Egypt’s Streets’ in L Herrera (ed), *Wired Citizenship: Youth Learning and Activism in the Middle East* (2014) 93.

²⁷¹ L Stack, ‘Video of Tortured Boy’s Corpse Deepens Anger in Syria’ *The New York Times*, 30 May 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/world/middleeast/31syria.html>

opportunity, and associated restrictions on upwards social mobility, is another shared area of concern. Marriage, for example, requires financial capital; rising youth unemployment has thus contributed to an increase in the average marriage age. Adding to these frustrations is that those who possess *wasta* — “arguably the most valuable form of currency in much of the Middle East”²⁷² — progress faster and easier.

[Karim, from Egypt] ... returns repeatedly to the questions of rights — the denial of rights, the importance of rights, and the devastating effect the lack of rights and political corruption has on the morale of youth and their ability to earn a livelihood and enjoy a decent life. He views the twin elements of justice and jobs — or injustice and unemployment — as intricately interwoven.²⁷³

3.3.1 Human rights abuses: A predictor of conflict?

Some research has identified a statistical correlation between human rights abuses and conflict onset. Fearon and Laitin found that “...at least for the period 1976 to 1994, government human rights performance in the prior year [was] a relatively powerful predictor of the odds of subsequent civil war”.²⁷⁴ They admit, however, that some of this effect may not be causal, and that the measure may reflect prior low-level insurgency.²⁷⁵ Additional research is therefore needed before a correlation can be confirmed.

3.3.2 Corruption: “Egypt has a million Mubaraks”²⁷⁶

Corruption is a common feature in WANA states. The effects of corruption trickle down, disproportionately affecting the poor because they have the least financial resources, but are still expected to pay bribes. Chayes, a former NPR reporter and now a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment, argues that the Arab Spring “amounted to a mass uprising against kleptocratic practices.”²⁷⁷ It was not only Mubarak in Egypt, but also his sons that particularly attracted people’s ire:

The Mubarak brothers — wealthy businessman Alaa and Mubarak’s one-time heir apparent Gamal — are viewed by many Egyptians as key pillars of an autocratic and corrupt administration that struck an alliance with mega-wealthy businessmen at the expense of the nation’s poor and disadvantaged.²⁷⁸

In Tunisia, it was former President Ben Ali, his family and his cronies. State interventions and entry restrictions enormously benefited these individuals at the expense of the private sector and the economy as a whole. Outrage escalated when WikiLeaks cables detailed the lavish and corrupt lifestyles of those who became commonly known as ‘The Family.’

²⁷² Cited in Whitaker, above n 226, 165.

²⁷³ B Asef and L Herrera (eds), *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (2010) 134.

²⁷⁴ Fearon and Laitin, above n 219, 26.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Whitaker, above n 226, 10.

²⁷⁷ cited in C Lozada, ‘Do corrupt governments breed violence; review of “Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security”, *The Washington Post (Online)*, 16 January 2015 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/book-party/wp/2015/01/16/does-a-corrupt-government-breed-political-violence/>>

²⁷⁸ H Hendawi and S El Deeb, ‘Alaa And Gamal Mubarak, Sons of Ousted Egyptian President, Freed From Prison’, *The World Post (Online)*, 27 March 2015 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/alaa-mubarak-gamal-mubarak_n_6544886.html>

With this background, it is not surprising that Transparency International have asserted that conflict and corruption have a symbiotic relationship. They state that “[c]orruption increases the risk of conflict and conflict increases the risk of corruption”.²⁷⁹ This is supported by World Bank findings that corruption “has doubly pernicious impacts on the risk of violence, by fuelling grievances and by undermining the effectiveness of national institutions and social norms”.²⁸⁰ Interestingly, the report notes that these risks may be exacerbated by natural resource competition and climate change.²⁸¹

3.4 Ethnic and Religious Pluralism, Horizontal Inequalities and Governance Issues

Having assessed social justice risk factors, it is vital to explore what potential role sectarian divisions play — if any — in instability and civil conflict. Fearon and Laitin’s research highlights that the majority of societies with ethnic and religious plurality are peaceful. Goldstone et al. agree:

While we find that nations with governments that discriminate against minorities at risk are themselves at higher risk of political instability, no measure of ethnic composition significantly entered the forecasting model.²⁸²

Collier, however, finds the opposite.²⁸³ In the WANA region conflicts are often drawn upon ethnic or sectarian lines; there is thus the need to further explore these factors, and the role of elite mobilisation, in driving instability and conflict. One explanation is that it is not the existence of these divisions themselves, but the implementation of discriminatory policies that are sectarian in nature, that leads to conflict and instability. Political leaders, for instance Milosevic, have manipulated ethnic identity²⁸⁴ and mobilised populations on the back of so-called ‘ancient ethnic hatreds.’ Politicians in the WANA region have also implemented policies that have led to horizontal inequalities i.e. economic, social or political inequalities between culturally defined groups.²⁸⁵ For instance, these inequalities can include specific groups’ deprivation in health or education services, access to land, and in security and protection from crime. As Stewart and Brown write “when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may lead to violent struggles”.²⁸⁶

3.4.1 The case of Iraq

There is perhaps no more powerful example of the deleterious impact of horizontal inequalities than the case of Iraq. After the fall of the Ba’athist regime in April 2003, US Administrator L. Paul Bremer implemented a process of de-Ba’athification “to prevent the Ba’ath Party from returning to power in Iraq”.²⁸⁷ Bremer’s first order banned the Ba’ath party and purged senior Ba’ath party

²⁷⁹ M Pyman et al., *Corruption as a Threat to Stability and Peace*, Transparency International (2014) 9.

²⁸⁰ The World Bank, *World Development Report on Conflict, Security, and Development* (2011) 6-7.

²⁸¹ *ibid* 7.

²⁸² Goldstone et al., above n 218, 201.

²⁸³ Collier, above n 1, 121-140; Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner, above n 26.

²⁸⁴ A Oberschall, ‘The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(6) (2000), 982-1001.

²⁸⁵ F Stewart, ‘Horizontal inequalities and conflict: An Introduction and some hypotheses’ in F Stewart (ed), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict* (2008), 3.

²⁸⁶ Cited in F Stewart, *Horizontal Inequalities as a Cause of Conflict: A Review of CRISE Findings*, World Development Report 2011 Background Paper (2010) 1.

²⁸⁷ M Sissons and A Al-Saiedi, *A Bitter Legacy: Lessons of De-Ba’athification in Iraq*, International Center for Transitional Justice, ICTJ (2013) 9 <<https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Iraq-De-Baathification-2013-ENG.pdf>; =Eric Stover>

members from the bureaucracy.²⁸⁸ In a second order, the army and some of the security services were also dismissed. Later, on appeal, some Ba'ath party members were re-instated, but the damage had been done: de-Ba'athification had dismantled the state apparatus. Moreover, in the post-conflict context, a large number of trained, armed and dispossessed Iraqis laid a foundation for insurgency and terrorism.

But all cannot be blamed on the US. Instead of working to forge a strong social contract (state-society agreement),²⁸⁹ Prime Minister Maliki exacted revenge on the Sunni population for the horrors of Saddam's Iraq. An examination of Maliki's personal history further suggests that he was not an ideal choice for Prime Minister — he had taken up arms in the fight for Shi'a Islam through the Dawa political party,²⁹⁰ and continued to advocate for Shi'a interests at the expense of the Sunni population. Some scholars even link the American invasion of Iraq and Maliki's policies to the birth of the terrorist group ISIS. Hanieh and Rumman argue that Maliki's sectarianism was clear in the use of force to stop Sunni protests and sit ins, for example in Al-Hawija in 2013. This and other violent acts in response to peaceful protests provoked both Sunni and Shi'a communities, pushing them to adopt sectarian narratives and narrowing the space for peaceful opposition, ultimately aiding ISIS recruitment.

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki used sectarian policies to buttress his power and influence, backed by Iran and the United States under the pretext of the “War on Terror.” He also used the “Terrorism Act” to eliminate his political opponents and rivals and to solidify his power. Al-Maliki furthermore exploited the “Accountability and Justice Act,” which replaced the “De-Ba'athification” law, to marginalize and exclude prominent Sunni politicians under the pretext that they had ties to senior ranks in the former Ba'ath Party.²⁹¹

3.4.2 Sectarianism and Syria

While Syria is generally portrayed as a sectarian conflict, some scholars argue that clan or kinship, *asabiyya* in Arabic, matters more than sect.²⁹² Others posit that Assad played the sectarian card in a bid to paint the rebels as not having legitimate political grievances.²⁹³ Both are probably true to some extent; the civil war certainly began as a revolution without sectarian elements; no one can deny that it constituted an uprising against the authoritarian Assad regime. While sectarianism may provide an attractive narrative, analysts must take care that such narratives do not obfuscate other factors that have contributed to the conflict.

This [Syria's civil war] is not a fight purely or even primarily about Islam; it is a war about the future of the Middle East. Unfortunately, however, all the talk about sectarian war is fast becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. And by misunderstanding

²⁸⁸ For more information about how ethnic identity was manipulated in Yugoslavia see: S Otterman, *IRAQ: Debaathification* (2005) Council on Foreign Relations <<http://www.cfr.org/iraq/iraq-debaathification/p7853>> at 3 August 2015.

²⁸⁹ What experts argue to be a prerequisite for a social covenant, or a society-to-society agreement see S Kaplan and M Freeman, 'Beating ISIL: Without identity, Iraqis have no will', *Al Jazeera*, 26 July 2015 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/07/beatng-isil-identity-iraqis-150722133656336.html>>

²⁹⁰ D Filkins, 'What we left behind', *The New Yorker*, 28 April 2014 <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/28/what-we-left-behind>>

²⁹¹ Abu Hanieh and Abu Rumman, above n 9, 165.

²⁹² E Hokayem, *Syria's Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant* (2013) 32

²⁹³ Abu Hanieh and Abu Rumman, , above n 9, 162.

the complicated history of Syria's alliances with Shia groups, we may contribute to the very sectarian tensions that are tearing the region apart.²⁹⁴

3.5 Weak States, Bad Governance

There is extant literature that finds a link between poor governance and civil conflict. For instance, Holsti posits that states lacking vertical and horizontal legitimacy will be at risk of experiencing civil conflict.²⁹⁵ Vertical legitimacy refers to the connection between a population and political institutions and regimes; if the latter are seen as representing society, then vertical legitimacy is high. Horizontal legitimacy refers to how individuals and groups treat each other;²⁹⁶ when horizontal legitimacy is high there is acceptance and tolerance between groups and communities in the polity.²⁹⁷

States of whatever format, if they lack vertical and horizontal legitimacy, and if their authority structures are primarily patrimonial, will be weak. They may look like states on the outside... [b]ut they lack a single "idea" of the state around which different constituent communities' affections and loyalties can converge. Inside, they are largely *hollow shells* in which governance is local, not national, and where communal animosities or state-group relations threaten to erupt into civil wars, communal bloodbaths, and wars of secession.²⁹⁸

These weak states could possess strong means — robust militaries that resort to authoritarianism measures — but still be at risk of civil conflict because they lack legitimacy. As a report published by the Berghof Foundation elucidates, "lack of legitimacy... is a core ingredient of [state] fragility".²⁹⁹ Poor governance more broadly is linked to conflict and instability, not only because of the relationship between poor governance and legitimacy, but due to its relationship to economic growth.

Given that poor governance has a link to conflict onset, it follows that good governance might reduce the incidence of conflict.³⁰⁰ Hegre and Nygard identify that informal aspects of good governance are equally as important as formal institution in terms of conflict prevention.

3.6 Post-Conflict States and Conflict Relapse: Violence Begets Violence

States that have experienced a civil war are statistically more likely to experience conflict again: out of 103 states that had a civil war (1945-2009), 57 percent experienced recidivism.³⁰¹ As Heger, Nygard and Strand et al. identify, one of the reasons for this recidivism is that conflicts negatively impact other risk factors; wars erode average income, for example, and low incomes

²⁹⁴ T Matthiesen, 'Syria: Inventing a Religious War,' *The New York Review of Books*, 12 June 2013 <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/jun/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>> at 1 September 2015.

²⁹⁵ K. Holsti, *The State, War and the State of War* (1996) 107-108.

²⁹⁶ *ibid* 87 and 97.

²⁹⁷ *ibid*, 87.

²⁹⁸ *ibid*, 107-108.

²⁹⁹ Berghof Foundation, *Legitimacy in fragile post-conflict situations – why it matters for peacebuilding and conflict transformation* <http://www.berghoffoundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Grantees_Partners/UoQ_Grant_Framing_Paper.pdf>

³⁰⁰ H Hegre and N Nygard, 'Governance and Conflict Relapse' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (2014).

³⁰¹ UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, cited in *Conflict Relapse and the Sustainability of Post-Conflict Peace*, World Development Report 2011 Background Paper (2010) 1.

are a key risk factor for conflict onset.³⁰² The WANA region has seen a very high rate of conflict recidivism.

States in transition are also at an increased risk of conflict. Mansfield and Snyder find that transitions from autocracy, which then become stymied before robust democratic institutions are developed, are particularly at risk of conflict.³⁰³

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the factors that have contributed to preventing civil conflict and unrest in the WANA region — namely the various combinations of co-optation and coercion employed by regimes to ensure their survival. Such regime survival strategies have been assisted by both foreign support and a unique availability of rents. This has come at a severe human cost and contributed to underlying governance and social justice grievances. The Achilles heel of this approach was demonstrated in the Arab Spring.

But how can we understand revolutions that are at once revolutions against kleptocratic practices, youth revolutions, social justice revolutions and even revolutions of the thirsty? This research suggests that mono-causal explanations of civil conflict and instability onset are problematic. But it is also conspicuous that many of these underlying issues (food, water, energy insecurity, social justice and human rights deficits) were long existent. Why then, in early 2011, did conditions reach a critical point. Certainly social media is one factor that could be perceived as a game changer. Revolution contagion is another, particularly how protesters in various cities gained support, confidence and momentum from each other.

It is also useful to map how political contestation develops. For instance in Egypt it has been shown that there was increased mobilisation in the years leading up to the revolution. The group *Kifaya* is one example; labour movement protests are another. If the Arab Spring is viewed in this way, it reinforces arguments that do not rely on grievance (or greed) alone, but that explore the political opportunity structure, and specifically the “rules, institutional structure and elite alliances that increase or decrease the risk of protest and rebellion”.³⁰⁴ Leenders goes as far as to apply some of the concepts of ‘social movement theory’ to the Arab Spring.³⁰⁵ Social movement theorists argue that “shifting state or regime characteristics” can give an indication of opportunities for action.³⁰⁶ In Syria, for example, while nothing had changed domestically, citizens sensed that a political opportunity had opened up because of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt: “In short, not the regime’s features appear to have changed, but many Syrians’ perception of their ability to challenge it”.

³⁰² H Hegre, H Nygard H Strand et al. ‘The Conflict Trap’, (paper prepared for the 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Seattle WA (2011), 7).

³⁰³ E Mansfield and J Snyder, ‘Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War’ *International Organization*, 56(2) (2002).

³⁰⁴ Fearon and Laitin, above n 219; See also S Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2011).

³⁰⁵ Leenders, R. ‘Social Movement Theory and the Onset of the Popular Uprising in Syria’ *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 35(3), Summer Special Issue: Perspectives on the Arab Uprisings (2013), 273-289.

³⁰⁶ *ibid* 275.

Table 6: Political Civil Conflict and Instability Risk Factors

WANA Political Risk Factors
-Regime type
-Religious and Ethnic Diversity
-Poor Governance
-Weak horizontal legitimacy
- Weak vertical legitimacy
-Recent experience of Civil Conflict
-Social Justice/ Human Rights deficits
-Corruption
-Horizontal inequalities

4: Economic Risk Factors for Civil Conflict and Instability

Long before the Arab Spring, the region's economies were associated with high levels of unemployment, inequality, and an underperforming private sector. Even the Gulf States, which enjoy some of the highest GDP per capita rates in the world, have not managed to exempt themselves from what appear to be regional economic trends. Economic shortcomings are harmful in and of themselves, however this section of the paper will focus on the relationship between economics and civil conflict and popular mobilisation. It argues that there are also economic correlates of instability and that these risk factors operate in conjunction with environmental and political drivers of conflict.

Critically, the WANA region is plagued by glaring discrepancies in economic well-being and prosperity; Qatar's GDP per capita stood at close to USD97,518.6 in 2014 compared to Yemen's meagre USD1,473. These discrepancies are attributable to both different resource endowments and different levels of policy functionality. Countries have likewise experienced different levels of unrest; in some cases economic decline pushed states into civil war, while others introduced partial reforms, thereby avoiding or delaying unrest. But even those that have successfully shielded themselves from conflict have felt the economic affects of neighbourhood instability, making the relationship between economic policies, performance and conflict key for understanding and advancing resilience.

4.1 Dual Dangers: Income and 'Conflict Traps'

Conflicts are costly, that much is clear. Since 2011 alone, conflict and unrest has cost the region an estimated USD170 billion in foregone economic potential.³⁰⁷ This is because conflict both impedes economic growth and thrives in contexts of insufficient growth. The take away is that growth is good for conflict resilience. This not just growth in an abstract sense; who grows, relative to others, is critical.

To fully understand the relationship between growth (or lack thereof) and conflict, we first need to understand how economic growth responds to conflict. Conflict has a demonstrable and unequivocal impact on a country's economic trajectory. Besides the direct costs of financing wars, conflict and instability destroys capital (financial, human, and cultural), demolishes infrastructure, reduces investment and trade, and impedes diversification.³⁰⁸ As noted above, civil conflict is estimated to reduce annual real GDP growth by about 2 percentage points;³⁰⁹ a seven-year war leaving a country 15 percent poorer than it would have been in the absence of conflict.³¹⁰ Individual cases can be even more severe; Chatham House has estimated that Syria's GDP has shrunk by close to 60 percent since the conflict commenced in 2006.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Remarks by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim at the MENA Stakeholders Event (2015) The World Bank Group <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2015/10/10/world-bank-group-president-jim-yong-kim-mena-stakeholders-event>> at 8 December 2015.

³⁰⁸ Hegre, Nygard Strand et al., above n 302.

³⁰⁹ N Staines, 'Economic Performance Over the Conflict Cycle' *International Monetary Fund*, 95(4) (2004).

³¹⁰ Collier, above n 4, 27.

³¹¹ Lobel, above n 7.

But not only does conflict destroy economic development and the potential for it, poor economic growth and performance also drive conflict.³¹² Finally, conflict and economic decline tend to drive each other; conflict exacerbates the economic conditions that favour insurgency by increasing poverty, causing capital flight, and destabilising neighbouring countries.³¹³

4.2 Poverty, Inequality and Threats to Stability

The WANA region's real GDP per capita is not low by international standards, averaging USD6478 in 2012 compared to USD2225 in South Asia, and less than USD2000 for Sub-Saharan Africa.³¹⁴ But these impressive figures are largely artificial. They are buttressed by the exceptional wealth of the region's oil-producing economies. Yemen and Somalia, for example, exist at the bottom end of the spectrum: ³¹⁵ around half of their populations are living below the poverty line of USD1.25 a day.³¹⁶ Poverty is also prevalent in the region's middle-income economies;³¹⁷ 26 percent of Egypt's population and 14 percent of Jordan's live below the poverty at some point during the year.³¹⁸ This exposes a dual threat in terms of conflict resilience. First, low levels of GDP are associated with a higher risk of civil war onset.³¹⁹ Fearon and Laitin's research on the conditions that favour insurgency³²⁰ find that each additional USD1000 of per capita income lowers the risk of conflict by 35 percent in any given year.³²¹ Collier reaches similar conclusions, finding that each percentage point off the growth rate of per capita income raises the risk of conflict by an equivalent of one percentage point.³²²

Second, the relative poverty that exists in the WANA region is particularly pernicious. More specifically, absolute poverty (deprivation of basic human needs including food, water, sanitation, shelter, and health), in the context of broader inequality, is a driver of conflict and instability. This is perhaps because it serves as a constant reminder of social injustice. There is also evidence that income inequality leads to general social dysfunction and that less equal societies tend to do worse in terms of health, education and general well-being.³²³ In the WANA region, the income share held by the poorest 20 percent is a negligible 6.8 percent of the total.³²⁴ Average income inequality for the region is 38.2 percent, which is only slightly better than East Asia and the Pacific at 39.2 percent.³²⁵ Inequality is particularly stark in South Sudan, Iran, Tunisia, Qatar, Djibouti and Morocco.³²⁶ These figures suggest that while reducing income inequality and poverty is an important policy measure in its own right, doing so in the WANA context is particularly important as a means of reducing instability.

³¹² *Sustainable Development Goals and Justice Report*, WANA Institute (2015) 7.

³¹³ Hegre, Nygard Strand et al., above n 302, 1.

³¹⁴ A Jcube, J Anywawu, and K Hauske, *Inequality, Economic Growth, and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa*, African Development Bank Group (2013) 8.

³¹⁵ The World Bank, above n 8; *Poverty in Somalia*, Finance Maps of the World <<http://finance.mapsofworld.com/economy/somalia/poverty.html>> at 3 September 2015

³¹⁶ While poverty has undoubtedly been exacerbated in this part of the world by political instability, alarming rates of poverty predated conflict and uprisings.

³¹⁷ As defined by the World Bank, Middle Income Economies are those whose GDP per capita is more than USD1,045 but less than USD12,736.

³¹⁸ 'Hunger, poverty rates in Egypt up sharply over past three years - UN report', *UN News Centre*, 21 May 2013 <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44961#.Vegp7fmqqkq>> at 25 August 2015.

³¹⁹ H Hegre and N Sambani, 'Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(4) (2006), 508-435.

³²⁰ Fearon and Laitin, above n 25.

³²¹ Fearon and Laitin, above n 219, 18.

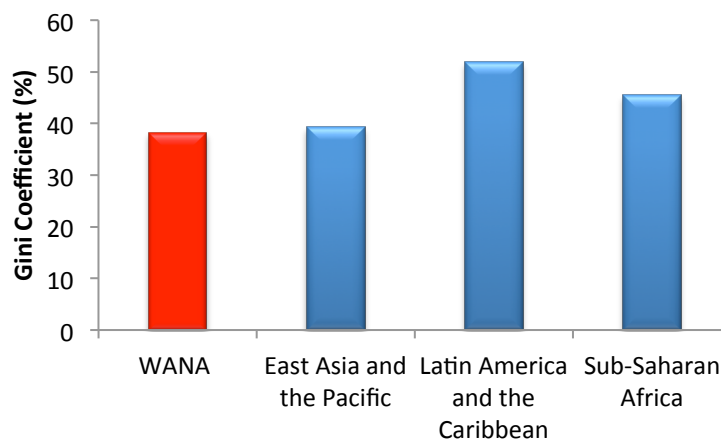
³²² P Collier, 'Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy' *University of Oxford* (2006), 6.

³²³ R Wilkinson and K Pickett, 'The Spirit Level: Why Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better' (2009).

³²⁴ Jcube, Anywawu, and Hauske, above n 314, 10.

³²⁵ *ibid.*

³²⁶ *ibid.*

Figure 1: Incidence of inequality in WANA relative to other regions

Source: Figures generated by: A Jcube, J Anywawu, and K Hauske, *Inequality, Economic Growth, and Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa*, African Development Bank Group (2013) and constructed from 2012 World Bank data.

4.3 The Middle Class Effect

A further impact of inequality is that it translates into a shrinking middle class. The middle class is a major force of stability in any society and, as revealed in Table 1 below, the WANA region represents only a two percent share of the global middle class.

Table 7: Global number (in millions) of middle class individuals and share of global population (actual and projected).

	2009		2020		2030	
North America	338	18%	333	10%	322	7%
Europe	664	36%	703	22%	680	14%
Central and South America	181	10%	251	8%	313	6%
Asia Pacific	525	28%	1740	54%	3228	66%
Sub-Saharan Africa	32	2%	57	2%	107	2%
WANA	105	6%	165	5%	234	5%
World	1845	100%	3249	100%	4884	100%

Source: H Kharas, *The Emerging Middle Class in Developing Countries*, OECD Development Centre (2010) 16

Scholars are divided on the relationship between the middle class and stability. Some hypothesise that a healthy middle class sustains the democratic tendencies necessary for economic and political development, and that conflict arises when this middle class is too small to sustain these tendencies. Others argue that the region's lack of or reverse patterns of democratisation are because it does not possess the economic and social basis needed for democracy to thrive,³²⁷ and democracy, as stated in the introduction to this paper, seems to have a protective function in middle-income regions such as WANA.

4.4 A Stunted Private Sector

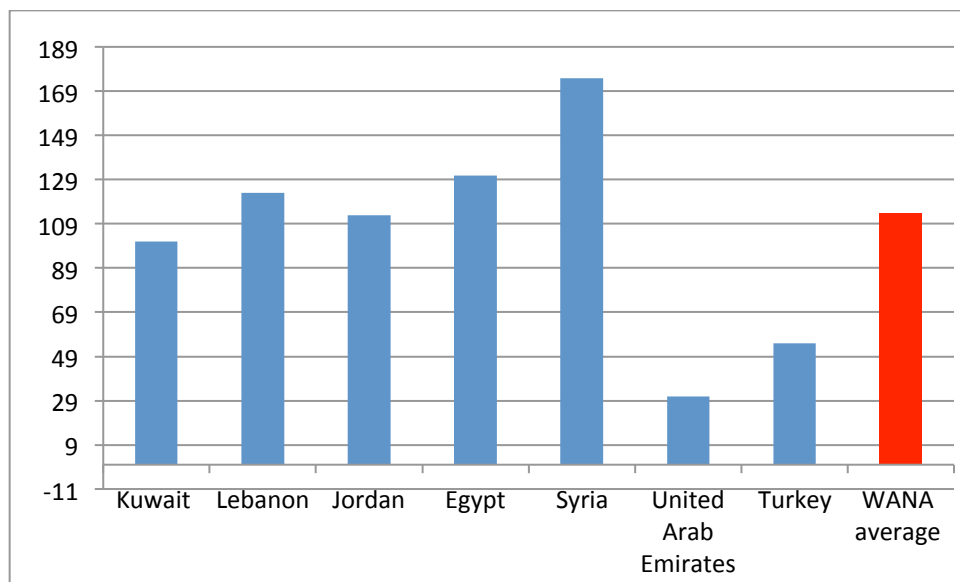
A collective failure of WANA states, rich and poor, has been their inability to develop a private sector that is independent, competitive and well integrated with global markets.³²⁸ Small and

³²⁷ C Issawi cited in *The Economic and Social Foundations in the Middle East* (1970).

³²⁸ A Malik and B Awadallah, *The Economics of the Arab Spring*, Centre for the Study of African Economies (2011) 5.

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent just 25 percent of the GDP in Saudi Arabia and 33 percent in Egypt, compared to more than half of the GDP contribution in both the US and Germany.³²⁹ A healthy business culture is a requirement for development because it generates productive income and value-added economic activity that is independent of the state.³³⁰ The private sector is hailed for unlocking a country's developmental potential; likewise, industrialisation creates jobs, transfers developmental know-how, and expands a state's export base, linking it to the global economy. On the contrary, private business activity in the WANA region is notable for its limited export presence, few productive spillovers across firms, and one of the lowest rates of productivity in the world.³³¹ Even countries that have made serious strides towards liberalising their markets and opening state-owned enterprises to privatisation and foreign investment still rank low according to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index.³³² As of 2014, the regional average was 114 out of 189, with most of the region's economies ranking below 100, with the exception of the UAE and Turkey, as demonstrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Ease of doing business rankings for sample WANA economies



Source: The World Bank, 'Ease of Doing Business Rankings' (2015) <<http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>> at 8 December 2015.

4.5 The State as a Main Provider of Well Being

Beyond the economic dimension, it is imperative to understand why an underperforming private sector is a *political* problem. A stunted private sector is not developed enough to provide sufficient income and employment for citizens. As a result, the state is forced to expand beyond its basic role of governance into being *provider*, heavily misconstruing the conditions of the social contract. This is how the traditional role of the Arab state as a welfare provider emerged in 1970s.

³²⁹ R Shediak, S Bohsali, and H Samman, *The Bedrock of Society: Understanding and Growing the MENA region's Middle Class*, Booz and Company (2013) 11.

³³⁰ Malik and Awadallah, above n 328, 5.

³³¹ Malik and Awadallah, above n 328, 7.

³³² Prime examples are Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf States in general; The World Bank ranks economies according to their ease of doing business, from 1–189. A high ease of doing business ranking means the regulatory environment is more conducive to the starting and *operation* of a local firm.

One of the main ways Arab states extend welfare is through food subsidies. For example, in Jordan in the 1960s, most basic food commodities were imported and subsidised by the Ministry of Supply. While liberalisation and moments of economic distress have seen a gradual withdrawal of food subsidies, remnants remain. Today the Jordanian government only subsidises flour specifically for making bread, at a cost of around JOD290 million per year.³³³ Egypt, on the other hand, spends up to USD5 billion a year on subsidising bread, rice, oil and sugar.³³⁴ Beyond pushing up state deficits and forcing governments to spend beyond their means, subsidies do not always deliver their intended effect and can benefit the rich more than the poor. In Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon, the poorest quintile receives 15–25 percent of total bread subsidies;³³⁵ while in Egypt, nearly 50 percent of the *baladi* bread subsidy goes to the top 40 percent of income recipients.³³⁶

Energy subsidies, which are widespread in the region, are even more notorious for unintended economic and social ramifications. For the region's oil-exporting countries, supporting fossil-fuel prices has long been considered a means of redistributing wealth gained by the state from selling oil to foreign markets. This redistribution is central to the social contract upon which the political model in Gulf countries is built. But besides the fiscal pressure this creates (GCC countries spend more than USD160 billion on energy subsidies annually),³³⁷ low fuel prices have driven domestic over-consumption of hydrocarbons³³⁸ and reduced the competitiveness of renewable energy projects.³³⁹ Diverted public spending also represents an opportunity cost. For oil exporters, total pretax energy subsidies exceed spending on education and health, while in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon spending on total pretax energy subsidies was higher than spending on capital, health, or education.³⁴⁰ Again, these subsidies largely fail to meet their intended objective of improving equity. In Tunisia, the highest-income households benefit almost 40 times more from energy subsidies than do the lowest-income ones,³⁴¹ while in Jordan, the richest quintile received nearly 12 times more in fuel and gasoline subsidies than the poorest quintile.

Beyond their clear economic drawbacks, it is subsidies' link to public opinion and stability that makes them a particularly flammable issue. Given their inherent unsustainability, their retraction — as is occurring in various WANA states — is inevitable. As demonstrated even before the Arab Spring, this can fuel protest and social unrest. President Anwar Sadat triggered riots when he cut the bread subsidy in 1977, while President Hosni Mubarak faced unrest in 2008 when the rising price of wheat caused shortages. As mentioned already in this paper, when Egyptians rose up against Mubarak's rule four years ago, one of their signature chants was: 'Bread, freedom and social justice.' Similarly, following a Yemeni government subsidy cut that

³³³ 'Cost of bread subsidy estimated at JD290m', *The Jordan Times*, (Amman) 7 May 2013.

³³⁴ 'Smart cards for Egypt's bread: achieving what was once rendered impossible?' *AlBawaba News* 24 February 2016 <<http://www.albawaba.com/business/egypt-food-subsidies--557253>> at 26 October 2015.

³³⁵ C Sdralevich et al., *Subsidy Reform in the Middle East and North Africa: Recent Progress and Challenges Ahead*, the International Monetary Fund (2014) 18.

³³⁶ *ibid.*

³³⁷ 'Gulf energy subsidies worth US\$160b a year: World Bank', *International Business Times*, 5 November 2014

<http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/energy-commodities/gulf-energy-subsidies-worth-us160b-a-year-world-bank>> at 15 August 2015.

³³⁸ Over-consumption is the most pressing problem. Electricity consumption has grown consistently at about 7 percent per year in GCC countries where the residential sector accounts for around half of domestic power demand. C Charles, T Morenhout, and R Bridle, *The Context of Fossil Fuel Subsidies in the GCC region and Their Impact on Renewable Energy Development*, International Institute for Sustainable Development (2014) iii.

³³⁹ *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ C Sdralevich et al, above n 335, 19.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*

nearly doubled the prices of petrol and diesel, protests erupted that required army intervention to quell them, and eventually for government to partially restore them.³⁴²

Interestingly, in the days following the collapse of the Mubarak's regime, Saudi Arabia announced a social welfare package for its citizens worth USD10.7 billion, featuring pay raises for government employees, new jobs and loan forgiveness schemes.³⁴³ By the end of the month, handouts totalled USD37 billion; then in March the King announced an additional USD93 billion in social spending.³⁴⁴ This was part of an initial GCC-wide response "to sharply increase current spending to accommodate social pressures and to pledge intra-regional fiscal transfers to less endowed members".³⁴⁵ These examples highlight the inherently politically sensitive nature of subsidies, and the fragile state-society relations they foster. In short, for countries that can afford to spend their way out of dissent, they will, but for those that cannot, the result is most likely violence. The trend appears to be towards the latter. Even in the Gulf countries, declining oil prices are making subsidies more difficult to maintain. Currently, they are paying more in energy subsidies than the total amount of revenue they stand to lose annually if the oil price stays below USD80 a barrel.³⁴⁶

4.5.1 Unemployment and a bloated public sector

The most literal and direct manifestation of the welfare state model has been the WANA states' role as a primary employer. A stunted private sector and inadequate growth means that the economy does not generate enough activity to keep all those able and willing to work employed. The result is that in many countries the public sector employs between 14-40 percent of all workers; government wages in the region amount to 9.8 percent of GDP, the highest rate worldwide.³⁴⁷ This manifests in government institutions that are overstaffed and over-remunerate compared to the private sector. States do this because they understand the link between unemployment and regime stability, adding another unrealistic tenet to the WANA social contract. The policy is not even completely effective; unemployment is still high even in countries with disproportionate public sectors. Against the 'generally tolerable' figure of 4 percent unemployment in healthy economies, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan hold unemployment rates of 12.80 percent, 6.5 percent, and 12.3 percent respectively.³⁴⁸

Youth unemployment is particularly pronounced in the WANA region and statistically correlated to political instability. More than 29 percent are out of work in North Africa – more than double the global average, according to WEF's report.³⁴⁹ Countries belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have persistently high youth unemployment rates, with the highest found in oil-rich Saudi Arabia

³⁴² 'Energy subsidy cuts spark protests in Yemen', *Project on Middle East Democracy*, 22 August 2013 <<http://pomed.org/blog-post/foreign-aid/energy-subsidy-cuts-spark-protests-in-yemen/>> at 30 August 2015.

³⁴³ 'To Stave Off Arab Spring Revolts, Saudi Arabia and Fellow Gulf Countries Spend \$150 Billion', *The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania*, 21 September 2011 <<http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/to-stave-off-arab-spring-revolts-saudi-arabia-and-fellow-gulf-countries-spend-150-billion/>> at 11 August 2015.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Charles, Morenhout, and Bridle, above n 338.

³⁴⁷ L Bteddini, *Governance and Public Sector Employment in the Middle East*, The World Bank (2012).

³⁴⁸ *Egypt Unemployment Rate*, Trading Economics <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/unemployment-rate>> at 7 August 2015; *Lebanon Unemployment Rate*, Trading Economics <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/unemployment-rate>> at 6 August 2015; *Jordan Unemployment Rate*, Trading Economics <<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/jordan/unemployment-rate>> at 7 August 2015.

³⁴⁹ R James, 'Arab 'brain drain' accelerates after Arab Spring: UN', Middle East Eye, 8 May 2015.

where the rate hovers around 30 percent, data from the G20 organization showed this year.³⁵⁰ These high unemployment rates have resulted in a couple of distinct trends. First, the State was required to shoulder such burden and act as a massive job provider, further draining its limited financing and inflating the public sector. Official figures estimate that well over 60 percent of Jordan's formal employment is in the public sector. This is inherently problematic given the symbiotic relationship between unemployment and instability. The relationship between youth unemployment and stability has been statistically verified. An African Development Bank Group study in 2013 sampled and applied a regression on 24 developing countries over the period of 1980-2010³⁵¹ and found that youth unemployment was significantly associated with an increase of the risk of political instability.³⁵²

4.5.2 Rentierism and stability

The role of the Arab state as a subsidy and employment provider is a manifestation of a problematic economic structure that pervades the region — rentierism. Much of the economic challenges of the GCC economies result from resource over-dependency that persists despite efforts to move towards diversification and knowledge-based economies. This is because when both the state and citizens are occupied with collecting oil rents, there are insufficient incentives to engage in or promote productive economic activity. If oil was infinite, this would not be so problematic. But the reality is that oil resources are non-renewable and their prices are too volatile to rely upon for the majority of a state's budget. Because oil revenues quickly crowd out productive economic activity, active efforts to diversify need to be promoted.

The Gulf states' drama is that it [oil extraction] is not simply another economic activity added to the other existing productive sources within a viable and modern economy, as it is with the Netherlands or, for that matter, Canada, Australia, and the Scandinavian countries. In the Gulf, the oil sector dominates the economy; it is almost the unique source of wealth.³⁵³

Countries that rely on primary commodities tend to be 'under-bureaucratized' for their GDP level, thus having weaker institutions and being more prone to conflict.³⁵⁴ At the same time, and in parallel to the conflict-poverty cycle, conflict seems to transform societies into more primary-commodity dependent economies.³⁵⁵ Collier and Hoeffler's research suggests that, up to a point, countries with higher levels of primary commodity exports provide better opportunities for rebels to finance themselves through "looting".³⁵⁶ Besides financing rebellion, natural resources also increase the risk of conflict by offering a prize or 'honey pot' to control.³⁵⁷ Collier establishes the most dangerous level of primary commodity dependence at 26 percent of GDP.³⁵⁸ More recently, Lujala found that onshore oil production increases the risk of civil war onset, but that offshore production does not. She also found that the location of resources is crucial for its

³⁵⁰ H Ellyatt 'Youth unemployment in Rich Middle East a Liability,' *CNBC* 15 October 2015, <<http://www.cnbc.com/2014/10/15/youth-unemployment-in-rich-middle-east-a-liability-wef.html>> at 28 January 2016.

³⁵¹ T Azeng and T Yogo, *Youth Unemployment and Political Instability in Selected Developing Countries*, African Development Bank (2013) 4.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ M Hvidt, *Economic Diversification in GCC Countries: Past Record and Future Trends*, Kuwait Program on Development, Governance, and Globalization in the Gulf States, London School of Economics (2013) 29.

³⁵⁴ Fearon and Laitin, above n 25.

³⁵⁵ P Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (2003) 84.

³⁵⁶ Collier and Hoeffler, above n 159, (2004).

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*

³⁵⁸ P Collier, above n 296, 5.

impact on the duration of the conflict; when the resources are located inside combat zones, the duration of the conflict doubles.³⁵⁹ One real-time analogy is ISIS, which, as acknowledged earlier in this paper, partly funds itself through money gleaned by selling looted oil on black markets.³⁶⁰

In the non-oil producing countries of WANA, other forms of rentierism have emerged, namely, foreign aid and remittances. WANA countries receive the highest overseas development assistance in per capita terms (USD73 compared to USD49 in Sub-Saharan Africa), whereas North Africa has consistently been the biggest recipient of net aid per capita since the 1960s.³⁶¹ Egypt and Jordan, by virtue of their strategic location, have historically derived significant external rents through foreign aid. In Egypt alone, two-thirds of foreign exchange revenues accrue from gas, aid and revenues from the Suez Canal. Like oil, aid stifles economic and political incentives, turning economies away from production and towards patronage. They also exacerbate the conflict risk factors discussed in previous sections, by driving a bloated public sector, and bolstering its ability to provide employment and subsidised public consumption.

Even if states could keep up with financing the welfare state model, rentierism in its essential form, and as it exists in the Gulf, has failed to translate material gain into human well-being. This is where its vulnerability and potential role as a driver of instability lies. The litmus-test is the Human Development Index (HDI), a metric that takes into account life expectancy, literacy, education, standards of living, and quality of life for countries worldwide. Globally, GDP per capita and HDI ranking tend to correlate (see Figure 4). But when comparing GDP per capita and HDI levels in the Gulf region, wide discrepancies between material wellbeing and human development are exposed. For example, while Qatar holds the world's highest GDP per capita rate in the world as of 2014, it ranks 31st on the HDI.³⁶² This discrepancy becomes more striking in comparison to OECD economies (see Figure 4). In these economies, not only are rankings of GDP per capita and HDI aligned,³⁶³ but HDI rankings at times outperform GDP per capita rankings, which is never the case in Gulf economies. Thus even where a state is successful in delivering wealth to its citizens, this wealth, if not productively generated, will not shield it from other drivers of instability such as unemployment and relative poverty.

³⁵⁹ P Lujala, 'The Spoils of Nature: Armed Conflict and Rebel Access to Natural Resources' *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (2010), 15–29.

³⁶⁰ 'Experts: ISIS makes up to \$3 million daily in oil sales', *Al-Arabiya News*, 24 August 2014, <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/22/-Israel-quiet-over-hotline-with-Russia-on-Syria.html>> at 22 October 2015.

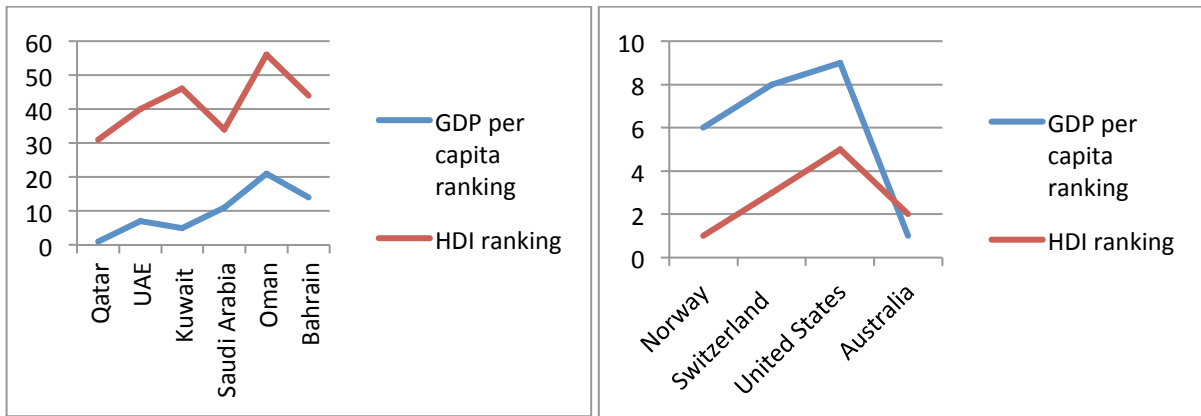
³⁶¹ Malik and Awadallah, above n 328, 9.

³⁶² Human Development Report, *United Nations Development Program* (2014).

< <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>> at 8 December 2015

³⁶³ The scale used in figure 3 is 1-60, as opposed to 1-10 in figure 4.

Figures 3 and 4: GDP per capita and HDI discrepancies in the Gulf States and in comparison with OECD economies



Sources: Human Development Report, *United Nations Development Program* (2014) .
 < <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr14-report-en-1.pdf>> at 8 December 2015 and World Bank GDP per capita data (2014)

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the economic characteristics of WANA states that may predispose them to conflict and instability. Principally, there is a mutually constituting relationship between conflict and growth. Conflict cripples growth, and at the same time slow growth creates a fertile environment for conflict. Relative poverty was also shown to be a risk factor, namely the region’s wide divide between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots.’ A small middle class and weak private sector are additional risk factors, as they impede economic self-determination and the associated accompanying freedoms. While the countries of the region lie on a wide spectrum of economic functionality and political stability, they have adopted an almost identical social contract, whereby citizens rely heavily on the state for public goods such as education, health, food and even wealth. This arrangement has been criticised as it weakens the ability and tools available for citizens to hold the state accountable.³⁶⁴ It is the set of unattainable expectations placed on both sides of the social contract that raises the risk of instability.

Table 8: Economic Civil Conflict and Instability Risk Factors

WANA Economic Risk Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relative and absolute poverty -Poor growth -Small middle class -Stunted private sector -Existence of inefficient subsidy regimes -Unemployment, especially youth unemployment - Youth bulge

³⁶⁴Malik and Awadallah, above n 328, 7.

Conclusion: Connecting the Dots Between Civil Conflict and Instability Risk Factors

This study represents the first step in developing a model to measure and track states' resilience to conflict. It has examined the extant literature on risk factors for civil conflict and instability in the WANA context from an inter-disciplinary perspective, incorporating contributions from economics, international relations and sociology. Environmental, economic and political risk factors for civil conflict and instability were identified. Some relationships are clearly made out. For example, there is significant evidence that regime type and institutional functionality have a relationship with conflict, and that states that have had a recent conflict are also more likely to experience another one. The unravelling of Iraq's democratic experiment provides a clear example of how weak horizontal and vertical legitimacy can be a lethal recipe in post-war contexts. The influence of social injustice and human rights deficits is also easy to identify in the conflicts of the WANA region. The Arab Spring showcased how justice and governance deficits can lead people into the streets, provided there is a suitable trigger; Bouazizi's self-immolation, Khaled Said's brutal killing and Hamza Ali Al-Khateeb's death constituted key events in the timeline of the uprisings. In terms of economics, the relative inequality, both within and between WANA states, was established as a conflict and instability risk factor. Growth was also shown to have a relationship with conflict: poor growth is both a driver and consequence of conflict. The region may even have a 'Middle Class Effect,' but this requires further empirical evaluation.

Other relationships remain ambiguous. The evidence on the role of religious and ethnic diversity was divergent, and there is insufficient data on the impact of tribal-national identity in fuelling conflict, suggesting a need for more sophisticated analysis and testing, with a regional focus.³⁶⁵ Another underexplored area is the extent to which contagion played a role in the popular mobilisations of 2011. Sociology — specifically Social Movement Theory — may provide a useful model for better understanding how one uprising might create the appearance of a political opportunity, thus contributing to another.

A broader finding is that mono-causal explanations for civil conflict and instability in the WANA region should be rejected. Instead, risk factors are interconnected and mutually constituting in nuanced ways. For example, the WANA region appears to be particularly at risk of instability engendered by food, water and energy insecurity. Countries are trying to counter this through 'virtual water' (sourcing food through international markets), exposing states to additional risks attendant on the volatility in international food prices. Climate change is likely to put further pressure on food, water and energy systems and drive displacement, which will likely bring with it political contestation. This case serves to further highlight how closely the region's challenges are interconnected.

This background paper was strongly influenced by Grounded Theory: we attempted to cast a wide net to encompass a range of risk factors, including some that may have been neglected previously. The next step will be to verify the statistical significance of the identified environmental, political and economic risk factors against civil conflict and instability incidence

³⁶⁵ Fearon and Laitin, above n 219; Goldstone et al., above n 218, 201; Collier, above n 1, 121-140; Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner, above n 26.

in the region. The proposed risk factors are a combination of slow moving indicators, which measure both institutional capacities (regime type/ governance/ corruption) with trigger variables such as food and fuel price shocks. These variables will need to be modelled separately; one option is to construct a multivariate model, which will determine which factors are the most significant.

It is important to highlight that these factors are not the only elements that will inform the Conflict Resilience Model. For instance, the impact of population on conflict and instability should be included in next-stage empirical testing. It is likely that any increase in population — be this due to mass migration or normal growth — will exacerbate risk both directly and via other factors. Food, water and energy systems, for example, are already under pressure, but with an increased population it is probable that these pressures will worsen.

As explained in the introduction to this paper, a Conflict Resilience Model cannot directly reduce or eliminate conflict. But a set of tools that can evaluate civil conflict and instability risk may create more opportunities to raise policies and interventions that can heighten states' resilience. By making available timely, evidence-based guidance on specific vulnerabilities, states, donors and development-humanitarian actors will have the tools to work together on ameliorative policies and programmes. Faced with objective evidence, states may take broad actions to build resilience, such as eliminating subsidies or making them more efficient;³⁶⁶ or they may take sector-specific actions such as wastewater reduction and investment in renewables. Clearly, such aversive actions must take place alongside positive development interventions. Bolstering the private sector and encouraging the creation of a strong middle class, for example, also requires policies that promote equal opportunity, participatory governance and an empowered civil society. These examples suggest that this is no 'magic bullet' for resilience, but instead what is needed is a comprehensive approach that recognises the interconnectivity between environmental, political, and economic challenges.

Even then, some difficult issues remain. If a state is unfortunate enough to have a disproportionate amount of mountainous terrain, a fair question is, 'what can be done about it?' Obviously, not a lot. But understanding how mountains influence conflict dynamics provides at least some component of the answer. From this understanding, new policy thinking can evolve and provide a foundation for more pragmatic solutions. Latest thinking is that mountainous terrain is problematic because of the associated governance issues — perhaps because poor infrastructure linking communities detracts from a sense of national identity and encourages tribalism. Or perhaps government schemes — be they educational, health or other — do not reach these communities, driving anger and resistance.

More sophisticated thinking might also give way to new solutions, based on the notion of regional resilience. The terrorist group ISIS, for example, now has a foothold in Afghanistan, as well as Syria and Iraq. Clearly, targeting the group in one territory will not be sufficient if they can find sanctuary in another. Developing regional architecture to deal with such issues may constitute a new and more effective policy direction. In short, where state action alone cannot

³⁶⁶ This would likely involve some political contestation; and their withdrawal would have to be gradual. This report has noted repeatedly the fallout from sudden subsidy withdrawal/ significant food price hikes.

address a threat, it is perhaps through regional resilience that they can reduce their vulnerability to conflict and instability.

One hardly needs a Conflict Resilience Model to establish that the outlook for many states in the WANA region is ominous. Where a metric matters is for understanding the relative significance of the conditions contributing to civil conflict and popular unrest, and working out which combination of factors is particularly pernicious. This knowledge can empower policymakers to understand the nature of these nations' fragility and develop effective policy measures. It is hoped that this work will prove to be a valuable tool in this transition towards state and regional resilience.

Annex 1: Environmental, Political and Economic Risk Factors for Civil Conflict and Instability Onset in the WANA Region

Recommended for Empirical Testing

Environmental / Geographic Risk Factors	Water insecurity
	Food insecurity – especially vulnerability to price fluctuations
	Energy insecurity – especially vulnerability to oil price fluctuations
	Rough terrain (test for forested terrain/ mountainous terrain/ desertification)
	Natural resource endowments
	Rapid urbanization
	Vulnerability to climate change/ extreme weather events
	Neighbourhood
	Unequal access to (water/ food/ energy) resources
Political Risk Factors	Regime type
	Recent experience of civil conflict
	Poor governance - Reduced horizontal and vertical legitimacy
	Diversity (ethnic/religious)
	Horizontal inequalities
	Corruption
	Social justice/ Human rights deficits
Economic Risk Factors	Poor growth
	Relative and absolute poverty
	Unemployment, especially youth unemployment
	Youth bulge
	Small middle class
	Stunted private sector
	Existence of inefficient subsidy regimes

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