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An Exploration of Impact:
Hunger, Cartoons & Philosophy

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Preface
Omar Imady

In the first issue of *Syria Studies* to be published in 2017, we are pleased to share three studies that provide important insights on subjects that have gained significant importance in recent times in so far as how they relate to the Syrian context: siege warfare, political cartoons, and gender politics.

In Isolating Dissent, Punishing the Masses: *Siege Warfare as Counter-Insurgency*, Will Todman analyses the intricate relationship between the nature of the Syrian regime and the military tactics it opted to use to suppress those opposed to it, both during the insurgency phase, and the subsequent civil war. Sieges were effective because they allowed the regime to make optimal use of its military advantage. Once you have a segment of the population in a restricted area, you not only control food and medical supplies, but you can also unleash an indiscriminate bombardment campaign, as the regime indeed did. Todman provides a historic context to the use of these tactics by the Syrian regime (i.e. Hama), and addresses the important question of whether or not siege warfare helped the regime survive.

In Whose Problem Is It Anyway? *The Depiction of Syrian Refugee Influx in Political Cartoons*, Özlem Özdemir and Emrah Özdemir explore the way in which the crisis of Syrian refugees was depicted by cartoons that appeared in Western media. In focusing on twelve randomly selected political cartoons, the authors tell a story of suffering that begins with why the refugee is fleeing and ends with how the refugee is being received by both border countries and beyond. The use of political science and communication theory to analyse these cartoons is not common in the current literature and constitutes an important contribution.

In Interrogating the Construction of Gendered Identity in the Syrian Nationalist Narrative: *Al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi*, Rahaf Aldoughli sheds an important light on how early Bathist theoreticians planted the intellectual foundation for the way in which gender roles were to be understood and, subsequently, taught and applied in Baathist Syria. Using extensive quotes from original sources, Aldoughli documents the systematic masculinisation of conceptions of nationhood by Baathist theoreticians. Perhaps most significant was the "normalisation of militarism in the national narrative" which, resulted in perpetuating "a hierarchy that obstructs the elimination of the gender gap in the Syrian constitution and legislation."

The important common denominator between the above noted studies is 'impact'; more specifically, the extent to which a specific method or idea achieved its desired impact. Todman explores the impact of siege warfare and concludes that despite the fact that the war economy allowed for besieged populations to receive a level of relief, sieges were overall successful in that they allowed for the regime to make use of its military advantage and survive a dire challenge to its very existence. While Özdemir and Özdemir showed that political cartoons can indeed be used to better understand a specific phenomenon, they equally demonstrated that political cartoons are ultimately expressive of a specific mindset that the majority of a population has at any given moment in time, rather than instruments by which public perceptions can be significantly changed. Indeed, the plight of Syrian refugees was not impacted in any significant way by the cartoons examined here. Finally, Aldoughli explores the impact of Baathist ideology on the way in which gender conceptions and roles were manifested in Baathist Syria. Here, impact is easily discerned. The works of early Baathist theoreticians, systematically and deliberately, became the ideological underpinnings of a society that is dominated by the idea of a militarized nation in which men lead both the state and the family.

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Isolating Dissent, Punishing the Masses: *Siege Warfare as Counter-Insurgency*

Will Todman

This paper argues that the Syrian regime's authoritarian nature has affected the choice of the siege as a tactic of counter-insurgency. The first section traces the evolution of urban locales as sites for the practice of war, and explores the geographies of counter-insurgency tactics, the justification for collective punishment, and the concept of 'urbicide'. The tactics employed by the Syrian regime are examined in light of the history of counter-insurgency and urban warfare in Syria in the twentieth century. The evolution of the Syrian regime's military doctrine is explored in order to show how it came to include siege tactics, which were first deployed in Hama in 1982 when Hafez al-Assad quashed the Islamist rebellion. Finally, the paper explores the imposition of sieges since April 2011, looking at how various armed groups employed sieges to achieve their military objectives. Two area case studies are given to illustrate the differences in military tactics between urban and rural sieges - the sieges of Yarmouk Camp and the Eastern Ghouta. The paper shows how siege tactics allowed the Syrian regime to isolate and contain sources of rebellion, and prevent them from spreading to key areas of strategic importance. Thus, siege tactics were one of the factors that contributed to the Syrian regime's ability to survive during the current conflict, even when various analysts predicted its imminent fall.

Introduction

In December, 2016, convoys of green buses carried tens of thousands of civilians and opposition fighters out of the remaining

rebel-held areas of Aleppo. The regime's brutal campaign to retake Aleppo mirrored the tactics it used two years earlier to recapture the city of Homs, once considered the capital of the Syrian revolution. In both instances, suffocating sieges forced the opposition forces to submit.

A siege is enforced by erecting checkpoints at strategic access points to a target area, thereby taking control of the area's supply-lines. Its primary aim is to force a restive population into submission by cutting off its access to food and other goods indispensable to its survival.

On April 25, 2011, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) deployed its first siege in the current conflict. After seven weeks of unrest, the SAA surrounded and laid siege to the southern city of Dera'a as part of a ten-day military operation that would leave over 500 Syrians dead, and 2,500 detained.[1] Following this initial use of siege tactics, the regime then began imposing longer-term partial sieges in rural Damascus in 2012, limiting the entry and exit of civilians and goods. The first instance of opposition forces besieging a pro-government area came in July 2012 when fighters from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) surrounded Nubul and Zahraa, two Alawi-majority towns in rural Aleppo. In the spring of 2013, the regime intensified its sieges in rural Damascus, preventing all goods from reaching many areas, and subjecting the besieged populations to aerial bombardment and shelling.[2]

In November 2016, the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, estimated that 974,080 people were living under siege in Syria, nearly doubling the estimate from six months earlier.[3] This revised figure brought the estimate closer to that of the monitoring group, Siege Watch, which has long argued that over a million Syrians live under siege.[4] Opposition armed groups, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), impose sieges that trap many thousands of Syrians. The vast majority, however, live under siege of the regime.

This paper will examine why the Syrian regime adopted sieges by exploring the urbanisation of modern warfare and

counter-insurgency. Beyond the relevant academic literature, the research draws upon interviews with 21 diplomatic and humanitarian officials, as well as survey responses completed by 16 inhabitants of various besieged areas in Syria, collected from Beirut during the summer of 2015. The identities and affiliations of these individuals are not included to ensure their confidentiality and safety.

Arguing that Syria's status as an authoritarian state affects the choice of counter-insurgency tactics, the first section will trace the evolution of urban locales as sites for the practice of war, and explore the geographies of counter-insurgency tactics, the justification of collective punishment, and the concept of 'urbicide'.[5] The second section will examine the tactics employed by the Syrian regime during the current conflict in light of the history of counter-insurgency and urban warfare in Syria in the twentieth century. The evolution of the Syrian regime's military doctrine is explored in order to show how it came to include siege tactics, first deployed in Hama in 1982 when Hafez al-Assad quashed the Islamist rebellion. The final section of the paper will explore the imposition of sieges since April 2011, looking at how armed groups employed siege warfare to achieve their military objectives. I will illustrate the differences in military tactics between urban and rural sieges by looking at the sieges of Yarmouk Camp in Damascus, and the Eastern Ghouta in rural Damascus. This paper will explain how adopting siege tactics allowed the Syrian regime to isolate and contain sources of rebellion and prevent them from spreading to key areas of strategic importance. Thus, siege tactics were one of the factors that contributed to the Syrian regime's ability to survive during the current conflict, even when various analysts predicted its imminent fall.

Counter-insurgency and the changing location of war

The Syrian regime's tactics were a crucial element of its ability to survive even as it suffered from increasing military defections, dwindling finances, and growing international condemnation. I

propose that the regime considered the early stages of the conflict to be a counter-insurgency, and this explains various elements of its response to the uprising, including the use of siege tactics. When sieges were first imposed on restive areas of the country, the asymmetric military capabilities of the conflicting parties, and the guerrilla tactics the rebels employed, both corroborate this point of view. An insurgency is defined in modern times as:

> [A]n organized movement that aims at overthrowing the political order within a given territory, using a combination of subversion, terrorism, guerrilla warfare and propaganda.[6]

Counter-insurgency, then, refers to the tactics that a government or occupying power employs to put down an insurgency. Laleh Khalili provides a useful differentiation between "enemy-centric" and "population-centric" counter-insurgency tactics.[7] Population-centric counter-insurgency involves attempts by the government or occupying power to provide security, protection, and services to populations living in the areas wherein insurgents operate. Enemy-centric counter-insurgency, on the other hand, aims to undermine insurgents' support by imposing punitive measures on the entire population living in insurgents' zones of operation, be they militants or civilians. Examining the impact of regime type on choice of counter-insurgency tactics, David Ucko argues that authoritarian regimes are more likely to adopt brutal enemy-centric tactics in a way that "punishes the people for the insurgency and severs the bonds between the two not through politics but with force."[8] Authoritarian regimes are able to adopt such methods because they are not constrained by law, are uncontested by rivals, and can often control the flow of information available to their citizens through the state-owned press.[9] Thus, for an authoritarian regime, the focus of counter-insurgency is not on winning 'hearts and minds', but rather on "selling the threat to the broader populace, surging support for both party and state, and whipping up a chauvinistic hatred for the perfidious rebels that justifies whatever response is deemed

necessary."[10] This paper will focus on these facets of enemy-centric counter-insurgency tactics, which the Syrian regime has overwhelmingly favoured during the current conflict.

The emergence of modern urban warfare

The dramatic rate of global urbanisation over the last few centuries has had a profound effect on the nature and setting of warfare. Throughout history, while the city has remained the critical site of militarized power and control, the site of armed conflicts has shifted.[11] In pre-modern and early-modern times, cities were both the primary agents and targets of war, and great efforts were expended on sacking and capturing cities of strategic importance, often by employing sieges.[12] The European nation-states that emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries directed the violence, control, and repression of colonial conquest from cities, however the cities themselves were no longer the primary site of conflict. Instead, colonial expansionism transferred the site of violence to rural areas as colonial states quashed rural insurrections in order to exploit the land to sustain the cities. However, with the coming of the industrial age, cities became crucial vehicles for providing states with sufficient manpower and military technology to sustain massive wars. As a result, once again, cities became the target of state-led armed conflict, with bombing campaigns moving from the "selective destruction of key sites within cities" to "attacks on urban areas" in their entirety.[13]

Twentieth-century urbanisation coincided with major global developments including increasing social polarization and inequality, violent political and economic structural adjustments, the heightening salience of ethnic and fundamentalist religious identities, and the growing scarcity of many essential resources.[14] This rapid urbanisation brought these new tensions into the urban sphere and resulted in an "implosion of global and national politics into the urban world."[15] As a result, many of the conflicts arising from these tensions have occurred in urban spaces, and thus, bloody urban insurgencies have proliferated.

The geographies of counter-insurgency

Insurgencies create new spatial possibilities for violence. Unlike the conventional warfare of the past, insurgencies are not constrained by linear movement, but rather operate indeterminably, exploiting the ability to exist in multiple spatial and temporal points in a seemingly random manner.[16] This unpredictability has proven an effective means of subverting a state's traditional authority, and helps explain why insurgency-tactics have arisen so frequently in recent history. To combat these new geographic vulnerabilities, counter-insurgencies often seek to reshape space as a way of re-exerting their authority.

During the French occupation of Syria, the French *Troupes du Levant* were forced to alter their military tactics in response to rebel insurgency. French forces traditionally used military column formations to march through areas and command the obedience of native populations. As the rebels exploited the new spatial opportunities insurgency-tactics afforded them, attacking the French sporadically and then swiftly retreating, the occupying forces attempted to reshape Syria's physical geography in such a way as to restore their military advantage over rebel groups.[17] As would be the case once again nearly a century later, one of the most important insurgencies operated in the Ghouta, the rural farmlands surrounding Damascus, after rebel groups failed to take the Syrian capital in October 1925. The *Troupes du Levant*'s military columns were ineffective in quashing the insurgents there, as the rebel groups could flee oncoming columns, hide in the rural landscape, and then re-form to strike in a non-linear, random fashion.[18] Initially unable to encircle such a wide area, the French employed an 'inverted siege' on Damascus to ensure that the rebels couldn't enter the city.[19] This tactic involved the construction of 12 miles of new boulevards and barbed wire fences around the capital.[20] After the landscape had been altered to ensure that the rebels could not penetrate the city, the French positioned some 9,000 troops around the Ghouta and swept through, forcing the rebel groups out to the North. This method of restricting movement to deal with insurgency in the

rural Ghouta, as we shall see, shares parallels with how the Syrian regime has attempted to quash rebellion in that region during the current conflict.

In urban settings too, counter-insurgency operations seek to reshape space to their advantage, and this often includes constructing physical barriers, such as walls. Geographical partitions often have the effect of solidifying boundaries between different population categories, be they ethnicities, communities, or nations.[21] Walls have been constructed as a tactic of counter-insurgency in many modern conflicts including in Northern Ireland, by the U.S. army in Iraq, and by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The new spatial realities that emerge enable increased military control by curtailing the environments in which rebels can operate. These new geographies have the effect of turning entire populations of urban spaces into objects of "study, warfare, and manipulation" as the traditional separation between military and civilian targets is blurred.[22] To justify this, armed actors employ Manichaean, dichotomised rhetorical constructions of 'us' and an othered 'them', in a way that renders all human subjects living in an urban environment legitimate targets, being seen as real or potential fighters, terrorists, or insurgents.[23] Sieges also aim to curtail the space in which insurgents can operate, affecting entire populations, and the Syrian regime has employed rhetoric to justify such tactics.

Counter-insurgency and collective punishment

Many aspects of this new military doctrine of counter-insurgency equate to collective punishment. Although collective punishment was historically accepted as a necessary element of warfare, the 1899 Hague Conventions broke this tradition and forbade collective punishment, stating: "[n]o general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, can be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as jointly and severally responsible".[24] The 1949 Geneva Conventions expanded upon these provisions, stating that "[n]o protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has

not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited."[25]

However, despite these provisions, governments and occupying powers have frequently employed measures which equate to collective punishment. Unable to locate insurgents responsible for hostile acts, powers have used collective punishment in an attempt to reduce violence and enforce obedience.[26] Historically, collective punishment included preventing food and other supplies from reaching a restive area. In Malaya, British colonial forces prevented the sale of anything but precooked rice to villages believed to be harbouring insurgents. Field Marshal Gerald Templer even ordered a reduction of rice rations as a punitive measure, following certain insurgent attacks.[27] More recently, throughout Operation Vigilant Resolve during the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2004, U.S. forces allowed just three of sixty vehicles carrying relief supplies, food, and medicine into Fallujah as part of their counter-insurgency operations.[28] This blockade was designed to force an end to the support of insurgents by downgrading the living conditions of all of the city's inhabitants. In 2015, a UN OCHA study asserted that the Israeli and Egyptian blockade on the Gaza Strip had undermined the living conditions of its 2 million inhabitants, saying "[the] restrictions have reduced access to livelihoods, essential services, and housing, disrupted family life, and undermined the people's hopes for a secure and prosperous future."[29]

Given technological advances in the modern day, governments and occupying powers have increasingly sought to destroy the means of modern urban life in a systematic manner, a tactic known as 'urbicide'. Employed as a facet of counter-insurgency, urbicide targets the modern infrastructure upon which urban populations rely, including systems of electricity, communications, water, sanitation, and transportation.[30] Tactics of urbicide aim to render a city uninhabitable, forcing the residents into submission by turning daily life into a "massive struggle against darkness, cold, immobility, hunger, isolation, fear of crime and violence, and a catastrophic and rapid degeneration in public

health."[31] Other forms of urbicide reshape the physical geography of a city to assert the complete dominance of a power over its enemy.

War mobilizes a charged dialectic of attachment to place: the idea that 'our' places are the antithesis of those of the demonized enemy.[32] In counter-insurgencies, therefore, the very physicality of cities is also rendered a legitimate target of violence, wherein entire neighbourhoods are razed to the ground in retaliation for having harboured insurgents. Given that tactics of urbicide do not discriminate between armed fighters and civilians, they constitute a form of collective punishment.

The 1982 Hama uprising provides one of the first examples of institutionalized urbicide, in which Hafez al-Assad used urbicide as a tactic of counter-insurgency. Following the Muslim Brotherhood's calls for Hama's population to rise up against Assad's regime in 1982, the regime carefully employed rhetoric in a way that would mobilize society for a brutal campaign of counter-insurgency. Patrick Seale described Hafez al-Assad as having turned from a recluse into an orator "able to set large audiences alight and to do so night after night" with his fiery speeches.[33] Two divisions of the SAA, the 3rd Armoured Division under the command of General Shafiq Fayyad, and the Defence Brigades under the command of Rifaat al-Assad, joined forces to quash the rebellion. These loyal divisions were joined by pro-regime paramilitary forces which had been carefully recruited and armed by the regime.[34] Rifaat al-Assad employed rhetoric that was consistent with collective punishment, stating "those who are not with the regime must now be considered against it."[35]

The assault began with several days of street battles, but after this proved insufficient, a high-intensity siege was imposed, and indiscriminate shelling destroyed whole neighbourhoods of the city.[36] Following this assault, army bulldozers were sent to flatten the smoking shells of buildings, allowing ground troops to advance, but also wiping the sites of rebellion from Hama's geography.[37] Tens of thousands of the city's fleeing inhabitants

were arrested at the security ring the regime forces had imposed.[38] Estimates of the dead range from 10,000 to 40,000.[39]

Syrian military doctrine

Understanding why and how such brutal measures of counter-insurgency entered into the SAA's military doctrine, as exemplified in Hama, is key to explaining the use of sieges in the current conflict. Following the defeat of Arab armies in the Six-Day War of 1967, the Soviet Union took the opportunity to dramatically increase its military relations with various Arab armies, including with the SAA. As part of this process, Soviet military advisors were placed in every Syrian military training facility, air and naval base, maintenance depot, and even in every single squadron of the SAA.[40] The SAA also sent significant numbers of its officers to the Soviet Union for military training.[41] To a greater extent than other Arab countries with military relationships with the Soviet Union, the Syrian military adopted the Red Army's organisation, tactics and operations.[42]

The Soviet Union adopted siege tactics resembling those employed in rural areas of Syria today when fighting Ukrainian separatists in the 1940s and 1950s, establishing outposts and checkpoints on all the roads and trails that connected villages thought to be harbouring insurgents, thus cutting off their access to provisions and critical supplies.[43] However, until the occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet Union had little experience in counter-insurgency, and had not developed a nuanced military doctrine capable of responding to such threats.[44] As a result, the Soviet Union relied on a tactic in Afghanistan that had previously proven successful, and which exploited an advantage it maintained over mujahedeen – overpowering military force through its superior artillery.[45] In Herat, a city central to urban guerrillas, the Soviets engaged in such extensive shelling that three-quarters of the urban centre was reduced to rubble.[46] Rifaat al-Assad, one of the key commanders in the Hama offensive, trained at the Soviet Yekaterinberg Artillery Academy, and it

was there that he likely learned such tactics. Thus, it seems probable that the tactic adopted by the SAA of overwhelmingly relying upon tank artillery fire in the operations against the insurgents in Hama was a product of Soviet military doctrine.[47] Russia has honed its doctrine of counter-insurgency through its involvement in other conflicts. During the second Chechnyan war in the late 1990s, the Russian military combined the heavy bombardment that had characterised many of its previous military operations with a military and economic blockade designed to choke any external support.[48] The military relationship between Russia and Syria so evident today has a long history. Given that reports of Russian military advisors embedded with the SAA surfaced early in the current conflict, it seems probable that Russian military doctrine has had an impact on the tactics employed in recent years by the SAA.[49] However, it is also important to remember that many of the same Syrian military officers who played a role in the 1982 Hama offensive retain roles in the SAA today. While Rifaat al-Assad and Shafiq Fayyad were respectively exiled from Syria and retired from the SAA in 1995, younger officers who participated in the Hama offensive remain in the SAA.[50]

In the intervening period between the Syrian regime's brutal crackdown in 1982, and March 2011, opponents of the government suffered from torture, detention, and long prison sentences, but the regime has not attempted military operations of the same scale.[51] This implies that the Syrian military's tactics of quashing rebellion in Hama were highly successful, and so it is logical that the regime would look to siege tactics as a proven means of putting down rebellion. Having witnessed the toppling of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the Syrian regime's response was also based on the premise that they did not repress the popular protests quickly enough. The following section will explore how and why the Syrian regime employed tactics of counter-insurgency during the current conflict.

The use of sieges in the current conflict

During the early stages of the uprising that erupted in Dera'a in March 2011, the Syrian regime employed rhetoric in a manner typical of Ucko's model of authoritarian counter-insurgency. In his national address on 30th March 2011, President Bashar al-Assad argued that Syria was "facing a great conspiracy" at the hands of "imperial forces" who were supported by foreigners and media groups.[52] This rhetoric reflects the established tactic of counter-insurgency, to create divisions between those 'inside' and 'outside' of the nation.[53] Until late March 2011, all protests were depicted as a "decisive threat".[54] However, in subsequent speeches in early April, as it became clear that the protests were not dying down, and due to external pressure, Assad changed tack and proposed limited political reforms, acknowledging the presence of some protestors with legitimate demands.[55] When this too failed to quell the protests, once again Assad differentiated between groups of people. In a speech at Damascus University on June 20, 2011, he argued that there were three different categories of people involved in the unrest in his country: those with legitimate concerns; outlaws; and *takfiri* extremists who tried to "sneak into Syria". This rhetoric represented another attempt to paint all dissenters as foreigners or criminals, distinguishing between 'Syrians' and "saboteurs".[56]

Military operations conducted by Syrian authorities to quash the growing insurgency mirrored the broad dichotomy between those who were with the regime and those who were against it, and whole geographical areas were categorised as being one or the other, making no attempt to distinguish between legitimate protestors and those allegedly involved in violence.[57] The SAA's military operations were all-encompassing and unforgiving, constituting collective punishment in a way similar to Hama in 1982.[58] Having failed to prevent protestors from continually taking to the streets chanting anti-regime slogans by firing upon them, the Syrian military opted to deploy all-out military force in a way that would reduce the spatial possibilities for insurgency. The first siege was imposed on the city of Dera'a.

On April 25, 2011, the army surrounded Dera'a, cut water and electricity supplies, shelled the city, and prevented the entry of humanitarian aid to the besieged population by either aid agencies or civilians.[59] Security forces opened fire on residents who attempted to leave their houses in search of food or medicine for the wounded during the 11-day siege.[60] The SAA would replicate this pattern in many sites of unrest across the country in their attempt to quash the uprising. The official rhetorical justification for the high levels of violence was that by promising reforms, Assad had removed the grounds for continued demonstrations.[61] On April 16, Assad had declared "with these laws, we draw a line between reform and sabotage."[62]

The Syrian military considered the first siege in Dera'a to be successful, withdrawing on May 5, 2011. Sieges were also imposed on Douma, Zabadani, Baniyas, and the Bab al-Seba'a and Baba Amr areas of Homs city between April 25 and May 6, 2011. These sieges aimed to restrict the geographical possibilities of insurgents' attacks by hermetically sealing populated areas thought to be harbouring fighters, preventing their escape. Checkpoints were erected at strategic points of entry to the encircled urban areas, and snipers often covered areas in between, shooting all those attempting to escape.[63] Restrictions on movement were combined with artillery shelling, although at this early stage in the conflict, it did not specifically target the infrastructure required for urban life, as is common with tactics of urbicide. Rather, these attacks seem to have constituted a common tactic of authoritarian counter-insurgency, seeking to terrorise the besieged populations in hope of turning them against the rebels and thus preventing rebel mobilisation.[64] The initial tactic of besieging restive areas was intended to be a short-term military tactic, using enemy-centric methods of counter-insurgency including violence and terror to force populations to withdraw perceived support for armed insurgents. However, as these tactics proved insufficient to control areas of rebellion, the SAA shifted to a systematic campaign of destroying vital sites of ci-

vilian infrastructure in a way that would force besieged populations to surrender by starving them. Investigating how siege tactics were deployed in specific areas helps explain how the regime protected its grip over Damascus, which was crucial to its hold on power. The regime first employed tactics of urbicide in a besieged area in the southern suburbs of Damascus, in Yarmouk Camp.

An urban siege – the siege of Yarmouk, Damascus

The Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp lies in Damascus' southern suburbs, and had a population of approximately 800,000 before the beginning of the current Syrian conflict, consisting of roughly 150,000 Palestinians and 650,000 Syrians.[65] Remembering the September 1982 massacres in Sabra and Shatila in Beirut and the mass expulsions of Palestinians from Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War, the vast majority of Palestinians in Syria were determined to remain neutral during the Syrian uprising.[66] However, after the increasing arming of protestors in the summer of 2011, and the entry of regime forces to al-Ramel Palestinian camp near Latakia in August, some Palestinians inside Yarmouk increased contact with the FSA. The regime was acutely aware of Yarmouk's potential as a site of opposition activity, as its strategic location made it a possible launch-pad from which rebels could advance into central Damascus, with supply lines available through the rural lands to the south of the camp.[67] Despite the majority of the camp residents' attempts to maintain a neutral stance in the conflict, armed opposition groups infiltrated the camp in the winter of 2012. Following this, Yarmouk became a target of sustained regime attacks.[68]

In August 2012, the SAA shelled the camp for the first time, reportedly killing 21 civilians.[69] In December of the same year, hostilities reached a climax, and a battle between armed opposition groups and pro-government forces erupted. In an important escalation in the conflict, on December 16, 2012, Syrian jets were used for the first time to bomb densely populated areas of

the camp.[70] The regime claimed this was a mistake, but indiscriminate bombing was to become a common feature of the SAA's counter-insurgency tactics, especially as continued defections and mounting casualties stretched the regime's forces.

After this incident, when more extreme Islamist factions, including Jabhat al-Nusra, stormed the camp, the SAA attempted to besiege Yarmouk, but supply lines from the south of the camp sporadically allowed in limited goods, meaning the siege was incomplete. By July 2013, the scarcity of goods, shelling, aerial bombardment, and the radicalisation of armed factions operating within Yarmouk, had motivated an estimated 85 percent of the camp's population to flee.[71] On July 15, 2013, the Syrian regime then imposed one of the most brutal sieges of the conflict to date.[72]

Systematically destroying the infrastructure upon which the camps' residents relied, including water, sanitation and electricity networks, the SAA prevented the movement of all people and goods in and out of the camp until April 2014.[73] During this time, humanitarian conditions deteriorated to become some of the worst in the whole conflict. Amnesty International estimates that at least 194 civilians died, 128 by starvation, and others due to a lack of adequate medical care or sniping while foraging for food.[74] In early 2014, the camp's residents broke into an abandoned spice factory and survived for months from boiling weeds, spices, and water into a kind of broth, drinking just one cup a day.[75] A number of residents reported having eaten nothing more than this for many weeks at a time.[76] In October 2013, a fatwa was issued by Salah al-Khatib, Imam of Yarmouk's largest mosque, lifting religious restrictions on eating cats and dogs in a desperate attempt to prevent people from starving to death.[77]

Beyond malnutrition, as a result of the tactics of urbicide the medical situation deteriorated with the destruction of the camp's infrastructure. With no electricity networks and severely limited fuel supplies, residents of Yarmouk resorted to burning wood salvaged from destroyed buildings and the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) cites smoke inhalation as the cause

of death for a resident of Yarmouk.[78] Severe shortages in medical supplies and the inability to operate medical equipment due to a lack of electricity led to fatalities from easily-treatable medical problems. For example, several women died during childbirth.[79] As levels of sanitation have further deteriorated, communicable diseases have proliferated. After months of fears of the spread of typhoid in the camp, UNRWA detected as many as 90 cases among those residents of Yarmouk who were able to exit the camp to UNRWA mobile health units in the neighbouring area of Yalda in September 2015.[80] The Syrian regime has attempted to justify the blockade on basic medical supplies, including bandages and baby formula, on the basis that they could be used to treat wounded opposition fighters.[81]

Because of the difficulties in getting basic goods into the camp during the most severe times of the siege, prices of basic food items increased exponentially, as seen in the table below (figures given in Syrian pounds and U.S. dollars to control for the inflation of the Syrian pound).

Figure 1: Comparison of prices of staple goods in Yarmouk before the siege to when they reached their height during the siege, based on author's data collected from residents of the camp

Food item	**February 2011 Prices (pre-siege)**		**April 2014 Prices**		**Increase**
	SYP	USD	SYP	USD	
Rice (1 kg)	80	1.68	10,000	67	40x
Sugar (1 kg)	90	1.89	11,000	73.7	39x
Flour (1 kg)	50	1.05	9,000	60.3	57x
Bread (1.5 kg)	15	0.32	1,000	6.7	21x

The siege of Yarmouk represented a decisive evolution in the government's use of siege tactics, as it was the first example of systematic urbicide during the current conflict. Rather than surrounding the area with armed forces and restricting the entry of goods alone, the regime's fear of an attack on Damascus from Yarmouk led it to combine these tactics with targeted airstrikes, shelling, and a comprehensive seal on the area in an attempt to starve the camp's residents and render continued life inside the camp impossible. This tactic has proved successful, as it curtailed the ability of armed opposition groups to operate outside the camp, and prevented any major attack on the city centre. However, the regime was not able to establish such an intense siege on rural areas in which armed groups operated, such as the Eastern Ghouta, which also presented a threat to the regime's grip on Damascus.

A rural siege: the siege of Douma, the Eastern Ghouta

Just as the rural farmlands of the Eastern Ghouta had once become a centre of dissent against French occupation, with rebel groups able to conduct ambushes and then escape with relative impunity, the Eastern Ghouta also became a major site of armed opposition against the regime in the current conflict, with groups exploiting the geographical opportunities for insurgency provided by the rural landscape. Mirroring the tactics employed by the French in 1925, the SAA's first major move against the opposition groups in December 2011 was to cut off the town of Douma, the administrative capital of the Eastern Ghouta, from Damascus. Unlike the relationship between the inhabitants of Aleppo and its surrounding rural lands, many of which are marked by animosity, there were strong ties between Damascus and the Eastern Ghouta.[82] Some of these networks were based on industry and land tenure, as many individuals living in Damascus owned rural land to the east of the city. As such, the regime feared the spread of opposition from the Eastern Ghouta into the capital, and so cut transportation links between the two areas.[83]

By the end of 2012, after a prolonged period of fighting, large areas of the Eastern Ghouta had fallen under the control of an array of 16 different armed opposition groups.[84] Unlike the urban Yarmouk camp, which could be surrounded and cut off with comparative ease, the rural lands of the Eastern Ghouta proved much more difficult to isolate, hence the proliferation of the various armed groups in the area. In 2013, leaders and civil servants from Douma who had defected from the regime created a local council that provided some services autonomously from the regime, including street cleaning, and the issuance of birth and death certificates.[85] At the time, Douma represented one of the only credible attempts for opposition factions to establish an alternative administrative system to that of the regime, and it became a military and administrative centre for the opposition-held areas of the Eastern Ghouta. Determined to destroy this rival administration, but lacking the resources to launch a full-scale attack into the area, the SAA established a full siege around the whole of the Eastern Ghouta in October 2013, mirroring the second stage of the occupying French forces' counter-insurgency operations against rebels in the area. A number of towns and villages fell inside the siege, including Harasta, Douma, Adra, Al-Marj, Saqba, Maliha, Irbin, and Kafr Batna.[86] The SAA enforced the siege by establishing a number of checkpoints at strategic entry points around the perimeter of the area, with snipers covering the farmland in between, in which they also planted mines.[87]

The siege that ensued destroyed much of the infrastructure in Douma, delivering a critical blow to opposition factions' ability to use it as an administrative centre, and making Doumanis' primary concern "simply avoiding death and finding food and shelter."[88] In June 2015, residents of Douma reported that the only water extracted from wells by hand pumps was available, and generators provided a maximum of two hours of electricity a day. In February 2015, local councils made the decision to restrict school hours, only opening early in the mornings "before

air strikes begin."[89] In addition to almost daily shelling and airstrikes on civilian areas, an infamous Sarin chemical attack on 21st August 2013 is considered to be one of the most serious human rights abuses during the Syrian conflict, killing hundreds of civilians.[90] Although the regime denied responsibility for the attack and a UN investigation was careful not to apportion blame for the attack, a report conducted by Human Rights Watch came to the conclusion that Syrian government forces were "almost certainly responsible."[91]

Unlike the urban siege of Yarmouk, the presence of agricultural lands inside the besieged area of the Eastern Ghouta produced dynamics that rendered the nature of the siege distinct from those the SAA had hitherto imposed in urban areas. Firstly, the farmland inside the siege provided a limited source of food for the besieged population. While limited access to water and the lack of diesel to power agricultural equipment meant that agricultural output was severely damaged, farmers continued to cultivate crops and orchards in an attempt to provide food for the besieged market.[92] However, airstrikes frequently bombed crops during or just before the harvest period, showing that even in the case of rural sieges, starvation remained a key aim of the SAA's siege tactics.[93] An UN official who entered Douma as part of an aid convoy described the besieged population as "skeletons floating in their clothes".[94]

As with Yarmouk Camp, the medical situation in the besieged areas of the Eastern Ghouta became dire. After regime strikes destroyed the electricity, water, and sanitation networks in the winter of 2012-13, residents resorted to irrigating agricultural lands with sewage-contaminated water, which the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) linked to the outbreak of typhoid in August 2014.[95] SAMS staff operating in the Eastern Ghouta estimated that even with bribes, the amount of medical supplies that they could smuggle in amounted to less than 5 percent of what was needed.[96] As with the siege of Yarmouk, many people living in Douma and the wider Eastern Ghouta area have died as

a direct result of the conditions brought about by the siege. During the period between October 21, 2012 and January 31, 2013 alone, SAMS collected evidence of at least 208 civilians in the Eastern Ghouta having died from malnutrition or lack of access to medical care.

Besieging the Eastern Ghouta served two principal purposes in terms of the regime's problems with manpower. Firstly, planting mines around the besieged area and manning the checkpoints was a means of isolating the area with limited manpower.[97] Secondly, the siege of the Eastern Ghouta was one of the first instances in which the regime exploited the conditions of the siege to conscript young males into the army.[98] The regime detained and forcibly conscripted some of these young men at checkpoints, but for others, unemployment, the dire humanitarian conditions, and the continued military attacks led them to the conclusion that joining the SAA was the only means of escaping the situation.[99] Therefore, siege tactics not only helped the regime to operate with limited manpower, but were also a means of remedying these problems, as conscription is a common feature across various sieges.

Conclusion

Because the Syrian regime is authoritarian, its counter-insurgency campaign has not been subject to many of the constraints that affect other governments. In a comparable manner to authoritarian counter-insurgencies elsewhere, the Syrian regime has utilized indiscriminate violence and countered this with narratives that sought to mobilise the Syrian population against those deemed to be foreign insurgents. Seen as a tried-and-tested tactic of counter-insurgency after Hafez al-Assad brutally quashed the Islamist insurgency in Hama in 1982, sieges were imposed early in the conflict across the country, in an attempt to repeat this past success. When the insurgency evolved into civil war in 2012, and as the SAA became increasingly overstretched, sieges proved an even more effective tactic for the re-

gime, as they required limited manpower, and provided opportunities for conscripting civilians into the army. Sieges also allowed the regime to utilise the military advantage provided by its air-force. Air attacks intensified the sieges, transforming the military blockades into a systematic campaign of urbicide in an attempt to render life in the besieged areas entirely unfeasible.

Siege warfare, therefore, is a military tactic that helps explain the longevity of the conflict in Syria. The Syrian regime's tactics of counter-insurgency were instrumental in its strategy of protecting certain key strongholds, and sieges were a central element of this strategy. As we have seen, whenever a threat to Damascus emerged, such as in Yarmouk camp or in the Eastern Ghouta, the regime employed sieges to isolate the centres of rebellion and cut them off from external support, thus staving off the threat to the city. This logic also explains the prolonged siege the regime imposed on the city of Homs, which occupies a strategic location in between Damascus and Aleppo, and on the corridor from the capital to the Mediterranean coast, and the 2016 siege of Aleppo city.[100] Controlling these key cities was crucial for the regime to maintain the legitimacy it was afforded by presenting itself as the sole actor capable of providing stability and services to the Syrian people, which explains its continuing support from a segment of Syrian society.

However, given the severe humanitarian conditions and extreme levels of destruction that sieges cause, it may seem surprising that many sieges failed to force the besieged populations to surrender, and instead have endured for many years. Some scholars, including Stathis Kalyvas, have argued that indiscriminate violence is often counter-productive, and that it actually *provokes* rather than dissuades insurgent violence.[101] However, a more significant motivation for the longevity of sieges has been the emergence of new networks of profiteering in the war economy. The Syrian regime has failed, either through negligence or necessity, to stop the spread of corruption within the SAA, and the prevalence of the practice of bribery. All 16 respondents to my surveys from besieged areas noted that regime

soldiers allowed certain goods into the besieged areas if they were bribed enough, and this helps explain why many sieges endured for years and failed to achieve their military objectives.[102]

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2

Whose Problem Is It Anyway?

The Depiction of Syrian Refugee Influx in Political Cartoons

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Political cartoons demonstrate the Syrian refugee crisis and their influx into bordering and European countries from different perspectives by using both visual and verbal metaphors in a caricaturised way. For this reason, this research aims to reveal how political cartoons represent the perilous journey of Syrian refugees and their families visually and verbally. In this regard, twelve political cartoons were selected randomly from the international political cartoon website cagle.com between March 2011 and February 2016, referencing the Syrian refugee crisis, and have been analysed in accordance with metaphorical analysis. From this point of view, as the theoretical framework, this paper uses a semiotic approach that points out the relationship between signs and meanings. Representation of the Syrian refugee crisis, the political stances of the different countries, and their perceptions as reflected in political cartoons are the focus point of this research. Results show that countries remain generally indifferent to Syrian refugee movement. In fact, they do not see the issue as their own problem, and they only consider the threats to their security and socio-economic interests posed by the influx. Moreover, Syrian refugees are represented as lonely, vulnerable and unwanted.

Introduction

Cartoon, as a visual communication tool, can express different opinions and perceptions about various subjects, such as social, political, economic, artistic and historical issues. The difference

between cartoons and other visual communication tools is that they use satire, making readers laugh as well as think. As noted by Fiske (1990: 48), “cartoons are examples of messages which attempt to convey a wealth of information by simple, direct means—they use simple signifiers for complex signifieds.” Following this assumption, this paper focuses on political cartoons representing the visual and verbal image of the Syrian refugee crisis as a political, social, and cultural problem in a satirised way. From this aspect, this paper considers cartoons bearers of political thinking of the USA, neighbouring, European, and Arab countries.

The enduring conflict in Syria has entered its fifth year, and lack of a political solution, human rights violations, insecurity and abuses during this period have forced many Syrians to leave their country (OCHA, 2016). During this civil war, over 250.000 civilians have been killed and over one million have been wounded. Almost 6.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced - often multiple times - making Syria the world’s largest displacement crisis. Inside Syria today, it is estimated that 4.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach and besieged places. Insecurity and violence restrict humanitarian access and aid services to various parts of the country (OCHA, 2016; UNHCR, 2015).

Due to these deteriorated circumstances, Syrians – who form one of the largest refugee groups in the world – are seeking protection, safety, and better life either in neighbouring or western countries. While the largest population of Syrian refugees have fled to the neighbouring countries, such as Iraq (245,022), Egypt (117,658), Lebanon (1,069,111), Jordan (637,859), and Turkey (2,620,553) (UNHCR, 2016), thousands of Syrians are on the move to European countries.

Syrian refugees illegally enter Europe either crossing the sea or land borders.[1] They mostly travel unseaworthy boats and dinghies on the Aegean and Mediterranean seas, and distressingly, some of these journeys end in tragedy, as in the example of the dramatic death of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi (UNHCR, 2015). The number of Syrian

refugees reaching Europe is increasing day by day, and 897,645 Syrians had sought asylum in Europe between Apr 2011 and Dec 2015. This number comprises only 20 per cent of all Syrian refugees leaving their country (UNHCR, 2016). Serbia (and Kosovo: S/RES/1244 [1999]), Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark are the top countries receiving asylum applications. Other European countries, such as the UK, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, and Finland, have received only 12% of the total applications (UNHCR, 2016).

Despite these increasing numbers, not all the European countries welcome Syrian refugees. On the contrary, they make serious efforts to prevent the flow of Syrian refugees. Austria, Macedonia, Hungary, and Slovenia, for example, erected fences to stop the flow of migrants (Graham-Harrison, 2015, Oct 31; Smale, 2015, Aug 24; Tomlinson, 2015, Sep 10). Bulgarian authorities also took measures to restrict access to their territory along the border with Turkey. They arrested 6,600 Syrian refugees who irregularly crossed the Bulgarian border in 2013 (UNHCR, 2014). Some newspapers carry the issue on agenda and broadcast their vulnerable position. News agencies broadcasted several incidents wherein Syrian refugees were beaten by police or soldiers when they wanted to cross the fences (Thornton, 2015, Sep 6; Withnall, 2015, Sep 6; Foster, 2016, Feb 20).

However, European populations did not pay a lot of attention to refugee crisis until the media broadcasted two events: the dead body of three-year-old Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi's, washed up on a Turkish shore after drowning on the journey, and fifty-three-year old Syrian refugee Osama Abdul Muhsen being tripped by a Hungarian camerawoman while he was carrying his son on the Hungary-Serbia border (Tharoor, 2015, Sep 3; Lister, 2015, Sep 18). These two symbolic incidents brought the situation of Syrian refugees who flee from war, poverty, persecution, conflict, and violence, to the forefront of public discourse. In addition, these two incidents highlighted the dilemma of the western countries between their hesitancy arising from security, economic, and social concerns, and their ethical responsibility toward the innocent Syrians abandoning their lives for a better life at the risk of death.

It is possible to cite more tragic incidents of the Syrian refugees trying to reach the shores of Europe. There are two main reasons why millions of Syrian refugees prefer EU countries to Arabic ones. Firstly,

although the Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are among the largest donors to Syrian refugees, these Arabic countries do not allow entry of Syrian refugees to their lands. This is not a particular concern about the Syrian refugees, but rather, none of these countries officially recognizes the legal concept of refugeehood. None of the six Gulf countries has ever signed the international resolutions on refugee rights and statelessness, which began to be recognised after World War II. The second reason is that EU countries have signed the UN Convention on refugees that grants important rights to a better life. Besides, there are some EU countries, which give legal status to refugees. To date, there is no internationally standardised comprehensive refugee policy to solve the refugee crisis, and this issue is also one of the biggest contributing factors to the crisis (Malsin, 2015, Sep 8; Kinninmont, 2015, Sep 9).

Although these issues have been addressed in the media through different mediums, such as documentaries, news programs, and in-depth researches, political cartoons have been ignored by the literature. Almost all the political process of the Syrian refugee crisis and their route to the borders of EU countries are depicted by political cartoons, especially from critical perspectives. Therefore, this research focuses on political cartoons to consider the Syrian refugee crisis from a different point of view. Political cartoons were selected randomly from cagle.com international, a political cartoon website which gives the best examples of cartoons. Political cartoons use visual metaphors to interpret the Syrian refugee crisis humorously. Political cartoons not only involve visual but also textual messages on political events presented through cultural symbols. It is an important social medium due to its multiplicity of meaning and forms (Göçek, 1998: 2). Cartoons simply explain and summarize the flow of Syrian refugees and reactions of Western and Arabic countries on social media, newspapers and magazines. They also illustrate the difficulty of the Syrian refugees' journey through both sea and land. Since political cartoons use textual and visual messages simultaneously, they are more effective in drawing the attention of societies, states, or governments to the unimaginable

situations of Syrian refugees. From this aspect, this research can make an important contribution to better understand the different perceptions on the Syrian refugee crisis, as well as fill the gap in the literature in terms of the analysis of political cartoons as a different way of expressing political criticism.

Consequently, this paper aims to contribute to the existing literature in four ways. Firstly, it helps to understand the Syrian refugee crisis. Secondly, it shows clearly how Syrian refugees are represented visually in political cartoons. Thirdly, it illustrates the response of countries to the refugee problem. Lastly, it also draws attention to the global refugee crisis and the circumstances of asylum seekers.

Cartoons as bearers of political thought

Political cartoons are a satiric source of information and truth about universal and local events. They are usually thought-provoking and attempt to inform the viewer about a current issue. With their messages, they touch the conscience and emotions of readers and inform them of what is going on around them. Because they are also a voice for the disenfranchised and the underdog, they have power to sway public opinion (Press, 1981: 62; Neighbor et al., 2003).

Political cartoons represent the visual and verbal image of political, social, and cultural problems or events through satire. The verbal and visual messages of cartoons try to convey a wealth of information by simple, direct means, using simple signifiers for complex signifieds (Fiske, 1990: 48). Because of the multiplicity of meaning and forms embedded within their visual and verbal messages, political cartoons are a significant social medium (Göçek, 1998: 2), a social medium that carries its messages with signs such as index, symbol, and icon. These signs are methods of creating meaning for political cartoons. In an icon, for example, the sign looks and sounds like its object. In the case of index, the sign and its object are directly connected with each other. It is simple to explain icon and index with examples. A photograph, for instance, is an icon; smoke is an index

of fire. Regarding symbol, it is a sign whose relation with its object is a matter of convention, agreement, or rule (Fiske, 1990: 46). A good coat, for example, protects its owner from cold, rain or snow. However, wearing an expensive well-known brand is a sign of wealth, identity, social status, social approval, and fashion.

Besides icon, index, and symbol, political cartoons also use metaphors to create agenda on political issues sarcastically. Metaphors mainly use visual mode to transmit meaning through humor. They visually or verbally summarise the social, cultural or political issues (El Refaie, 2009: 174). Thus, political cartoons, which are published in the editorial or comments pages of a newspaper, are a rich source of metaphors (Gamson and Lasch, 1983: 399; Templin, 1999; El Refaie, 2009: 174-175). However, caricaturists must be cautious about their visual and verbal metaphors, so as not to offend other nationalities. Beliefs, cultures, religions, customs, or traditions, are the sensibilities of nations or persons. For this reason, caricaturists ought to think from different cultural perspectives when drawing metaphors.[2]

Political cartoons are a form of visual news discourse. It is through comedic conventions that cartoons seize upon and reinforce common sense, and thus enable the public to actively classify, organize and interpret meaning in what they see or experience about the world at a given moment. This study examines political cartoons as a form of satirical journalism and a type of visual opinion news discourse, and theorizes on the role of cartoons in the construction of social problems. Political cartoons offer newsreaders condensed claims or mini-narratives about putative "problem" conditions and draw upon, and reinforce, taken-for-granted meanings. By doing so, political cartoons provide metalanguage for discourse about the social order by constructing idealizations of the world, positioning readers within a discursive context of "meaning-making", and offering readers a tool for deliberating on present conditions. Cartoons "frame" phenomena by situating the "problem" in question

within the context of everyday life and, in this way, exploit "universal values" as a means of persuading readers to identify with an image and its intended message (Greenberg, 2002).

Metaphors

Visual metaphor, "as the pictorial expression of a metaphorical way of thinking" (El Refaie, 2003: 75), is the representation of an image or idea through a visual image that bears a particular similarity or resemblance. This similarity between the images can be cognitive as well as physical. From that aspect, visual metaphor uses images or symbols to express the cartoonist's argument. Therefore, some researchers mention them as works of art (Green, 1985; Serig, 2006). For example, visual arts such as drawing, painting, printmaking, design, crafts, ceramics, cartoons, ballet, photography, sculpture, filmmaking, and architecture, are based on non-verbal metaphors (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 107). All these are visual metaphors that employ visual images to express the ideas and emotions of the artists (Carroll 1994: 190). Political cartoon also uses visual metaphors as representations of thoughts, critiques, and opinions. Besides, it is possible to support visual metaphors by using explanatory texts or dialogues. Therefore, it is a part of visual communication, which carries visual knowledge about social, political, and cultural issues. Thus, metaphors must be evaluated within their socio-political context (El Refaie, 2003: 75).

According to the researchers, describing metaphor as visual, pictorial or non-verbal (Hausman, 1989; El Refaie, 2003; Knowles and Moon, 2006: 109, 117; Serig, 2006), verbal concepts are expressed through pictorial metaphors in political cartoons. Using metaphors is also important in speech and writing to explain, simplify, define, express, estimate and entertain topics. Therefore, cartoonists use verbal metaphors to express what they think or how they feel about issues, or to convey a meaning in a stronger, more exciting and more imaginative way (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 3). As Swain (2012: 86) states, verbal texts of cartoons may include "captions, in-text labels, signs, placards,

speech or thought bubbles – rarely consist of more than two clauses, and sometimes of a single word, but are essential to the cartoon's evaluative coherence." For example, fox in literal meaning is an animal, but its metaphorical meaning is a cunning or wily person. While literal meaning here is the most basic meaning, metaphor is considered as non-literal language that involves some kind of comparison, identification, or cognitive assumptions (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 5).

Cognitive framework regarding metaphors depends on the embodied human experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, interpretation and perception of metaphor depend in part upon the participants' social, cultural, political, and educational background (El Refaie, 2003: 173). Therefore, both visual and verbal metaphors are decoded in the context of human experience (Yus, 2009: 148). For this reason, political cartoonists must be very careful about the intended metaphorical interpretation of the cartoon. Universal metaphors are appropriate examples for inferential phase of readers (El Refaie 2003: 81).

Since political cartoons are rich sources of metaphors (Gombrich, 1971; Gamson and Lasch, 1983: 399), metaphor analysis is used to answer the research question. Metaphor analysis is one of the interpretive research methods (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006: xix) used to analyse political cartoons. According to Fiske (1990: 92), metaphor is used to express the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. It is a way of explaining, describing, and evaluating abstract and otherwise difficult concepts (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 48). In this research, twelve political cartoons were selected randomly from cagle.com, an international political cartoon website, between March 2011 to February 2016, which present different aspects and perceptions about the issue of the Syrian refugee crisis.

The main research question of the paper is how political cartoons represent the Syrian refugee crisis and the influx of refugees into bordering, Arab, and western countries. As noted earlier, verbal and visual metaphors are important parts of social

and political context. Analysis of these representations thus illustrates social and political perceptions of the international society as well. To maintain analytic integrity and systematic analysis, cartoons are analysed according to these thematic headlines: “Syrian refugee influx to border countries”, “EU response to refugees”, “U.S. response to Syrian refugees”, and “The Gulf countries’ response to Syrian refugees”.

Syrian refugee influx into border countries

This dramatic refugee crisis changed agendas, topics, and headlines of the media. It also became an important issue in political cartoons. Cartoons have great importance for framing phenomena by situating the problem in a visual and verbal context. They also persuade readers to identify with a visual image and its intended verbal message (Greenberg, 2002: 182). Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, more than four million Syrian refugees have been forced to flee their homes for safety and protection. The majority of Syrian refugees have fled into bordering countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon.

The refugee influx has caused important demographic changes in these neighbouring countries. With the increasing number of refugees, various problems have emerged, such as education, healthcare, accommodation, employment, and sustainable sources for the other necessities of these people. Without any systematic and sustainable political solution for the crisis, these countries have tried to implement new measures to alleviate the burden on their economies (Balsari et al., 2015: 942). Although international organizations, and other countries individually, have supported these efforts of the neighbouring countries, the social and ethical responsibilities toward, as well as the economic burdens of, these refugees far outweigh the assistances.

This situation is illustrated in political cartoons with the visual metaphor of giant waves caused by a flood. From this aspect, the Syrian refugee influx is likened to a natural disaster, abrupt and destructive (Figure-2). This metaphoric expression relies on

two different meanings of 'influx'. According to Collins Dictionary (2016), the first meaning of the word is "the arrival or entry of many people or things." Another meaning of influx is the act of flowing in; inflow. From this perspective, in the cartoons, the idea that the danger and risk of the influx is far beyond the capacity and capabilities of the neighbouring countries is illustrated with this visual metaphor.

Figure-1 Syrian Refugees (Nath, 2013)

Figure-2 Syrian Refugee Flow (Nath, 2012)

In Figure-1, Nath features Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and humanitarian agencies, solicitously lifting up their hands to stop the Syrian refugee wave exceeding the wall. The wall implies the borders of the countries. Representatives of Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon stand in knee-deep water. The standing water metaphorically implies the Syrian refugees who were already hosted by the bordering countries. The wave metaphor represents the serious danger of Syrian refugee flow. At the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon were the first countries to take on the burden of Syrian refugees. The insolvable Syrian crisis leads to more Syrian refugee influx to bordering countries. Thus, the pressure and financial burden of the refugees has increased upon neighbouring countries. While Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon's representatives are in black clothing, Jordan's representative is in dark blue. Colours

are one of important elements of visual metaphor for conveying meaning to readers (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 112). The reason for dark blue colour is that Jordan already provides shelter to a large number of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan. Jordan has a history of taking in refugees especially from Palestine. Thus, Jordan is used to refugees but now Syrians constitute the majority of Jordan's refugee population, according to the United Nations (Martinez, 2015 Sep 10).

International aid organizations and humanitarian agencies are represented as inadequate to maintain necessary conditions for the refugees in political cartoons. The intensity and speed of the rising influx is beyond their capabilities. In addition, the bureaucratic mechanisms of these institutions also prevented them from reacting effectively to the need. As illustrated in Figure-1, humanitarian agencies also feel the same anxiety with the bordering countries – the representative stands with a to-do-list or a document in his hand.

Figure-3 Syrian Refugee (Nath, 2014)

In Figure-3, the attitude and the level of international support are illustrated through stronger visual metaphors. Figure-3 symbolizes the refugee crisis as a giant male refugee with a sad face sitting on an UNHCR desk. Behind the desk, a comparatively small man talking on the phone says that the situation is under control, without realizing the greatness of the problem. The cartoonist uses colour to express different meanings, simi-

larly to the previous cartoons. The dark colour of the refugee illustrates the unpleasant and risky situation created by the influx. Patches on his pants and ripped shoes signify the poor condition of Syrian refugees. Heavy boxes next to giant man imply the burden of the Syrian refugee crisis. The small desk also symbolizes the inadequate efforts of the UNHCR.

In the political cartoons that illustrate the Syrian refugee influx to border countries, cartoonists use natural disasters as a metaphor to signify the seriousness of the refugee crisis. By using a flood to illustrate the flow of refugees, they emphasise the danger that affects neighbouring countries. The dark colours of the cartoons also reflect the hopeless situation of the refugees. These cartoons illustrate the lack of comprehension and preparedness of institutions of international support for this human suffering by using international agencies and humanitarian organisations as important figures.

EU response to refugees

According to UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards (2015), there are seven factors that can explain why Syrian refugees are fleeing to Europe. Loss of hope for a solution in Syria, high costs of living and deepening poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, aid shortfalls, hurdles to renew legal residency, scant education opportunities, and deteriorating security situation in the region comprise Edwards's seven factors leading the refugees to seek better opportunities in European countries. Respect for human rights, good living conditions, opportunities, and respect for international law on asylum seekers, are a few of the benefits refugees expect to find in Europe. However, the increasing influx creates big anxieties for European countries. According to political cartoons, security, social, and economic aspects are the main points that create hesitancies among European governments towards Syrian refugees. To prevent the influx, European countries have tried to take some precautions. Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria and Macedonia built fences to prevent the refugee flow.

Refugees were even beaten and treated badly by the police and border guards of these countries.

Figure-4 Pure Wool European Flag (Kountouris, 2016)

As seen in Figure-4, the exclusivist attitude of the European countries is symbolized with the physical obstacles such as barbed wires in political cartoon. In Figure-4, Kountouris uses dry humour to present the attitude of the European Union. He employs visual metaphors between the texture and fabric of the European Union flag, and their exclusionist manner illustrated by the wool-care label. The label indicates that the fabric is made from barbed wire. According to Kountoris's idea, this exclusionist behaviour of the EU is a characteristic of the Union more than an attitude.

Figure-5 Merkel and Refugees (Janssen, 2015a)

The political cartoons representing the attitude of European countries often use the image of German Chancellor Angela Merkel to illustrate the discussion about whether European countries should accept Syrian refugees or not. In most of the cartoons, cartoonists picture the Chancellor in her red jacket. As an idea, in the uniform and dark nature of the European bureaucratic society, Merkel's red jacket can be evaluated as a contradiction to the general attitude of the bureaucratic society. In Figure-5, Merkel is portrayed as unable to find any supporters for her positive attitude towards the refugee influx. All male politicians in dark suits are fleeing from Merkel's suggestion.

Figure-6 Hungarian Journalism (Kamensky, 2015)

Besides these cartoons, there are different cartoons presenting why European countries are afraid of refugee influx. Figure-6 considers the reason as xenophobia. There are two flags represented in the cartoon; one is that of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the other one is Hungarian. Flags are one of the most common realizations of visual metaphors (Knowles and Moon, 2006: 112). The political cartoon portrays the unfortunate incident when the Hungarian camerawoman tripped a male Syrian refugee with his son fleeing from police at refugee collection point. In the cartoon ISIL terrorists in black with knifes chase Syrian refugee man with his son on one side, and he is stopped by the Hungarian government symbolised by the camerawoman on the other side. "Tripping" implies the attitude of Hungary. The Hungarian government took some precautions to stop the Syrian refugees. First, it blocked its border with Serbia and built wire fence at the border to prevent the refugee influx. The Hungarian police arrested and prosecuted the refugees for committing illegal border crossing. The first refugee has been deported after a very fast trial and could not apply for asylum (Green, 2015). These security considerations caused by the refugee influx increased especially after the Paris terror attack on the evening of 13 November 2015. As French Prime Minister Manuel Valls (2015) mentions, the European bureaucrats think that "some of the suspects in the Paris attacks took advantage of Europe's migrant crisis to 'slip in' unnoticed."

The political cartoons generally criticise EU responses to the refugee crisis. The exclusionist manner of EU countries is one of the important criticisms emphasised in the cartoons. Barbed wires and the Hungarian camera woman are the most widely used symbols of the cartoons. Another symbol is German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had a bit more positive attitude to Syrian refugees. However, Merkel has been criticised by other European bureaucrats due to her positive attitude, as illustrated in the cartoons.

The U.S. response to Syrian refugees

The United States has also had a similar political attitude to Europe towards Syrian refugees. However, in the USA, the debate is between two different political parties. One side of the debate, consisting of the Democrats and other progressives, welcomes the refugees; however, most Republicans demonstrate a strict opposition to the idea.

Figure-7 The Fear of War Refugees (Matson, 2015)

Figure-7 another important visual metaphor to express the attitude in the USA is the Statue of Liberty. The statue is an icon of freedom and democracy in the country, and has historically been a welcoming sight to immigrants arriving from abroad. In the political cartoons, the Statue is typically used to highlight the contradiction of the Republican's attitude with the soul of the country as a place offering immigrants freedom and peace throughout history, since America is a country founded by immigrants.

Figure-7 demonstrates American people holding banners which include expressions against refugees such as 'war refugees go home', 'keep out', 'terrorists not admitted', and 'no Syrians'. Matson uses the Statue as a visual metaphor to illustrate tolerance and a positive attitude towards the refugees. Moreover, he puts a teardrop on her cheek to emphasise the contradiction between the political attitude and the meaning embodied by the

Statue. Other important details in the cartoon are a rope for execution hanging on the crown and pitchforks in their hands that symbolize hatred.

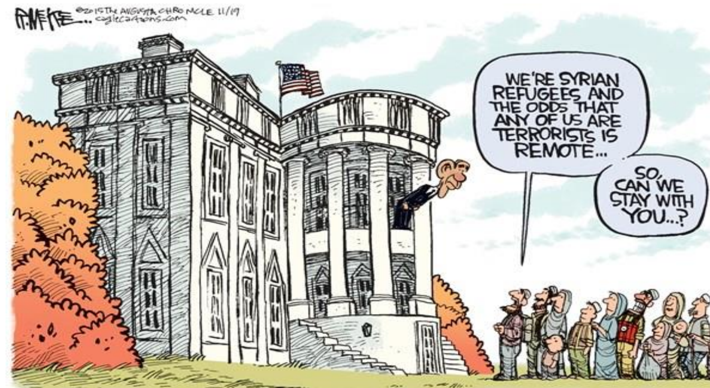

Figure-8 Syrian Refugees (McKee, 2015)

President Obama is also another popular figure in the cartoons. Figure-8, McKee's political cartoon with the topic "Syrian Refugees", represents the migration of Syrian refugee families to the USA. President Obama looks from the window of the Whitehouse to see the Syrian refugees. One Syrian refugee man appeals to Obama: "We're Syrian refugees and the odds that any of us are terrorists is remote… So, can we stay with you?"

Figure-9 Local Utah Governor Herbert (Bagley, 2015)

The Syrian refugee wants to say to Obama that he and the other refugees standing behind him are not terrorists, and they desire to obtain asylum in the USA. For this reason, Syrian refugees are waiting in front of the Whitehouse to get help from Obama as he said he is planning to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees (Healy and Bosman, 2015, Nov 16).

But, despite President Obama's positive attitude, more than half of the nation's governors (Grand Old Party is a nickname of Republican Party) say Syrian refugees are not welcome into their states. As shown in Figure-9, Alyan Kurdi is a common metaphor to illustrate the tragedy of the innocent Syrian refugees. With the exception of Utah Governor Gary Herbert, all the Republican-led states agreed to close their borders to Syrian refugees. Since the Syrian conflict began, Utah has resettled 12 Syrian refugees, from two families. The State of Utah expects to receive a few hundred more Syrian refugees between March and October (Canham, 2015, Nov 16). On the other side, Figure-9 shows that Republican-led states do not see the Syrian refugee crisis as their own problem. As shoe prints seen in the cartoon show that they just passed by the dead body of Aylan Kurdi, even saying: 'C'mon Gary. Not our Problem' when he was looking sadly to lifeless body washed up on the Turkish shore. The Statue of Liberty symbol on the left top of the cartoon implies freedom and U.S. democracy, which is assumed to have a positive attitude towards the migrants as a migrant country. Thousands of Syrian refugees arrive to the country of freedom and democracy to seek asylum. But their arrival is not welcomed in many parts of the USA.

The cartoons illustrate the U.S. response to the refugee crises by emphasising an important contradiction between the feature of the country as a refugee country and negative attitudes among politicians. In the cartoons, the American politicians try to isolate their country from the refugee crisis. The Statue of Liberty is a common symbol used in the cartoons. Security risks that might be posed by Syrian refugees are another important subject of the cartoons.

Gulf countries' response to Syrian refugees

Persian Gulf countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have been criticised for not opening borders to Syrian refugees. Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees is one of underlying reasons for this situation. According to the Convention (UNHCR, 2010: 14) relating to the status of refugees, a refugee is defined as:

> A person owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Figure- 10 Not our problem (Englehart, 2015)

Gulf countries were not among the twenty-six states who signed the protocol. Thus, Syrian refugees in these countries are not formally registered as "refugees", but rather as "guests", or "workers". Therefore refugees do not receive protection, support, or the possibility for citizenship within the Gulf countries. Figure-10, Englehart's political cartoon with the title "Not our

problem," reflects the attitude of Gulf countries towards Syrian refugees. Gulf countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates turn their back to Aylan Kurdi's lifeless body on the shore. Saudi Arabia's representative says: "Not our problem." Gulf countries have been criticised for tepidness, inaction, and unconcerned responses to Syrian refugee crisis.

Figure-11 Arab Refugee Response (Heller, 2015)

The same tepid situation of the Gulf countries is portrayed in Figure-11, as a representative of the U.S., illustrated as Uncle Sam, asks Gulf States: "Why aren't you Arab countries taking in those poor Syrian refugees?" Saudi Arabia, represented as spokesperson of the Gulf counties, replies in Spanish: "*Ahhh… No hablo Ingle*s?" (I don't speak English). In sum, both the USA and the Gulf countries are recriminating each other with different languages. It implies their ignorance of the refugee crisis. At the same time, in the figure, gunny sacks in front of all the Gulf countries signify their wealth and richness with the dollar symbol on them. Their black sunglasses are the sign of their blindness to the refugee crisis. Additionally, the cartoonist illustrates the Arab man speaking in Spanish as a reference to the US attitude to asylum claims from Mexico.

Figure-12 Wealthy Arab States Refuse Refugees (Zanetti, 2015)

A few cartoons related to the attitudes of Arab countries use similar metaphors within previous cartoons to illustrate European and US attitudes. For instance, in Figure-12, Zanetti pictures a golden Arab male statue as a reference to the Statue of Liberty. However, this statue reflects the negative attitude of the Arab countries; he is a wealthy male figure holding a sack with the dollar sign on it differently from the Statue of Liberty. The text above the cartoon also refers to the New Colossus, but instead of welcoming migrants, it emphasizes wealth as a criterion for acceptance. In addition, there is a western male figure holding a female refugee with her baby in his arms in the cartoon. The western male figure brings the refugees to the Arab countries, but a typical Arab male figure similar to the statue refuses the refugees since they do not fit their wealth criteria. The Arab male figure's fat body also illustrates the wealth of the Arab Gulf countries.

In the last group of the political cartoons, the cartoonists illustrate the political decisions of the Gulf Countries which reject Syrian refugees, although they are the neighbours of Syria. In these cartoons, these Arab countries are illustrated as wealthy and selfish people besides the poor and in-need Syrian refugees.

In addition, there is a similarity between the negligent attitude of American politicians, and the Arab countries in the cartoons.

Conclusion

The twelve political cartoons, analysed here, are addressing the Syrian refugee influx to bordering, Arab, and western countries, and their responses to refugee crisis. After the conflict in Syria, thousands of refugees have fled into neighbouring countries. At the beginning, the Syrian refugee problem was seen as the problem of bordering countries. Then, the Syrian refugee crisis became the main topic in the agenda of the international society, with the huge influx of Syrian refugees into EU countries to seek asylum.

There were three top topics discussed in mass media. Firstly, how it is possible to stop the Syrian refugee flow into Europe. Secondly, their perilous journey by the Mediterranean Sea and the Eastern border route after the image of Aylan Kurdi's dead body washed up on a shore spread throughout the world, and the Syrian refugee who was tripped while carrying his son by a Hungarian camerawoman on the border, carried on the agenda. After these sad events, some EU countries gave asylum to hundreds of Syrian refugees. These incidents, which were used as symbols in political cartoons, caused deep debates on the ethical responsibility of the global community toward these human sufferings, and the social, economic, and political threats posed by the influx in Europe as well as in the USA. Thirdly, which country should take the responsibility of the Syrian crisis?

Due to the security concerns, and their 'guest' status in the Gulf countries, the USA, the EU, and Gulf countries, do not see the Syrian refugee crisis as their own problem. Countries visually and verbally depicted as insusceptible and irrelevant to Syrian refugee movement in political cartoons. Syrian refugees were depicted as masses, lonely, vulnerable, unwanted, and otherwise. For instance, in the political cartoons that illustrate Syrian refugee influx to border countries, cartoonists use natural disasters as a metaphor to signify the seriousness of the refugee

crisis. Instead of their suffering, the dangerous consequences of the refugee crises are emphasised in these cartoons. The dark colours of these cartoons also illustrate the negative attitude towards the refugees.

The research has analysed different cartoons to reveal the attitudes of different countries and regions. Despite the socio-cultural differences, cartoonists use similar metaphors to illustrate similar ideas. For instance, the barbed-wire metaphor is used as a symbol of the exclusionist attitude of all countries. Wave and flood figures are also commonly used in cartoons to illustrate the dangerous and destructive characteristics of the refugee influx. In addition, use of colours to express attitudes is similar in the cartoons. Thus, as cited earlier, dark colours generally symbolize negative attitudes. However, cartoonists use specific metaphors related to the different cultural, political and social contexts of the countries. For instance, in the cartoons illustrating the attitude of the USA, political figures such as White House and the Statue of Liberty are specific metaphors that cannot be understood by the audience who are not familiar with the context in the country. Metaphors gain special meanings and can be better understood within the social and political contexts of different countries.

Political cartoons illustrating different attitudes criticise the current situation, but the number of cartoons offering solutions to these human sufferings is limited. As an example, one of the most viable solutions for the refugee crisis is to enable a peaceful end for the tragic civil war in the country that evolved into a proxy war between different countries, ethnic groups and religious sects. The main driver of the influx is that these people do not have a proper life in their countries. In this regard, further analyses that evaluate these issues through the political cartoons in terms of visual and verbal metaphors should be done for a better understanding of different aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis. Analysis of political cartoons combining political science and communication literature is one of most appropriate plat-

forms to make comprehensive analysis of the contemporary matters of the international society. Thus, these studies can help people better understand each other's opinions and perceptions as well as their feelings.

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Endnotes

[1] There are six main migratory routes that Syrian refugees are using to enter the European countries. These are Eastern border routes (*long land border between Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation and its eastern Member States such as Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia*), Eastern Mediterranean route (*from Turkey, Greece, southern Bulgaria or Cyprus*), Western Balkan route, Apulia and Calabria route (*from Turkey, Greece and Egypt*), central Mediterranean route (*from Northern Africa towards Italy and Malta through the Mediterranean Sea*) and Western Mediterranean route (*from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the land route through Ceuta and Melilla*), according to Frontex. (2016, Jan 26) Migratory Routes Map.

[2] For instance, cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published in several western newspapers have caused outrage among some Muslims in different incident such as the Charli Hebdo, the French satiric magazine which has been the target of two terrorist attacks, in 2011 and 2015 due to controversial Prophet Muhammad cartoons. For further examples, please see; Asser M. (2010) *What the Muhammad cartoons portray*. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4693292.stm.

3
Interrogating the Construction of Gendered Identity in the Syrian Nationalist Narrative:
Al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi

Rahaf Aldoughli

This paper explores the politics of belonging and the alliance between the invisibility of women and the emergence of the concept of nationalism in Syria in the late 20th century. It interrogates the considerable neglect of the question of women in the writings of the three Syrian thinkers, Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣarī (1880-1967), Michel ʿAflaq (1910-1989) and Zakī al-Arsūzī (1899-1968).[1] I chose these three thinkers because of their prominent role in shaping Syrian nationalist thought (Aldoughli, 2016). Al-Husari has widely been considered the father of secular nationalism (Karpat, 1968: 28); his theorisation forms the ideological underpinning of the Baʿth Party, later founded by Aflaq and Arsuzi (Aldoughli, 2016; Dawisha, 2003: 3; Khadduri, 1970: 205; Salem, 1994: 49; Tibi, 1997: 203). Together, the narratives of these three thinkers constitute the basis of Syrian national thought, which has evolved around two overlapping yet diffusionist conceptions of nation and nationalism: emphasising the cultural identity of the nation, and achieving its political embodiment—the Baʿth Party.[2] These thinkers perceived the foundation of Syrian nationalism as premised on a set of national sentiments, with language, history, and education (militarism) providing the main sources of cultural identity for the nation. While the three thinkers shared these sentiments, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi identified the need to establish a political body to represent the nation through shared experiences of identification, such

as will and determination, pain and suffering, and sacrificial heroism. A close reading of these national elements will be the first step towards unveiling the construction of gendered identity in Syrian nationalist thought. As these thinkers' narratives contextualise the emergence of nationalism in the second half of the 20th century (Aldoughli, 2016), this paper goes beyond the arguments of attributing gender hierarchy to religion and culture, and, rather, recognises the importance of investigating the early emergence of nationalist narratives as a crucial dimension in producing a masculine national identity in national imagining.

Introduction

By analysing the nationalist theories of al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi, two interconnected themes emerge. First, the contextualisation of the concept of the nation as a natural extension of the family underlines the dominance of the father figure in both institutions. Second, the use of universal terms to refer to 'people' (*jamāhīr; shaʿb*), and their frequent substitution with masculine labels such as 'men' (*rijāl*) and 'young men' (*shabāb*), excludes women from the national imagination. This linguistic phenomenon is not confined to Syrian national theories (see McClintock, 1991, 1993; Okin, 1980), but it has contributed to the erasure of women from Syrian national memory.[3]

Whilst this omission of women generates an impression that men are ubiquitous, the exclusion of women from the Syrian nationalist narrative has maintained power relations and bolstered hierarchies in the national imagination. Throughout the present study, I intend to explore gender bias in the definition of nation and nationalism by first, interrogating the language used by these thinkers; and second, questioning the 'absolute will' mediated by the male figure as warrior and revolutionary in the nation, and as the patriarch in the family. Such hierarchical symmetry between the private and public spheres has reinforced an essentialist conception of the role of women, and, concurrently, portrayed men as occupying an all-encompassing role in the family, society, and the nation.

Looking at how nation and nationalism have been narrated can help us understand how contemporary thinkers conceive politics of national belonging. Whilst one may argue that the absence of women from national narratives is rather universal and not exclusive to the Syrian context (Aldoughli, 2014; Jaber, 1997: 105; Pateman, 1988; Philips, 1991), it cannot be ignored that the subordinate position of women in early political philosophy has relegated women to a secondary position in contemporary politics (see Okin 1980: 3-5). Okin's significant account of the consequences of Western national narratives in relegating women to a secondary status in Western states is a leading example of the importance of investigating the construction of gender in national narratives (ibid). In the same spirit, and using Anderson's thesis that nations are "imagined political communities" as a guiding principle (2006), I argue that an examination of the writings of the three Syrian thinkers illuminates how the national narrative has defined the rights and responsibilities of women and men as members of a national community, and also sheds light on the assumptions behind these definitions.

Starting with the importance of investigating the language of national narrative as it portrays a form of 'power', we can argue that the missing representation of women produces a masculinist imagining of the nation (Okin, 1980: 4). Berger et al. argue that "the formation of gender differences in language – that is, the ways in which categories of the masculine and the feminine are defined by and eventually ingrained in language – most often produces a rigid and fictive construction of reality''(1995: 3-4). Scott demonstrates that the gender bias, which can be traced in the writings of most contemporary theorists, has become a naturalised given (1993: 397). Scott further contextualises the authority of masculinist writing and reveals how it is infused with presenting one dimension of 'experience' and excluding the 'other', which is in turn reflected in the production of national identity (Scott, 1993: 412; see also Connell, 1987: 109). Hence, this subjective 'authority', as reflected in the theorists' nationalist language and perspectives, is a reflection of

women's absent image and voice from history (Rowbotham, 1973a: 32; Scott, 1993: 403, 405).

More importantly, there is an intimately-linked affinity between the construction of the national narrative and the construction of manhood. In this respect, Enloe demonstrates the close association between the missing representation of women and the construction of masculinity in national narration. In other words, nationalism becomes a reflection of an image of man's memories, humiliations, and hopes (Enloe, 1990: 45; see also Aldoughli, 2014; Lyotard and Clarke, 1978: 9; Mayer, 2000:9-11).

In his influential book *Nation and Narration* (1990) which offers a new substantive tool for analysing the construction of the nation, Homi Bhabha states:

> Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation- or narration-might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west (Bhabha, 1990: 1).

The importance of these words lies in highlighting the association between the construction of a nation and its narrative. In this sense, narrative can be conceptualised as a reflection of the distorted presentation of women (see Foster, 1998: 38).[4]

Conceptualising the Syrian national narrative, one can discern three distinct positions that define the cultural phase. The first concentrates on the notion that nations are natural extensions of *family*. The paradoxical nature of conceptualising the nation as a "national family of man'' is that such a notion reinforces gender hierarchy in the nation. It naturalises the supremacy of the male patriarch within both family and nation (McClintock, 1993: 63). The second is the cultural construction of the nation as defined through implementing shared language, history and education. However, in the Syrian national narrative,

men are depicted as the ones who guard, preserve, and transmit these cultural identifications (Davis, 1997; Peterson, 1998). The third notion is defining national belonging as non-voluntary, whereas this naturalised belonging reinforces the ethos of masculinised patriotism, sacrifice, and heroism.

At the same time, although the civic phase expounded by Aflaq and al-Arsuzi provided different characteristics for the political embodiment of the nation—i.e. the state—this phase defines the will and determination and shared pain and suffering of its men as markers of communal experience, markers which subsequently act as a delineation of power relations. More importantly, these concepts are perceived to be measured by masculinist identifications, which in turn politicise national boundaries around the heroic deeds of men only. In this regard, the emphasis on constructing communal experience serves as a trace of men's historical national experience, thereby creating a hierarchal symbolisation of the nation.

This national experience has been identified and measured by the twinned nexus of love of country and men's readiness to sacrifice. Andrew Parker et al. argue that 'a love of country' is an 'eroticised nationalism' defined by men's physical sacrifices (1992: 1). This raises the question of whether women's absence in nationalist literature can be linked to women's implied lack of love for their country and being stereotyped within certain emphasised roles of passivity, since the love of a country presumably requires the active militarised ability of its men. Such notions highlight the reasoning behind defining the nation as a fraternity, which is intimately linked with how women's relationship to citizenship will later be conceptualised (see Aldoughli, 2016a[5]; Badran 1993). This construction of idealised femininity and masculinity in national narratives defines 'love of the country' as a male arena, in which only 'he' is allegedly capable of defending the fatherland. Hence, nationalism is reconciled with hegemonic masculinity and feminine exclusion; women are once more relegated to passive, subordinate dependents who require an active, dominant mobiliser.

Within these two phases, Syrian national narrative perpetuates an obsessive representation of the nation as a community of men, imagined and defended by men. There is no denying the fact that this empowered masculine identification between the nation and men is a reflection of nationalism as "the exercise of internal hegemony," as Tamar Mayer (2000: 1) masterfully puts it. Therefore, these constructed gender stereotypes reinforce the notion that the nation within these narratives is becoming ''gendered and radicalised'' (Anthias and Davis, 1993: 127).[6] Anne McClintock indicates that "all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous" (1991: 104-105). It is 'dangerous' in the sense that it reinforces power relations and incites hegemonic ideologies of masculinised violence (ibid). Moreover, Mosse argues that "nationalism had a special affinity for male society and together with the concept of respectability legitimised the dominance of men over women" (Mosse, 1985: 67).

Finally, this gender bias, which can be traced in dominant theorisations of nation and nationalism, is not a coincidence; it stems from a 'male-defined' world wherein women are obscured in 'brotherhood'. The excessively masculine language used in the nationalist narrative must not be underestimated; it reveals the "intense rejection'' of women in history, and reflects how they are trapped in a world constructed and represented predominantly by men (Rowbotham, 1972: 11). Therefore, after exploring nationalist narratives, we are faced with the overlooked question of women: the exclusion of women in a manner which reconsolidates "centralized control of authority…including gender privilege" (Pettman, 1996: 138).

In line with the above argument, much of my analysis of the writings of al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi employ Nira Yuval Davis' understanding of the intersection between gender relations and the formulation of the nation. Davis' important contribution suggests that no matter the characteristics of the nation (whether it is a cultural or civic construction), gender relations are deeply embedded in national formations (Davis, 1997: 21-

5). Davis outlined five ways in which gender and the constructed identity of women intersect with the construction of nationalism:

1- As biological producers of the nation;
2- As cultural preservers that mark the nation's identity and reinforce cultural boundaries. Women are conceived as symbols and signifiers of national difference;
3- As transmitters of cultural narratives (mothers, teachers);
4- As keepers of national boundaries by accepting or refusing marriage from outside the national community;
5- As active participants in national movements.

The following discussion identifies these five gender-differentiated dimensions in which Syrian women have been forcefully substituted with men in relation to national formation. Each section will highlight how men are constructed as the main contributors to nation-building, whether in its cultural or civic phase.

Al-Husari and the masculinist construction of cultural nationalism: men as social reproducers of cultural forms

Sāṭiʿ al-Husari, the father of secular nationalism in the Arab world, extensively debated the origin of the idea of nation and nationalism in his works (1959: 31; 1964a: 15-6; 1985a: 15-6). His nationalist theory constitutes the basis of the *Baʿth* ideology in Syria. Whilst one might argue that al-Husari's nationalist ideology was so thorough that it hardly left anything out (See Cleveland, 1971: 148), this overview of his works will reveal his disregard for women's contribution to national formation. In this section, I intend to analyse al-Husari's nationalist ideas with particular reference to the role of women and family in fostering national consciousness. In this context, a close reading of his three national elements—*language, history,* and *education*—display forms of dominance and coercion in the construction of national identity.

'The Soul' of the masculinised nation

In al-Husari's theorisation, language plays the most pivotal role in defining not only the political and cultural boundaries of the nation, but also the gendered boundaries of belonging. According to al-Husari, the nation is a cultural entity that has naturally extended from the family. This naturalised conception of nation formation reinforces non-voluntary belonging to the nation.[7] Conceptualising language as the driving force behind fostering national identity raises the question of how al-Husari constructed a gendered understanding of the role of language. Al-Husari's conceptualisation of national language can be summarised in four propositions. First, its role as the "soul of the nation;" second, as a tool that protects the nation from losing its cultural character during times of war; third, as a tool that determines the political and cultural boundaries of the nation, and unites Arab countries through disseminating Standard Arabic and minimising the use of colloquial language; and fourth, as a preserver of national heritage in its capacity as the *language of fathers*.

From the very outset, part of the formulation of al-Husari's national ideology is based on internalising a gendered understanding of national love and belonging. In this sense, his ideological methodology is to insist on how to define 'love' for the nation (*ummah*) and the fatherland (*waṭan*),[8] wherein al-Husari emphasises that national love is a substitution for familial love.[9] This primordial love is compared to a child's love for *his* mother (1985a: 29). However, this definition of national love becomes part of an enforced and naturalistic sentiment that generates propaganda regarding how to produce an ideal image of the man. More importantly, national love constitutes a means of legitimising death for the nation, which is in turn embedded with gendered interpretations of national belonging.

The deep correlation between defining patriotic belonging and masculinity is further intensified by al-Husari's social construction of kinship (*qarābah*). He argues that ''the important thing about kinship (*qarābah*) and lineage (*nasab*) is not blood

relations, but rather the belief in this relation'' (1928). Al-Husari confirms that "spiritual kinship" is socially constructed through unifying language, history, and education (1985b: 105). However, despite disregarding the racial and ethnic origin of the nation, al-Husari argues that the nation is a "brotherhood" and a "fraternity of descendants from one father" (1985b: 35). He further argues that the inefficacy of the racial origin of the nation[10] is backed up by his idea of intermarriages (1959: 129). While these notions suggest that the nation is culturally constructed and preserved through language and intermarriages, al-Husari disregards the role of women as custodians of the nation's cultural identity through their marriages.[11] Therefore, whilst the role of intermarriages in defining racial belonging to the nation highlights the role of women as producers of national boundaries, al-Husari defines the nation as a "fraternity" and a "brotherhood", based on solidarity *between the brothers (ikhwan)* (ibid).

Identifying language as the soul of the nation, which mediates and determines the mode of thinking among individuals, al-Husari argues:

> Language is the most influential spiritual tie which binds mankind together. First, it is the means of mutual understanding among individuals. In addition, it is the instrument of thought… Finally, language is the means for transmission of ideas and acquired knowledge from fathers to sons, from ancestors to descendants. The language with which man grows up can mould his thought in a special manner, and deeply influences his sentiments, his language which the individual listens to since childhood is the language of the mother (1928).

The great importance al-Husari accords to language is juxtaposed against the fact that he refers to the national language as the language of "the fathers" (1959: 56). However, he never mentions women's role in socially and culturally preserving the language (see Davis, 1997; Peterson, 1998), instead he considers it the language of fathers only (1959: 56). Moreover, these words are highly reflective of al-Husari's paradoxical position towards

women. Whilst he highlights the naturalised acquisition of the language through "mothers", he still considers language to be transmitted from "fathers to sons." Affording language this patriarchal connotation, al-Husari disregards the influence of mothers in fostering the "sentimental" identity of the child. In other words, he denied women their cultural role in preserving the cultural identity of the nation.

At the same time, the importance of having one national language is clarified in his own words as "a mere need *for men in order to contribute politically to the nation*" (italics added for emphasis, 1959: 67). These ideas significantly imply the inseparability of language and nationalism as the former is indispensable to the modernisation of both political and social life (1959: 67). Yet, al-Husari understands this link as pertaining to the public sector (1959: 68). It is worth noting that al-Husari only gives importance to the use of language in the state apparatus to establish and disseminate the national language. However, he misses the role of the private sphere in reproducing language in the same effective manner. Paradoxically, whilst he ignores the role of women in enacting this preservation, he affirms that the most important aim is to promulgate the national language through the state apparatus (1959: 73).[12]

Since language is such a driving element in his conceptualisation of nation formation, al-Husari adamantly shows his dissatisfaction with the use of colloquial Arabic (*al-ʿarabiyyah al-ʿāmmiyyah*). According to him, its widespread usage has divided and weakened the sense of national unity among Arab countries. It must be noted that his view on how to deploy Standard Arabic and curb the usage of colloquial Arabic is to promote Standard Arabic through the state apparatus (1985f: 30). Yet, he stresses that, in order to deploy Standard Arabic, there is a need to reinforce the role of "intellectual men" by adopting their language and style (1985f, 29, 32). What is missed in his proposition is the fact that unless mothers at home minimise the use of colloquial Arabic, the attempt to enforce the use of Standard Arabic is inefficient. More importantly, his perspective demonstrates a

rather biased perception of women's intellectual contribution to Arabic literature and the Arabic language in his time (Altoma, 1991: 79-91).

By employing Nira Yuval-Davis's account on women's contribution to the construction of nation and nationalism, I will review al-Husari's theory on men's cultural, intellectual and heroic achievement. For example, he perceives language to be a part of the nation's heritage that is only fulfilled by fathers of the nation. Nevertheless, al-Husari disregards the role of women and the family in ingraining the national language, and substitutes the role of mothers in disseminating the standard language with "*men of letters*." This biased perception against the role of women and the private sphere in the inculcation of a homogeneous cultural identity through language has perpetuated hierarchy, coercion, and gender-bias, in the construction of national identity. This is in no way confined to language; indeed, these views encompass how al-Husari perceives history. The following section will analyse how history is narrated in his national doctrine.

Telling the masculinist narrative: men as transmitters of history and active participants in political struggles

The second central feature in al-Husari's nationalist conception is a unified version of history. In his definition of the nation as "a human being, with life and feeling. Life through its language and feeling through its history" (1985g: 19), al-Husari describes *unity of history* as it…

> …gives rise to shared feelings and views. It leads to collective memories of bygone exploits and past hardships, and to a mutual faith in the awakening and to mutually shared hopes for the future … Every nation feels its self-consciousness and creates its personality by means of its special history (1928).

Al-Husari's notion of "special history" is a *selective* approach to history in which only particular events should be recorded in the national imagining to instill a patriotic identity. This culturally constructed definition of history, based on certain imagined

communal experiences of pain and joy (1985g: 19), raises the question of how this national imagining is discursively constructed, and whether women are included within this national imagining.

In the introduction of the 2nd edition of his book *Pages of the Recent Past* (*Ṣafaḥāt min al-Māḍī al-Qarīb*), al-Husari indicates that the re-publishing of this book is "of great benefits to young men (*shabāb*)[13] of the 'present' and to the men (*rijāl*)[14] of 'recent future''' (1948: 7). These words reflect al-Husari's intention of instilling a sense of collectivity through the use of masculine terms to refer to his audience. Using masculinised terminology in relation to the past and the future generates a misogynist position towards women's place in nationalism. In the same vein, this grouping of masculine peoplehood reinforces boundary relations in al-Husari's narrative, which deems history primarily a male domain. Al-Husari proceeds in this book to call for reviving the past through creating a glorious present.

The problem is that his concept of glorious present and future is identified with empowering men and urging them to generate the "spirit of sacrifice and victory," while on the other hand, urging men not to spread the "spirit of discontent, despair and surrender" (1948: 70). What follows is an exaltation of death and sacrifice associated with the great deeds committed by men. In his concluding words, al-Husari defines life as synonymous with courageous death, which reasserts manhood and challenges potency (1948: 112). This gratification of men's sacrifices attempts to measure national belonging by physical strength. This in turn exposes al-Husari's construction of nationalism as intimately linked with constructing the ideal man of the nation. It becomes very clear to the close reader that al-Husari conceptualises the nation's realisation of glory as man's own achievement of manhood and masculinity. He argues

> The man loves the nation under the influence of nationalism, and his heart is attached to it severely, and considers himself part of it, so he becomes happy whenever its glory increases, and suffers if its strength

> reduces. He aspires to see it strong and developed, and be proud of its glories (*amjād*)…and tends to do whatever can be done to defend its existence and its dignity. Besides, the man loves his fatherland (*watan*) under the influence of patriotism…and seeks to serve it, and does not delay to sacrifice his soul for its sake (1985a: 27).

These words highlight the extreme identification of nation's glory (*majd*) with man's love for the nation. Al-Husari further declares that these patriotic and nationalistic feelings are not only connected by spiritual ties but even resemble maternal love (1985a: 27-29). This portrayal of national love reflects the man-woman relation of subordination and coercion. According to al-Husari, it is this nationalistic and patriotic love that would awaken sentiments in people to struggle and sacrifice for national renewal and unity: "We must remember that the nationalist idea enjoys a self-motivating power; it is a driving impulse to action and struggle. When it enters the mind and dominates the soul, it is one of the forces which awakens the people (*al-shaʿb*) and inspire them to sacrifice'' (1951: 238-239). From these words, we can derive a picture of an overwhelmingly gendered representation that conceptualises national membership through physical sacrifice. It is related to the question of: who are the "people" (*al-shaʿb*) who may be connoted with the characteristics of "action" and "struggle"? Moreover, it must be discerned that al-Husari's use of the term (*shubbān*) 'young men' is an affirmation of the superiority of men as the only national believers in the nation. Hence, this juxtaposition between the assertion of nationalistic faith and the ability to sacrifice for the national struggle subsequently defines the concept of belonging (1985g: 40).

Because of his belief in the intrinsic value of national faith and patriotism, al-Husari points out that the greatest possible task for patriots is to prioritise national love over love of self. Al-Husari contends that the gravest enemy to the nation is excessive love to oneself as opposed to "altruism" and "sacrifice" (1985a: 117). It is, however, essential to examine the solution

that al-Husari proposes to this "selfishness". In his call for ultimate national devotedness and love for the nation, al-Husari suggests that the only means for raising, spreading and strengthening national consciousness is national education. He strongly believes in the role that national education can play in regenerating and creating a generation with national pride.

National education: men as active participants in a militarised nation

In his consistent attempts to construe a secular perception of nationhood, al-Husari relies on education to foster a homogeneous national identity (1985g: 20). As elaborated previously, according to al-Husari national ties among individuals are established through a unified language and history. He further outlines education as a means of instilling communal solidarity and sacrifice among *the men of the nation*. These patriotic sentiments are extolled as essential for the inauguration of national identity. Education is used by al-Husari as a means to achieve a unified perception of nationhood among men through prioritising militarism and sacrifice as the ultimate goals which constitute the nation. Al-Husari classifies schools into two types: the natural school—the home into which the child is born; and the primary school, conceived as the real social institution that fosters the national identity of the child. As such, according to al-Husari, formulation of national identity progresses through two stages. The first stage is during primary school, as it is the social and educational institution which nurtures, constructs, and prepares the child for the second stage—army conscription. It must be argued that considering militarism a part of the educational system, which underpins the national upbringing of the child, illuminates the privileging of one sex over the other in the national consciousness. This narrative, undoubtedly, promotes the image of the male warrior as a representative of the nation. In al-Husari's own words:

> If we notice the role of these two institutions (the military and the school) from a general social perspective,

> we will find that there are many similarities: as the first (the school) takes the child from the family, and makes him join his peers, and the school pledges to bring up the individual nationally and socially (*tarbiyyah*) and educationally (*taʿlīm*) for the benefit of the nation. However, the second (military barracks) takes the young man from his environment, and makes him socialise with other men that are prepared to serve and defend their nation (1985a: 450).

From the very outset, these words leave no room for argument regarding unto whom al-Husari is addressing his narrative. The persistent overlap between the concepts of social and national upbringing (*tarbiyyah*) and militarism (*ʿaskariyyah*) leaves no space for women in his narrative. Worse, this conceptualisation of militarising men further promotes a hierarchal and hegemonic gendered identity in the national community.

The insistence that militarism is complementary to schooling is strikingly short sighted. On one level, al-Husari's perception of militarism as part of the educational system sustains an exclusionary narrative of female children on how they should be educated (as we will see later). Militarism effectively becomes a means of defining and maintaining group identity and affiliation; the army, as a representative of the nation, structures the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the national community. This belonging to and membership of the nation is best understood in the readiness to die for the nation, fostering a commitment to ''militarised and continuously politicised conception of life, a conception that is entirely masculinist'' (Kateb, 2006: 8; see Aldoughli, 2016a). The role of the family is therefore disregarded and substituted with school and military barracks. Moreover, the glory of the nation, like the glory of a man, is measured in terms of heroism and militarism. Therefore, women become non-integral in the national discourse, propagating their image as naturally passive, whereas men are conceived as active participants in the national struggle.

Al-Husari further expresses his attraction to the military barracks, to the extent that he considers their role to outweigh that of the school because they are more effective at controlling the life of the individual. Moreover, military life is a life "of activity and fatigue, it strengthens the spirit of young men's activity and movement, and gets them familiar with the roughness of life and develops their endurance of hardship, more importantly it develops their manhood … and the spirit of leadership that the nation needs most'' (1985a: 450). In fact, conceptualising military barracks to be agencies for raising and strengthening national consciousness, al-Husari's theorisation of nationhood is based on casting men as a metonymy for sacrifice and altruism. This subsequently relegates women to an unknown place in the national discourse (1985a: 451).

The use of schools and military service as a means of raising national and patriotic consciousness disregards the role of the family as an educational institution and neglects women's cultural role (1984: 15,35).[15] And what he classifies as natural school; family, is rather disregarded as playing an important role in inculcating national identity. In this sense, nationhood becomes reliant on men's realisation of heroism, manhood, and aspirations. Al-Husari argues that militarism plays a special role in fostering, strengthening, and forming nationhood:

> The soldier lives – during military service – outside his personal circle, and away from his personal life … He leaves his home, town, family and profession … He lives with a group of the sons of his fatherland who are from different towns and classes and who hold various beliefs and positions. He lives with them subject to a system in which they are included without exception. He lives there, not with the intention of returning to his original personality or of being confined to his family and a life cantered in his village. On the contrary, he works for a purpose which is loftier than all these, for a purpose which ensures the life of the fatherland and the welfare of the nation. Is there a need to clarify the

> seriousness of the psychological and educational effects that occur as a result of this life in these circumstances? I do not know anything comparable to the life of the soldier, in their impact on the social qualities: military barracks as social schools, connect the individual with the nation, and involve him in the most important episode of the community, and make him feel the existence of the nation and fatherland. He learns true sacrifice of blood and self in the cause of the nation and fatherland. Therefore, we can say that the system of military life is one of the most important and effective methods in social pedagogy (1944: 65).

This extract emphasises the role of military life in strengthening ties among members of the nation, and perceives it as the source for producing and disseminating national consciousness. Leaving aside the conceptualisation of militarism as a prerequisite for constructing a consolidated community based on internal solidarity, the normalisation of militarism in national narrative characterises men as active participants in national-formation.

Undoubtedly, this idealised perception of military life generates a hierarchal social order. According to al-Husari, there are three main social classes which form the nation:

> Every nation, from a social perspective, is composed of three basic social classes: The first one is composed of general people (*sawād al-nās*), the public. The second one is the upper class; the elite, is composed of men (*rijāl*) that run the affairs of the nation, and have great influence on conducting these affairs, whether through enjoying official positions in the government, or by the virtue of enjoying a scientific, social or economic status – and whether this is in the administrative or political field – or in the literary, industrial or trading one. The third class, is composed of men (*rijāl*) who occupy medium statuses in comparison with the general public and the upper class. They represent the link

between the upper class and the general public one (1944: 77-78).

In this passage there is a shift from the general use of *shabāb* which signifies young men, to a more specific use of *rijāl* which signifies mature men. This linguistic usage reinforces an image of the nation as a community composed of and based on men. The term *rijāl* ([mature] men) connotes a privileged gender, masking a hierarchal perception of the nation. Within this context, there is an infused connotation between hierarchy and masculinism, and those in the upper class are all men. Even the middle class, those who enjoy higher scientific or financial status, are specified as men only. The reader is left wondering where women fit within this social classification, and how the two fields of politics and education, represented respectively by the upper and middle classes, are restricted to men only. Women, in this sense, are not even part of these two classes, which hold the most important national front. However, one might consider that women are positioned within the 'general class' (*sawād/ʿāmmat al-naās*), which is deemed the uneducated class (1944: 77-79).

Gender-bias can be further traced in al-Husari's extensive exploration of what men should choose for their future professions. Al-Husari asserts the importance of choosing entrepreneurship and investment for the growth of economy (1984). He urges young men to choose business and commerce for their significant benefits in modernising society, and in turn the nation. This deep consideration for how men should improve the nation and promote national consciousness through their professions demonstrates al-Husari's misogynistic views on women's role as mothers and individuals. This is evidenced, first, in his failure to advance a parallel perception of how women could become more effective contributors to society. Second, he asserts that mothers have a bad influence on their sons' professional choices (1984: 73-82). It might be suggested that because al-Husari was aware of the greater lack of education among women, he be-

lieved that they are bound to have a negative influence on determining the future of young men. However, he failed to raise any awareness about the benefits of educating women. With man placed at the higher end of the social spectrum, woman, by comparison, is conceived as a metonymy for intellectual rigidity in society and the nation.

Al-Husari further masculinises the perception of the nation by illuminating the particular education female students should receive at schools. Unlike men, according to al-Husari, women should receive *special* teaching of how to manage the household. In his own words: “Schools should adapt to the requirements of women’s education” (1944: 90). Al-Husari even deemed it necessary to establish special professional schools that catered to womanly professions and workshops (1944: 89-90). While al-Husari presents himself as an advocate of national education, it is suggested that female education is confined to the domestic sphere. Al-Husari’s proposition for special education for women emphasises the national boundaries of the feminine and the masculine. This trend of thought laid the foundation for gendered education in Syria, as skills such as cooking, sewing and embroidery later became mandatory subjects for girls in Syrian schools. Moreover, the disparity between the wider professional options offered to men and women’s confined roles in society (1944: 79-83) highlights the inferior position assigned to women in that national imagining.

Throughout al-Husari’s theorisation, his legacy in constructing a militarised conception of culture, history and education perpetuated hegemonic notions of physical strength. In other words, the connection made between militarism and nationalism throughout his national ideology appropriated shared solidarity premised on masculinity among ‘brothers’ *(Ikhwan)* of the nation. This masculine construction that was expounded in al-Husari’s national ideology was later reinforced in the Baʿthist ideology, which makes his doctrine essential to understanding how the legacy of gender bias in Syria has been ingrained.

Michel Aflaq's Political Philosophy

The political philosophy of Michel Aflaq has long been studied as the most attributive theory towards the establishment of the political system in Syria (see El-Attrache, 1973).[16] Aflaq's militant conception of nationalism is best examined through deconstructing the national concepts and language in his iconic work *Fī Sabīl al-Baʿth* (Towards the Resurrection). The following account includes a fine-grained analysis of his public lectures, articles, and speeches written between 1930 and 1980. The examination of his work will also consider the perceived audience of his narrative. Accordingly, I will address the questions: how did Aflaq seek to position himself in relation to his audience? And what sort of political community did he wish to constitute? In this sense, this section seeks to provide a systematic analysis of Aflaq's emphasis on the construction of national identity, as measured by constructing the ideal image of the Baʿthist man (as will later be discussed). More importantly, it seeks to illuminate how language is employed to reinforce an essentialist conception of women in Aflaq's national discourse.

Aflaq's national narrative: men as signifiers of national identity and group membership

Contextualising his conception of nationalism, Aflaq's speeches propose the image of manhood as the only representative of the ideal human being. This is exemplified in the gender-exclusionary language of one of Aflaq's earliest articles (predating the establishment of the Baʿth party), entitled 'Age of Heroism' (*ʿhd al-butula*) (1935). Aflaq starts by saying: "Now we close a page of weakness from our history and open a new one … A page full of patriotism and heroism" (1935). These concepts of patriotism and heroism are addressed to "*great men*", who will be ready for this new battle for the nation. In a more explicit manner, encouraging "young men" (*shabāb*) to join the Baʿth, an article circulated the following year in 1936 distinguishes between "revolutionary men" and men who are still out of the party. This

distinction does not only refer to the basic Baʿthist ideology as "a movement from dark to light" (which is exclusively defined by men's participation in the Ba'th). It is a masculinist call for a *particular* type of men: those who show readiness for sacrifice. As the title, "Treasure of Life" (*Tharwat al-Ḥayāt*) (1936), makes very clear, this speech is addressed to men as the only ones who give life its meaning, and that through their participation in the national struggle. Another distinctive feature in the ideology of the Baʿth is its reliance on the activism and impulsion of young men (*indifāʿ al-shabāb*[17]). In a separate article, Aflaq states that "between our nation and our men, there is chemistry, appointment, and a meeting." In a more transparent articulation of his sentiments, he states that men's activism and impulsion is what our nation needs: "They are the rescuers" (1955).

However, Aflaq has a particular definition of manhood. According to him, there are basic characteristics (*ṣifāt asāsiyyah*) that define men's national belonging. Aflaq emphasises the special rank of the heroic past of the nation, bidding men to identify with the glorious past and implement it in their present and future. More importantly, Aflaq expects a certain national and moral disposition from these men towards their nation (1943). Needless to say, that these messages are selectively addressed to men, however the definitive characteristics provided by Aflaq raise the question of how he conceptualises the sense of belonging and the moral disposition required by these men towards their nation (1943). In order to highlight how these features enshrine a distinctive internalisation of masculinism in Aflaq's national propagation, the following section addresses his conceptions of national belonging and solidarity.

Men as cultural producers of the nation: defining national love through the construction of manhood

Aflaq's contextualization of national belonging emphasises the importance of preserving culture and tradition. In his speech

"Abstract Thinking" *(al-tafkir al-mujarad)* (1943a), Aflaq prioritises the role of men in preserving the heritage of the nation, overlooking women's contribution to the preservation of Arab culture. Aflaq was also concerned with creating an emotional basis for the nation, based on the love men have towards the nation. In 1940, he wrote an essay titled 'Nationalism is love before anything else,' *(al-qawmiya hub kabla kul shi'a)* in which he drew parallels between national and familial love:

> The nationalism which we call for is love before everything else. It is the very same feeling that binds the individual to his family because the fatherland is only a large household and the nation is a large family … and as love is always found linked to sacrifice, so is nationalism. Sacrifice for the sake of the nation leads to heroism (1940).

Notably, these words fuse notions of sacrifice, glory, and masculinity in the national imagination, thereby placing men at the helm of the national arena (see 1977).[18] However, this proposition of familial love and belonging has not prevented the exclusion of women from the national imagination. In fact, this sense of familial love that binds particularly "*brothers*" *(ikhwan)* of the nation together in their party, relegated women to the margins of national imagining. This primordial construction of national belonging in Aflaq's theory is concerned with understanding its two fundamental principles: substitution of family and life.

Subjective and non-voluntary belonging to the nation is juxtaposed with familial love (1940), whereby creating familial bonds among members is infused with patriarchy and coercion. Aflaq's conceptualization of the nation as a family is intimately linked with heroic sacrifices achieved by men. In the course of presenting his argument, Aflaq uses the concept of the family as a substitute for the nation, which subsequently makes women invisible in both the private and public spheres. Such a substitution ascribes masculine qualities to society and the nation. Sheila Katz points out the patriarchal side of Aflaq's notion of national love, and sums up its impact on the masculinisation of the nation:

> [M]en could become lovers and heroes. Sacrifice … entailed shahada, the imperative to die for a family/nation … nationalists interpreted the nation to be a place in which (at least certain) men could consider themselves at home. Dignity at home would be unassailable or, if assailed, defended by brothers. Nationalism became a male affair through masculinised definitions of national community, freedom, dignity, economic opportunity, and security (2003: 80-81).

Hence, conceiving the nation as a family, based on those who are able to discern themselves as fighters for the nation, capitalises on heroism as a prerequisite to inculcate national identity. In other words, while the definition of nationalism is demonstrated only through 'love', this love can only be accomplished in masculine terms where men are patriots and great soldiers of the nation. This in turn marginalises the role of women in the construction of the national community.

Reconstruction of heroic past through pain, suffering and struggle

Aflaq's politics of belonging entail submission to the scheme of a solidified life. Aflaq emphasises the image of the nation as a community born out of solidarity between patriots. According to him, the nation is composed only of those who embody the "national idea" (1944). The related question in this context is, how does the nation preserve its identity? Aflaq encourages a sense of belonging among those who internalise the national cause in their souls, and are therefore committed to sacrifice and die for the nation; those "who are aware of themselves and their individuality, and not that distorted, abnormal minority who are in denial of their national role" (1950). In fact, Aflaq specifies the membership of this imagined majority to be exclusively comprised of *male patriots*. This implementation of struggle, sacrifice, and suffering, as national themes which are ascribed with manhood and masculinity, is central to Aflaq's definition of national belonging. Even in the 1940s, by which time Al-Baʿth was

established as a political party, the linguistic choices of Aflaq were not any more gender-inclusive. In a detailed article on the concept of national "Faith" (*Īmān*)' (1943c), Aflaq connects the concept of "faith" with national consciousness. He states that the value of having 'faith in the Baʿth' has been confined to our 'Arab men' (*al-shabāb al-ʿarabī*). Moreover, this faith is conceptualised as a means to "transcend partition through pain … and struggle" (1943c).

Like al-Husari, Aflaq's primordial conception enforces a non-voluntary belonging on members of the nation. This is clear in his article "Nationalism is a self-fulfilling destiny" (*al-Qawmiyyah qadar mujeeb*) (1940a):

> Very rarely does a person (*marʾ*) think of simple questions like his name and face? They are his destined features that are going to stick with him till the rest of his life. We belong to nationalism just in the very same way that we have our names since we were born, and like our facial features that we inherit from our fathers and grandfathers. Even though in adulthood we might dislike our names and we prefer if we were called other names. However, we are obliged to accept our name as well as our face because our facial features hold the meaning of our inner soul and construct our identity even if this face does not represent the perfect beauty … Nationalism to people (*shaʿb*) is like a name and a face to an individual, it is a destiny that cannot be avoided … So, why one bothers himself in changing his destiny while he can fulfil every step in his life with patriotism. He should say if this is my destiny, then let it be heroic … However, what kind of 'man' (*rajul*) is that who does not feel proud about his nationalism (1940a).

Aflaq's excessive use of masculine terms has ranged from the term *marʾ* (person), which is specified later in the text to include men only through the use of *rajul* ([mature] man). These mascu-

line terms effectively exclude women from the national imagining. Moreover, this language choice highlights an inherent paradox: while Aflaq's conception of belonging is naturalistic, he constructs a special definition of this belonging, confined to the performativity of heroism and manliness. At the same time, Aflaq harshly condemns those who do not meet the ideal definition of *man* in his ideology:

> Whenever I think about the conditions of such a man, I writhe with fear of the image of misery engulfing him and the frostbite of isolation keeping him aloof. What narrow horizons of his own, a poor soul and a silly, dull life! He goes through his life, neither knowing that he is a bough of a tree which is deeply rooted in the past and whose branches grow up through ages … nor understanding that he is one among millions who succeeded each other throughout centuries and generations, cultivating lands … and fighting and dying in wars. They strove for all that to write the history of their own nation, line by line, build it up, stone by stone, clarify and prove its genius and continue carrying its mission out. All those millions strove, fought, wrestled with storms and withstood disasters to lead him forth from the darkness of nonexistence into the light of life, give birth to him – the unmindful, the forgetful – enrich his life with the lives of millions, foster his actions with the efforts exerted by all generations, burden and honour him with the responsibility of the past, and let him get a name with which he is called and features with which he is distinguished among others, so that he is no more a "Zayd" or "Bakr" (John Doe); rather, when it is time for every nation to vie in boasting with one another, he can say: "I am Arab" (1940a).

These words subscribe to a monolithic definition of belonging, based on achieving masculine prowess as the normal *status quo* in the nation. The text also presents a clear-cut distinction between men classified as heroes, and those considered cowards,

depending on their readiness to defend and sacrifice for the nation. The key feature of this belonging in Aflaq's early manifestations of nationalism has been the denial of women's participation in formulating the nation (ibid). Hence, national discourse becomes embedded with power relations and hierarchy. Such a masculinist construction of national narrative is further manifested in the emphasis on reviving the glorious past (*majd*) through appreciative men:

> So cruel is such a destiny as we were destined to live in the age of weakness, disgrace, backwardness and division instead of living in the age al-Walīd or that of al-Rashīd when we were backed by a venerated and invincible state, an active and unified people and a golden civilization that shone like the sun. Destiny may sometimes be cruel, but it is forever and ever just; it distributes heroism only according to difficulty and gives glory only according to efforts. And, in its view, the heroism of those striving nowadays to liberate their countries from foreign occupation and the threat of division and to extract them from the abyss of ignorance and poverty is no less than the heroism of Qutaybah and Ibn Nuṣayr. As the age of al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn expanded to produce philosophies and literatures, each of today's heroes will similarly be, in the view of future generations, a subject of an eternal epic, and his sacrifice will be the birth of a new philosophy (1940a).

Not only is Aflaq's language gender-biased, but his failure to recognise what women achieved on the national level in the 1940s is another dimension of how his embodiment of the past is only represented by male fighters. Also essential to constructing the nation is advocating the heroic history: Aflaq insists on the role of history in binding the nation together. However, his version of Arab history is confined to the heroic deeds of its men. This is evident in his invocation of Qutaybah, Ibn Nuṣayr, al-

Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn as representatives of Arab history (1943b; 1950).[19]

This emphasis on reviving the heroic past is deeply intertwined with the commemoration of the shared experience of struggle and pain by the "masses". By Aflaq's insistence on realising a dialectical construction of the heroic past, rites of sacrifice and struggle tend to bring the past into the present. While the use of the "masses" denotes a gender-neutral perception, Aflaq cites once more the distinction between active and passive men, filtering out women from this national construction (1957). Another demonstration of the masculinism of Aflaq's narrative is his conception "young men" (*shabāb*) and "the people" (*al-shaʿb*). This is another reference to how Aflaq conceives the "*masses*" *(jamāhīr)*. Aflaq's conceptualization of the masses as falling into either of two categories—"young men" or "people"—leads to a gendered construction of national identity. Even within this classification, Aflaq prioritises the role of young men in formulating and representing the nation, and bids *the people* (*al-shaʿb*) to learn from them (1950a). It is not clear where women fit into Aflaq's hierarchal social differentiation. He states that this division cannot be avoided as "young men" are the ones who present the nation with their sacrifices. The ambiguity of the term "young men" (*shabāb*), along with Aflaq's masculinist-inflected version of patriotism, exudes a masculine definition of the nation (1957a).

Moreover, according to Aflaq, pain and suffering are not only connected with the construction of a heroic past, but are also conceived as the backbones of the nation. In his article, "Arabism and Pain" (*ūrūba wa lʾalam*) (1956), Aflaq affirms the process defined as "resurrection is through suffering" (ibid). Arabism can be only be realized through "struggle" and "pain". In his own words: "The destiny of our Arabism is suffering." However, even these two national conceptions (suffering and struggle) are measured and identified with manliness. Along with defining "the great struggle" of the nation, Aflaq contextualised

the meaning of struggle through reaching the “perfection of manhood’’ (*rujūlah*) (ibid).

The trope of sacrifice and struggle continues to structure the order of people in the national imagination. Aflaq distinctively differentiates between active and passive men. In his theorisation, he considers sacrifice and struggle the definitive features of real Baʿthists. Indeed, the following passage not only illustrates Aflaq’s hierarchal categorisation of men in the nation, it even associates “humanity” with manhood:

> When activists accept the hard-won struggle and bear the sacrifices and agonies … they are aspiring that their comrades will follow the road of national struggle in order to establish their nation for their people and their sons … However, there is an organic link/nexus between the eras of negative struggle and the eras of positive struggle. The achievements of positive struggle are the production of virtues, steadfastness … and the production of deep human experience by which the fighter acquires through his experience of struggle and adversity … this is what distinguishes him from the [passive] others … So struggle is an indivisible unit with both its positive and negative halves … Therefore, struggle is the true life and I would say its foundation is this active part … it is the period when the fighter is absorbed and fused with principles, suffering and sacrifice … It is the only period by which the identity of the fighter is determined alongside his destiny, merit and his originality (1967).

Aflaq’s hierarchal construction of national identity must be understood in relation to the two dichotomised categorisations of men: passive vis-à-vis active. Such categorisation situates women in a third category, effectively relegating women in the national imagining not only to the private sphere, but to an almost invisible sphere.

Another manifestation of gender-bias in Aflaq’s national construction is based on invoking a unified concept of heritage.

According to Davis, heritage is transmitted through women (Davis, 1997: 21; see also Peterson, 1998). Aflaq, on the other hand, associates national heritage with the great experience of men. This masculine characterisation of heritage emphasises a monolithic perception with the appeal to the great deeds of men. According to Aflaq, “understanding heritage can only be through revolutionary thought and the suffering of struggle” (1967). In this sense, struggle and suffering, the twin sirens of Aflaq's masculinist composition of national narrative, also perpetuate the concept of heritage based on those who suffer and struggle for the nation. This rhetoric of suffering and struggle is replete with images of men as representatives of the nation’s heritage.

However, in addition to identifying struggle with men’s heroic sacrifices, sufferings, and achievements, Aflaq employs other meanings of “struggle” (*niḍāl*) in his national discourse. Aflaq’s conception of national struggle has a variety of meanings ranging from the struggle to realise the ultimate goal of man through sacrifice, to the daily struggle in life and the struggle for education and knowledge (1956a). That is, his conception of daily struggle in this context has multiple manifestations in everyday life (1956a). As such, while he previously associated struggle with sacrifice, despite this change of tone, Aflaq still excludes women from his conception. He even refers to men as *munāḍilīn* (fighters) of the nation and further warns them that if they do not stand up to their role in everyday tasks, their “*rujulatkum*”, manliness, is under threat (1956a).

Indeed, even the daily struggle for education and knowledge is associated exclusively with men’s intellectual capacity (1970). Aflaq was aware that the Arab nation was entering a “new era” that required a great level of “intellectuality” in order to keep up with modernisation and global change. In his speech, “The Party of Arab Revolution” *(hīzb al-thawrah al-ʿarabyyah)*, delivered in 1970, he redefines the characteristics of the “ideal Baʿthist” and the “Baʿthi fighter”. Aflaq’s conception of “struggle” (*niḍāl*), in the early inception of the Baʿth ideology,

was associated with militancy, fighting, and using force. However, during the 1970s, there was a redefinition of "struggle"' in his thought to mean the promotion of the "intellectual foundation" of the Baʿth. The notions of "sacrifice" (*taḍḥyyah*), "struggle" *(nīdāl)*, and "manhood" *(rujūla*), which define the ideal "Baʿthi fighter", are substituted with the emphasis on education and intellectuality. However, this redefinition of the concept of "struggle" to encompass the field of education is still masculinist through the emphasis on men's role in education and the disregard for women's achievements and the need to educate them (see 1974a).[20]

The army: the ideal construction of the Ba'athist man

In light of the above analysis, there is a need to illuminate how Aflaq understood the Baʿth message, which is defined in his speech, "About the Arab Message" (*hawl al-risālah al-ʾarabiyyah*) (1946), as a belief before anything else…it precedes any practical knowledge… It is the nation…and it is the right of every individual to aspire for chivalry (*al-murūʾa*) and heroism (*al-butūla*)… However, as should be noticed, although it is required that each one should aspire for heroism, but not all people are heroic (*alʾbtāl*) (1946).

While Aflaq's narrative appears to be inclusive in his reference to "all individuals" ('*afrād)* rather than using (*shabāb)* "men", still the correlation between accomplishing your individuality and your national role in the nation can only be achieved through heroism and chivalry and their juxtaposition with the construction of masculinity. As (*al-murūʾa*) "chivalry" in Arabic stands for "perfect manhood",[21] Aflaq's poetic style demonstrates an essentialist correlation between manliness and the construction of ideal national identity. The construction of this companionship manifests in the two words—"heroism and chivalry"—that delineates an apprehension for a masculinist national conception. In the same vein, Aflaq introduces a new concept of Baʿth, which is its revolutionary character, stressing that what society needs most is the revolutionary spirit of its "young men"

(1950b). Indeed, Aflaq states that, "in the achievement of man's national identity, the identity of the nation will be achieved. And the realisation of his ambitions and dreams will contribute to public life'' (1944). Aflaq insists that the nation comes into existence through the true embodiment of patriotism in its members' souls.

This proposition of a revolutionary Baʿthist identity raises the question of how Aflaq perceives the Baʿth generation. Suffice to say that Aflaq conditions the realisation of the nation's identity on the masculine traits of heroism, strength, and, more importantly, militarism. This identification between the man and the nation delineates a gendered nationalist conception. By fostering a stratified, masculinist culture in the national imagination, Aflaq gratifies the role of army in his narrative. His speech, "The Army is Part of the Fighting Masses" (*al-jaish hwa jīzʾ min al-jamahīr al-monaḍilah*) (1974), raises further questions about how women are conceptualised within these "fighting masses". In his own words, Aflaq states, "I am here to confirm that the Party gives a primary position to the army. In the Baʿthist ideology and its theorisation, the army is very important" (1974). The army, then, becomes another place for idealising masculinity by epitomising concepts like heroism, bravery, and sacrifice, which are recognised as masculine traits. The Baʿth not only affords the army an important role, it rather aims to normalise militarism in society:

> The Baʿth ideology should take care of those men who enter the army for a short period – the period of military service only – and those who remain in civil life; we should enforce values of militarism into their lives … This is for the upbringing of the new generation, whether in the military or in civilian life (1974).

These words endow the values of militarism with a further dimension in society by configuring and extending hierarchy, patriarchy, and bravery. Aflaq's normalisation of the military ethos highlights the hierarchal authority of male domination which resonates with enshrining a culture of masculinity. Moreover,

Aflaq extends the naturalisation of militarism into the realms of civil life. This naturalisation of patriarchal ideologies embedded in Aflaq's theorisation of the army conventionally depends on the capacity for male authority, ranging from the militaristic to the domestic. Hence, Aflaq's notion of the army as an ideological formation of society determinates the increasingly reciprocal relationship between manhood and militarism. It further transmits the authority of men in a public institution – the army – to that of the private sphere – the family.

The essentialist perceptions of women in al-Arsuzi's political theory: nature vs culture

Al-Arsuzi brings us together to praise the introduction of liberal thought in his national doctrine. His national thought embraces the application of state, democracy and free society, in contrast to al-Husari and Aflaq's chief theorisation of the nation as a cultural and primordial entity. Al-Arsuzi introduces a civic conception of the nation based on highlighting the importance of achieving a political body: the state. His national theorisation further emphasises the need to adopt democracy and freedom in the process of nation-building. Suffice it to say that such notions are the outcome of the deep influence wrought upon him by his study of the French Revolution (Choueiri, 2001: 144). This attraction to French ideals might be attributed to his excellence in speaking French, and to his studying at the Sorbonne University. He came back to Syria in 1930 very influenced by the French Revolution and its principles. This, however, later caused him trouble with the French authorities for teaching the principles of French Revolution to his students in Syria.

The lack of scholarship tackling his work is attributed to the limited access to his early and later writings. However, his influence in the emergence of the Baʿth political system has been reconsidered, after Hafez al-Assad became president in the 1970s (Saba', 2005: 298). This is mainly because 'Assad needed an ideological preacher to further strengthen his rule over Ba'athist

supporters, so during 'Assad's appointment as the Syrian Regional Commander after the 1963 coup, and as Minister of Defence after the 1966 coup, he took al-'Arsuzi with him to meet soldiers and officers in the military. 'Assad's interest in al-'Arsuzi enlivened al-'Arsuzi's ideological stance, and in return, he wrote extensive ideological profiles on 'Assad in the Ba'ath periodicals (Saba' 2005: 270).This shift towards al-Arsuzi's national theory is not only important on the political level in the Syrian context, but also has massive implications on how women are imagined in Syrian society. Widely considered the father of the Baʿth ideology in Syria, al-Arsuzi is deemed by Dalal Elamir to be the most important leader to introduce the concepts of liberalism and nationalism in the Middle East (2010:66). It is therefore important to interrogate the perceptions of women in his theory.

Being an advocate of the civic construction of the nation, in which the idea of nation-formation transcends the realisation of the cultural identity of the nation, to the establishment of the state through means of applying democracy, free elections and freedom (1973: 321).[22] In light of this civic conception, the significance of al-Arsuzi's political writings lie in his preoccupation with constructing a theology of free society unprecedented by al-Husari and Aflaq. Therefore, the related question is where do al-Arsuzi's primordialistic and civic conceptions situate women in relation to the state and society?[23]

Al-Arsuzi's overemphasis on the role of philology in constructing the nation, makes the analysis of his national concepts and use of language highly important. Taking into consideration how he used philology to form his national theory, I shall examine al-Arsuzi's perception of women through a deconstruction of the language of his national theory, coupled with his insistence on state and democracy as the only viable means for constructing a national community. In other words, this section aims to examine the ideas of al-Arsuzi regarding women, particularly in relation to their nature, education, and place in the social and political order.

Emasculating the nation: A-Arsuzi, women, and society

In pursuit of an egalitarian political society and a constitution of freedom and democracy, al-Arsuzi proposes a conflicting perception of the emergence of nation and nationalism.[24] While his preoccupation with the idea of civic nationalism seemed paramount in his national narrative (1973: 47-48, 228-229),[25] he could not transcend the romanticised idea of the nation. In light of such a perception, al-Arsuzi is not different from al-Husari or Aflaq in defining the nation as an extension to the family, however, his views reflect more essentialist and misogynistic views on women. While Aflaq and al-Husari disregard the question of women in their theorisations, al-Arsuzi devotes a substantial part of his writings to what defines a natural woman and a natural man. It may well be considered one of his most fundamental principles that nature is the source of the structural order in nation and society.

From the very beginning, al-Arsuzi's conceptualisation of the nation (*ummah*) takes us to how he perceived the role of the mother (*umm*). His preoccupation with philology—the roots of the words—forms the basis of his ideological views on the roles of women in state and society. Al-Arsuzi identifies belonging to the nation with the naturalistic love born out of the mother-son relationship. This justification of national love articulates both a cultural and primordialistic[26] conception (213). According to al-Arsuzi, the nation as a cultural entity is sustained by the love of its sons. However, perceiving the nation as a fraternity deprives women of equal representation in the nation. In this sense, the emphasis on the role of grandfathers (*ajdād*) and sons (*abnāʾ*) in preserving the cultural identity of the nation further complicates al-Arsuzi's perception of women.

Al-Arsuzi stresses that the nation is based on the "natural sympathy among brothers, in the same way that the creation of the family is based on affection among kin" (: 247). Following Aflaq and al-Husari, al-Arsuzi conceptualises national belonging as preceding any philosophical or theoretical knowledge

(341), which means that national love is unconditional and uncontrolled. According to al-Arsuzi, the nation is not only an extension of the family from "a spiritual perspective", the resemblance between the family and the nation also lies in the duties assigned to the 'brothers' (*ikhwān*) of the nation (344). This suggests that in both the family and the nation, man is considered the sovereign, the leader, and the superior. More importantly, this politicisation of the cultural and familial sphere warrants an examination of how al-Arsuzi conceives the relationship between men and women.

In a separate chapter of his book (The Full Works) '*Muʾallafāt al-Kāmilah vol2'*, titled "Family" {*al-Usrah*), al-Arsuzi outlines the importance of integrating the role of the family in the formation of the nation. This is strikingly different from how al-Husari and Aflaq conceived the notion of family in their theorisations. Al-Arsuzi defines the family as held together by bonds of fraternal love. In the course of expressing the role of the family, we are reminded of the sexist perceptions appointed to men and women by al-Arsuzi:

> The family (*usrah*) as a unit is based on men and women. Man in this natural entity symbolises the ideal figure, as he becomes the role model for his sons. The mother, overflowing with emotions, fuels her sons with emotions. The gentleness of women, and the tendency of men to control and show mutual sympathy between brothers is what formulates a family environment that is full of life. In such an atmosphere, the people are trained to carry out public duties … In such an atmosphere, the mother blooms with tenderness and mercy, and the father practices what he is naturally born into; that is his inclination for sovereignty and the administration of justice … In such an atmosphere, all members enjoy freedom, the freedom to tackle the duties and problems of life (304).

Al-Arsuzi's words stress that every sex is assigned a different role that is suited to their nature. A closer analysis of the linguistic labels used by al-Arsuzi reveals his masculinist conceptions. Al-Arsuzi refers overtly to both men and women, which subsequently asserts the prevalent assumptions about the different functions of the two sexes. Despite this clear reference to gender, it is openly asserted that man is responsible for administering justice. This hierarchal and patriarchal understanding of the family subsequently incites a hegemonic perception of the nation.

Al-Arsuzi conceives the nation as an arena that regulates the relations between rulers and those who need to be ruled. This hierarchal conception is exemplified in his reference to the two terms "mother" (*umm*) and "leader" (*imām*). On the one hand, the mother is deemed by al-Arsuzi not only to be the origin of life in the family – in as much as she reproduces the sons of the nation – but also to symbolise "the image of the nation." Yet, al-Arsuzi emphasises that the "leader"[27] is the one who leads and rules the nation and the family (333). According to al-Arsuzi, a man *naturally* symbolises sovereignty and justice, while a woman is *naturally* defined by her *function* in relation to the man. In such an argument, al-Arsuzi determines the distinctive moral standards of men in applying reason and justice to both the private and the public spheres. Nonetheless, qualities such as tenderness and submissiveness, which are prescribed to women establish a certain emotional superiority. This is evident in the justification that such a differentiation of gender roles contributes to the realisation of freedom. This leads us to question the gender-inclusivity of the concept of freedom in al-Arsuzi's doctrine.

Women as producers of national boundaries: curtailing women's choices

According to al-Arsuzi, the family has a significant role in nation-formation. For this reason he considers the family as a synonym for "humanity". However, the "evolution of the family towards superior humanity" (305) is based on controlling

women's choices of their future husbands In this context, al-Arsuzi considers controlling who a woman marries essential for formulating a nation of a superior race. In spite of his claim that his doctrine is not a racial one, when it comes to a woman's freedom to choose her partner, al-Arsuzi adamantly justifies full control over her choices (305). In this sense, while al-Arsuzi seems conscious of women's role as markers of national boundaries, this recognition is accompanied by depriving women of their freedom of choice.

One might wonder whether al-Arsuzi's opposition to mixed-race marriages encompassed both men and women. Significantly, the overt reference to the 'danger' of mixed marriages only pertains to women. Given the hierarchal structure of al-Arsuzi's conception of family and the nation, it can be discerned that the chastity of the woman is yet another masculinist construction which is used and justified to control women's choices. Using rather racist language, al-Arsuzi articulates his view that the child born to such mixed-race marriages is a "disgusting" (*muqrif*) "half-caste" (*hajīn*) (307). His proposal for the regulation of marriage and breeding reflects the priority of maintaining the purity of the race in constituting the natural boundaries of the nation.

Such notions instill aggression and racism in the Syrian and Arab national context. Yet beyond this enforced naturalness, al-Arsuzi furthers his argument in the course of constructing an ideal national identity through claiming that any marriage to a foreign man will lead to physical and psychological deficiency in the crossbred child (305-6). He argues that this child is doomed to fail culturally and socially, and even compares him to "parasites" (*ṭufayliyyāt*), in a bid to affirm that this child will never be able to be independent or responsible. In the course of this argument, the woman is solely regarded as a means for breeding a superior race, and that only if married to local men. In this sense, it is only logical to presume that al-Arsuzi's anti-miscegenetic[28] views are the roots of the deprivation from Syrian

women of the right to pass citizenship to their children if they marry non-Syrians.[29]

Such an argument is advocated by al-Arsuzi in pursuit of the highest convention of the nation, which is a "pure" family of superior race. In his emphasis on the significance of painting the ideal "image of the Arab family," al-Arsuzi resorts to the conceptualisation of the hierarchal order within the family (307). By conceiving that the family is natural, al-Arsuzi implies that its existence is pivotal for the satisfaction of the man. This is reflected in his argument that the man is naturally "superior to the woman" in the formation of the family (307). Interestingly, al-Arsuzi further attributes the superiority of the father in the family to the philological source of the term '*abb*' (father) to be identified in its pronunciation to the term 'up' in English, therefore, he concludes that the word 'father' in Arabic symbolises 'highness' (*iʿtilāʾ*) and 'eruption' (*haiajān*) (308). Al-Arsuzi justifies this linguistic association with the superior role of the man in controlling the private sphere.

On the subject of the function of women, al-Arsuzi identifies the central role of the female as attracting the man to perform her function in reproducing sons for the nation. In another chapter titled "Woman" (*al-Marʾah*), al-Arsuzi subjects women to what he claims are natural constraints. Supporting his argument with philology again, he claims that the term "*sayyid*" (master) originates from "*asad*" (lion), highlighting the sovereignty of the man. This is also in line with the man's natural function to be the breadwinner of his house. al-Arsuzi even associates the linguistic meaning of the term "*sayyid*" with the man's inclination to "protect his house." On the other hand, the woman is inclined by her nature to "stay in her sacred (*al-muqaddas*) home" (311). This association between sacredness and the home sustains an essentialist conceptualisation of women's role. Furthermore, the potential of the woman is seen in her nature to arouse the man sexually, which in turn, secures a well-ordered moral and intellectual life for the man (311-312). This is evidently to be juxtaposed with how al-Arsuzi examines the philological meaning of

the term 'femininity' (*unūthah*), associating it with "stillness and silence" (*sukūn*), which in turn symbolises her natural love for "stability and settlement" (*istiqrār*) (311).

Even though this traditionalist view gives women a national function in producing a well-ordered "image of the Arab family" (307), regarding the family as a natural and pivotal institution in the nation has defined women by their sexual functions. Within this context, al-Arsuzi concludes that the woman is defined by her role in arousing the man sexually, so that she may fulfil her natural function of reproducing sons for the nation (309-310). Perceiving the woman as the guardian of chastity and morality is reflected in her function to preserve her purity for the man, so that society sustains its moral standards. According to al-Arsuzi, in such an "historical moment, the woman completes the terms of her function … if she helped the man to do his public responsibilities. She would ingrain in him the sense of chivalry and prevent those who represent politics from shabbiness and villainy" (312). Al-Arsuzi considers the sexual purity of women the sole means of helping male politicians preserve the characteristics of manhood. He also insists that women are made for "love" (*ḥubb*) and "docility" (*wadāʿah*) (308, 311, 310). In accordance with such essentialist features assigned to women, men are conversely perceived to possess limitless potential. Al-Arsuzi conceptualises women's functional potentials of "sensuality" that would "fire the man and fill in him "imagination", which subsequently would turn the man into an "artist" (*fannān*) and a "hero" (*baṭal*) (312-3).

Women as transmitters of masculinist culture and traditions

The Syrian writer of freedom and equality has hardly considered man and woman to share the same human values. Nonetheless, his notions implicitly undertook the assumptions of the origin of inequality between man and woman by the hierarchal categorisation of men and women to respectively represent the dichotomised spheres, public and private. By entrenching patriarchal privileges, al-Arsuzi argues that the "practical duties of the

woman, the responsibilities in which she completes her function and accomplishes her identity is through being a housewife. She should organise everything about house to make it a perfect place for the man to rest after accomplishing his tiring duties in the public life" (313). He continues that "the woman does her duties through turning the house to a national fireplace where children learn about the heritage of grandfathers" (313). It is important here to note that al-Arsuzi, unlike Aflaq and al-Husari, is conscious of the woman's cultural role in preserving the culture, tradition and the heritage of the nation. However, this recognition is limited to the essentialist perception of women. This is evident in his argument that the mother, through using her motherhood instincts, shall ingrain the cultural identity of the generation without the least focus on how to improve her role to extend the confinement of the private sphere. In a more clear manner, al-Arsuzi asserts that woman's happiness is achieved through "preserving her feminine nature and cooperating with the man to achieve what her nature entails from art and virtue" (313). It is very palatable in this context that al-Arsuzi considered the essential character of woman as determined by being the servant of man's needs, whether in fulfilling his sexual need, reproducing the new generation, or easing his tiring days of public life.

Are women citizens?

The interesting thing about al-Arsuzi's views on women is their inherent contradiction. While he extensively defines the woman in terms of accomplishing what he claims is her natural function, he simultaneously expresses the need for integrating women into state affairs (314-6). However, al-Arsuzi's encouragement of women's participation in the national construction is at odds with his emphasis on the functionalist character of women earlier. More importantly, women's participation in the public sphere is conditioned on conforming to al-Arsuzi's perceptions of modern, secular dress. He openly attacked women's choice to don the headscarf (*ḥijāb*) and considered wearing it a reactionary

act (314-315). It later becomes clear that stressing the need for women to receive education and participate in public life is bound by al-Arsuzi's ideological motives. His aggressive attack on the *ḥijāb* is no wonder a manipulation of what the large religious sect of Syrian women believe in (ibid).

What may appear to be the seeds of liberal views on women becomes entirely misogynistic again when al-Arsuzi claims that the "ingenious man" (*al-ʿabqarī*) is rather independent and does not need the woman in his life (316). According to al-Arsuzi, this ingenious man is superior to both what he calls normal men and women who have an average level of intelligence. This hierarchal categorisation of men resonates with both al-Husari and Aflaq's earlier representations, but the relevant point here is that al-Arsuzi, even after claiming the need for participation in the public sphere by a particular type of women,[30] still hardly regards them as intellectuals (316). He further contends that this "ingenious man masterfully administers the rules that build the national society, whereas the women reproduce sons so that life continues'' (316). These words, which follow al-Arsuzi's seemingly modernistic views[31] on women, again position women as inferior to men.

Another demonstration of al-Arsuzi's perception of the subordinate status of women is reflected in his conclusive remarks on marriage. In the course of emphasising the superiority of the "ingenious man", he furthers a hierarchal assumption by claiming that this ingenious man is better off not marrying the woman. He argues that the ingenious man does not need the woman, as his superior nature encompasses the dichotomised characteristics of males and females. However, al-Arsuzi continues to stigmatise women in stating that "the woman cannot live without the man" (316).

Within this context, it seems that al-Arsuzi fell short of advocating true equality and freedom for women. It becomes clear that al-Arsuzi's writings on women are covertly concerned with men's preferences rather than women's social and political choices. Thus, even though women are included in al-Arsuzi's

theorisation, their role is restricted in both the private and public spheres. At the private level, al-Arsuzi advocates the regulation of women's sexuality and breeding and stresses that her natural role is to serve the man. At the public level, he confines his modernistic views to those women who conform to his ideological perceptions.

Throughout al-Arsuzi's argument, the nation is conceived as a brotherhood. Suffice it to say that al-Arsuzi considers the creation of the ideal family central to ingraining national solidarity and sympathy among brothers. Al-Arsuzi is preoccupied with constructing an ideal family based on realising the satisfaction of the brothers in the nation. This satisfaction is supposed to be the responsibility of the woman in the family, wherein her submissive function ensures the fulfilment of the man's role in the public sphere.

In al-Arsuzi's liberal notion of the state, and in his conception of how to rule the state, he affirms that the administration of the state is based on cooperation among men. In his own words: "Why not the *human being* (*insān*) has the right of ruling his state, as a *citizen (muwāṭin)*, the cooperation among brothers (*ikhwān*) to practice their right in fighting against despotism…, thereby confirming their determination to live" (323). The significance of al-Arsuzi's linguistic choices must not be overlooked: while the terms "human being" and "citizen" are gender-neutral, they are paradoxically equated with the masculine term "brothers". This argument cannot be understood in isolation from al-Arsuzi's cultural conception, wherein the democratic state can only be achieved through the 'brothers of the nation' *(ikhwān al-ummah*) (324). According to al-Arsuzi, this cultural construction is realised through reviving the heritage of the nation, but this relies on a monolithic perception, based on commemorating the heroic past of fathers and grandfathers (324).

The impact of al-Arsuzi's Baʿthist perceptions on Hafiz al-Assad outweighed that of Aflaq due to reasons pertaining to the ethnic origin of both (al-Assad and al-Arsuzi) (Seale, 1989:27).

Such preferences to al-Arsuzi's national ideology by al-Assad foreground the misogynistic conceptions of women's potentials in both the private and the public spheres. Thus, it does not take long for the reader to realise that the inclusion of women in the public sphere in al-Arsuzi's ideology is merely hypothetical. For, in order to make a real effort to emancipate women in the public sphere, there must be major changes in the way women are envisaged as naturally born to serve men's needs. Women become fated to fulfil their functions in the private sphere, which in turn become their most defining feature.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the considerable neglect of women's contribution to nation-formation in the early period of the three Syrian pioneers, al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi. It has reviewed the main currents of Syrian national thought on nation and nationalism in extensive detail, analysing and deconstructing the traces of masculinist ideologies in national narrative. The analysis takes into consideration the two phases of the evolution of Syrian national ideas: the cultural and the political. While emphasising the cultural identity of the nation, the three thinkers were concerned with two key notions. The first was conceptualising the nation as a family which in turn naturalised the non-voluntary belonging to the nation. The paradoxical nature of this enforced belonging is that it is measured by masculine qualities.

In the cultural phase, the correlation between national love and familial love perpetuated the construction of a national identity based on the ethos of enforced militarism and masculinity. The configuration of the nation as a familial entity has been considered by Syrian ideologues as a substitution, which consequently constructs the man as a patriarch in the private sphere and a male fighter in the public sphere. More importantly, this correlation legitimated the transmission of patriarchy from the sphere of the family to that of the public (Wedeen, 1999: 52).

Although these thinkers articulated this correlation between the family and the nation, each of them conceptualised its impact

on constructing cultural identity differently. For example, al-Husari considered the family a marginal institution in the nation. His disregard for the private sphere is evidenced by the way he perceived language, history and education. He relied on the public sphere in ingraining national sentiments and substituted the role of family with schools and later the military barracks. In the same vein, Aflaq stressed that love for the nation starts in the family but disregarded the role of mothers in his theorisation and reinforced the construction of physical strength as a definer of the nation and the Baʿth. On the other hand, al-Arsuzi took a strikingly different approach, extensively considering the family a necessary institution in the nation. Yet this conscious inclusion of the family in his national doctrine only reinforced the subordinate position of women in both the nation and the family. In his inclusion of the question of women in his theory, al-Arsuzi justified the subordinate position of women in both state and society by objectifying women as men's own possessions. Al-Arsuzi perceived women as sexual objects and servants to the man in both the private and the public space. This essentialist view of women is in line with the process of normalising militarism and masculinity in the Syrian national narrative as expounded by al-Husari and Aflaq. Moreover, al-Arsuzi's conscious appreciation of the role of mothers as cultural producers incited coercion and hegemony over women's choices.

The second key notion in the three thinkers' work is concerned with the construction of a unified conception of history. Suffice it to say that this narrative has been saturated with references to men. The social construction of memory in these narratives focused on masculinist discourses, through which memories are shaped to formulate the imagination of fatherland. In fact, this glorification of sacrifice is associated with prototyping militarised men, thereby accumulating a selective history defined by the heroic deeds of men only. Hence, the narratives of al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi masculinised time by projecting men as embodiments of the nation's glorious past and continuing

to project them as having autonomous, revolutionary and infinite impacts on nation's present and future.

This study has also employed Nira Yuval-Davis' five identifications of women's contribution to nation-building. However, al-Husari and Aflaq substituted women's cultural, social and political contribution to the nation with considering men to be guardians and markers of cultural group membership. Al-Arsuzi, on the other hand, included women in his theorisation, but with essentialist, sexist views of women's role. While women are conceived as transmitters of traditions and culture, these traditions are channeled through a masculinist prism to retell the ethos and ideals of the heroic deeds of men.

We have seen that all three thinkers identified the nation as a cultural entity and called for preserving the cultural identity of the nation. However, both Aflaq and al-Arsuzi sought to construct a civic understanding of the nation through establishing a political ideology to governs the state; namely, the Baʿth Party. On the one hand, Aflaq constituted heroism, masculinity, and militarism as the basis of his political ideology. Moreover, he asserted that the construction of the Baʿth Party was synonymous with constructing the ideal Baʿthist fighter. Al-Arsuzi, on the other hand, introduced concepts of free society and democracy as essential for constructing the national state. He conceptualised the "people" as political citizens, but conceived women as inferior to men. Although civic notions can be traced in the narratives of the two thinkers, they both subscribe to a legacy of domination and perpetuation through internalising militarism, patriarchy and masculinism in the construction of their nationalist concepts.

To this end, having interrogated the early emergence of the idea of nation and nationalism in Syria, this study has paved the way for reconceptualising the construction of masculinism in national narrative. Uncovering the dominant national concepts in the Syrian context can also reflect how the concepts of citizenship, rights, and responsibilities, are constructed in the Syrian

Constitution(s) (Aldoughli, 2016a). Furthermore, this imposition and normalisation of militarism in the national narrative has perpetuated a hierarchy that obstructs the elimination of the gender gap in the Syrian constitution and legislation (ibid). Therefore, this detailed analysis of the national theories of al-Husari, Aflaq and Al-Arsuzi opens the door for future studies to investigate how militarism, belonging, struggle, and history, feature in perpetuating gender hierarchy in Syrian public discourse.

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Endnotes

[1] Henceforth al-Husari, Aflaq and al-Arsuzi respectively.

[2] For further reading on the evolution of these two diffusionist schools of thought: the cultural and civic construction of the nation, see (Aldoughli, 2016).

[3] For further reading on the importance of investigating the role of national narratives in perpetuating masculinism in state policies, see Okin's study of Western national philosophy and the influence of its narrative on different countries such as France and UK.

[4] Roy Foster affirms the centrality of 'narrative' in constructing 'nationality' as it evolved over history. He states: 'The idea of nationality as a narrative is becoming a cliché: but it is not a cliché of recent creation, fashionable as it has been in the work of various postmodern critics' (1998: 38). His article is a case study of Ireland.

[5] This short article demonstrates the construction of patriarchal militant identity in the Syrian Constitution(s) as influenced by both the cultural and civic nationalist elements that shape Syrian national thought.

[6] This alliance between nationalism and gender bias has been widely considered by prominent theorists. For further reading see: Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (London: Methuen London Ltd, 1988), p. 21; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.2-6; Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (London, England: University of California Press, Ltd.), pp, 2, 5-6; Tamar Mayer, *Women and the Israeli Occupation: the politics of change* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.1-15; Pateman, Carole, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), p.4; Jennifer Heuer, 'Gender and Nationalism', in *Nations and Nationalism: A Global Historical Overview 1770-1880* (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc.), pp. (43-47), 43-58.

[7]This forceful belonging is also advocated through emphasising that speaking Arabic makes you an Arab. This in turn highlights the broad role of language from a definitive cultural means of formulating the nation to a tool for perpetuating coercion and hierarchy. In his own words*:* 'Every Arab-speaking people is an Arab people. Every individual belonging to one of these Arabic-speaking peoples is an Arab. And if he does not recognize this, and if he is not proud of his Arabism, then we must look for the reasons that have made him take this stand. It may be an expression of ignorance; in that case we must teach him the truth. It may spring from an indifference or false consciousness; in that case we must enlighten him and lead him to the right path. It may result from extreme egoism; in that case we must limit his egoism. But under no circumstances, should we say: "As long as he does not wish to be an Arab, and as long as he is disdainful of his Arabness, then he is not an

Arab." He is an Arab regardless of his own wishes. Whether ignorant, indifferent, undutiful, or disloyal, he is an Arab, but an Arab without consciousness or feeling, and perhaps even without conscience'. (Translation from Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton and Oxford, 2003), p. 72.

[8] Al-Ḥuṣarī makes a clear distinction between fatherland (*watan*) and nation (*ummah*): for him the nation (*ummah*) is 'a group of people' whereas the notion of fatherland 'basically, is a certain geographic land' (1985a: 23).

[9] The use of the masculine term is taken from al-Ḥuṣarī's narrative.

[10] Al-Husari defies the ethnic origin of the nation that it is composed of one race. For further readings on this see: Aldoughli, 2016.

[11] This is according to Davis (1997) analysis of women's role in national formation.

[12] This is evidenced in his emphasis on the role public institutions play in maintaining the cultural language of the nation. He enlisted some tools to preserve language which are through the influence of schools and teachers, and the churches and men of religion (1959, 72).

[13] This word is often used in Arabic to refer to young men, presumably from the age of 18 to their mid-thirties.

[14] This word is used to refer to men in mature age, between 35-55.

[15] It is worth noting that al-Ḥuṣarī's notions of education and school recur in many of his books, and are even occasionally repeated word-for-word. If anything, this confirms his strong views on the necessity of fostering a specific concept of nationhood, grounded first in schools and later in the military barracks.

[16] A thorough study of 'Aflaq's political philosophy, it is almost the only study to dedicate so much attention to Aflaq's national concepts, although it does not address the question of women. El-Attrache highlights the difficulty of conducting research related to the Baʿth party. In his own words: "The problems encountered in this research were the unavailability of documental materials and the scarcity of published Arabic books on the subject. In Syria, it is considered dangerous and often arouses suspicion to go to governmental offices and bureaus and ask for documents and papers. After the ill-fated six-day war of 1967, the Baʿth and Syrian officials have become even more cautious of anyone seeking written materials or asking questions concerning the Party and/or the government" (p. vi).

[17] While the term *al-shabāb* sometimes colloquially used to broadly mean youth, however, in the context of Aflaq's narrative it is addressed to young men as it is associated with the readiness to die for the nation and being military prepared.

[18] In fact, the notion that national love is on the same level as familial love was still dominated ʿaflaq's thought 37 years later. In a speech delivered in the opening of the 11th National Conference in 1977, Aflaq emphasises that

"the party is one family". He states: We feel that the sense of one family is predominant in the party, and this is very important for our national struggle''. For full speech, it can be found at: http://albaath.online.fr/VolumeV-Chapters/Fi%20Sabil%20al%20Baath-Vol%205-Ch11.htm

[19] For further reading on Aflaq's masculinist notion of the heroic past see his speech delivered on the 5th of April in 1943b (*In Memory of the Prophet*) in which Aflaq glorifies the heroic deeds of grandfathers and argues that remembering the heroic past will shape a heroic future (such as recalling the glorious past of Qutaybah and Ibn Nuṣayrand the age of al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn). It must be noted that this speech excessively uses the term '*rajul*' (mature man) signifying Aflaq's conception of a national community inclusive of men only: http://albaath.online.fr/Volume%20I-Chapters/Fi%20Sabil%20al%20Baath-Vol%201-Ch33.htm. See also:(*al-baʿth al-ʿarabī īradīt al-hayyat*) 1950 at: http://albaath.online.fr/Volume%20I-Chapters/Fi%20Sabil%20al%20Baath-Vol%201-Ch13.htm.

[20] In another speech delivered later in the 1974a *(al-mustaqbal lan yūbna ʾīla bi al-ʾīlm wa fī minẓār al-wihīdah al-ʿarabyyah)*, Aflaq evaluates the significance of education for the nation's future and the realisation of unity. While this speech reflects a distancing from militarism compared to Aflaq's past work, his words are still highly masculinist.

Aflaq salutes the scientific achievements of men and the extent to which these achievements will inspire the nation's future. of the fact that these achievements are confined only to men, coupled with his reference to scientists as 'heroes' and 'brothers' reinforces the association with 'manhood'.

At the end of his speech, Aflaq calls for scientific cooperation between Arabs in different countries. He directs his message to the 'Arab human being'. While this would seemingly encompass all Arabs irrespectively of sexual identity, Aflaq bases cooperation between 'Arab human beings' on 'brotherly love' and 'brotherhood':

'But I must tell you that I am simply and essentially proud of the Arab human being everywhere and of the Arab people who are the origin of tournaments and heroes, and that my heart skips with joy whenever I see brothers in different Arab countries who gather in an Arab country where they cooperate in a brotherly fashion for one common destiny' < http://albaath.online.fr/VolumeV-Chapters/Fi%20Sabil%20al%20Baath-Vol%205-Ch36.htm>

[21] This translation is according to Almaany translations site: http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A1%D8%A9/

[22] The chapter 'The Emergence of Nationalism in the Modern Ages' (nushu' al-Qawmiyyah fi al''usur al-hadiyytha) in Vol II. His proposition of national concepts: 'will', 'determination', 'state', 'consent' can be traced in pp. 321-323. Further references to this book will be given in parenthesis.

[23] For further readings on al-Arsuzi's primordialistic and civic conceptions of the nation, see (Aldoughli, 2016).
[24] By 'conflictual perceptions', I mean that al-Arsuzi perceives the nation as both a cultural and civic construct. In other words, he argues that the origin of the nation is primordial that is an extension of the family, but at the same time, he advocates the political establishment of the nation which proposes the need to establish a political state. His views transcend both Husari and Aflaq and shows a clear influence by the two conflictual schools of thought: the Germanic and the French. For further readings on the early emergence of the Syrian national thought in the narratives of Husaro, Aflaq and Arsuzi, see (Aldoughli, 2016).
[25] Further references to this source will be given in parentheses after the quotation.
[26] The term 'primordialistic' means that the origin of the nation is based on sharing the same language, history, culture and ethnic origin.
[27] He means the masculine guardian.
[28] The interbreeding of people considered to be of different racial types.
[29] According to the Syrian Nationality Act which was enacted in November 1969 under decree number 276, just after the ascendance of the Baath regime to power. For full read of the Nationality Law, see the link: http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d81e7b12.pdf
[30] Those who do not wear *hijab* (headscarf).
[31] By 'modernistic views', I mean his civic conceptualisation of the nation. Arsuzi's theorisations encompasses the importance of realising the political body of the nation; state. In this sense, he was one step ahead of his contemporary peers (Husari and Aflaq).

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