“IRHAL!”: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE ARAB SPRING

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Arab Studies

By

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Washington, DC
April 18, 2013
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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the explanatory power of Arabic dialects in describing why the ‘Arab Spring’ is a transnational regional phenomenon rather than an isolated local event specific to Tunisia or Egypt? Is the Arabic language (standard), or its colloquial variants (dialects), part of the explanation, and to what extent? In a December 31, 2011 YouTube posting, Al-Arabiya spotlights language as a critical component of the Arab Spring uprisings. In countries where certain kinds of speech and particularly anti-regime expression are monitored, regulated, and punishable by both legal and extra-legal means, an imperative like /irHal/ (MSA: ‘depart’) is interpreted by regime security apparatuses as action. Elliot Colla explains that the “slogans the protestors are chanting are couplets—and they are as loud as they are sharp.” This poetry is “not an ornament to the uprising,” but rather it is a veritable “soundtrack and also composes a significant part of the action itself.” In the Arab Spring uprisings, then, poets are warriors. Code choices about Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic (CA) in the context of the Arab Spring reflect Reem Bassiouney’s concept of “involvement,” a psycho-social objective related to the speaker’s intended level of audience engagement. Its corollary, “ideation,” is the “translation of this aim into different types of discourse.” In the Arab Spring, involvement is a choice the
chanter makes after determining a communicative aim and then decides upon a method of ideation, and finally arrives at a code choice based on her/his perception of the intended audience. This analysis argues that there is an illocutionary element at play in the “travel” of the revolutionary chants, and therewith its requisite sentiments and objectives, across Arab state borders. The chants are designed to increase public engagement and sustain the tenor of the uprisings in order to provoke the revolutionary movement, or action. The language of the Arab Spring is a critical form of action. The shouted slogans of the demonstrators take the form of couplets with predictable and simple rhyming patterns that set the tone and meter of the protests. These ‘couplet-slogans’ carry the sentiments and objectives of the revolutionaries across national borders, down streets and alleys, but also transmit the entitlement, the right, the messages, and the impetus to revolt into the mouths and feet of the public at large, but also into lexicons, syntaxes and synapses of spectators who, in turn, are driven to activism. In participating in a protest one understands her/his words to be a form of revolutionary activism, or involvement. In most cases, the language of the Arab Spring slogans has been colloquial Arabic, which, this research argues, contributes to the transnationalism of the uprisings because dialects are perceived to be the authentic speech of ash-sha’b (the people) and therefore travel more easily across borders. With the words of the people echoing across borders, revolutionary action is inspired. This analysis suggests that the chanter believes the revolution to be popular (sha’bi) and, while they perceive their audiences to be Arabs of all nationalities, they choose to speak and be moved by colloquial rather than
standard Arabic. While the regime speaks MSA, the protestors speak colloquial Arabic to engage locals and use MSA to interact with and spread the revolution regionally.
For my amazing wife, Balkis, and our new baby, little Arwa.
I devote to you both all my love and gratitude,
N. HARB MICHEL
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Chapter 1: Introduction & Relevance

“A revolutionary movement with such qualities and characteristics may bend in the wind but will not break, because its roots reach the very depth of the nation and it draws on the nation’s heritage and history and is inspired both from heaven and earth.”

Throughout the unfolding of the Arab Uprisings, or ‘Arab Spring’, scholars have debated and proposed various explanations for the ‘travel’ of the revolution beyond Tunisia into nearly every Arab state within a period of about six months. Among the posited variables have been the similarity of authoritarian politics from state to state, Islam or ‘Arabo-Islamic culture’ as a common denominator, comparable economic disparities and failures, the youth bulge, the purported ‘success’ of the Bush doctrine, the final fruition of Obama’s Cairo speech, and, of course, the argument that the Arab Spring is a Twitter and/or Facebook revolution. Few, however, have systematically investigated the role of language itself. This study endeavors to do just that by asking: Can the revolutionary sentiments and related reform objectives of the Arab Spring uprisings be explained, at least in part, by the ‘travel’ of a new Arabic socio-political argot?

In a February 2011 article in FP, Rashid Khalidi suggests that the Tunisian chant, ‘ash-sha’b yurid isQa:T an-niTHa:m’ (the people want the downfall of the regime), which featured prominently in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria and other locales, refers to all Arab peoples’ desire for region-wide change of the prevailing ancien régimes. Is Khalidi’s thesis feasible? To what extent are these uprisings the result of an ‘Arabic Spring’ wherein a new language of the people has enabled a regional referendum against incumbent Arab regimes? If ‘the Arabic language’ plays an important role, then which Arabic variety or varieties precisely? Does Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) play a different role than local Arabic dialects? What importance do activists and onlookers in the region

1 Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya, no. 11, November 1979 taken from Bengio (1998), pp. 17.
ascribe to the language of the uprisings? How have dialects fared at disseminating or carrying sentiments and objectives within and across Arab borders? How, or in what languages and dialects, are people discussing the goals of the Arab Spring, its history, present, and future, as well as its significance for individual and possibly collective identity? Is the (perceived or real) role of Modern Standard Arabic changing as a result or byproduct of the Arab Spring? Is the (perceived or real) role of Arabic dialects changing for that matter?

**Overview: The Target Data**

The data this research seeks to obtain is intended to address the aforementioned questions in the introduction, but also, more broadly, to contextualize and create space for the use of dialectical Arabic in academic research. For the specific purposes of this study, knowledge of dialectical Arabic is necessary to explore whether colloquial Arabic is better able to carry and convey the sentiments and related objectives of the Arab Spring.

The present research is interested in and oriented by the following set of inquiries: To what extent has language, both standard Arabic and colloquial variants, served as a transporter of revolution, or revolutionary sentiments and objectives, for ‘Arab Spring’ protest movements or uprisings, specifically in Egypt and Syria? And, to what extent, has, or why has language been such a successful vessel (“event-catalyst”) for collective indignation and its express ends of social change and political reform? How does this socio-political agent travel most effectively? Through dialectical or standard Arabic? What is the role of media, ‘official’, or regime-sponsored, and opposition? songs, slogans, chants, and calls? What is the new role of non-elite discourse? Non-elite documents? And are traditional media fully displaced by alternative forms of more direct communication, such as social networking media, pamphlets, chants, slogans, protest songs, popular poetry, or graffiti, and if
so, why? To what extent is language, including Arabic dialects, able to explain the transnationalism and durability of the ongoing Arab Spring uprisings in locations inscribed by severe violence as in the case of Syria? Exploring the responses to these questions and paradoxes will involve gathering and analyzing the words, phrases, and particularly politically charged lexical items (slogans, calls to unity, calls to protest, and imperatives that have traveled across states such as “irHall”) being developed in Arabic to interpret, perpetuate, or counter "reform".

This report will begin by presenting the most current debates concerning the use of linguistics to conduct political science analyses of Arabic-speaking societies. The literature review is used as a space for the development of the interdisciplinary, namely linguistic-political, theoretical legs upon which this research stands and moves through the various forms of data that will be interrogated, ranging from documents, digital archives, and Tweets, to personal interviews, and in-depth discussion of specific protest-chants, slogans, blogs, and websites dedicated to promoting or subverting the Arab Spring. The analytical sections of the paper take up questions of national and individual identity formation in the Arab Spring, challenge the notion of a “leaderless” regional movement, and argue for the expansion of the traditional definition of intellectual production to make space for linguistic activism in the Arabic variants deployed in the Arab Spring. The paper will then introduce the original research completed in Lebanon. A discussion of the qualitative methodology will precede the interview sections, which are capped off by a reflective précis on my time in Lebanon and prospective steps toward expanding this thesis into an eventual doctoral dissertation. The conclusion is a short interaction with some of the lingering theoretical questions forged in the literature review, and ends with several remarks and an advisement about the academic study of the demonstrators, armed fighters, and poet-warriors of the Arab Spring.
Interdisciplinarity: Linguistic, Political, & Semi-Statistical Analysis

The current research principally investigates and utilizes the growing corpora of primary sources made available by the Tahrir Documents project as well as cognate undertakings in Syria known variously as SyriaLeaks, syria-hurra.com, the pro-Assad Syria 360°, and sometimes EgyLeaks, along with internal blogs like Su:ri:ya al-Mundassa, and diasporic Arab intellectual blogs like Critical Muslims. The “revolution”, “politics”, and “solidarity” categories of documents are of particular relevance to this report as they rely heavily on rhetoric to foment solidarity and coordinate organized large-scale actions and mobilizations. The report uses the pan-Arab Internet information aggregator and Twitter mining device, R-Shief, to quantify frequencies of emerging language trends and lexical convergences so as to speculate about the resonance of the premises of the theory regarding the formation of a ‘language of revolution’ as an explanatory variable, or transporter of revolutionary political thought, for continued regional conflagration.

The investigation of the aforementioned documents, archives, and interviews requisites an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to interpret the implicature of words, phrases, and particularly politically charged lexical items, as well as illocutionary slogans, calls to unity, calls to protest, speeches, and imperatives that have traveled across states, languages, and dialects. This research thereby employs the semi-statistical approach by incorporating a range of elementary to more advanced critical discourse analytical tools like Aralex, Arabic newspaper aggregators, and R-Shief.

4 For R-Shief see: http://www.r-shief.org/. It is, of course, necessary to understand the Arab Spring at a state, or atomistic, level but taken en toto these separate events lend themselves to comparative analyses due to their empirical, apparent synchrony and dialogical nature.
Chapter 2: Addressing Lacunae: A Review of the Relevant Literature

The Case for Linguistic Analysis of the Arab Spring: How Speaking is Stance-Taking

While the literature on Arab nationalism is vast and varied, most have argued that language is an important “component” or “marker” of Arab national identity to the extent that this category has internal resonance throughout the Middle East and North Africa.5 However, analytical treatments of Arab political movements and the role of language as a carrier or conveyor of shared, organized sentiment remains largely ambiguous with respect to area studies and technical linguistics.6

In large part, as demonstrated in the relevant writings of authors such as Laipson, Gause, Anderson, and Bayat, among others, these lacunae are part and parcel of a general and longstanding reticence within academia toward interdisciplinary methods—this has taken an unduly critical toll on the field of Middle East, or Arab area studies.7 Ironically, more ink is devoted to describing the problems and deficiencies in Arab studies, even after and during the events of the Arab Spring, than is toward proposing novel approaches or simply producing less or differently deficient work.8

5 Especially Al-Kindi (2002) and Suleiman (2003).
6 Ibid; For an overview of technical linguistic approaches, the combinatorial system, and the genealogy and generation of lexica and syntaxes, see Steven Pinker (1999), Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language—“The human language system also appears to be built out of two kinds of mental tissue. It has a lexicon of words, which refer to common things such as people, places, objects, and actions, and which are handled by a mechanism for storing and retrieving items in memory. And it has a grammar of rules, which refer to novel relationships among things, and which is handled by a mechanism for combining and analyzing sequences of symbols” (pp. 12-13).
8 Ibid
Anderson's aforementioned piece, as well as Laipson's, call to mind the familiar axiom that hindsight is 20/20—while each analysis approached the inquiry of how best to account for the Arab Spring in a distinct manner and with different foci, both authors clearly benefitted from the ability to reflect on events that have passed and both express some degree of vexation over the inability to have predicted what Bayat presciently terms "refo-lutions".9 Anderson's treatment of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya is comparable to the project of Chomiak and Entelis that examined Morocco and Algeria in that she too sought to excavate the genealogies of the revolutionary moments of Arab states that experienced uprisings.10

In many ways, Anderson's article is more conventional in taking up an historiographical method rather than questioning the undergirding a priori of the scholars and analysts of the region who may have been, arguably, more fixated with the facile notion of perpetual Arab authoritarianism—the now-debunked international relations lore of "Arab exceptionalism"—than the ever-fluctuating realities in Arab societies. In this way, Laipson's contribution to the seeming paradox of the Arab Spring is the most productive; it does not falter in identifying the obstructions that impeded scholars and political analysts from interrogating the complex histories of Arab societies in resisting authoritarian rule.11 There was evidently very little interest in, or perhaps awareness of, the constant and variegated streams of Arab opposition to autocratic, top-down rule. As the Arab Spring continues to unfold and the thuwwaar of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and other states face the relentless challenges of "transition", Laipson's call to interdisciplinarity must be heeded by the academic and analytic communities; so too must Bayat's

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9 Ibid
10 Ibid
11 Ibid
advisements regarding the revolutionary road to reform be taken seriously by Arab reformers in the region and the students thereof in the United States and around the world.

This analysis seeks to then engage in an interdisciplinary approach to the question of the language of revolution and the politics of reform in the Arab Spring. The literature in Arab studies on “change,” “reform,” “democratization,” “revolution,” and “national identity” is relevant to this framework in that it forms a backdrop and necessary context for applying the linguistics tools of critical discourse analysis and interjecting the findings and theoretics of important socio-linguists.

From Chomsky to Lakoff, Suleiman, Kanafani, Abu-Lughod, Swedenburg, Khalili, and Colla, there is a long tradition of underappreciated interdisciplinary scholarship concerned with discerning the role of language in politics, sensus lacto, and the linguistics of political discourse. This analysis will therefore utilize components of these scholars’, and others’, work to configure a theoretical framework of revolutionary language, social activism, and the political discourse of reform. Not to discount the rhetoric of the authoritarian Arab regimes, counter-revolutionary tactics will also be interrogated in the present research. This framework serves as a veritable toolbox to investigate several primary source documents selected from the newly released banks of what this research refers to as “revolutionary documents” from Egypt and Syria. Documents, as opposed to printed conventional “texts”, were selected that demonstrated discernible popular attitudes either for or against “revolution” using rhetorical devices such as code switching and what Bassiouney terms stance-taking.12

What follows is a discussion of the pertinent questions that oriented this study, then an overview of the relevant theories, contributions, and instruments in the literatures pertaining to the

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Arab region with respect to Arab nationalism, “Arabic linguistics”, social change theory, the technical approaches of critical discourse analysis, and a discussion of political discourse in the Arab Spring context. Subsequently, the paper will address a range of selected revolutionary documents from Egypt and to a lesser extent Syria to test the premises of the theory of language as a vessel for sentiments and objectives of the Arab Spring. As a tentative conclusion, I will discuss possible responses to the questions posed in the Introduction & Relevance section of this paper.

**Locating & Assessing the Voices of the Arab Spring**

On March 11, 1968, Ghassan Kanafani explained in a lecture titled, “Thought on Change and ‘Blind Language,’” that “[t]he problem is not that we do not know, but that we do not permit those who do know to speak and to act. It is not that we are foreigners to the age, but that we have squandered and thwarted the younger generations who are themselves the bridge to the age.” The critical point in Kanafani’s discussion is that Arabs are capable democrats and able to win independence and, for Kanafani, specifically liberate Palestine, but, more generally, these objectives are only attainable if the youth are allowed to take their rightful position in politics and systems of governance—as Said might have put it, the people must be free to speak truth to power. Despite these implorations, discussions of the Arab Spring that started in January 2011 have examined the role of language only indirectly in terms of the prominence of media as well as social networking technology such as Facebook and Twitter. These interfaces or modes of communication are not in themselves as

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13 For these purposes, “Arabic linguistics” will serve as a general category for all instances in the literature under review of authors variably interested in the role of language in Arab politics, cultures, and media. Notwithstanding, the present research will also investigate some of the more formal definitions and tools of the field of Arabic linguistics.

14 There are simply fewer available primary sources from Syria—it is notable that Syria is very much still in the midst of what many are calling a civil war. It is reasonable to expect less of the sort of ‘document activism’ taking place in post-Mubarak Egypt. EgyLeaks, for example, which is in reality a store of leaked Syrian documents, has been deactivated and all users have been removed. No documents remain.

relevant as the linguistic transmissions they facilitate. Analyses of the per capita access to communication media, the Internet, and social networking technology in Arab states have failed to produce reliable interpretive frameworks. The question therefore remains as to the implications of language usage in the still unfolding Arab Spring. This research proposes that one possible outcome of a linguistic analysis of the Arab Spring is the exposition of a rich world of intellectual discourse that is otherwise undetectable through traditional approaches to academic research and historiography.

These ‘undetected’ stores of relevant data are largely digital or only present in the hidden transcripts of everyday unpublished, undocumented chatter. Oftentimes the digital archives or blogs are difficult to access because they are targeted for elimination by the authoritarian regimes undermined by the uprisings. Since January 2011, multiple activist groups across the Arab region have set out to compile and publish documents, pamphlets, announcements, and other linguistic paraphernalia that this analysis will treat summarily as the intellectual production of the Arab Spring.

Situating and responding to the orienting questions of this study, necessitates an overview and investigation of the discursive elements and socio-political repercussions of these evolving, organic digital archives, which wittingly or unwittingly comprise a rich ad hoc primary source literature on the intellectual discourse of the Arab Spring as well as the travel of the language of revolution/uprising (intifada). This report refers to these artifacts as wathaa'iq ath-thowra (‘revolution[ary] documents’). In the wake of the Arab uprisings (intifada), subversive progressive groups in nearly every Arab state, as well as Arab intellectuals, in diaspora, have established online presences and banks of leaked documents (wathaa'iq musarrah) à la WikiLeaks. As such, it is not clear how long these primary sources will remain readily available. This is therefore a critical time to
conduct academic and interdisciplinary explorations of these intellectually, socially, and politically subversive materials. A cogent selection of these facsimiles shall form the basis of this report’s sociolinguistic project to scrutinize said documents made available, perhaps only temporarily, by Egyptian and Syrian activists that demonstrate the salience, symbolism, and functionality of “revolutionary language”. This approach aims to be more resonant with the impromptu, digital, and non-, or perhaps anti-elite, nature of the Arab Spring revolutionaries’ strategies of communication and modes of intellectual production. This stands in contradistinction to the existent and increasingly outmoded literature on theory or culture that Laipson, among others, indicts for having failed to predict even the possibility of an Arab Revolution.

The current research, like Sheila K. Webster has, takes seriously improvised and planned Arabic neologisms, concocted proverbs, and re-jiggered idiomology of the Arab Spring chants and protest slogans but, unlike Webster, focuses upon a contemporary, or ongoing, diachronic interval and is specifically interested in regional political discourse trends during the Arab Spring. To shift focus onto the intellectual discourse of Arab Spring revolutionaries, this study relies on what Schopflin (1997: 26) termed “resonance” as a litmus test for the relevance of revolutionary documents and intellectual discourse items. According to Schopflin, however, “there are clear and unavoidable limits to invention and imagination” applicable when configuring such an interdisciplinary framework and so this research is grounded by the works of Arabic linguists, Reem Bassiouney and Yasir Suleiman—particularly their post-Arab Spring work on political language and

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16 For more on elite discourse, see Haddad’s analysis of Syria’s state bourgeoisie in Bassam Haddad, “Syria’s State Bourgeoisie: An Organic Backbone for the Regime,” Middle East Critique, Vol. 21, Issue 3 (Fall 2012).
18 See Anderson (2006), and The Arabic Language and National Identity, pp. 7.
identity. Still, Smith’s (1997: 56) rubric of the five fundamental features of national identity remain highly resonant in investigating the intellectual discourse of the Arab Spring: 1. An historic territory, or homeland; 2. common myths and historical memories; 3. a common, mass public culture; 4. common legal rights and duties for all members; 5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members. Smith describes this as a “peculiarly Western concept of the nation” and Suleiman explains that given this Western model, Arab nationalist construals would seem “misguided and bogus”. Suleiman argues that Arab national discourse is not yet about “Arab identity per se, but about an Arab national consciousness as a precursor to this identity.” Indeed, Smith’s five features closely parallel several of the major themes of Arab Spring revolutionary discourse, namely: “authenticity, rootedness, continuity, dignity and destiny.”

The present research therefore borrows Smith’s features of national identity and Schopflin’s resonance metric to argue for the relevance of Arabic political discourse, including colloquial Arabic items, as intellectual formation through language throughout the thus far open-ended period understood as the Arab Spring. In contrast, Webster underscored the central importance of language and verbal expression in “Arab culture” and within the Arabic language environment dating back to the pre-Islamic era without explicitly concerning herself with contemporary, urban dialects and developments of Arabic language usage as a social and political vehicle. She contends, rather, that language in the Arab Middle East is still a fundamental element of contemporary society, sensus lacto.

19 Ibid
21 *The Arabic Language and National Identity*, pp. 6-8.
22 Ibid
James T. Monroe (1972 and 1984) and Saad Abdullah Sowayan (1985: 110-113), among others, explicitly explored Arabic formulaic expressions, or proverbs, as a major mode of oral communication. Sowayan explains that formulaic expression is prevalent but he challenges the Parry-Lord theory in that Sowayan believes Nabaṭi poetry to vary from the formulaic to the more spontaneous. He maintains that, “‘orality’ does not always, or necessarily, mean ‘oral-formulaic,’ and that attempts to fit ancient Arabic poetry into this classification are in error.” Webster cites H.R.P. Dickinson’s somewhat arcane and essentializing observation that, “[t]he Arab is forever quoting proverbs or sayings of some poet or other, and he seems to enjoy this almost as much as story telling.” While such statements are disputable and contested, other scholars of Arabic paremiology and idiomology such as Mohamed Abdelkafi have sought to defend the notion that, “the [Arabs] make more use of proverbs than most other nations.” To return to Ghassan Kanafani, Kanafani specifically cites the importance of language, and even suggests his own neologisms, in the politics of the Arab region, particularly with respect to the terminology of intellectual traditions, and the schools and parties concerned with social and political reform. To incite political change, for Kanafani, who writes in the first person, “we” must unite, and must find

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26 *Ibid*


28 *Etymologically rooted in the Greek word “paroimia”, paremiology refers to the study of proverbs.


linguistic agreement; in other words, language precedes politics and political reform requires the formation of simultaneous, coherent, shared political discourse:31

Over the last ten years we have witnessed the birth of what we might call a ‘blind language’ (لغة ‘امية’) in the region and nothing has been more operative in our daily life than this blind language. The most significant words lost all meaning. There was no longer any specificity and each writer had his own private diction, using his words according to his own private understanding, an understanding that had no consensus and which thus meant nothing. The meanings carried by such conventional terms as ‘revolutionary,’ ‘Nasserist,’ ‘socialist,’ ‘justice,’ ‘democracy,’ and ‘freedom’ appeared in innumerable writings that we would read every day and although it seemed—from just observing these words and their widespread dissemination—as if there was some consensus on their meanings; in fact no one agreed with anyone else on their significance. We need urgently to re-evaluate these words, so that definite and meaningful specificities can be agreed upon. Such a step was similarly necessary for other peoples of the world at the end of the nineteenth century as they too stood at the threshold of an emergent age. The conventional terms have, however, become pure alienation for us and this mutual deafness leads only to a total absence of meaning in discourse.32

This suggests that Webster’s argument regarding the centrality of language in Arabic political discourse may indeed be defensible, albeit deficient sans socio-, neuro-, and cognitive linguistic studies. It is also problematic to offer a generalization about the importance of the Arabic language without referencing a discrete period, or, what this research refers to as a “diachronic interval”, to test the limits of the precepts of such a hypothesis.33 Still, one idea of Webster’s that the present research takes quite seriously, albeit not at face value, in light of the Arab Spring, is that in Arabic-speaking societies, “[t]he masterful orator, whether poet, conversationalist, politician or proverb user, garners respect through linguistic skill; the form and delivery of a message are at least as crucial as its content.”34

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31 “Thoughts on Change and the ‘Blind Language’”, pp. 144-145.
32 “Thoughts on Change and the ‘Blind Language’”, pp. 145-146.
33 For approaches to shared national identity that do not focus on language as conveyor and transmitter, see Khalili Laleh, “Virtual Nation: Palestinian Cyberculture in Lebanese Camps” in Stein, Rebecca L., and Ted Swedenburg. 2005. Palestine, Israel, and the politics of popular culture. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 138-139. Khalili discusses how “material media”, such as photos, kufiyas, collages, and flags, among other images, are “digitally reborn and fortify the semiotic language of a shared national identity… the Palestinian person-nation is married to symbolic and figurative representations of the land.”
34 Italics added for emphasis; taken from “Arabic Proverbs and Related Forms”. I do not argue that this is only true of Arabic-speaking societies and I do not intend to explore the notion further in this research as it is not pertinent to the topic at hand, namely how non-elite political discourse during Arab Spring uprisings can be understood to constitute relevant intellectual production.
The Linguistics of Political Discourse Analysis

While many have explored “language and politics” or the “language of politics” broadly, this phrase has also been narrowed by analysts who employ the concept of “political discourse” either technically, through applied discourse analysis methods, or more theoretically. The lesser-known history of “political discourse” as a subject of technical linguistics must be understood specifically and contingently to enable an interdisciplinary approach to the revolutionary documents of the Egyptian and Syrian iterations of the Arab Spring.\(^{35}\)

The term “political discourse” is traditionally employed in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to refer to “critical linguistics with the discourse of inequality and injustice; language behavior in situations of social relevance (institutions, media, minority problems, racism, etc.),” which is often studied with a view toward “uncovering inequality and injustice.”\(^{36}\) Similarly, political discourse in CDA is often seen as particularly relevant in “situations of war involving Threats [sic.] and acts of violence,” or “an imbalance of power,” wherein the media and its manipulation by the state is said to “clearly belong to this mandate.”\(^{37}\) In this way, in 2003, Dunne constructs her framework based on the works of Bakhtin, Scollon, Wilson, Billig, and others to analyze the political discourse of “democracy” in Egypt.\(^{38}\) In following linguist John Wilson’s cue, Dunne proposes that the best way to apply linguistics to political discourse analyses is to consider the effects, or “what (sic) speakers did in public discourse and


\(^{39}\) See Michele Dunne, \textit{Democracy in Contemporary Egyptian Political Discourse} (2003).
democracy and how they did it with language.  

Breaking from traditional molds, Blanchard, a cognitive linguist, posits that in political science and international relations studies, “discourse” is “no longer the monopoly of dissident critical theorists but is slowly gaining acceptance in qualitative methods circles.”  

This research is in agreement with the proposition that technical and theoretical linguistics, as well as cognitive linguistic, models and frameworks should play a serious role in political science analysis, especially in Arab Studies and the study of Middle East politics. While few have taken up the admittedly challenging task of combining political science theoretical frameworks with the methodology of discourse analysis (DA) or critical discourse analysis (CDA), Blanchard, Abdelal, and others have documented “[c]alls for its incorporation,” which perhaps “[signals] the acceptability of DA [discourse analysis] as method across diverse practices of academic political science,” among those researchers who have expressed a commitment to “variable oriented analysis.”  

Amid these analysts are linguists who construe of the linguistic constructivist approach in more technical terms, such as Klotz and Lynch (2007: 19).  

In the field of linguistics, cognitive and social, analysts who are concerned with political discourse, both abstractly and empirically, emphasize "categorization" and call or relate this term to 'similarity' and 'object recognition'. Adele Goldberg, the inventor of the model known as "Goldberg's Construction Grammar" (Constructions, 2003), posits Construction Grammar (CG) as the other major
school of cognitive linguistics that largely counters the approaches and findings of Noam Chomsky’s hegemonic Universal Grammar. The most active and well-known scholars of CG are Goldberg, William Croft (radical construction grammar), Benjamin Bergen, and Nancy Chang (embodied construction grammar) and they have not been as particularly concerned with political discourse as George Lackoff or Chomsky have been and continue to be. Goldberg’s work on CG was in response to Filmore, Kay, and O’Connor’s 1988 paper on ‘Construction Grammar’ but has not definitively questioned Chomsky’s notion of political discourse. These developments are relevant to my interest in the political discourse of the Arab Spring because the linguistic concept of categorization can help explain the associations and consequences of both regime rhetoric and anti-regime, or revolutionary and oppositionist, discourse. As political discourse analysis develops over time, it is critical that researchers of the Middle East and North Africa engage with linguists to track new approaches to Arabic political discourse and contribute to the creation of innovative theories and models based on Arab states and Arabic primary samples.

Lackoff, who has written many influential books on language and politics, made his greatest contribution to cognitive linguistics in 1990 regarding the two key commitments of cognitive linguistics, namely, he posits, cognitive semantics and cognitive approaches to grammar. Lackoff’s paper’s main thrust was the idea of the Generalization Commitment. This is where a split developed and cognitive linguistics departs from Lackoff’s approach. Whereas Lackoff argues for the importance of locating the most generalizeable principles possible that “apply to all aspects of human language,” cognitive

43 See Fillmore, C. (1982). Frame semantics. The Linguistic Society of Korea (Ed.), Linguistics in the Morning Calm (pp. 111-137). Seoul: Hanshin Publishing Co. In On Language, Chomsky defends the presence of a link between the study of language and political activities and analyses. However, there is a connection only on the “abstract level.” One way of understanding the argument he makes in his first chapter, Linguistics and Politics, is that political discourse is in fact shaped and affected by the egocentricity of human nature, thus rendering analyses subjective. Chomsky therefore talks about the role of intelligentsia in configuring political discourse. He argues that putative experts in certain fields—politics in this case—and their analyses of events and facts impact conventional wisdom and create “the ideological justification for social practice,” engaging people, their relations to one another, their relations to their surroundings, and their relations to the structures that constitute their surroundings. See Chomsky, Noam. On Language. The New Press, 1998 pp. 4.

linguistics' goals are traditionally more concerned with those principles that separate language by faculty: e.g. phonology, semantics, pragmatics, morphology, syntax, and other very nuanced 'mechanical aspects' of languages. Thus, the cognitive linguistics approach is more in line with 'formal linguistics' and Lackoff's approach is more similar to the UG project and is amenable to the purposes of political science or social analysis and is apt for developing a framework to more fully comprehend the resonances and consequences of the language of revolution in the Arab Spring.

That said, it may be artificial to distinguish construction grammar from UG because UG, also known as Generative Grammar, is so foundational that all types of linguistics that are based in formal linguistics are impacted by the paradigmatic works of Noam Chomsky (especially, 1965, 1981, and 1995), as well as Richard Montague, the linguist behind 'formal semantics' (1970, 1973). Cognitive linguistics, while it does concern itself with what separates languages, remains interested in the idea of 'prototype effects' (see Lackoff's 'Cognitive Models and Prototype Theory') in morphology (Taylor's paper in 2003), syntax (Goldberg again, her 1995 paper), and phonology (Jaeger & Ohala's 1984 publication). Lackoff's Idealized Cognitive Models (ICM) theoretics is rich with potentially political insights for analyzing the slogans, refrains, and demands of Arab Spring protestors in Egypt and Syria. An ICM, in linguistics, is a “concept (or cluster of related concepts) that define our knowledge of a category.” One must imagine, as Lakoff suggests, that people associate words with objects, or 'artifacts', based on a prototypical category within the observer-speaker's memory—“[a]t the center of an ICM are those features which most strongly characterize the category.” Busch cites one of Lakoff's famous examples of an ICM: “a bird has two wings, can fly, has a beak, etc.” While “bird” can encompass any number of real-world iterations,

46 Cann wrote an overview of these fields in 1993. For good reviews and critiques of these linguistics see papers by Vyvan Evans, Benjamin K. Bergen, and Jorg Zinken; my own remarks draw heavily from their reviews.
“[m]embers of a category which most strongly fit the definition imposed by the ICM,” on a largely subjective basis, “are called prototypes.”

A prototypical bird, then, for many people, might be “something like a sparrow or a robin.”

How then are certain prototypes created? And disseminated? While this is not the appropriate space to delve into neuro-linguistic theory, I contend that there is a strong social element, or an intersubjective communicative factor, enabled by language, the conveyor or internuncio, behind the traveling of innovative ideas, or even the stoking of a particular sentiment. In the case of the Arab Spring, the Idealized Cognitive Model is not “bird” but perhaps “thoωra”, “intiʃa:Da”, “isQa:T an-niTHa:m”, “iSlα:H”, or even “dimu:Qra:Tyyy”. These revolutionary lexemes are concatenated by the prototypical event-catalysts of Bouazizi in Tunisia, and Egypt’s thuwwaar maydaan at-Tahrir (Tahrir Revolutionaries). While the origin of “ash-sha’b yuri:d isQa:T an-niTHa:m” is disputed, there is a consensus in many online Arabic language forums that this key slogan that instantly became the theme of all Arab uprisings thereafter began in Tunis.

ICM builds on Fillmore’s 'semantic frame' notion and Langacker’s 'domains’—these ideas are key to Lackoff’s ICM as he concerned his model with categorization, which stems from the 1970s’ work on cognitive psychology more than ‘encyclopedic semantics’, which is concerned with how words are associated to banks of knowledge and specific contexts rather than the psychic processes involved in the

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49 Ibid; However, Busch also adumbrates Lakoff’s provisos to ICM prototypes: “Not all members of a category are prototypical, though. Some members deviate in just one or two ways, and some are barely recognizable as members of the same type. A chicken, for example, is less characteristic of our mental prototype of a bird -- it can't fly all that far, and the proportions of the body are rather different than those of sparrows or robins. Compared to ostriches, though, chickens are positively prototypical. What this means in practice is that: 1) categories are graded, and 2) the organization of mental models is radial (think of spokes on a wheel, but with some spokes longer than others).”


51 See annexes i-iii, and Norm Chart. In the field of cognitive linguistics, it is an expounded postulation that in order to comprehend any iteration of communication, phatic or other, one involuntarily and subconsciously appropriates a set of related social assumptions that corroborate the locution, be it speech-act or other utterance, and potentially morph the listener’s idiomodes of self-concept and self-presentation (See Lackoff & Johnson, 1980; Lackoff, 1995 from his book, Moral Politics for more on cognitive linguistics, self-concept and self-presentation).

categorization of artifacts into words according to ICMs or prototypes. Word clouds, as in figure 1, embody, then, the theoretics of categorization and encyclopedic semantics by displaying visually the relativity of lexical items in terms of proximity and frequency but also the ways words, or slogans, are commonly associated in a categorical semantic environment, such as the, this research argues, Arab Spring. To substantiate this claim, the next section will consider the events of 1/25/2011 in Cairo, Egypt’s Tahrir Square.

**The Role of Diglossia & Code Choice in Political Discourse Analysis**

Although an approach focused on the concept of language as an “event-catalyst” built upon analyses of the travel and levels of frequency of standard Arabic (MSA) phrases, chants, slogans, and imperatives is exceedingly helpful in addressing the main inquiry, the role of Arabic dialects requires special attention. This research therefore provides a more detailed articulation of the contributions of Arabic dialectology and sociolinguistics and its scholars’ findings to test, and strengthen, the premises of the argument that language is central to the travel of revolutionary sentiments and socio-political reform objectives.

Arabic dialectology is concerned, largely, with the distinguishing morphological,

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phonological and, for some, sociological, features of the many regional dialects of Arabic spanning the geography of Arabic-speaking societies from Mauritania to Anatolia and South Arabian colloquial varieties and beyond. While, according to Bassiouney (2009), Arabs have been aware of differences in dialect (lahjat wa lakna’t), this is a fairly recent science in Western literature. In fact, some argue that it was not until Charles Ferguson’s watershed 1959 book on diglossia that Arabic dialectology found its niche in Europe and the United States.\(^{54}\) What is diglossia? How has it developed as a concept? How is it being used? The following discussion addresses these questions.

Ferguson (1959) introduces the concept of diglossia through his discussion of “koine Arabic”, a coinage that he traces back to the work of Leiden (1957) and the Encyclopedia of Islam (1956). He differentiates ‘Arabiyya, or Classical Arabic, from spoken Arabic, which he posits existed alongside ‘Arabiyya “in many parts of Arabia,” and “diverged increasingly from this standard.”\(^{55}\) The spoken varieties of Arabic comprise, for Ferguson, something of a set of, what some today might call basilects or mesolects, while Classical Arabic holds a High acrolect status above the Low regional dialects—this seemingly epiphenomenal binary divide, albeit diachronic, forms the basis of Ferguson’s “diglossia” thesis.\(^{56}\)

According to the section on the “History of Arabic” in the Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics (EAL), diglossia is understood by linguists today to have either predated the rise of Islam, or, as argued by Blau (1977), it may have emerged as the result of the spread of Islam—“a consequence of the linguistic contact between Arabic and other languages.”\(^{57}\) Very little


\(^{55}\) Ferguson (1959), pp. 617.

\(^{56}\) Ferguson (1959), pp. 618.

\(^{57}\) “History of Arabic” in EAL, pp. 9.
evidence is available either way, however, and so this is a question relegated to historical linguistics yet without a discernible answer. On the concept of diglossia, there has been a great deal of scholarly progress, particularly as described by Bassiouney (2006)—Bassiouney affirms while re-analyzing Ferguson’s more stark dichotomy (viz. H-L), by treating ‘High’ and ‘Low’ as “two poles”, or “levels”.

**Code Switching (Multiple Voices)**

Language choices are negotiations of one’s perceived “rights,” or options in a given situation, and “obligations sets,” or perceived customs one must abide by, each with a history but quite original; their “history consists of the norms indicating to speakers how they can expect their choices to be interpreted (and how they interpret the choices to others).” Speech events are original in that they are ‘local’ constructions—speakers make their own choices.

Code-switching, in Myers-Scotton’s model, takes four forms: 1) sequential unmarked choices (Blom and Gumperz 1972) wherein a switch between marked varieties of a language to an unmarked variety is predicated by a change in the “salient social features of the situation,” such as a third-party native speaker of a different marked variety entering an exchange originally between two native speakers of the same marked variety (what Gumperz, 1982:131, referred to as a ‘contextualization cue’)—this is also called the ‘unmarked choice maxim’ (Scotton 1983:120); 2) switching as an overall...

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59 Bassiouney (2006), pp. 13, 14-15; “It may be that ‘pure H’ or ‘pure L’ does not occur very often, and that there are usually elements of both varieties in any stretch of normal speech, but still one has to consider a hypothetical pure H or L, in order to presuppose that there are elements that occur from one or the other in a stretch of discourse,” a point Bassiouney explains that Ferguson himself (1996) conceded (13). Still, Bassiouney explores the levels of Arabic further in her discussions of Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA) (see pp. 16-17), and “prestige” as a concept that helps better categorize and explain decisions of colloquial versus formal Arabic code-mixing throughout a stretch of discourse. Bassiouney provides extensive tests to demonstrate the explanatory power and resonance of the concept of prestige (21-25).
unmarked choice, wherein more than one social identity is salient for bilingual peers with respect to the rights and obligations balance but each identity is “encoded in the particular speech community by a different linguistic variety,” in which case “those two or more codes constitute the unmarked choice” and both, or more, carry social meaning.\footnote{Myers-Scotton (1986), pp. 406.} 3) Switching as marked choice occurs when a speaker makes a choice which is marked for a particular speech event to intentionally “change the expected rights and obligations balance in a conventionalized exchange”;\footnote{Ibid} this is understood as a “dis-identification with the status quo.” Examples of this include the use of a “learned word from a formal style” or inserting a French or Latin phrase (for an English speaker)—these are “marked choices” within a conversation taking place in an otherwise middle style of English and can simply be predicated upon the speaker’s choice to make a part of her/his persona salient in that moment.\footnote{Ibid} 4) Switching as an exploratory choice—this is done when multiple codes are possible and speakers must decide upon a “mutually acceptable… vehicle for the exchange.”\footnote{Myers-Scotton (1986), pp. 407.} The exploratory choice maxim “enjoins speakers to ‘make an exploratory choice as a candidate for an unmarked choice in a non-conventionalized exchange’” (Meyers-Scotton 1983: 125).

**Applying Socio-Linguistics**

According to Bassiouney, code-switching “was considered part of the performance of the imperfect bilingual who could not carry on a conversation in one language in different situations,” (Myers-Scotton 1993: 47) until the work of Blom and Gumperz (1972) on the dialects of Hemnesberget in Norway.\footnote{Bassiouney, Reem (2009). *Arabic Sociolinguistics*: Georgetown University Press, USA. Pp. 29.} This “imperfect bilingual” model was challenged when bilinguals themselves claimed that
they switch “to fill in lexical gaps,” or to compensate for a missing word “to express their feelings in one of the codes they have mastered.”66 Romaine (1995: 169), however, found that switching occurs for a specific purpose and cannot be reduced to lexical gaps as there is evidence that code switchers are able to identify words across codes with the “exactly the same meaning.” Bassiouney suggests examining code switching as a “discourse-related phenomenon” whereby one must “assume that it has sociolinguistic motivations,” and may be somewhat determined by syntactical constraints.67

Bassiouney, based on the work of Myers-Scotton, goes further to bifurcate code switching into a “classical”, or presumably multilingual sort, and “diglossic” sort whereby speakers switch between varieties of the same language; “‘varieties is a cover term for selections at all linguistic levels so that choices between varieties include, for example, choices of one language rather than another, one dialect over another, one style or register over another, and one form of a directive or refusal over another’” (Myers-Scotton 1998b: 18).68 While Mazraani (1997: 8-9) conceives of code-switching as a phenomenon with a discourse function wherein “‘sections in one code are followed by sections in another one in the same conversation’” with affects on the syntactic, morphological, phonological, and lexical levels, code-mixing, for her, is “‘the mixing of different varieties within a single utterance or even within a single word,’” without necessarily affecting all linguistic levels.69 Bassiouney takes up Myers-Scotton’s (1998b: 19-21) matrix language model, which argues that there is “normally a base language,” the Matrix Language (ML), “during the process of switching.”70

Factors Governing Code Choice: Perceived Roles & Code Switching

66 Ibid
67 Ibid
68 See Bassiouney (2009), pp. 29. For Gumperz as well, code-switching is “‘the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems’” (1982a: 59) (29).
69 Bassiouney (2009), pp. 30.
70 Bassiouney (2009), pp. 37.
Bassiouney cites that Gumperz (1982) argued, “people may mark a change in the role they are playing (or wish to be perceived as playing) by using a different code.”\(^{71}\) Myers-Scotton (1993) contests these claims—“code switching does not always entail a change of role; the speaker can switch between different codes without changing his role.”\(^{72}\) For Myers-Scotton, one’s illocutionary aim is a determining factor in code choice and may manifest itself through syntactic or phonological shifts.\(^{73}\) Bassiouney aims to test the theories regarding change of role and code switching. To add a level of complexity, Bassiouney identifies several factors that indicate a change of role that are independent of code choice: \(^{74}\) a) paralinguistic factors, which include speed of delivery, b) the nature of the message; is it personal, objective, etc. and has the speaker defined her/his capacity beforehand? c) the use of pronouns, which can denote the speaker’s perceived level of privacy or intimacy vis-à-vis the interlocutor.

Involvement is a choice that occurs during a certain stage, or liminal phase, in a speaker’s discernment of illocutionary aim—after the speaker determines a communicative aim (stage 1), s/he then opts for or against involvement (liminal), and then decides upon a ‘method of ideation’ (stage 2), and finally arrives at a code choice with regard for the audience’s “likely or known education” (stage 3).\(^{75}\) Bassiouney summarizes this process: “involvement is a psycho-social aim, and ideation is the translation of this aim into different types of discourse.”\(^{76}\) In this way, Bassiouney counters Ferguson’s claims (1972:236) that situation and subject matter determine the diglossic situation, or the speaker’s code choice. In fact, for Bassiouney, “subject matter, as an independent factor, 

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\(^{71}\) See Bassiouney (2009), pp. 171. Similar to Goffman (1981)—speakers play different roles using code choice to indicate new roles.

\(^{72}\) Ibid

\(^{73}\) Bassiouney (2009), pp. 172.

\(^{74}\) cf. Bassiouney (2009), pp. 173.

\(^{75}\) Bassiouney (2009), pp. 227, 230.

\(^{76}\) Bassiouney (2009), pp. 227.
impinges at stages 2 and 3 [see above],” and is decidedly not, then, primary or predominant in determining code choice.\textsuperscript{77}

In the following sections, the analysis will examine data taken from sites of revolution and \textit{wathba:’iq ath-thowra} with an interdisciplinary framework that will deploy the instruments of theoretical and Arabic dialectological linguistics briefly outlined in the above treatment. Bassiouney’s three stages, including Myers-Scotton’s illocutionary aim, and the Matrix Language theory are particularly resonant in testing the mettle of the argument that the differences between standard and colloquial Arabic inform language choice in the context of the Arab Spring and significantly influence the resultant level of impact of Arab Spring linguistic devices.

\textsuperscript{77} Bassiouney (2009), pp. 230.
Chapter 3: Bridging Lacunae, Making Space for Linguistic Activism in the Arab Spring

Leaderlessness: Language, Thought & Identity Formation in the Arab Spring

In December 2011 Ramzy Baroud observed that “[t]here are loud words these days about democracy, especially from the West, but no mention of imperialism.”

Baroud, a prolific Arab author and budding intellectual argues that the “[t]he so-called Arab Spring is creating an intellectual divide that threatens any sensible understanding of the turmoil engulfing several Arab countries.” Baroud posits that the revolutions in the Arab region “quickly became a fault line,

exploited by those who wanted to ensure the failure of Arab uprisings, or to direct their outcomes.”\(^{79}\) It is on this basis that Baroud critiques the phraseology of the “Arab Spring.” Baroud propounds that the Arab Spring, while based in real consternation and originating at the ground level, was quickly commandeered by Western forces. His analysis presumes that the grassroots nature of the uprisings is a foregone conclusion—in this way, Sean Rocha expounds on the notion that “[n]o one needed an intellectual, or anyone else, to tell them about these problems since they’d lived them for decades.”\(^{80}\) Rocha offers a commonplace romanticism about the Arab Spring, explaining that the revolutionaries only needed “the hope that, acting in concert, they could do something to change it [dictatorial regimes].”\(^{81}\) Still, Rocha is critical of Western mainstream media for its inability to comprehend what many understand to be the “leaderless movements” of the Arab uprisings.

Rather than presuppose the “leaderlessness” of the Arab Spring, or the lack of intellectual production, for that matter, this research contends that there is a distinct ‘thought movement’ pervading the revolutionary sites of the Arab states. However, as Elie Chalala argues in “The Arab Spring—The Original Arab Revolution?”, the most relevant intellectual production is not that of the well-known Arab thinkers who have addressed the Arab Spring in writing, especially, Mohamad Ali-Moukaled, Samir Amin, and “Adonis”, or Ahmad Ali Said Isber.\(^{82}\) They approached the Arab Spring as a question of Arab civil society. Adonis questioned if the Islam of the revolution was that of Ali or Muawiyya, and romanticized the revolution as “the moment the beautiful tempest comes

\(^{79}\) Ibid


\(^{81}\) Ibid

to shake the minds.”83 These thinkers’ writings and ideas did not appear “in the myriad slogans promoting the Arab Spring.”84 Chalala reiterates, “no demonstrator wrote anything similar on any sign, nor were these sorts of quandaries the subjects of discussion on anyone’s Facebook page.”85

If the recognized Arab intelligentsia, regardless of how they stand with respect to the Arab Spring, is ignored by, unknown or irrelevant to the self-identified ‘revolutionaries’ (thuwwaar), is it fair to conclude that the Arab Spring uprisings are devoid of intellectual content? Might “non-elite” voices contribute to a popular, effective conceptual framework despite being more fluid than an individual published manifesto? This research contends that while the thought underpinning the Arab Spring may not have taken the conventional textual form of readily identifiable printed books or articles, the language and documents of the protestors and revolutionaries demonstrate, constitute, and advance an identifiable dialectic of intellectual production. Rather than a small cabal of thinkers to articulate the epistemology of the Arab Spring, the language of the Arab Spring’s rationalization is polyvocal, plural, and non-elite. These articulations are locatable in the slogans, chants, pamphlets, and flyers of those nameless millions of individuals who have self-identified, wittingly or unwittingly, as “the people,” or “ash-sha’b”. This analysis will examine the emerging polysemy of “ash-sha’b” as an identity marker, as collective indignation, and as a nom de guerre in the Arab uprisings standing in metonymically for the millions of individuals participating as thuwwaar (‘revolutionaries’).

irHal!: The Etymology of Key Slogans of the Arab Uprisings

An important example of a central chant of the Arab Uprisings that requires an interdisciplinary framework to situate in its proper contexts is the redeployed term: “irHal!” “irHal!”, which appears

83 Ibid
84 Ibid
85 Ibid
in the title of this study, is a translation of the Tunisian French speech-act-turned-slogan, ‘dégage!’ ('leave!', 'get out!'), used in and around Tunis to ouster Ben Ali in early January of 2011.\textsuperscript{86} It is significant that the initial expression of the sentiment was articulated in French, to be translated only once it was evident that the Tunisian uprising had captured the attention of the wider Arab region; the French chant needed to be reiterated in MSA for reasons of mutual comprehensibility, Tunisian Arab identity, and to successfully export the revolution. In this way, the regionally prevalent cant, “\textit{ash-sha'b yurid isQa:T an-niTHam}”, arguably the catchphrase of the Arab Uprisings, has been developed and re-appropriated in MSA and local dialects across the Middle East and North Africa.\textsuperscript{87} In fact, Middle East political blogger and analyst Suby Raman traces the genealogy of “\textit{ash-sha'b yurid isQa:T an-niTHam},”\textsuperscript{88} and concurs that this is, “[w]ithout a doubt, the central slogan of the Arab Spring,” and translates it as “The People want the downfall of the Regime.”\textsuperscript{89} Raman explains that the political diction and MSA register of the slogan are quite relevant as the “chant itself is significant in that in its language it speaks to a broader Arab polity, and not local demands.”\textsuperscript{90} In other words, Arab revolutionaries, while using local dialects for their own constituencies, employ MSA to reach a broader pan-Arab audience. Raman traces the origin of the slogan to Tunis and follows its travel into Egypt and then to Libya, Yemen, and finally to Bahrain by February 2011. One month later, in March 2011, it was uttered for the first time in a Syrian protest.\textsuperscript{91}


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid
Elsewhere, the slogan was altered to fit the local socio-political context of the protestors. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where protestors demanded the unification of Fatah and Hamas, the chant, while maintaining the same cadence, register—namely MSA—and rhythm as the original, became: “The People want an end to the division” (ash-sha’ab yurūd inḥā’ al-inqīsām).92 In Lebanon, the slogan was unaltered but differed in its referent. Lebanese protestors sought the end of the confessional government paradigm whereby a system of codified quotas defines which religious sects and ethnic groups can occupy what parts of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the central government.93 In Jordan, the chant transformed to: “ash-sha’b yurūd isqa’T al-Huḳūma

Raman also traces various reversals of the slogan to advance counter-revolutionary regime loyalist and Islamist objectives.94 Assad loyalists in October 2011 chanted “The People want Bashar al-Assad” (ash-sha’ab yurūd Bashar al-Assad). In February 2012, Syrian Islamists in Baba Amro called for “jihad”: “The People want the declaration of Jihad” (ash-sha’ab yurūd i’lān al-Jihād). In Aleppo, on 23 February 2012, Islamists also improvised a pro-Caliphate banner, shouting: “The Ummah wants an Islamic Caliphate” (al-Ummah turūd khilāfah islāmiyyah).

Allocation and re-allocation serve to interpret, perpetuate, or, with respect to the incumbents of state power and regime loyalists, at times also counter "reform" ("iSla:H") by calling, through language, for the familiar rhetorical promises of the status quo ante: “iṣṭiqrār” (stability), or “wafa’” (loyalty). This counter-revolutionary response, which insists that it promotes reform but not regime change, is often referred to as “al-mu’a:rāDa ad-da:xiliyya”, or “internal opposition.” To situate the ways such slogans are translated and travel across geographic and linguistic-societal boarders, this

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92 Ibid
93 Ibid
94 Ibid; the following references to specific counter-revolutionary chants are all extracted from Raman’s collection of YouTube videos and accompanying captions chronicling the spread and evolution of the “ash-sha’b yurūd isqa’T an-nTHa’m” slogan.
research also utilizes the sociolinguistic concept of the “functional allocation of codes” (Breitborde, 1983). The framework is then a critical, analytical approach to political discourse items, in this case the “language of the Arab Spring” in Egypt and Syria, to determine the efficacy, or resonance, of the premise that transnational revolutionary idiolects served as veritable contagions of revolution, or revolutionary sentiments, for ‘Arab Spring’ protest movements, involves taking seriously the documented and public statements of protestors and conjecturing as to the subsequent effects thereof on identity and politics.

**The Linguistics of Arab Spring Protest Chants: Emerging Political Discourse**

According to Elliott Colla, in the last 130 years, Egypt has experienced no less than 10 “major revolts and revolutions.” In his article, “The Poetry of Revolt,” Colla highlights the role of poetry in Egypt’s revolution only six days after Tahrir was first occupied by over one million Egyptians; still, many of Colla’s insights have stood the test of time, albeit many argue not enough time to truly judge or reach any conclusions, and, this report argues, are applicable to other sites of revolution beyond Egypt.

Colla explains that the “slogans the protestors are chanting are couplets—and they are as loud as they are sharp.” This poetry is “not an ornament to the uprising,” but rather it is a veritable “soundtrack and also composes a significant part of the action itself.” In Egypt’s revolutions, then, poets are warriors—in the 1881 Urabi Revolution it was the neo-classical qasidas of Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi that provided sonic support and carried the sentiments of revolutionaries; in the anti-

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96 Ibid
97 Ibid, emphasis added.
British 1919 Revolution, Bayram al-Tunsi’s colloquial zajals exploded against the occupation. The 1952 Revolution that brought Nasser to power was accompanied by Fuad Haddad’s mawawi:wi:, and the poetics of Salah Jahin, oftentimes melodized and intoned by Abdel Halim Hafez. After the 1970s, Colla points out that Ahmed Fouad Negm’s Egyptian colloquial poems, “set to music by Sheikh Imam,” has lyricized anti-regime sentiment for over forty years. Colla also argues that the “literary-political tradition” of activists like Naguib Suru, Abd al-Rahman al-Abnoudi, and Tamam Barghouti is critical to understanding how poetry and politics have enlivened the timbre of and provided the very meter for Egypt’s revolutionary history, and indeed, this report offers, for the ongoing Arab Spring.99

Colla describes the couplets of Egypt’s Arab Spring as colloquial, rather than classical or standard, in register, and as therefore “extremely catchy and easy to sing.” Among others, he provides the example: "Yā Mubārak! Yā Mubārak! Is-Sa‘ūdiyya fi-ntizārak!" (‘Mubarak, O Mabarak, Saudi Arabia awaits!’).100 Another such “couplet-slogan”, Colla shows, is a modified version of a well-known Egyptian axiom. The revolutionary rendition of it is: "Idrab idrab yā Habīb, mahma tadrab mish hansīb!" (‘Hit us, beat us, O Habib [al-Adly, now-former Minister of the Interior], hit all you want—we're not going to leave!’).101 The source of this permutation is: "Darb al-habib zayy akl al-zabib" (‘The beloved's fist is as sweet as raisins’).102 The illocutionary force of these poetic chants extends beyond “complaints and aspirations,” and into, according to Colla, “messages that could not

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101 This is Colla’s transliteration and translation. Taken from “The Poetry of Revolt,” Colla (2011).
102 This is also Colla’s transliteration and translation. Taken from “The Poetry of Revolt,” Colla (2011).
be articulated in other forms,” and also serve the purpose of sharpening socio-political demands “with ever keener edges.”

Colla takes perhaps the most emblematic and prevalent of all of the Arab Spring slogans, “Ish-sha’b/yu-rîd/is-qât/in-ni-zâm,” (“The People want the regime to fall”) and posits that its popularity is due to its uniquely fitting register given the idiomatic purpose it inheres. The couplet “straddles colloquial Egyptian and standard media Arabic,” which makes it “readily understandable to the massive Arab audiences who are watching and listening,” as it, all the while, is constructed on a “regular metrical and stress pattern.” Here Colla suggests that there is something intrinsically “catchy,” or memorable and compelling about the meter of this couplet, which he depicts as “short-LONG, short-LONG, short-LONG, short-SHORT-LONG.” This slogan does not rhyme but it “can be sung and shouted by thousands of people in a unified, clear cadence,” and for Collas, that “seems to be a key factor in why it works so well.”

Colla understands the “prosody of the revolt” to be critical to the Arab Spring; the language of the revolution, of these couplet-slogans, and beyond, carry the sentiments and objectives of the revolutionaries across borders, down streets and alleys, but also transmit the messages and impetus to revolt into the mouths, lexicons, syntaxes, sinews, synapses, and actions of interlocutors and spectators. For Colla, Egypt’s couplet-slogans suggest “that there is more at stake… than the creation and distillation of a purely semantic meaning.” The collective chanting of these poems “created a palpable sense of community that had not existed before,” and more importantly, “the act

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104 This is Colla’s transliteration and translation. Taken from “The Poetry of Revolt,” Colla (2011).
106 Ibid
107 Ibid
of singing invective that satirizes feared public figures has an immediate impact that cannot be explained in terms of language, for learning to laugh at one’s oppressor is a key part of unlearning fear.” In this way, it is “difficult to determine whether the crowd sustained the words, or the words the crowd.” Colla’s question precisely underscores the importance of the concept of the language of the Arab Spring.

The Linguistics of “karamat Ash-Sha’b” in Arab Spring Discourse: Origins & Implications

It has yet to be investigated whether regional slogans are necessarily generating “respect,” but certainly many have argued that partaking in the Arab Spring through protesting has restored disenfranchised peoples’ sense of karama, ‘national dignity’ and karamat ash-sha’b (‘dignity of the people’). This searchable phrase, karamat ash-sha’b, has a periodized frequency of 155 occurrences from 12/17/2010 to 12/17/2011. In fact, between 12/17/2009, one year before Bouazizi’s self-immolation, and 12/17/2010, Arabic newspaper aggregators report that there were 82 instances of the term karama appearing in conjunction with "شعب" /sha’b (‘the people’). From 12/17/2010 to 12/17/2011, the number has increased exponentially to 1,080. These results are significantly higher than their normal frequencies would suggest.

The exact word, or token, كرامّة /karama, typically occurs in print at a normal frequency of 11.52 per one million Arabic words (see annex 3). The type, in this case in reference to the triconsonantal root “كرام” /“k,r,m” occurs at a higher rate, as we would expect, of 9702.22. Similarly, "شعب" /sha’b, a far more common word, has a token normal frequency of 24014.23 occurrences per one million printed Arabic words, and a broader, trilateral root-based, or “type” normal frequency of

109 Ibid
110 Ibid
27226.05. Still, while the results for sha'b appear quite high, particularly in relation to kara:ma, what matters is that when these frequencies are tested over specific periods of time, kara:ma averages at about 11 normal occurrences a year, and sha'b only 73.03. There is then, evidence of a sharp increase in the frequency related to the Egyptian revolution.

These data indicate that shouting political motifs, such as the now proverbial “ash-sha'b yurid isQa:T an-niTHa:m” (the people want [alt. will the] to overthrow [alt. the toppling of] the regime), is coterminous with a new national identity built upon the lexical item-made-prototype by the Arab Spring: “ash-Sha'b” (الشعب), ‘the people’. Mohammed Bamyeh takes up the use of the term “sha'b” by Arab Spring revolutionaries and expands on the idea of “Darurat insha: 'thaqa:fa sha'biyya 'ilmiiyya” (the foundation/promotion of [an emergent] “popular”, of the people (ash-Sha'b), culture of knowledge, or science). 

The size of the “sha'b” ('people') and the size of the required capacity depends on the size of the threat it faces, and so emerged the concept of "ash-Sha'b" in the modern Arab world as an instrument of resistance to external threat, and therefore "ash-Sha'b" remained a defensive concept through to the Arab Spring. By this I mean that the term "ash-Sha'b" was often used [in the past] to express demands for the restoration of rights stolen from the society as a whole, more than it was used to articulate a sense of society’s right to sovereignty over the state.

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112 See annex 3. These figures were calculated in this study based on aggregating the lexical item “kara:ma” in Arabic with the specific concomitant item, “sha'b” to form a searchable phrase in the database available through Google Advanced News Archive Search: http://news.google.com/archivesearch/advanced_search; results were then situated in terms of normal frequency using AraLex’s Arabic pointed/unpointed and type/token counters: http://www.mrc-ebu.cam.ac.uk:8081/aralex.online/login.jsp, run by cognitive psychology researcher Sami Boudalaa: http://www.mrc-ebu.cam.ac.uk/people/sami.boudelaa/personal/; Also The arabicCorpus website: http://arabiccorpus.byu.edu/ by Dil Parkinson; also see Tim Buckwalter: http://Qamus.org/; and Cognitive Atlas: http://www.cognitiveatlas.org/term/id/term_4a3fd79d0b554.


As a germane corollary to Webster’s above-mentioned thought, Robert A. Barakat offers that many Arabic speakers are given to the aesthetics and wisdom of proverbs because “the proverb is the linguistic embodiment of traditional wisdom,” thus suggesting that Arabic proverbs, ostensibly both traditional and extemporized, “bear the stamp of approval from tradition and are thought to express best one’s thoughts on many occasions.”

In recognition of the importance of language particularly when a speaker aims to achieve political objectives, Suleiman argues in favor of merging the study of Arab political discourse with Arabic sociolinguistics.

Suleiman’s sociolinguistics is an important framework and springboard for this paper. Suleiman rightfully underscores that there is a “glaring gap in the study of nationalism in the Arab Middle East… of a serious study of the most important of all systems of functional and symbolic expression: language.”

Along similar lines, Abdullah K. Al-Kindi’s article entitled, *Islamic Political Discourse in the Arabic Emigrant Press (Al-Hayat and Al-Quds-al-Arabiya)* approaches the issue of Arab media and political discourse by focusing on media as a tool of political discourse and as a major cause of tensions, rather than political discourse as an abstraction of Arab sociality. The article talks about how the Arab emigrant press looks at Islamic political movements in the Arab Middle East, as well as the terminology used to describe them and its analysis of related events, namely: “Islamic fundamentalists”, “Islamic Terrorism”, and ”Political Islam”.

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115 1980: 11; also see A Contextual Study of Arabic Proverbs (Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Akademia Scientrum Fennica), FF Communication, pp. 226, Helsinki.
118 Suleiman’s research into the sociolinguistics of Arabic and the relationship between Arab nationalism and the Arabic language is unique in both English and Arabic. Suleiman mentions Bengio (1998), Chejne (1969), Holes (1993), Mazraani (1997), and several of his own publications (1993, 1994, 1996b, 1997, 1999a, 1999d) as forming the theoretical taxonomy upon which and to which his 2003 project constructs its framework. The works of authors such
For the present analysis, I rely upon Suleiman’s definition of “sociolinguistics” as a discipline that is “essentially about identity (sic), its formation, presentation and maintenance” in addressing the implicature of the burgeoning socio-political phenomenon of the language of the Arab Spring.\(^{119}\) By exploring the language environment that simultaneously emerged from and disseminates the vocabulary, grammar and sentiments of revolution, I highlight the linguistic dimensionality of the Arab Spring as an innovative category for cultural production.\(^{120}\) That is, the messages conveyed through the slogans and protest-chants of the uprisings have made heretofore hidden transcripts public and therefore provided not only a forum for dissent, but a vocabulary, style, and indeed an entire idiom of opposition where before fear and a sense of being voiceless pervaded. In this way, Suleiman argues that, “national identity is not ‘simply a natural growth’ among the people who exhibit it. National identity is a construct, in both the intellectual and historical senses.” The rise of ash-sha‘b, ‘the people’, and the idiom of opposition replete with chants, songs, slogans, quips, and axioms was no accident of history; the language of the Arab Uprisings, and the concomitant transformations in national consciousness, are the result of generations of the production of counter-culture and, buttressing it, a veritable counter-speak, to play off of an Orwellian term. Suleiman adds that national identity “is fashioned out of history, or, more correctly, interpretations of history. The involvement of the elite in fashioning it is absolutely fundamental to formulating its intellectual foundations and, also, to popularizing it as the basis of mass political action.” It is too soon to tell what will come of the inchoate national identities of Arab Spring states, but Suleiman’s

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as Riad Aziz Kassis (1999), while offering enticing titles, viz., The Book of Proverbs and Arabic Proverbial Works, make use of an historical analysis of Arabic as it pertains to another field of interest such as in this case, the possibility of Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible with etymological connections to Arabic. Indeed, the book is not concerned with Arabic itself or Arabic proverbs and idiomology as would be insightful to better understanding Arab discourses. Kassis refers to his scholarship as taking up the “Relevance of Arabic Proverbial Wisdom for Comparative Study.”

\(^{119}\) Suleiman builds his definition upon that of Edwards’ (1988: 3).

\(^{120}\) Suleiman (2003), pp. 5-7, and Grew (1986: 35).
analysis rightfully underscores that national identity is the product of certain interpretations of a people’s history that are privileged and standardized by “elites” over time. Here, Suleiman’s use of the term “elite” is not like that of the rest of this report.

When I use the word “elite” or “non-elite”, for that matter, in relation to political discourse or master- and counter-narratives, I am drawing principally from Bassam Haddad’s conception of ‘state bourgeoisie’ born out of the Syrian context. Haddad convincingly identifies the members of the closest networks to Bashar Assad and his regime as forming not a traditional "class", but a state-produced and managed “bourgeoisie”, in the Marxian sense of the term. Indeed, for Marx, this ‘state bourgeoisie’ cannot be a class because it 'controls' rather than 'owns' the means of production. The state continues to own the means of production, and the bourgeoisie it spawns, thus ‘state bourgeoisie’, does not have different interests from those of the state—they are, then, one in the same. According to Haddad, Syrian state bourgeoisie act in concert to block legislation and decisions that “might have made their economies more efficient,” namely by expanding an independent private sector, which would threaten the monopoly of the state and its bourgeoisie over capital, currency, and goods. This paper prefers the phrase “state elite”, over ‘state bourgeoisie, as discourse and narratology are by necessity more diffuse and therefore the definition cannot be as rigid or as clearly defined by economic status as the term ‘bourgeoisie’ implies. To be sure, state elites encompasses Haddad’s state bourgeoisie entirely, but the term ‘elites’ is meant to leave more space for individuals near the top of the Assad pyramid of rule but not necessarily at the highest echelons; state elites are still products of the state, but not in as strict a sense as Haddad’s nomenclature holds. State elites benefit from their proximity to the regime but do not benefit as

much, materially, as the state-wrought capitalists to which Haddad refers. Still, the elites may benefit from a persistent state of emergency and emergency laws and, like the bourgeoisie, believe more fully in 'the state' than 'statehood' per se.124

*Arab Spring Documents & Digital Archives: The Functions of Arabic Dialects*

The “speech” of Arab revolutionary discourse is tangible but may only be accessible through unconventional means. Using various online freeware designed for linguistic research and quantitative discourse analysis, the present research pieced together a veritable discourse of specific events during the Arab Spring. Consider, for example, that on the first day of the Egyptian demonstrations, January 25, 2011, some 800,000+ Tweets were sent in English, or transliterated Arabic, throughout Tahrir Square and the area immediately surrounding it. A semantic analysis of the “Tahrir Tweets” utilizing IBM ManyEyes Visual Database spatially depicts the most commonly Tweeted words (frequency) and their syntactic relationships to other high-frequency words (proximity)—see Annex 2. The word with the highest proximity rating that day was “revolution”—the word with the highest frequency register was “Mubarak”—this chart portrays 642 copular phrases, of them the clearest legibility or implications were: “this is (it) revolution is Egypt”; followed by, [recovered—speculative]: “(what) (is) Mubarak like? What (is) happening (to him)?”

The latter critical discourse analytical procedure proves, in hindsight, to have been the more predictive, or more complete interpretive, method in determining what was occurring in Tahrir Square on January 25th, namely a “revolution” targeted at toppling Hosni “Mubarak”—notably, “regime” was not mentioned at a high frequency. Neither were the words “military” nor “judiciary” present in the spatial reconstruction.

In retrospect, the rise of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces under Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi was not even on the semantic radar. The language of these communications suggests an overall fixation on the toppling of Mubarak without a clear, or distinct, course of action for the rest of his regime, the role of the military, or the judiciary for that matter—the language of revolution was aimed at the symbol of the regime: Mubarak. It appears then that there was a correlation between the frequency and proximity of words Tweeted on January 25th, 2011 and the ensuing events that unfolded in the two weeks, at least, proceeding that fateful morning known collectively as “the 18 days of Tahrir.” The language of revolution, the Arab Spring, as a category, exemplifies the increasingly encyclopedic nature of “thouра”, or “intiftа:Da”, “аsб-Sba’b”, and “isqa:Т an-niTHаm”, among others, as what this analysis interprets as the concatenated semantics of the regional epistemological phenomenon known as the Arab Spring.

Indeed, the ‘travel’ of these terms and slogans comprise a lexicon, rather than an atomized list, and suggests that the Arab Spring, while beginning in December 2010 in Tunis, has rapidly evolved into a regional intellectual idioms for expressing political ideas and transmitting attitudes and objectives. The specific lexical items of this idiom are deictic and have effectively transformed the political vocabulary of pre-Arab Spring elite and non-elite discourse. The localized syntaxes of the revolutionaries in Tahrir, Hama, Homs, Tripoli, Benghazi, Algiers, Rabat, Sana’a and beyond constitute the language of the Arab Spring and appear to have both emic and etic resonance—in other words, the ‘Arab Spring’ has quickly become a transnational theme taken up across the Arab

region but also in the United States by the 99% movement, with offshoots and iterations from Israel to China and Russia.  

The emerging *de facto* intellectual discourse of Arab Spring revolutionaries, or *thuwwar*, as expressed through pamphlets, flyers, chants, slogans, and graffiti together represent the thought movement that swept the Arab region. The medium of expression used to communicate this subversive intellectual paradigm shift is the Arabic language, in all of its diverse dialects and in its Modern Standard (MSA) form. As Suleiman has argued, MSA “acts as a site of loyalty for Arabic speakers as a linguistic community” interested in emphasizing “Arab-ness”, whereas dialectics of Arabic serve as “sites of loyalty for speech communities” and underscore local identity and belonging. However, the underlying commonality of these Arabic variants is in their illocutionary force. That is, language is used to carry revolutionary sentiments and attitudes, change minds and conceptions, and inspire specific actions. The “language of revolution” is intellectual production—in the Arab Spring, speech is activism, as is engaging in the language, or messaging, of the revolutionary documents.

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126 For more on the 99% movement in the US and the “Arab Spring revolutionary tactic” see <http://occupywallst.org/>.


Counter-Revolutionary Documents & Digital Archives: The Functions of Standard Arabic

In “Refo-lutions”, Bayat posed a critical problematic of history and politics in underscoring that to every revolution there is, essentially, an equal and opposite counter-revolution. Bayat’s indexing of revolution, reform, and the tendency for counter-revolution to domesticate uprisings challenges the way that Arab politics are conventionally viewed.\textsuperscript{129} Bayat’s contention is critical regarding paradigmatic counter-revolution/counter-reform measures and rhetoric taken up and deployed by, in this case, the incumbent authoritarian governments and official media of Egypt and Syria, and their civilian loyalists.\textsuperscript{130} In keeping with trends in the literature over the past decade, to investigate this reactionary epiphenomenon, this analysis relies primarily upon newspaper articles from the Egyptian, Syrian, and various international presses, as coverage of the unfolding events in these states has been wide and continuous.\textsuperscript{131} The present report interrogates, however, the significance of the counter-revolutions as concatenations of distinctly governmental rationalities and teleology.\textsuperscript{132}

Critical to the analysis of counter-revolutionary rhetoric, is locating the voices and sources of regime narratology. The articles published by pro-regime sources, such as Al-Ahed News Website, a


\textsuperscript{130} Bayat’s “Paradoxes of Arab Refo-lutions” (supra).


\textsuperscript{132} For more on governmental rationale or rationalities, see Michel Foucault’s On Governmentality (c.1977-1984) wherein he extrapolates that the art of government is to produce a citizenry suited to its policies, which includes the organized practices around savoir, mentalities, rationalities, and techniques to manipulate power and wealth distribution; see also "art of government" (Burchell 78); "governmental rationality" (Gordon 1991: 1); See Chomsky, 1998, pp. 4-5: “With a little industry and application, anyone who is willing to extricate himself from the system of ideology and propaganda will readily see through the modes of distortion developed by substantial segments of the intelligentsia… If such analysis is often carried out poorly, that is because, quite commonly, social and political analysis is produced to defend special interests rather than to account for the actual events.” Also, refer to Gramsci’s cultural hegemony, available: <http://stmarys.ca/~evanderveen/wvdv/political_sociology/political_sociological_theories.htm>.
Shi’ite, Hezbollah-operated site that produces pro-Assad messaging and regularly disparages revolutionaries as partaking in “at-tadaxxulat al-ağnabiyya” (‘foreign interventions’), are part and parcel of the war of languages, or codes, that occupies an important and contested space in the physical battlegrounds where the fate of Syria is being decided by armed soldiers and inscribed by the words of poet-warriors.  

An October 26 article from 2011, written anonymously, assimilates the emblematic protest-slogan of the Arab Spring into the rhetoric of Assad’s regime. The title of the article includes the reactionary cant of a putatively million-or-more-person crowd that had spontaneously, according to the article, gathered to express support of Assad: “ash-sha’b yurid Bashar al-Assad” (‘the people want Bashar al-Assad’). The author explains that the Syrian people have made the “sovereign, independent choice of resistance to the occupation, and foreign intervention into Syria’s ‘affairs’.”

The words selected in this carefully-crafted statement are intentionally selected from the lexicon of Arabism and conjure up the imagery and sentiment-sets of anti-colonialism: “choice” (qara:r), “sovereign” (siya:di), “independent” (mustaqill), “resistance” (muqa:wama), and “occupation” (iHtila:l). By that same token, the article assures that the people gathered on that day with the intent to declare “azmihim ’ala isqa:T al-mu’a:mara allati tata’rrad laha su:riy:a: min xila:l… at-taDli:l al-’ila:mi: al-ka:thib allathi yahdaf ila za’za’at ’amniha: wa-istiqra:riha:” (‘their plan to bring down the conspiracy that Syria faces by dint of the lying media’s deception that aims to undermine Syria’s national security and stability’). The biting condemnation of the media’s role in portraying the Syrian uprising is noteworthy—in mid-May 2012, Assad told a Russian news broadcaster that “[t]he

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134 Ibid, the translation is my own.
135 Ibid, the translation is my own.
media war with the West was lost the day the Syrian uprising began.” Assad also asserts, in the same interview, that the “West outplayed Syria in media battlefield [sic.]”. The “war” metaphor is a motif in the linguistics of the Arab Spring and further evidences the activist and intellectual dimension of language in each of the revolutionary sites and for the Arab region.

It is unlikely that those in attendance at the protest that day had such a clearly delineated message but what is significant is that this author, a representative of the counter-revolution, responds to the inherent intellectual, or ideological, framework of the Arab Spring linguistically. The author re-appropriates key lexical items of the revolutionary idiom such as “isqa:T” (downfall) by situating in opposition to a highly charged pro-Assad narrative term, namely, “mu’a:mara” ([Western] conspiracy). This shift from the Arab Uprising’s narrative term, “niTHa:m” (regime), is a reiteration of the powerful sentiments fueling the Syrian civil war, but it is articulated with the syntax of Assad’s regime. The regime and its proponents are waging a war of words as an active part of their physical war against the revolutionaries.

Suleiman has demonstrated that language in Arabic political discourse is often wrongfully disregarded by Western analysts; there is an invaluable “meta-discourse about language” that suggests an ideology of the use of Arabic that is closely linked to ethnic and national identity construction. Political identity, then, on the individual and national level, both for regime opponents and supporters, is at stake in the Syrian Uprising. The regime advocates understand this and operate in a linguistic paradigm, among other modalities, to achieve specific counter-opposition ends—

137 “Assad: Syria Will Never Be A Western Puppet State.”
138 For more on the notion of a war of words in the Arabic context see Yasir Suleiman, War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
perhaps principal among these is the survival of the Assad regime. One important strategy, among other tactics, as was seen in the above pro-regime article, is the de-legitimization of the opposition forces.\(^{139}\)

In the Egyptian context, Bassiouney also recognizes that the Egyptian revolution of January 25, 2011 “became a media war” from the onset.\(^{140}\) Bassiouney believes that the Egyptian media war was about “who represents the ‘real Egyptian’ and what does s/he want?” Bassiouney sees that the media war of words is symbolic of an intellectual discourse wherein the critical questions about the meaning of the revolution are being asked and debated. She posits that the media’s discourse can be understood as a polyvocal debate over the question of whether “the real Egyptian [wants] to change the regime, or are the couple of million in Tahrir Square no more than a couple of million who do not truly represent the majority of the 85 million Egyptians?”\(^{141}\) Bassiouney’s article treats language in the Egyptian revolution not as a “whole independent [system],” but as a set of “resources that speakers draw upon under specific conditions.”\(^{142}\) Both the form and content of the language produced in the Egyptian revolution are “considered to be part of the same process.”\(^{143}\) Language must therefore be regarded as related to “ideology, social practice and social organization.”\(^{144}\)

**Bassiouney’s Stance-Taking**

In the Egyptian media war during the revolution, Bassiouney argues that “speakers use language to take a stance and by doing so give themselves a specific identity and impose on others a different

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\(^{141}\) Ibid


\(^{143}\) Ibid

one.”\textsuperscript{145} In this “stance-taking” process, “people employ linguistic resources, discourse resources and structural resources,” such as associations and indices of MSA, Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), and foreign language use.\textsuperscript{146} The present research is indebted in part to Bassiouney’s framework for understanding language in the Arab Spring as a marker of political identity through the “stance-taking” process. She also argues that stance-taking depends on “code-switching as a mechanism that lays claim to different indexes,” or language varieties, and “thus appeals to different ideologies and eventually different facets of identity.”\textsuperscript{147}

Stance-taking, as a linguistic phenomenon, results in three achievements, namely: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Bassiouney proffers that evaluation is the process by which a speaker, or “stance-taker”, determines the “specific quality or value” of a linguistic code choice that reflects a particular political view, or “stance”. Positioning describes the speaker’s delineation of her/his own stance and involves “claims to have some degree of certainty or knowledge.”\textsuperscript{148} Finally, alignment refers to the speaker’s judgment and situation of other stances in relation to one’s own as either “pro-” or “anti-”; Bassiouney explains alignment to be an “act of standardizing or normalizing the relation between stances.”\textsuperscript{149}

For both Bassiouney and Suleiman “[s]peaking is associated [with] action,” and, for Suleiman, “in the Arabic grammatical tradition, speaking is also action.”\textsuperscript{150} Bassiouney, much like Colla in the “Poetry of Revolt”, concludes that, “literally, by speaking up, Egyptians have already

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid (paraphrased)
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid; Bassiouney cites “stance” as a term borrowed from Ochs (1992) to refer to “the mediating path between linguistic forms and social identities.” It is also a “contextualizing cue” that informs interlocutors of the nature of the role the speaker aims to project in relation to the form and content of his or her utterance.” See also Jaffe, 2007: 56.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid
taken action.”151 In her article, Bassiouney refers to the Egyptian poet Jugh as a “protestor/poet” for taking a stance in opposition to Arabic media attacks against the identity of the Tahrir Square protestors.152 Whereas media figures like Tamer and Afaf Shuweeb attempt to appropriate MSA and certain ECA variants to disprove the Egyptian-ness, or belonging, of the protestors, Jugh, using his poetry, at once re-claims MSA and ECA while reinstating the protestors’ Egyptian identity.153 Jugh appeared in an episode of The Prince of Poets, a famous television program based in Abu Dhabi, on February 8, 2011, days before Mubarak’s abdication. In the last couple of minutes of the program he called for a moment of silence in honor of those killed in the revolution and he then recited his now-famous poem, “A Bird’s Eye View From Tahrir Square.” Bassiouney rightfully describes Jugh’s poem as demonstrating “how language can be used to re-claim an identity through a stance-taking act,” in this case re-appropriating MSA while code-switching with ECA to assert linguistically the authenticity, and indeed valor, of the national identity of the Egyptians protesting in Tahrir Square.154

**The Syrian Regime’s Counter-Revolutionary Narrative**

Khoury argues that, “[a]fter the breakdown of the rhetoric of a conspiracy of Salafis and armed gangs, the Syrian regime has resorted to a rhetoric of colonial conspiracy,” and goes to trace the significant shifts in rhetoric, as a political stratagem, by Assad’s regime since protests began in Syria in early 2011.155

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152 Ibid
Spring, regime elites and their cronies have resorted to a more nefarious, pernicious perlocutionary rhetoric intended, pragmatically, to justify further state violence against protestors, particularly in the ongoing case of Syria. Bhuta’s “transformative occupation” thesis is also relevant in the case of the Syrian response to its unwavering revolutionaries. Danchin too argues that for the ‘occupier’ or aggressor (Assad regime), “[t]he subjects of occupation must cease their resistance and either acquiesce or consent to the basic norms that define the new order.” Assad’s regime must re-legitimize its old order pre-uprising in the face of the new reality of the Arab Spring. Danchin concludes that, “[t]he desperate struggle for the occupier is to convince the occupied population not to resist its military dictatorship on the promise of the justice and legitimacy of the normative order being instantiated thereby.” Syria’s “Naked power” is quite apparent in the images of tanks and soldiers lining Damascus and occupying cities where larger numbers of protestors have amassed. However, the legitimation phase is occurring simultaneously rather than consecutively, or in the linear fashion Bhuta proffers. Bhuta explains that the occupant’s ability to legitimate a new order in place of the old depends on his capacity to engender among the occupied population the belief, post facto, in the legitimacy of the occupant’s ‘naked power’ as a precondition for the new basic norm to which the occupied is subjected.

In qualitative terms, Assad himself has indirectly acknowledged the failure of his regime’s official narrative to quell protestors or persuade international onlookers. In an interview with

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158 Danchin (2010), Part II.

159 Ibid
Reuters Africa in mid November on his approach to the Free Syrian Army (FSA), composed of state army defectors working in opposition to the regime and its as yet “loyalist” armed forces, Assad stated categorically that, "[t]he only way is to search for the armed people, chase the armed gangs, prevent the entry of arms and weapons from neighbouring countries, prevent sabotage and enforce law and order."\textsuperscript{160} This anaphoric series of illocutionary speech-acts, in the form of his repetition of “armed” in reference to the FSA and his emphasis that there is only “one” solution to “prevent sabotage” and “enforce law and order,” demonstrate an attempt to threaten protestors and FSA members, but also to reconstitute the official narrative of the state in contravention of the non-elite, or popular, counter-narrative of ash-sh'ab (the people of Syria). Pro-revolutionary discourse constitutes a counter-narrative to that of the Assad regime’s official interpretation, or ‘master narrative’, of the events of the Syrian uprising as narrated by Sana and regime spokespersons. The regime master narrative does not acknowledge the presence of ‘revolutionaries’; it makes no distinction between oppositionists and instead categorizes all such individuals as “irha:biyyi:n” (‘terrorists’) in cahoots with, if not avowed members of, al-Qaeda. The counter-narrative, however, to the Assad regime holds that the demonstrators are \textit{thawra} (peaceful protestors, or ‘revolutionaries’) engaged in a civil war and that their objective is \textit{thowra} (demonstrations aimed initially at reform but shifted toward ‘revolution’), which aims to depose Assad’s regime (isqa:T en-niZa:m). Assad, in his interviews, intended to, \textit{using language}, alter the perception of his violent counter-revolutionary war against Syrian demonstrators and FSA fighters, as well as al-Qaeda contingents. Assad’s master narrative attempts to manifest a new rhetorical balance of power that would ostensibly re-legitimate the regime’s claims to “order” and “civility”, which are, in reality, crude euphemisms for blatant violence against all oppositionists and increasingly entrenched authoritarian rule.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid
The discourse analyses conducted in this study of the communication records from social media networks like Twitter in Syria suggest that the Assad regime’s official narrative and the sorts of external rhetoric, coming from both the Arabic and English speaking state- and non-state-controlled media sources, does not seem to be gaining overall social traction (see annex 1). That is, even as the state encroaches upon the demonstrators, Syria’s official Sana media outlets and Assad’s state elites continue to repeat the legitimacy narrative of post-1948 and post-1963 Syria.\textsuperscript{161} Both of these periods employed the rhetoric of the Assad regime as the protector of Syria and the Palestinian cause from Israeli Zionist, or otherwise Western, expansionism as well as the supposedly imminent threat of Islamists.\textsuperscript{162} The slogan of the former period is, “La: SowTa ta’lu fawqa SowTi-l-ma’raka” (no voice shall supersede the battle cry); for the latter, the language of \textit{al-amm} (national security) and \textit{wataniyya} (nationalism, patriotism) is often invoked.\textsuperscript{163} Assad’s perlocutions, which often resort to labeling the protestors as either “armed gang members” or “extremists” and “Salafis”, are crafted carefully to resonate with and instrumentalize the internationally recognized post-9/11 “war on terror” narrative. Assad exploits the ‘war on terror’ metaphor to garner international sympathy while also attempting to drum up latent fears in Syrians of an impending Islamist coup d’état. The ‘war on terror’ narrative also allows Assad to make lofty statements in support of military action to prove the resolve of the regime in the face of “terrorism” rather than an initially peaceful grassroots movement. The success of the regime’s master narrative in the face of the non-elite counter-narrative is questionable but ultimately very difficult to quantify. In the media war, it would seem the


\textsuperscript{163} Ibid; For Ibrahim’s statements on the use of this slogan in Egypt, see Michele Dunne, \textit{A Post-Pharaonic Egypt? The American Interest Online}. September-October 2008 Issue. Available: \url{http://www.the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=469}; and a related article, available: \url{http://www.economist.com/node/638848}.
pro-revolutionists have amassed far more sympathy internationally by the sheer number of Tweets, re-Tweets, Facebook Likes, blogs, and articles written in their favor. Erstwhile, in the other corner, pro-Assad Tweets remain relatively very low. These themes and inquiries will be interrogated further in the later section, *Syria’s Online Revolution*.

*Egypt’s Online Revolution: The Tahrir Documents Project*

Given the availability of appropriate sources in the wake of a transnational consciousness of engagement or participation in “revolution” or “uprising” (*intifāḍa*), this analysis weaves in observations relating to the dialectical developments beyond formal Arabic, especially in Egypt and Syria. The National Archive Commission for Documenting the January 25th Revolution contains an artifact called, “Call for Volunteers” that exemplifies national consciousness building. The document compels Egyptians, particularly those studying in the humanities, to volunteer for the National Archive Commission so as to, through the menial work of document preservation and indexing, “protect Egypt” and serve the nation. While the Syrian and Egyptian uprisings have unfolded in starkly distinct ways, comparative analyses are possible, and necessary, to explain the empirical evidence of the apparent synchrony and dialogical nature of the various state-specific episodes of what analysts refer to polysemously as the ‘Arab Spring’ or ‘Arab Uprisings’. An examination of data pulled from relevant social media trackers and newly-founded websites follows. These materials, especially those on the Tahrir Documents website, are significant because they were selected for publication by Egyptians in the context of the 2011 Egyptian revolution for their decidedly revolutionary content.

164 Ibid, and see Annex 1 on Tweet rates.
In the Egyptian context, the Tahrir Documents project has made available some 546 artifacts to date as part of an “ongoing effort to archive and translate activist papers from the 2011 Egyptian uprising and its aftermath.” The relatively large team behind Tahrir Documents (four editors, 2 staffers, and approx. 50 contributing translators) gathers its materials for website publication “from demonstrations in Cairo’s Tahrir Square” and makes the originals available for free online as scanned, downloadable PDFs alongside “complete English translation.” The creators of Tahrir Documents also clarify that it “is not affiliated with any political organization, Egyptian or otherwise.” From March to December 2011, their most active period, they collected an average of 46 documents monthly:

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
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<td>April</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<td>December</td>
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Figure 2 Number of published texts released on Tahrir Documents every month from March-December 2011 (tahrirdocuments.org).

http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/about
Starting in December 2011, TahrirDocuments.org experienced a significant slowdown in turnout. In December 2011 32 documents were published. In January 2012 (28), February 2012 (6), March 2012 (1), April 2012 (2), May 2012 (11), and no documents have been published thereafter. The content of the facsimiles in Tahrir Documents is varied but aggregated under the thematic of ‘revolution’—implicitly, the process of discriminating between documents to select materials for the website requires a judgment as to a threshold that is plainly, and empirically based on a reading or indexing of the rhetoric of the particular artifact in question to ensure that it fits under a recognizably revolutionary taxonomy. Tahrir Documents’ contents are searchable, and the site features a visual word map where the relative size of a word is in ratio to the number of times it has been sought (see figure 2). The words in this schematic represent more than their common, colloquial implicature.

'Cognitive lexical semantics' is concerned with 'lexical items', and posits that words are 'conceptual categories', which is entirely compatible with the political discourse analysis of the Tahrir

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167 The present research endeavor cannot explore the sifting out process undertaken by the Tahrir Documents staff—rather, the potential for self-selection bias is exploited by this analysis as a natural threshold that enables probabilistic selection. That is, no strict methodology is necessary for choosing which documents to analyze as this research adopts and takes for granted the Tahrir Documents’ staff’s methodology. This presents a particular validity threat in that, to a certain extent, I must relegate the rubric of selection for the documents I analyze to the available range of documents handpicked by the Tahrir Documents staff without a discernably systematic process of identification. This may be problematic but cannot be remedied until I am able to conduct further field research in Cairo. I would seek to do so while expanding this paper into my doctoral dissertation.
Documents’ proportional word map. Here, the “Categories” of the word map represent revolutionary themes and those lexical items that “trend” most highly immediately stand out: Revolution (by far), Solidarity, and Politics, followed closely by Demands, Calls to Protest, Constitution, Culture, Regime, etc. (See above, Figure 3 “Categories” from December 2011: Tahrir Documents Searchable Visual Word Map, tahrirdocuments.org).

Using the Tweet aggregator on R-Shief, I determined that from April 26, 2010 to December 2, 2010, there were as many as 90 assorted Tweets, in Arabic, that mentioned “thowra” (revolution) in Egypt (#miSr). The same search terms from April 19, 2011 to December 2, 2011 resulted in 422 instances of “revolution” Tweets. As a point of comparison, for Syria (#Syria), in English, there were 180 “revolution” Tweets from May 1, 2011 to December 2, 2011—in Arabic (#suuriya) there were 17 such Tweets.

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169 For critiques of Lackoff and the cognitive linguistics approach in political discourse, or critical discourse analysis, see “Women, Fire, And Dangerous Theories: A Critique Of Lakoff’s Theory Of Categorization”, available: <http://www.yorku.ca/christo/papers/wfdt8.htm>. Lackoff contributed to lexical semantics as well with his argument for ‘radial categories’, which was also based on prototypes as opposed to generated or predictable rules.

170 This analysis uses the pan-Arab Internet information aggregator and Twitter mining device, R-Shief, to quantify frequencies of emerging language trends and lexical convergences so as to speculate about the resonance of the premises of the theory regarding the formation of a ‘language of revolution’.

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from July 9, 2010 to December 2, 2010. It is difficult to draw a conclusion based on these findings regarding the importance of “revolution” as a category term in Egypt versus Syria as there are far too many potentially confounding omitted variables, but what can be gleaned is that there is an increasingly utilized alternative space for less encumbered communication.\footnote{The “revolution”, “politics”, and “solidarity” categories of Tahrir Documents are of particular relevance to this analysis as these scanned treatises and exhortations rely, by necessity, heavily on rhetoric to foment solidarity to thereby coordinate organized large-scale actions and mobilizations.}

mock an opponent so as to render her/him speechless, or unable to repartee. Its appeal to popular grievances against the regime served to remind of and re-enliven in the reader the same sentiments and attitudes that brought millions of people to Tahrir Square only several weeks prior.

Perhaps most interesting, though, is how the document ends. It features a short section entitled, “Legitimacy of the Revolution,” under which it explains that, “[w]e see that many of the noble hadiths promote the prevention of injustice, whereby confirming the legitimacy of the revolution.” However, after the hadiths, the author warns against the “evil” of “imams of injustice and misguidance” (‘a’imma al-ju’er wa aD-Dalâla), which is a reference to a hadith with which the author ends the document: “I fear what I fear when the imams are deceptive” (akha:fu ‘ala ’amta al-‘a’imma al-muDalli:n). This suggests perhaps that this author is weary of either the religious establishment, namely Al-Azhar University and its sheikhs and grand mufti, or of the more explicitly political Islamists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This document is dated April 26 and portends to speak for a generalized every-Egyptian (“lima:tha qumna: bi-thowra 25 yanayir?”). This document also makes many religious allusions and hagiographizes the history of January 25 to inspire further protests and a return to Tahrir. It calls for the dissolution of the “State Security apparatus,” which may be a cloaked allusion to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which in that period would have been somewhat progressive, if not prescient. The Arabic of the original document is exceedingly clear and parsimonious. It employs a very basic, elementary level of

\[174\] Ibid

\[175\] Ibid; translation: “Why We Undertook the Revolution” (my emphasis).

\[176\] Anonymous. “We Want… a humane state, Based on both… reason and religion [sic.]” where it follows the sub-title “ingredients for the success of revolutions.” This document also makes many religious allusions and hagiographizes the history of January 25 to inspire further protests and a return to Tahrir. It calls for the dissolution of the “State Security apparatus,” which may be a cloaked allusion to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which in that period would have been somewhat progressive, if not prescient. The Arabic of the original document is exceedingly clear and parsimonious. It employs a very basic, elementary level of
vocabulary and its syntax is almost colloquial. For instance, one sentence begins: “wa ba’d 30 ‘am min Hukm ha:tha aT-Ta:ghiya…”, which closely mimics the general syntactical pattern of Egyptian, Cairene dialectal Arabic and utilizes the broadly-recognized and Quranic term “Ta:ghiya” for “tyrant” before going on to lament Egypt’s occupation of “57th place among 60 countries in the World Suffering Report.” “Ta:ghiya”, for “tyrant”, emanates from a more accessible diction, as opposed to the restrictive code of more formal and less colloquial Arabic, which would likely use the synonym, “mustabidd”.

Of course, it is possible that this language arrangement is less of a “tactic” and more of a genuine form of expression on the part of the author, but in either case, there is some explanatory power accruable to this stylistic as it was widely-circulated and deemed influential enough to have been included in Tahrir Documents, which does screen the materials it chooses to scan, translate, and publish. The document is inclusive, concise, and poignant—its “maTa:lib”, or demands, give it an edge at a time, post Feb. 11, 2011, when there was much ambiguity about the future of Egyptian governance.177 These demands employ an illocutionary device, which suggests or impels a discreet set of actions, in this case returning to Tahrir to resume the revolutionary protests, through the (linguistic) modality of grievance listing as a revolutionary device. The document seeks to be convincing and is, arguably, evidence of the resonance of the premises of this theoretical framework—language is indeed used as a prototypical event-catalyst, or vehicle of revolutionary sentiment. The document appeals far more to a collective sense of indignation, and evokes emotion and passion, memory, and pride through the emergent idiolect of revolution. The authors seek to evince the reader’s presumably latent revolutionary identity to inspire her/him to take to Tahrir and continue what had begun on January 25, 2011.

177 Ibid
In the above discussion, several documents were examined that utilized grievance-and-demand constructions to configure veritable lists of illocutionary “speech-acts” intended to evince revolutionary sentiments and impel revolutionary actions. This grievance-listing is a helpful literary motif for sifting through and interpreting *watha:'iq ath-thowra* from both Egypt and Syria.

**Illocution in Tahrir Documents: The Words that Mobilize Protests**

In “Labor and Liberating the State,” so important is the language of the revolution that the authors, members of the Social Democratic Forum, recount that the working class not only participated in the revolution, but that it “led the Egyptians’ struggle” through “sit-ins, strikes, demonstrations,” and was the first, on April 6, 2008, to protest Mubarak by stepping on his photos and chanting slogans calling for his downfall—“*naza’a ‘amma:l al-MaHalla Suwarabu wa dasu:ha bil-aqda:m wa batafu: bi-suqu:Tihi.*”[178] The document contrasts the power of revolutionary slogans to the inherent subjugation, or “degradation” (*ibtitha:l*) of the pathetic appeals and petitionary pleas of formerly disenfranchised members of the labor class under Mubarak’s oppressive regime—these self-deprecating ‘humiliation-slogans’ are critically transcribed in Egyptian colloquial Arabic, rather than the high formal Arabic of the rest of the letter: “*al-minHa ya: rayis, al-‘alacwa ya: rayis,*” (‘a favor, O president, a bonus, O president’). Bassiouney argues that “diglossic switching as part of code switching is used to create an effect on the audience,” and that scripted utterances are intended to

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appeal to a particular class-based constituency.” 179 This document, according to Bassiouney’s taxonomy, most closely resembles category 2, “fusHa al-‘aSr” in that it mixes codes between “contemporary classical” and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, but the majority of the text is in unmistakable MSA. 180

The objective of the document is to reappropriate both the idiom of the Arabic Spring and invigorate that emergent linguistic mode with a traditional Marxism to create the effect, using only language, of infusing the Arab Spring with a classist, labor-centered, social justice agenda while also deploying illocutionary grievance-listing and perlocutionary demand-constructions. The document, for example, directly addresses those who “work for a wage and do not own the means of production,” a clearly Marxist referent, narrowed by calling upon the “scientist… doctor… engineer… lawyer… accountant… etc.” 181 Similarly, it closes with the following co-refrains: “unite O workers of Egypt, to purify all yellow unions, which cooperated with the previous regime, which conspired and sold you to bondage and servitude,” and the rhapsodic Arab Spring slogan that appears centered as the last line of the message: “wa 'asbat mīSr bī-l-Huriyya wa lī-l-Huriyya” (‘Long live Egypt, in freedom and for freedom’).

The register of “Because We Want to Realize These Demands, We Are Protesting in Tahrir,” is strikingly different than that of the previous documents under review. 182 Its title is entirely in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic: “‘asba:n ‘aayzīn naHa(qq)i(q) ilmaTadīb di: ‘IHn: ma’taSim: fī: (i)t-

180 Ibid
181 Ellipses are original. See “Labor and Liberating the State, May 1 2011”.
"TaHri:r" (Because We Want to Realize These Demands, We are Protesting in Egypt’). The vocabulary, verb valence around the continuous present plural contraption, “‘aaazyin” (we want’, or lit. ‘we wanting’), and syntax is entirely rendered in the Cairene dialect to identify and speak to the document’s target audience, expressly “al-insan al-miSri,” which the Tahrir Documents staff translated as the ‘the average Egyptian’. The rest of the text, title aside, is in formal Arabic but uses mostly simple grammatical constructions, large font, very few words, and a familiar, if not explicitly mixed syntax. What differentiates this document is its seemingly dyadic intention—it appeals to the “average Egyptian” and supplies her/him with a grievance-list formulated as a demand-construction that is inaugurated and sealed with slogan-esque neologisms. The first such quasi-slogan is its colloquial title; the second is rendered in formal Arabic but employs various colloquial devices such as the use of the term “sha’bi” and a parsimony that suggests a spoken quality. The phrasing identifies the Party of the Popular Union: “We are a group from popular councils (lij ga:n sha’biyya) across Egypt, cooperating with all so that we may protect the present… and build the future.”

Similarly the We Love This Country Group [Ihna bi-inHibb al-Balad D], dawns a colloquial title but its document is entirely in formal Arabic. The document specifically, within its preamble, draws attention to the language of the Arab Spring in Egypt: “[t]he revolution raised up the slogan ‘Bread… Freedom… Social Justice,’” which it seeks to appropriate toward not only “its goal [to]...
completely topple the regime,” but also fight corruption.\textsuperscript{186} It employs an interesting literary device, an extended body metaphor, to convince, through this illocutionary linguistic form, the reader to engage in the action of protest: “The head (the deposed Mubarak) has fallen, but the body (the system of corruption and despotism that is spread throughout the state’s different institutions and foundations) has not yet fallen.” In repeating the slogan of the revolution, “Bread, Freedom, Social Justice,” the document attempts to invoke revolutionary sentiments and further its social change and political reform objectives through the language of the Arabic Spring—this implies and demonstrates a natural internal resonance that the idiomodal ‘language of the Arab Spring’ seems to have almost immediately taken on and maintained, if not augmented, over time and in its travel to various spaces. The formatting of text is original. Similarly, “Egyptians Are One Hand to Complete the Goals of the Revolution,” utilizes a linguistic device, an extended body metaphor, built upon the notion that Egyptian leftist political parties serve one purpose, as “\textit{yad wa:Hida}” (‘one hand’), would clearly imply.\textsuperscript{187}

\textbf{Syria’s Online Revolution: SyriaLeaks \& Assad’s (failing) Counter-Revolutionary Rhetoric}

Syria’s \textit{thuwwa:r} have not been as fortunate as those of Egypt. They have yet to topple the Assad regime and they have been attacked relentlessly on a daily basis by the Syrian military. There is, therefore, a larger preponderance of leaked Assad regime documents that constitute the language of “counter-revolution” in very strong tones. Syria’s “revolutionary documents”, or documents that focus, as in the case of Egypt’s Tahrir Documents project, on the aftermath of regime change and


configuring a shared vision for a future state and new national identity are still few and far between.

SyriaLeaks has not survived the Syrian regime’s monitoring and *mukhabarat* tactics\(^\text{188}\)—the site is void of all of its prior documents and its membership has been disbanded. Still, it shared a bank of artifacts with sister online movements, SyriaLeaks and Arasyam Revolution Intelligence System (“Arasyam”). SyriaLeaks (*walha:’iq ath-thowra as-suriyya*) is hosted by Facebook and contains a total of 29 captured documents, including several letters by anti-regime, revolutionary groups.

Document 9 is an official edict from the Syrian General Directorate of Customs warning Syrians against the use of iPhone devices due to its “prohibited and extra-legal features as defined by the Communications Department of the Ministry of Finance.”\(^\text{189}\) This letter is extremely short—it consists of one sentence in very simple, basic, semi-formal Arabic where every word is in bold font and “I PHONE” is capitalized in English. The letter, dated December 1, 2011 is meant for general distribution among “the public” (*‘ta’mir*)

This style is replicated in nearly all 29 of the SyriaLeaks captured artifacts. In a letter addressed to the director of Syria’s Ministry of Health, the head of a Hama’s clinic requests that an ambulance that was confiscated around the end of November 2011 be returned to the clinic. The comments on the Facebook site indicate that the ambulance was commandeered by the Syrian army to discourage and disable local health clinics from treating the wounded protestors. The letter is also quite short—it reads as an incident report and is one sentence that stretches over three lines. It conveys a marked sense of subjugation, from its opening “kind greetings,” to its “warm request” for action in its closing. The document is sufficiently stamped and signed to confirm at once its official


nature as well as its ongoing respect for the rules and customs of the regime, despite what is likely a ‘hidden script’ of dissent and resentment.\(^{190}\) In a particularly alarming letter, titled, ‘‘\textit{\textasciitilde amr ida\textasciitilde ri}’’ (‘a management matter’), signed by the leader of the Syrian Army’s Generals’ Council, a list of procedures and upcoming measures are listed that summarize a plan to draft a larger number of Syrian citizens into the army “\textit{\textasciitilde istida\textasciitilde dan li\textasciitilde H\textasciitildearb al\textasciitilde qa\textasciitilde dima}’’ (‘in preparation for the imminent war’).\(^{191}\)

While the text was not prepared for the public, its language is nevertheless ominous and it displays, in unambiguous terms, the regime’s willingness to transform words, or its rhetoric of marginalization of protestors to justify treating them as enemy Salafi terrorists of the state, into violent action.

Arasyam’s ‘leaked documents’ project features a similar letter produced by the Office of Public Intelligence (\textit{\textasciitilde mukha\textasciitilde ba\textasciitilde ra\textasciitilde f}), which instructs and advises the Syrian security forces “\textit{\textasciitilde bi\textasciitilde l\textasciitilde it\textasciitilde fa\textasciitilde f\textasciitilde a\textasciitilde la\textasciitilde al\textasciitilde m\textasciitilde u\textasciitilde ta\textasciitilde TH\textasciitilde a\textasciitilde bir\textasciitilde n}’’ (‘containment of the demonstrators’) and provides a plan of action and a profile of two specific contingents—it literally bifurcates the Syrian population into the categories of “\textit{\textasciitilde al\textasciitilde \textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde tunSur al\textasciitilde mu\textasciitilde wa\textasciitilde li\textasciitilde}’’ (‘the loyalist component’) and “\textit{\textasciitilde al\textasciitilde \textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde\textasciitilde tunSur al\textasciitilde mu\textasciitilde a\textasciitilde ri\textasciitilde D}’’ (‘the oppositionist component’).\(^{192}\)

All of the Arab states confronting Arab Spring revolutionaries have, at least initially, been willing to instrumentalize, to varied extents, the purportedly inherent threat of “religious extremism” (Ar. “\textit{\textasciitilde ta\textasciitilde Tar\textasciitilde nuf}’) but Arasyam’s document cache contains over 24 items that detail regime plans to continue military operations to quash their population’s revolutionary movements on the streets of Damascus, Deraa, Baniyas, Homs, and Hama. The regime’s conception that religious extremism is the scourge of Ba’athist secular nationalism fed into the military rhetoric that the Arab Spring in

\(^{190}\) See SyriaLeaks, Wall Photos 10. For more on Scott’s hidden scripts, see James Scott. \textit{Domination and the Arts of Resistance}. (Yale, 1990), pp. 1-28.

\(^{191}\) SyriaLeaks, Wall Photos 12.

Syria is orchestrated by al-Qaedaists or Salafists, or American spies, and must therefore be forcefully put down. Sana, the official Syrian news agency, has echoed the Assad regime’s rhetoric about an "armed insurrection" led by Salafist groups that is taking place in “Homs and further north in Baniyas.”193 According to Sana, official Syrian media, the demonstrators are “armed criminal gangsters” and are to be considered and treated by the military as “Salafists”. While directly adopting the language of “moderate” versus “radical,” as Arasyam’s captured letter from Syria’s Intelligence Agency starkly demonstrates, Sana and the Assad regime have effectively Islamized the otherwise avowedly areligious Arab Spring demonstrators of Syria and determined the protestors to be necessarily extremist Muslims rather than legitimate Syrian oppositionists. The Salafists are largely equated with al-Qaeda by the Arab Republics and in Syria they are to be targeted for disrupting national security.194 Likewise, moderate or “good” Muslims, “al-‘unSur al-muwachi” (‘the loyalist component’), i.e. supporters of Assad, are reported to constitute the “large majority of Syrian citizens” and have “spontaneously formed crowds” on the streets of Damascus in defense of Assad’s rule and the crackdown against the (radical) Salafists, presumably “al-‘unSur al-mu’ariD” (‘the oppositionist component’).195

Figure 5 (AR) Mutanaffis/Extremist AND “mu’aaraDa”/“opposition” [9/11/2001-5/10/2011]: avg. 9.3/yr


194 Thousands of protestors have been arrested and hundreds killed as tanks continue to roll into cities around the country under the banner of containing the Islamist threat.

195 In this way, Peter Danchin’s conclusion that for the writers of the 2010 Chicago Report, “[t]he only way to deal with the bad Muslims, and the serious security threat that they pose, is to continue with external military intervention (the foreign policy objective of a “global war on terrorism,” adopted by Republican and Democratic administrations alike)” is true too for Syria and the Arab Republics and this has come to a head since January 2011. See: Danchin P. Good Muslim, bad Muslim. The Immanent Frame. 2010. Available at: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/04/21/good-muslim-bad-muslim/. Accessed May 3, 2011.
This report’s analyses of the communication records from social media networks like Twitter in Syria suggest that the regime’s narrative about the threats of al-Qaedaists and the sorts of anti-Islamist external rhetoric, coming from both the Arabic and English speaking media sources, does not seem to be resonant. Notwithstanding instances of government social media blackouts and propagandistic flooding and phishing, pro-regime Tweets remain very low in absolute terms (see annexes 1, 2). There is a stronger and far more insidious correlation between the extent to which the Syrian regime has resorted to violent subordination and the increased incidence of localized new phrasings that conflate “Islam” and “Muslim” with “violence,” “terrorism,” and “al-Qaeda”, or that bolster the secularist bifurcation of Muslim and Syrian citizen identity into acceptable modes, i.e. “moderate”, “good”, “supporter”, etc. and unacceptable or problematic modes, i.e. “radical”, “terrorist”, “extremist”, etc. factor to date and it has been largely ignored at the peril of Syrians at the frontline calling for liberal democracy, dignity, human rights, and real political reform. That is, the Syrian regime, with the collaboration of Sana state media, uses language that depicts all protestors as “terrorists” and “gangsters”, “thugs”, or “drug dealers”, in correlation with its
increased resorting to violent repression of demonstrations as well as in combatting the FSA and al-Qaeda entities within its borders. Conversely, the regime-media alliance portrays loyalists who support Bashar as true Syrians, patriots, and good citizens and ‘innocent civilians’. It pays no attention to the in-fighting, officially dubbed a civil war by the United Nations in 2012, between armed factions both in support of and against Bashar’s regime. “Loyalists”, significantly, have, meanwhile, garnered a different label in Arabic social media and within Syria among oppositionists, namely “menhebakjis”, or literally “we-love-you-ists”, in reference to their diehard backing of Bashar. There is a Facebook group at facebook.com/menhebakji that derides menhebakjis and ridicules the bases of their pro-regime stance.

Figure 7 Satirical cartoon shows Bashar as a duck riding a jackass with a label on its tale that reads "menhebakji". Bashar’s likeness carries a sign bearing the logo of World News (Ad-Dunya). Taken from facebook.com/menhebakji

While pro-Bashar Syrians are known widely as menhebakjis, those who oppose the regime, many of them at least, self-identify as “žim’aže”. It is unclear to me, as of yet, whether “žim’aže” means “Friday-ist”, in reference to the pattern of popular engagement in large protests across Syria following Friday prayers, or if it simply means “gather-ist” from the Arabic root جمومع (‘to gather’). In a blog post titled, “shi’arar: al-muTH:harar” (the protest-slogans of the demonstrations) by an anonymous author who goes by “Alaa”, we see yet another demonstration of
the association between SCA and revolutionary sentiment. The post appears on the blog, *al-mundassa as-suриyya*, written in Arabic script and is composed largely in Syrian Colloquial Arabic (SCA) after an introduction with heavy diglossic code mixing between MSA and SCA.¹⁹⁶

The image that introduces the article portrays silhouettes of Syrian protestors holding signs that bear MSA protest slogans, which read from top left to right, and bottom left to right: "No to Injustice", "Yes to a Syria of the People, No to a Syria of One Person", "No to Slavery", "No to Bribing", "No to Oppression, No to Fear", "No to Defeat, No to humiliation", “No to Torture,” “No to Unemployment”, “No to Poverty”, “No to Hunger”. Alaa begins by declaring “hella:’ ene žim’aže lil-mo:t” (now, I am a post-Friday prayer protestor, or protest supporter, to the death), and thus immediately aligns his stance with the Syrian *thuwwar*, “žama:’at le:sh” (the group that asks ‘why?’) from the onset. Alaa sets up a mutually exclusive opposite identity category that is pro-regime, which he designates as “žama:’at mnHibbak” (the group that says ‘we love you’ [directed at Bashar al-Asad]). He then proceeds to position himself as a wise onlooker able to dispense fair judgment of the situation by establishing a claim to having special or neutral knowledge through his assertion that, “min hal-Haki: il-muHim ’arraret il-yo:m ’axla:’ naDa:rat il-mu’a:raDe tab’iti:… w HaHwel ’ilbis kaza:lik al-Hiya:x ma-raH ’u:l žama:’at mnHibbak” (due to the importance of this topic of discussion, I’ve decided today to remove my lenses from the perspective of the opposition… and try to wear, in that way, [a lens of] neutrality; I wouldn’t [however] say [I’m going to pretend to be of] the group of those who say ‘we love you’ [to Bashar al-Assad and his regime]). He then proceeds to reveal his alignment with the opposition by critiquing the rhetorical claims of the revolutionaries (satirically) from the perspective of the Assad regime. The satirical overtone and leaning toward the

opposition is punctuated by the fact that Alaa writes the section entirely in SCA. In his first treatment, he comports with an opposition slogan-protest (ṣbiʿar) he heard on a video online, namely “Allahu akbar” (‘God is great’). Alaa explains,

w-baʿd showfat kem fidiyyu tbeyyenle innu: il-emen yestefizz b-he:l-kilmi ktir… shu: fiha?: naHne bi-kill Sala:t mn'u:l keza marra ‘Allahu akbar’ Hatta ‘ala il-mu’ezzen w-bil-ʿya:d w-il-m’ne:sebe:; innu: shu: ‘tgheyer hella:’?

And after watching several videos, it became clear to me that the security forces are bothered by this word [“Allahu akbar”] a lot… (but) what’s the big deal? We, in every prayer, say that, “Allahu akbar”, even the muezzin has to (say it), and during holidays, and special occasions. I mean, what changed now?

Alaa thus renders his judgment of “il-emen”, a metonymic reference to the Assad regime and loyalists, and the particular situation of the Syrian civil war being fought on the ground, in the media, and in the very words and register of conversations throughout the country. Alaa has taken a stance in support of the opposition and has adopted the popular opposition’s penchant for SCA; Alaa expresses, reconstitutions, confirms, and acts upon his alignment with the Syrian opposition through his code choices.

Syrians have found myriad virtual spaces that are less daunting arenas for dissent than the perilous streets of nearly every major Syrian city since the government crackdown began in March 2011. Twitter, for example, serves as a neutral territory for political expression. It hosts Syrians who
regularly Tweet about developments in-country and make the protestors’ demands clear amid the efforts by the Syrian regime and Sana media system to obfuscate and obscure the identities and demands of the Arab Spring demonstrators. The following is a sampling of such Tweets:

**KareemLailah (@KareemLailah)**
11/12/11 7:29 AM
P.S. All news coming from the Arab League now are leaks from personal contacts there and not based on any press sources. #Egypt #Syria

**paintmyblues (@paintmyblues)**
11/19/11 4:15 AM
#NoMilTrials We Want a Humane State Based on both Reason and Religion t.co/JafrbSzg

**Syrian Revolution (@RevolutionSyria)**
11/19/11 6:12 PM
#Assad will continue to ask for more time to continue his #reforms of torture and murder. #freedom #Syria... fb.mc/UnVcFPLl

**Mona Eltahawy (@monaeltahawy)**
11/19/11 6:30 PM
Ya Allah - 1 dead, 750 injured, too many in the head, #Tahrir #Nov19

**Syrian Revolution (@RevolutionSyria)**
04/16/13
#Deir ez-Zor #Syria Rebels Lay Siege to Deir ez-Zor Military Airport with Regime Troops Trapped... http://fb.mc/B5UBmikC

Why did paintmyblues choose to capitalize the first letters of the words she did? Syrian Revolution utilizes sarcasm and dramatic irony to express dissent much in line with Scott’s theory of ‘hidden scripts.’ Mona Eltahawy conveys the inexplicable direness of the situation in Syria in 68 characters, including spaces, 55 not. The entry by paintmyblues evidences the travel of revolutionary language as it cites one of the flyers published by Tahrir Documents referred to in the previous section of this analysis. Cross fertilization of ideas has contributed to the spread of the Arab Spring across the region but so too have the messages of despair such as those by Mona Eltahawy, Syrian Revolution, and KareemLailah. Indeed, these Tweets are part of a sad regular pattern of individuals
and organizations chronicling the suffering of civilians caught in the cross-fire of revolutionaries, ‘other’ opposition forces, and regime loyalists. The following Tweet by Syria Monitor is an example of a Tweeter seeing fit to re-Tweet a newspaper article by Hurriyet Daily News that expresses pessimism about ever toppling Assad’s regime. The Tweeter adds a concise summary of what the Tweeter believes to be the most important aspect of the article:

**Syria Monitor**(@syriamonitor)
12/10/12 4:17PM

The Tweet admits that Assad’s downfall may not be imminent but it nevertheless indicates that the revolution will succeed with time. This Tweet and scores of others with comparable realist-optimist messaging serve a dual function. They allow for collective venting, or airing of grievance and disappointment, but also express collective indignation and seek to inspire patience and faith that victory near.

Twitter is a viable **site of revolutionary language** and, for many, is the best forum available for observing and reporting the trends and developments in Syria’s Arab Spring. The Assad-Sana political-media rhetoric feeds into counter-revolutionary activity ranging from military suppression of protestors and opposition forces to Internet blackouts and the impediments to the entry of international press as well as Arab League inspectors.197 On 29 November 2012 at 12:26PM (Damascus time) the regime blocked, cut off, or used malware to attack all 84 of Syria’s IP addresses. As a result, Akamai, Syria’s Internet delivery network reported a sharp drop in Syrian

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Figure 9 Akamai chart documents the steep drop in Syrian Internet usage to zero within minutes of the regime’s 29 Nov. 2012 blackout.

Within hours of the Internet blackout, Twitter users around the world responded by providing free dial-up alternatives for in-country Syrians to connect. Consider the following message from StoryfullPro on 29 November 2012:

**StoryfulPro Verified [@storyfulpro]**

11/29/12 11:11AM
SYRIA: Local Coordination Committees offers dial-up alternatives to internet outage: http://on.fb.me/QsOyKN

Users had quickly Tweeted numbers Syrian Twitter users could use to gain access to Twitter:

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Syrian users adapted to the need to use dial-up to connect. Several users found that the regime had already caught on to those using dial-up for Internet access and issued warnings to their colleagues:

Iyad El-Baghdadi (@iyad_elbaghdadi)  
11/29/12 10:11AM  
#Syria accounts that are using dial-up (Telecomix), please be aware that it is not secure.

These messages demonstrate the urgency of communication—without the ability to communicate constantly the revolution itself is under threat. Language not only carries the ideas, sentiments, and objectives of the revolution across Arab state borders, it also sustains the revolution at all times. The Assad regime therefore engages in both counter-revolutionary rhetoric and implements attacks on communication centers that make it possible for revolutionaries to maintain contact.199 In effect, muting the language of the Arab Spring used by the revolutionaries, could undermine, in any given Arab state, if not completely terminate, the Arab Spring uprisings in that locality and potentially choke it off across the region.

Chapter 3 examined the critical role of the online spaces for expression and conversation for both pro- and anti- Arab Spring discourse. The next chapter adumbrates the methodology behind the qualitative analytical research that will be presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 4 also investigates two case studies, one Kuwaiti and one Algerian, and presents the major themes and questions that will

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199 In 2012 a series of Assad family e-mails were intercepted and leaked to international media—the collection reveals eerily mundane interactions between Bashar al-Assad and his wife and confidants as well as extraordinary exchanges with advisers pertaining to regime image, and very specific points on rhetoric to the level of particular wordings and what to mention and not mention in certain public speeches by Assad. These e-mails, particularly the more relevant ones for political analysis written in Arabic, require further analysis that is beyond the scope of this article. Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/14/bashar-al-assad-syria5>.
be addressed in the fifth chapter.

Chapter 4: Non-Revolutionaries’ Voices in the Discourse of the Arab Uprisings: Lebanon & Others

The Arab Spring, among a host of other heretofore-unforeseen consequences, occasioned a re-examination of intellectual production as a processual dynamic that feeds back into revolutionary attitudes and sentiment; the messages of these revolutionary uprisings are part and parcel of revolutionary thought and action. The language of the Arab Spring is created and re-created daily through the extraordinary and mundane avenues of public expression chosen by revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, be they visual and artistic, written and analytic, physical and activist, or spoken, sung and chanted as explicitly political. Indeed, for many, hatafaːt wa shi’aːr (calls and chants) are political actions in themselves and occupy space and time as much as the physical bodies in Tahrir or Saadallah Al-Jabiri square.

Non-revolutionaries both in and outside of Egypt and Syria, or individuals who chose not to participate physically or vocally in protests, have also experienced a political re-alignment of identity in having to side with either the reformist opposition groups (anti-regime) or conservative loyalists (pro-regime).\(^{200}\) This information remains out of sight because non-revolutionaries do not appear in

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sensational photographs or maintain Facebook pages or necessarily Tweet on Twitter. They may, however, e-mail, or engage in interviews—indeed, the Lebanese subjects included in this research expressed a broad range of views on the Arab Spring. What they had in common was that they each felt inclined to support one side or the other in the case of Syria’s civil war, and did so either explicitly or implicitly.

This research contributes to the inchoate literature on the Arab Spring by emphasizing the import and ubiquity of language as a marker of an otherwise undetectable intellectual discourse. The uprisings in Egypt and Syria, and across the region, take place within the parameters of the political discourses of the Arab Spring as well as counter-revolutionary narratives perpetuated by state media, incumbent political actors of the regimes, and ordinary people who may self-identify as ‘anti-revolutionary’ or ‘pro-government’. However, these political discourses, as the interviews in this research show, are recreated, reframed, and variously played out outside of Arab Spring states by individuals whose lives are not necessarily at stake but who make specific claims about the Arab Uprisings, and consequently form their political, social, and, in some cases, religious identities partially on these discursive lines.

**Qualitative Methodology**

With the availability of appropriate textual sources in the wake of a transnational consciousness of engagement or participation in “revolution” or “uprising” (intifaDa), this analysis ran the risk of an overly “textual” analysis of the question of the ‘language of the Arab Spring’, or language as a determining factor to explain the transnationalism of the Arab uprisings. As such, a grounding device, or set of instruments, is required to normalize and measure the emic resonance of the
framework of a purportedly ‘revolutionary language’, or ‘idiolects’ for that matter. To account then for the nuances of “language” as a revolutionary category, it is imperative to include participant-based ‘control data’ and/or observations relating to the dialectical developments beyond formal Arabic, especially in Egypt and Syria, around the metropolises of Cairo and Damascus, but also beyond these veritable hotspots of revolutionary activism and rhapsody to the peripheral states, such as Lebanon.

Given that very little literature exists in dialectal Arabic, a particular methodology, or research plan, is required to systematically and analytically weave in material from the relevant literature, both theoretical and primary source documents or Internet artifacts, alongside qualitative data gathered by way of participant observation and interviews. The personal interviews took place with native Arabic-speakers in and/or from the region with a view toward the role of colloquial Arabic, be it in political speechifying, rallying, protesting, or various modes of artistic ‘revolutionary expression.’ These took the form of largely unstructured conversations with non-probabilistically selected informants. I thereby made use of the concatenative, or ‘snowball’, approach. My questions were formatted into clusters of inquiry so as to provide the informant with various cues, including the option to critique the question, the research itself, or the potential findings.

It is difficult to generalize as to the validity of the prior analyses based on web data and relevant literature without somehow actualizing the data by testing its premises and tentative findings. By validity, I mean that the analyses of revolutionary documents and online data are resonant with the experiences of people in the region and are defensible vis-à-vis the relevant literature. I tested for resonance by engaging in participant observation and conducting personal interviews. With respect to the literature, my work acknowledges the progress being made toward an
interdisciplinary framework that combines linguistic and political scientific methods and theories, while contributing case studies in the field of Arabic political discourse analysis that make specific arguments about the relationship between colloquial Arabic and revolutionary sentiment, as well as MSA and regime loyalty. To be valid, and perhaps generalizable, my arguments must hold water when cross-examined in relation to the other research, however sparse and embryonic, being done on language and the Arab Spring and critical discourse analytical methods.

Personal interviews, data analysis, and participant observation are therefore appropriate means for accounting for normal frequencies and internal resonances of terms and phrases related to the Arab Spring uprisings. It remains problematic that, to a certain extent, the “Arab Spring” is not entirely componential—that is, it cannot simply be understood as the sum of its parts. It is a complex social gestaltism and to scientifically operationalize ‘Arab Spring’ in specific localities is somewhat disingenuous, particularly in the case of Syria where a revolutionary movement may have transformed into a civil war with potentially very different consequences than what is understood by “a spring”. For this reason it is also critical to introduce a human dimension, or social modality—in this case, interviews but, eventually, a survey may be added as an additional leg of this ongoing research.

Data Use

The thesis, in its current form, features several sections that touch on the role of dialectical Arabic in the blogosphere and other sites of revolution (pun intended). These sections require further substantiation and corroborating evidence to support or subvert the claim that dialectical Arabic is employed when attempting to either reach a broader audience or explain the logic of continued revolutionary activism and thereby compel or convince those broader, presumably inactive, audience
members to partake in specific actions that sustain or undermine the “revolution”. Revolution is treated as a subjective entity in this research—no attempt is made to disqualify specific uses of the term “thowra” (‘revolution’) or “intifa:Da” (‘uprising’). Rather, the objective of the research is to contextualize this language use as is and describe how the metaphor of revolution—whether a “real” revolution is imagined, discursive, or actual—is utilized in written and verbal speech acts to inspire action and commitment through rhetorical persuasion.

The data gathered from the online survey will be country-specific, assuming that users voluntarily identify their countries of origin, and will thereby help parameterize the hypotheses of the thesis as it expands into a doctoral dissertation. The in-person interviews in Lebanon required a new sub-section in the paper as Lebanese people, not having experienced a revolution as part of the Arab Spring, aside from limited sympathy protests and anti-confessional movements, did not always find the topic internally relevant.

Still, given that the research aims to measure the extent to which language helps explain the ‘travel’ of Arab Spring “revolutionary” or “reform” sentiments and social-political reform objectives, a test case like Lebanon where no explicitly Arab Spring protests or demonstrations have been reported, is a helpful litmus test that grounds the thesis. Entering into the research in Lebanon, I planned that, in the event that the fieldwork in Lebanon fails to locate overtly political, cultural (sensus lacto), or religious traces of the Arab Spring by way of protests, marches, or other forms of socio-political reform movements, I would search for the presence of linguistic paraphernalia and facsimiles, or “co-factors”, that would illustrate the resonance of the discursive framework provided by the Arab Spring. Strictly speaking, I would expect to find that the linguistic cues that typically accompany uprisings in other Arab states would not be present in Lebanon. However, if Lebanon is
not experiencing political reform, but there is a high level of salience to the language of the Arab Spring, I can perhaps conjecture as to the likelihood of future activism, or agitation based on what I observe in the political discourse of my interviewees and in my immediate social environment while there.

The purpose of my framework is not to predict future uprisings, or oppositionist, ‘revolutionary’, activity. In fact, the language of the Arab Spring itself, in my research, constitutes revolutionary activity—if the slogan-chants and the lexicon of the protests are present, that warrants serious attention. Alternatively, the experience in Lebanon could also allow me to conjecture as to the putative lack of other revolutionary co-factors. That is, why, if I do find linguistic traces, have Lebanese people not organized large-scale pro-reform or anti-regime protests? According to my framework, the idiom of opposition is sufficient grounds for declaring an ‘Arab Uprising’ in Lebanon; with this understanding, milyoniya:ts (protests consisting of a million or more people) might not be necessary so long as millions of Lebanese people adopt the vocabulary of revolt, or of regime loyalism for that matter. In this way, I might ask why have there, to date, not been pro-government movements? In this way, Lebanon may be an ideal test case for demonstrating the validity of my argument that the language of the Arab Spring is a form of revolutionary activity in itself and should therefore be categorized as such and recognized in Middle East studies literature, analyses of the region and the Arab Spring, and beyond. It is not, then, simple to dismiss the notion that Lebanon, and other states that may not have experienced mass protests, peaceful or otherwise, or violent government crackdowns in reaction to popular demands for reform, somehow “skipped” the Arab Spring. Analytically, taking my thesis seriously means that to make the claim that Lebanon did not undergo an Arab uprising, one would need to prove that the language of the Arab Spring was not at
all present, or not to significant extents, in the country.

My hypothesis in Lebanon was to find a correlation between the frequency levels of revolutionary rhetoric, which I argue constitutes revolutionary activity, and revolutionary attitudes—if I did not, then a host of follow-up questions would arise; among them is the very question posed at the core of this research, namely the extent to which language helps to explain the transnationalism of the Arab Spring uprisings. If the results are ‘negative’, so to speak, and I do not find significant proportional traces of the travel of revolutionary language in Lebanon and the manifestation of revolutionary attitudes toward the incumbent regime, such a finding would be an opportunity to write against language as action and document the limits and extent to which the argument that language helps explain the prevalence of the Arab Uprisings, both as a linguistic phenomenon and a socio-political physical activity, is valid in the minority of Arab states that have not directly experienced consistent large-scale pro- or anti-regime demonstrations. Such ‘demonstrations’ are understood as a synonym for ‘revolutionary activity’ and, in this research, include protests and marches be they in public squares or university campuses and every space in between, or poetry, prose, and other forms of counter-, or potentially pro-Arab Uprisings production, be it cultural, religious, political, economic, or social, but also public or private. If revolutionary language is a kind of action, and if that ‘action’ is a co-factor of revolutionary sentiment, or attitude, then the condition that defines ‘revolutionary activity’ is that the speech act, or physical act, accompany, or otherwise convey or translate, the attitude of an individual who has strongly identified, or sympathized, with either the regime (counter-revolutionary), or the opposition (revolutionary).
Limits, Constraints, & Risks: Concerns

There are essentially two main areas of concern from whence stem various related limits and potential risks. The first, mentioned above, is that the Lebanese people, not having directly experienced a revolution as part of the Arab Spring, may not respond genuinely to the interview questions. If the conversations are entirely hypothetical or removed, they may be of limited applicability. The second concern is that, due to limited time, I was unable to engage in sufficient participant observation prior to each of the interviews. I was able to spend significant time establishing relationships with some participants prior to their interviews, but not with all. Perhaps especially when testing for language cues, such as code switching, the way I am initially perceived will affect the linguistic choices of the interviewees.

Lastly, in expanding this research and the theoretical framework beyond available texts and online revolutionary sites to explore the role of dialectical Arabic, unstructured interviews were used to involve relevant informants. Given the ongoing and highly contested nature of the events of the Arab Spring in multiple regional locales, particularly in Egypt and Syria where violence is rampant in some parts and security is unstable, certain ethical considerations present real validity threats to the research that may be partially unavoidable. Important questions include: How can I secure against the seizure and wrongful use of information stored on my electronic devices or online accounts? How can the research avoid seeming overtly or covertly biased toward the Arab Spring either in favor or against?

To account for some of these validity issues, I used freeware applications like DropBox that provide a free online data storage service where information could be instantly uploaded to a password-protected virtual space only directly accessible by devices owned by, in this case, myself.
This only required a viable Internet connection from the place of interview, which I secured by bringing a wireless tablet computer with direct access to Lebanon’s 3G network. The tablet enabled me to delete all traces of any data from my digital recording devices within seconds of transfer. To protect the identities of my interviewees, I also use pseudonyms and changed certain personal facts.

**Endpoint**

If the language of the Arab Uprisings, or the new Arabic socio-political argot, is a discernible transnational code with an accompanying attitudinal, or arguably ideological, component that plays a significant role in the spread of the Arab Uprisings, the study should show that native-Arabic speakers on either side of the uprising, or revolution, pro- or anti-, evaluate this code to be a) more persuasive in the face of challenges from competing factions, and b) a relevant and indeed effective form of activism whether they are for or against the ‘Arab Uprisings’. My challenge, then, is to use linguistic and political as well as socio-linguistic theory to analyze strings of interview and eek out motifs that I could fairly describe as the ‘language of the Arab Spring’; that is one part of the research.

**Relevant Test Cases: Voices from Kuwait & Algeria**

I tested the interview tool with two individuals prior to my fieldwork in Lebanon, neither of whom were in the Middle East at the time, nor were they in an Arab state during the Arab Spring uprisings. They technically did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study; however, their responses demonstrate an engagement with their home countries that, in each case, was illustrative of how language is a port of access into political, and revolutionary, activism, so powerful and vivid that expatriates can connect through it from abroad. While both were born and partially raised in Arab
states, and are native speakers of Arabic who claimed Arabic to be their first language (lughat al-
‘umm), in a sense, they were not “ideal” interviewees as their level of personal investment in the
politics, and language, of the Arab Spring and direct experience with it was faint to non-existent.
Neither of the interviewees was Lebanese either—the first interviewee was a Kuwaiti male, a
graduate student living in Arizona in his twenties, and the second was an Algerian female, a working
professional in her twenties. Their being in the United States, and not in the midst of an uprising,
allowed for fuller conversations and a more thorough examination of the questions in the interview
tool. In many of the Lebanese interviews, circumstances simply did not allow for extended
conversations and many times only two to three questions were explored.

In both interviews I used a modified version of the interview tool based on the idea that an
interviewer should not directly confront interviewees with the study’s intended topic, but that rather,
a certain level of ‘deception’ is necessary so as to avert the infamous Heisenberg Uncertainty
Principle effect whereby an interviewee shapes her/his answers to essentially tell the researcher what
s/he thinks the researcher wants to hear. I therefore edited the interview tool to give the impression
that, like many “Western” researchers, I was interested in general attitudes about the Arab Spring
and the overall politics of the region. I conducted the interview entirely in Arabic – I tended to ask
the questions in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) but made comments or clarified ideas in Lebanese
Colloquial Arabic (LCA).

*Kuwaiti Case Study: “Ahmed”*

Ahmed is a member of a network of close friends of mine and was born in Kuwait. He is a graduate
student in a scientific field and is in his twenties. Raised speaking Kuwaiti Arabic, Farsi, and English,
he is fluent in each but chose to respond to the questions in the interview in his dialect of Arabic. Of
the questions in the interview tool, to maintain the time limit of thirty minutes, I chose the questions I thought would be most relevant to Ahmed’s context. Not having prepared the questions in Arabic beforehand, I improvised the translations and found that it contributed positively to the comfort of the interviewee—he was relatively at ease and the interview was more of a conversation. The English transcriptions below of the pertinent parts of the interview are my own translations. Parenthetical statements within quotations are my own attempts to clarify or provide an approximate translation for an important term that may appear in transliterated Arabic.

Ahmed identified himself as a Muslim, adding that he follows the “math-hab esh-Shi’i,” or the Shi’a school of thought. When asked about his political leanings, he explained that he does not “ascribe to a specific political ideology,” other than not “oppress[ing] or wrong[ing] minorities.” He added that “in some cases I consider myself liberal, in others conservative. I believe that the best way is to be moderate – middle path.” From there, I asked him how he would characterize the political situation of Kuwait and to describe the political or civil rights of Kuwaiti citizens as he sees it. For Ahmed, “the situation is bad; we have a majles (parliament) but it does not represent the thought of the people; unfortunately, it only represents the material interests of the people, not their rights.” Ahmed described a system whereby the “people buy votes and those who buy votes end up in the majles.” When prodded about the prospect of an uprising in Kuwait, Ahmed responded that “the people don’t worry about the situation. In another way, after the Bedouin entered and their sheikhs entered, they started voting for the Salafis because they see them as closer to their perspective of religion and the Salafis make problems in the country with respect to general administration.” Ahmed was perplexed about why there would be an uprising given that, “Kuwait
has a constitution – Saudi Arabia does not. Kuwait has one and it clarifies and solidifies the laws of the people. Every Kuwaiti citizen has rights expressed in the constitution.”

On the rights of Kuwaitis, he elaborated that, “they can vote in elections and elect parliamentarians and ministers to the majles and congress.” He went on about the Emir: “even in the constitution there are limits to the rights of the Emir – he does not have limitless power.” He volunteered his view on Kuwait’s oil wealth, saying, “it does not belong to the government or the Emir, but to the people.” Ahmed’s responses were often at a high level of generality but it he clearly feels strongly about Kuwaiti nationalism and his identity as a Kuwaiti, despite having some reservations about including himself, linguistically, in his choice of pronouns when speaking about “Kuwaitis”.

Next, I asked Ahmed to characterize the Arab Uprisings or mass demonstrations in some Arab states where people gathered for a political or social cause. I also asked him to explain what term he prefers for these ‘movements’. Ahmed began with Tunisia, where he argues the “it (the revolution) wasn’t expected although the situation was bad for a long time. Tunisia has cultured people and they are educated and understand their circumstances and so finally they had enough and revolted and there was a revolution.” With regard to Egypt, “Egypt’s was also a revolution just not the size that people discuss on the news – in the beginning there wasn’t a political ideology behind the movements. You see that the Muslim Brotherhood is running for government spots now but they didn’t have a big role in the revolution.” He added that “people who went out on the streets (in Egypt) weren’t the majority of the Egyptian People (esh-sha’b el-MaSri); I think most Egyptians were aware of the political situation.”
On Bahrain, Ahmed explained that “at least half of the society participated in the
demonstrations – it was not a revolution so much as a request for rights, political rights. It wasn’t a
revolution but it could have become one in the beginning.” I asked him to describe why the Bahraini
uprising did not become a “revolution” in his view, and he expanded on his prior statement, “Saudi
Arabia supports the ruler so the people couldn’t revolt. That’s Bahrain. With Syria, its circumstances
are different – many Syrians…I don’t think Bashar’s government is good, it’s bad, and it doesn’t
represent the people. It’s Baathist and I don’t support or defend that party. They call them the
*thuwwar* (revolutionaries) in Syria but I don’t think they represent the people either.” Switching
topics to Syria, he continued, saying “they’re Salafis and terrorists (the revolutionaries). There are
those ideas. So in Syria, I don’t call it a revolution – they have a place in the middle – they’re not
what Bashar calls them; they’re not that religious really.” He then commented on the Libyan
uprising, explaining that “Libya was a tribal conflict – Qaddafi, God damn him, in the end those
who fought him are not better than him. It was an internal war where one side beat another.”

On the question of what to call the movements, Ahmed exclaimed that he “[doesn’t] like the
phrase ‘Arab Spring’ because the idea of ‘spring’ means the beginning of something new; the idea
that this is a new beginning for Arabs, is not a new idea in Arab society. Arabs, for years, have had
discussions about their rights or the *niTHam il-bukm* (the system of governance) and that changes
like in other big countries.” Ahmed does not believe “there are Arabs who are awake as much as
media talks about this… If something happened, the news got people out on the streets. Now with
social media, those who knew, were ready to go out and protest but I don’t think the majority in
these countries… God help them.. (they) don’t know their rights or what they want.” I interjected
and explained that his views on the role of media were common in some circles and I then asked
about his sources of information. He explained “Western news or Middle Eastern news – Google news, I start there, and in Arabic, there is maybe, there aren’t good Arabic newspapers that I like so much, but I read, more often than not, from Egypt, there is maybe some newspapers or from Kuwait. The most news in Arabic is from Twitter – of course, you need to not believe everything. You can still learn a lot from Twitter or Facebook.”

Ahmed did not mention the role of protests or language in his discussion of the strategies that made some of the uprisings successful. For him, “the biggest strategy, what do they call it? There’s a word: ‘civil disobedience,’ I forgot the Arabic word, and the idea is, as you see in Bahrain, maybe the situation didn’t improve but the people didn’t do anything b-’onf (with violence) or kbusbu:na (roughness); the people could not get any of the thuwwar or protestors.” Ahmed’s focus was on the non-violent aspect of the protests and the visibility of the participants: “In Egypt, the Egyptians didn’t do anything but go out on the streets. If you go out and do anything but you want your rights in the end, that’s fine; the government can’t do anything (to stop people).” He argued that the movement spread because “the problems felt in one country were felt in other countries and with Facebook and the Twitter and the Internet, they (Arabs in other countries) saw the events and especially what happened in Tunisia helped to move people’s emotions – no one expected Bin Ali to leave or be toppled so easily, so people who felt the same problems believed they might change things. When Egypt removed Mubarak after more than 30 years, and being such an important Arab state, the most important one, people believed that it could be done. And the Internet explains it.”

At this point I asked Ahmed to recall any of the slogans chanted during any of the uprisings. He quickly mentioned “Ish-sha’b yuri:d isqaat ar-ra’is” (the people want the downfall of the
president). He also repeated the Yemeni chant, “yasqut Hamed” (may Hamed fall). When asked about Kuwait specifically, he explained that some people “used the *hiren* (car horn), not doing anything, just honking.” For Ahmed, “there are no demonstrations in Kuwait.” His view did not seem to be so much of a political statement as an expression of disappointment with Kuwaitis for not taking the initiative to demonstrate as in other states.

Overall, Ahmed tended to speak in generalities but spoke comfortably in Kuwaiti dialect. There was little borrowing from MSA, and when he did borrow from MSA or English on occasion, it was noticeable as he stumbled somewhat. This may be due to his relative inexperience with MSA. In Myers-Scotton’s terms, Ahmed’s matrix language (ML) throughout the interview was Kuwaiti Arabic with some borrowings from MSA. Ahmed borrowed more from MSA when speaking about his political leanings and religious identity. He also spoke about those topics more somberly, and seemed to take them very seriously. Still, Ahmed does not seem to identify strongly with the uprisings or concept of an “Arab Spring”. He remained very skeptical with each question about uprisings and protests. Interestingly, Ahmed enjoyed the question about the slogans and recalled a couple of them, but both were in MSA and from Gulf states.

**Algerian Case Study: “Laila”**

Also a member of a close network of friends, Laila is a professional working in a scientific field at a company in the United States. Unlike Ahmed who was born in Kuwait but mostly raised in the West, Laila was born and raised in Algeria until moving to the United States for college. She is fluent in daarija Arabic ( Algerian colloquial), MSA, French, and English. The interview also demonstrated her comfort with multiple Arabic dialects, although she most certainly chose to level and speak to me in a general Levantine dialect rather than in her own dialect, despite my explaining to her that I
was comfortable with Algerian. I translated the following transcriptions added clarifications in parentheses.

Laila described her religion as “Islam – my perspective, everything in my world. I eat in the name of God and drink and sleep in God’s name. Islam comprises a large part of my life.” For political affiliation, she quoted a famous hadith (saying of the Prophet Muhammad), “no, kheyr al-umuuuri awsataha (moderation is the best in all matters).” Laila was clear that she doesn’t “like to identify with any (political) ideology.”

Like Ahmed, when asked about the situation in her country, she began with, “the situation is bad; the situation is not just at all; the government tries to control the society and that leads to social dangers and social problems like the use of drugs among children or young adolescents.” On the political rights of Algerians, she explained that, “we believe we have rights but when I lived in the U.S. I was able to compare rights here and there. In Algeria we learn that we have the right to the freedom of speech – we can criticize the president – but in reality, we cannot.” She elaborated, “if you say something that is not acceptable to (cultural) customs or according to the government, it becomes a real big problem.” Laila become passionate about the topic Algerians’ rights, and was adamant that the “government pays money to people to try to restrict people and what they say or do. People guard what they say—there isn’t freedom of speech. I grew up my whole life in my mind with the idea of freedom of speech but there isn’t.” She concluded saying that, “we (Algerians) have to say the president (Bouteflika) is good, but politically our country isn’t the best. Our rights in Algeria are very limited if there are any rights.” For Laila, the most convincing definition of political rights she has encountered is “freedom… whatever a person want to do, he can do. If he wants to live Muslim he can; Christian he can. Not just in the field of religion, but in other respects. If you
want to study something that contradicts the ideas or traditions of your religion or society, you can.”

Laila provided the example of her experience with women’s rights in Algeria: “I grew up in a small town and people, women believe they have rights, but if a woman reaches a certain level of education, she has to stop and marry and have kids. Human rights, in my mind, means a woman can choose to study or not study if she wants.”

I proceeded to direct Laila’s attention at the Arab Spring uprisings and asked her to define the term in the Algerian context. She chose to relate the Arab Spring back to human rights. For Laila, “the Arab Spring has ideas and ideologies that apply to my understanding of human rights; the ideas of the Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, all people who participate, their ideas mesh with freedom in work, politics, society, and human rights.” She explained that, while she was not in the region at the time, she “did follow the events in Egypt and Tunisia and Libya, but especially Libya because its ending was very musharrida lil-‘aql (traumatizing, inconceivable).” Laila sees the Arab Uprisings as a lesson to dictators everywhere: “see how in this life if you didn’t do justice to people, people will do justice to you. What we learned was that the attitudes in Libya were very strong and it shook us (as Algerians). Qaddafi’s death, or manner of death, was bigger than Mubarak’s ouster (for us as Algerians).”

Laila revealed that while she consulted many sources for news, throughout the Arab Uprisings, she would, “every day talk to someone in my family to ask them about their ideas and what they saw on TV because I feel that in the US we don’t get to see the reality; it’s very biased.” I asked her if she thought there was also a bias in Algerian, or Arab broadcasting, in general, and for Laila, “in the ME there is a new point of view – it’s natural because people are living in that situation. And, of course, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiyya covered this matter a lot.” Laila believes that
the Arab news networks were more accountable to the events unfolding in the region in early 2011 because, being in the region they were invested in representing the facts with the perception of less bias to avoid being grouped with the incumbent regimes. She did not seem to think that siding with the demonstrators was also a biased perspective.

When questioned about the most successful strategies of the demonstrators, Laila explained that “the internet and social media like Facebook and Twitter were important to gather the majority of people.” She referred to a “language of Facebook” that “they (protestors) all used, and they couldn’t move from one place to another until they heard the latest news and that’s how they depended on it (language of Facebook) for the spread of their ideas to be able to encourage people.” I interpret Laila’s description of the “language of Facebook” as an acknowledgement, arguably, of the phenomenon I am interested in, namely the creation of a socio-political, dialectical argot that is transnational in its carrying of the revolution, or uprisings, from one Arab state to another, and, within Arab states, enlivening ordinary people to partake in activism on the streets and in the city squares. The language of the Arab Spring is then the same as the “language of Facebook”, or at least a closely-related variant with the same, or largely similar, structures, forms, vocabulary, and perlocutionary ends, or objects. I do not have space in this report to elaborate on this point, but it is a question that requires further research and analysis.

I asked her to recall any particularly memorable slogans from the demonstrations she watched on the news. Laila responded, saying, “I am from Algeria, and the biggest slogans I heard, and this was like a civil war against dictatorship, it wasn’t the same as the others; ‘ukhtuna!’ (leave us alone).” Acknowledging that, despite some early attempts at demonstrations, Algeria had largely missed the Arab Spring, Laila theorized that, “Algeria had passed the stage of civil war after the last
decade and now we feel that we are past it (civil war) and we lost many people and families. People started to fear; they were happy it (civil war) ended; if they have a home and a job, they don’t care about the president or what he does.” Laila added that Algerians today “just want freedom,” for, “for that reason, they (Algerians) say to other Arabs, leave us alone, we don’t want war.” Laila was a young girl when the civil war in Algeria broke out between Islamists and government forces, but she was clearly deeply impacted by the experience. For her, the most important slogan in Algeria was “leave us alone,” and it is not clear that she heard that during the days of the Arab Spring or if she was recalling a slogan from the Algerian civil war period in the 1990s.

Laila’s strong ties to Algeria influenced her view of the Arab Spring uprisings in other states. When asked about the trans-regionalism of the movements, she explained that “people reached a level where they can’t do more.” She argued that, “people needed help against the government and that’s how the series of events began based on that event (Bouazizi’s self-immolation in Tunisia) and through Facebook and Twitter people could see and hear the expression of this revolution around the surrounding countries around Tunisia.” She summarized her view on the spread of the uprisings, saying, “the movement spread because… all of the Arab countries have dictators and their governments are controlling of the people and don’t give them rights. People finally awoke from a deep sleep and lost their lives and money to fight for their freedoms and the new generations.”

Oddly, Laila mixed not only between her dialect and MSA but also with a general Levantine dialect throughout the interview. I could not determine if this was in place of French or English or if she was simply leveling to accommodate me as someone she could identify as a speaker of a Levantine dialect. She used more MSA than the Ahmed did but she also spent a much longer time in Algerian schools learning MSA than Ahmed did in Kuwait. Still, Laila’s answers were quite general
and often vague. Whether this was a reflection of the questions or her inexperience with questions of politics or lack of knowledge about the events of the Arab Spring was unclear. Living the United States and working a fulltime job, she may not have been as interested in the events on the news, especially after it seemed that the opportunity for mass demonstrations in Algeria had passed and she knew her family would be safe. It could also be that framing this as an interview about her political attitudes was off-putting.

**Reflections on the Test Interviews**

My translations of the questions were always in MSA, as with Ahmed, and some of my comments were made in LCA. Laila spoke with almost no Algerian Colloquial Arabic (ACA) in her speech. She used almost entirely LCA and MSA, which is not necessarily problematic but it could be if her answers were short and vague due to her limited ability to express herself in Levantine Arabic. This is a clear case where my presence triggered a concern for her that I would not understand ACA and so she felt constrained in her code choices. While the rest of the interviews were conducted in Lebanon with other LCA speakers, I learned from the interview with Laila that I would need to establish my background firmly before future interviews so participants had a better sense of what I know and what I do not. Laila did not know I would understand ACA or may not have been convinced even after I reassured her. I was careful not to be too overtly concerned about her language choice and dialect variations as I wanted her to speak naturally, but her perception of my language identity seemingly could not be overcome.

Chapter 5: Participant Observation & Personal Interviews in Lebanon

**Sampling Strategy**
In May and June 2012, I traveled to Lebanon to carry out unstructured, un-probabilistic interviews on the theme of the language of the Arab Spring. Lebanon, having both thus far not incurred an Arab Spring uprising and being a somewhat ‘freer’ society with respect to speech and expression, is a prime location from whence to obtain a largely unfettered sampling of attitudes and opinions to measure the indigenous resonance of the political-linguistic analytic framework proposed in this paper. I weave in segments of interviews and discuss findings from participant observation related to the dialectical developments beyond formal Arabic, especially in Lebanon since the onset of the uprisings. The political-linguistic analytic framework draws from the sorts of qualitative analyses and sociolinguistic methods forged through the works of scholars like Abu-Lughod (1986), Bassiouney (2010), Ryding (2005), Versteegh (2001, 2006), Boussufara, Mejdell, Myers-Scotton, Auer (2007), Abu-Haidar (1991), and Holes (1983a).

While I was in Lebanon, I used the concatenative approach to select twenty interviewees for unstructured ‘conversations’. I began with my close contacts at the American University of Beirut and family members and sought their advice as to other potential informants. The number of interviews in Lebanon, twenty in total, was limited due to the short time I was there, namely one month—it would have been five weeks had I not felt the need to flee to Jordan for one week during a particularly heated time when twelve Lebanese Shi’is were captured in Syria while on pilgrimage. Locals in the neighborhood I lived in began setting fire to tires and closing roadways to the airport. I was being hosted in the Shi’a-majority East quarter of Beirut in the area known as Adh-Dhaahya where Hizbollah has a strong presence, and the family strongly urged me to exit Lebanon for several days. Nevertheless, I took advantage of my time in Jordan to conduct eight unstructured interviews using the same interview tool, with some tweaks, as I used in Lebanon. While I will not include
these in the current research, the interviews helped situate my interactions in Lebanon and broaden my perspective on the regional spectrum of attitudes with respect to the Arab Spring.

Adh-Dhahya District of Beirut, Lebanon Case Study – “Farid”

Farid, in his twenties, was completing his master’s degree in Lebanon in the summer of 2012 when I met him to follow up on an e-mail interview I had conducted with him on April 3, 2011 on the effects of the Arab Spring on Lebanon. While he chose to e-mail me in English, with some Arabic interjections, our follow-up interview in May 2012 took place in person and we spoke in LCA; that is, LCA was the matrix language, but Farid borrowed heavily from MSA when speaking about and reiterating the positions of the Assad regime. The conversation was largely unstructured but a very enlightening glimpse into the pro-Assad Lebanese perspective. Farid identifies as a practicing Shi'i Muslim who is also an advocate of Hizbollah. The below transcriptions are my own translations.

To begin our conversation, Farid cautioned that “one thing we should avoid is generalization because no regime in the world has ever had a strict majority support; there is always opposition. Also, these should not be viewed separate from international political and economic agendas of major powers.” I explained that I wanted to go back to what he wrote in 2011 about Hafez Assad and his policy of “stability.” Farid had written that, “since 1970, Hafez Assad sought political stability, strong state security, no external intervention, rationalization of the economy to the benefit of the state (Syria now is one of the only states that doesn’t have foreign debt), and strong national unity and identity in Syria.” Farid gave a great deal of credit to Hafez Assad and took the regime’s “reforms” at face value. In contrast, Haddad (2011) convincingly argues that the economic liberalization under the Assad regime was “circumscribed” to assure that structural adjustments to

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bolster the private sector were rigged to favor the same major beneficiaries who had dominated in the public sector prior to the “reforms”.\textsuperscript{202} Farid is an example of an individual with access to multiple narratives about the Syrian regime’s brutal crackdown on the demonstrators but sincerely buys into, and indeed reproduces through his regular allusions to and quoting of, the rhetoric of Assad’s regime whereby he is essentially infallible.

Farid’s 2011 account expands on the notion that Assad’s repressive actions can be explained by Syria’s volatile geographic contexts: “Given the constant state of war with Israel, and the adoption of the Palestinian cause, Assad had to create a ‘social pact’ with the population based on a centralization of the decision making process as a necessity for the protection of Syria and the liberation of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel.” Farid sees a natural, and justifiable, progression in the ascendance of Assad and the escalation of his absolute power. “Assad had to extensively expand the armed forces on the lines of a strong militarization that was socially incorporated.” I questioned Farid’s use of the phrase “socially incorporated” and he elaborated that he meant that the “Syrian people accepted the ‘strong militarization’” of the country at the “expense of their civil liberties and political rights” in order to “achieve important national goals such as defending the state against Israeli expansion, fighting to free Palestine, and strengthening the economy.” Farid argued that, “Syria’s position in the Arab-Israeli war legitimized the choices of its regime,” and “militarization strategies were not questioned by the public.” This is a naïve view of the history and a disingenuous understanding of state-sponsored repression, but Farid is not invested in Assad’s

\textsuperscript{202}Haddad defines “circumscribed liberalization” as reform that benefits the same beneficiaries as the status quo ante by ensuring that these same individuals who prospered in the public sector go into the private sector to receive the transfer of wealth thereto. There is no redistribution to speak of. The loyalty of these planned "entrepreneurs" is then still to the state and they never develop 'private interests' different from those of the state. Control remains in the hands of the top despot, namely Assad the father, and then his scion. See Bassam Haddad, \textit{Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience}. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). Also, Steven Heydemann, “Introduction,” in Networks of Privilege: The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East, ed. Steven Heydemann (New York: Palgrave-St. Martin's Press, 2004).
regime in any material way—his positive take on the Assad dynasty is motivated by his ideological leanings or worldview. Farid believes that what he refers to as “militarization” of the Syrian state, “helped to further a spirit of Syrianness, an identity related to the territory of Syria within its post-independence borders.”

When I asked Farid about the demonstrations against Assad, he retorted back with heavy code mixing between LCA and MSA that, “when the Syrian regime was put into question two weeks ago, millions of people randomly went out to the streets in support of Assad.” I italicize “randomly” because I am not as convinced, as Farid is, that these pro-regime demonstrations were entirely spontaneous and not the result of direct or indirect coercion, including fear of retribution against those who do not express support outwardly. At the time, in early April 2011, with the peaceful protests only just beginning in Syria, the demonstrators were not yet demanding the fall of the regime. Farid capitalized on that point, arguing that, “the main slogan of all Arab revolutions… was ‘Al sha3b yourid 2esqat al nizam’ (/3/ represents /ع/, an emphatic pharyngeal egression; /2/ represents /ء/, a glottal stop, in Farid’s Latinized rendition of the chant, ‘the people want the fall of the regime’), so people were demanding regime change. However, this was never the case in Syria. When people went out and protested they only asked for more reforms and Assad immediately responded in consent and action.” Farid was referring to the modified chant used by early Syrian protestors who cried, “ash-sha’b yurid iSla:H an-niTTham” (the people want the reform of the regime). Farid also underscored and overemphasized the significance of the “reforms” put into place by Assad after the protestors began chanting for “isqa:T an-niTTham” (the fall of the regime) in response to the swift and violent military actions taken against them for protesting non-violently in Deraa. Farid’s perspective reveals the lingering power of the Assad regime’s exhortations to emotive
issues like pan-Arabism, the Palestinian cause, and the anti-colonial fervor that continues to fuel mistrust of all things Western.

For Farid, “there are a lot of deficiencies in the system that Assad will have to fix, and I think he will, maybe slowly and gradually, but he will.” Farid maintains that Syria is not undergoing a revolution “like that of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya.” He sees the closest kinship to “the Bahrain case [where] people went out and asked for reforms, they didn't ask for regime change. I think the majority of Syrians are willing to give Assad another chance to apply a reformist agenda and overhaul the system, and the current status quo would allow him to do so.” Farid’s confidence in Assad’s ability to “overhaul the system” and placate the masses was echoed in another interview with “Amina”, a close friend. Farid’s views, however, would be contested sharply by his college classmate, “Mohammed”.

**Beirut, Lebanon Case Study – “Mohammed”**

Mohammed, also in his twenties, works in a technical field and identifies as a practicing Shi’i Muslim from Beirut. We also spoke in LCA, and Farid was present as he introduced us and explained my project to Mohammed on the spot. Mohammed did not borrow from MSA at all—he maintained LCA in every utterance and only occasionally borrowed phrases from English. Mohammed exclaimed, “Assad is fucked up [menyuk] to say the least and is doing a lot of terrible stuff, I mean. No disagreements there. The problem is he’s (Assad) in an impossible stalemate now—his back is against the wall and he knows that if he gives up, he might be able to secure asylum for himself and his immediate family, but the rest of his network of cronies is screwed. They will all be killed, or prosecuted and then killed, and his sect (Alawis) will be castrated, hanged, and desiccated, never to wield power or influence again.” Farid intervened, explaining that, “the situation now is different
than the past ten years in which the regime was under extensive external pressures. Even the U.S. now realized that it's impossible to overthrow the Assad regime, and you can sense that from Clinton's empty comments and the general U.S. ambiguity and lack of action in its stance.”

I pressed them both on the extreme violence prevalent in multiple Syrian cities. Farid responded right away, exclaiming, “obviously, mistakes happen on the ground, but most violence and killing was actually from unrecognized groups against civilians and Syrian police.” Mohammed was quiet at first but then challenged his friend, arguing that, “Assad is an asshole and is too paranoid and powerful to allow for ‘mistakes’ to keep happening, if you believe that the first signs of violent military response were ‘mistakes’. I don’t. He ordered these attacks on the protestors because he thinks he can get away with it. He knows he has diehard supporters like Farid who would justify anything he does and believe that Al-Qaeda is taking over the country before accepting that the ba’al al-‘Arab (hero of the Arabs, a reference to Bashar Assad) is killing his own people to save his ass.” Farid quickly replied, “if people are not asking for regime change, why would Assad repress them? There is no religious dimension in Syria, like in Bahrain for example.” Farid continued, “my point is that out of all regimes in the Middle East, the Syrian regime is the least likely to be overthrown, and not because of regime repression and violence, but because of strong popular Syrian and Arab nationalism... and that's one of the few things that tie the people to Assad.” Mohammed questioned that Syrians felt the unity that Farid talked about. For Farid, however, “Hafez Assad succeeded in fomenting a strong sense of unity among Syrians based on foreign policy, Arabism and the Arab-Israeli conflict.. and all those legitimized and still legitimize the regime internally.”
To provide some context, by May of 2012, Syrian demonstrators, in the tens of thousands, had taken to the streets of Damascus, Deraa, Baniyas, Homs, and Hama in what began as peacefully protests to reform the Assad regime and call for the end of the state of emergency and restoration of political rights. The immediate response of the regime was to recast the protestors as foreign members of al-Qaeda who had infiltrated the country after being defeated in Libya. Assad’s speeches reconstituted that religious extremism is the scourge of Ba’athist secular nationalism, which fed into the military rhetoric that the Arab Spring in Syria was orchestrated by al-Qaeda and must therefore be forcefully put down in accordance with domestic and international law. Sana, the official Syrian news agency, echoed the Assad regime’s rhetoric about an "armed insurrection" led by Salafist groups that was taking place in “Homs and further north in Baniyas.”203

While directly adopting the language of “moderate” versus “radical”, Sana and the Assad regime effectively Islamized the otherwise avowedly areligious protest movements and bifurcated the identity of Syrian demonstrators between the “armed criminal gangsters” who are considered ‘enemy Muslims’ (codenamed “Salafists”) and the regime loyalists who Sana showed gathering “spontaneously” in the “millions” in streets of Damascus in support of Assad. The so-called Salafists were largely equated with al-Qaeda and so the Syrian army was right to target them for disrupting national security. Thousands of peaceful protestors were arrested and, in the intervening months, tens of thousands were killed as tanks rolled into cities around the country under the banner of containing the “Islamist threat”. In contrast, Sana reported that “moderates”, the “muwwālīn” (regime supporters) and “awfiyya[1]:” (regime loyalists), constituted the “large majority of Syrian citizens” and had continually “spontaneously formed crowds” on the streets of Damascus.

in defense of Assad’s rule and the crackdown against the “radical Salafists”. An Al-Jazeera poll taken in late January 2012 found that 83% of 11,222 online survey-takers voted “yes” when asked “hal tu’ayyd raHi:l an-niTHa:m as-Su:ri: bi-mujib al-mub:adarati al-‘arabiyya?” (do you support the departure of the Syrian regime in accordance with the Arab Initiative?), while only 17% responded “no”.\textsuperscript{204}

Over one year into the conflict, even after the UN classified the situation in Syria as a civil war, Farid made the point that, “Assad [had] passed 8 decrees addressing the population’s needs, and more will be passed in the coming weeks. The Syrian regime is very strong and widely backed locally and regionally. Millions in the Middle East regard him as the new Jamal Abdel Nasser.” Mohammed was incredulous and remarked that, “Assad is no Jamal Abdel Nasser, but you’re right (to Farid) that Syrians, maybe all Arabs, are looking for a great leader to take them to a better future. It’s not Assad though. It isn’t any Western government or organization either.” Farid did not contest Mohammed’s account. He, almost entirely in MSA, extrapolated on Mohammed’s comment about the search for a leader, saying, “when they (Syrians) support him (Assad), they endorse the Palestinian cause, as well as a culture of strength against and freedom from foreign intervention and occupation, as well as one of unity, rejectionism, and resistance. This same regime has survived several years of severe U.S. and international political and economic pressure and sanctions.” Farid concluded that, “any insecure and unstable regime would have instantly crumbled.”

My conversations with Farid and Mohammed supported my hypothesis that there would be a correlation between MSA and regime rhetoric, and, conversely, between Colloquial Arabic and the language of the Arab Spring. Farid’s code choices reflected ambivalence toward the Arab Spring. At

one point, Farid insisted, in a mixture of LCA and MSA that, “ma: fi: ismo ‘ar-rabi:‘ al-‘arabi:’!
hatthihi mu’a:mara gharbiyya li-za’za‘at… farriq tasud… ash-sharq al-awsaT” (there is no such thing as an Arab Spring! It is a Western conspiracy meant to destabilize, divide and conquer, the Middle East). Farid often expressed his own opinions in LCA and, when his views overlapped with those of the Assad regime, he seamlessly switched into MSA, as if he was quoting verbatim something he had heard on Sana. He fully perpetuated the Assad-Sana portrayal of the Syrian opposition as terrorists and gangsters engaging in bullying (‘balTaja’).

The Syrian project in Islamizing the opposition forces, including the Free Syrian Army (FSA) after its establishment on July 29, 2011, allowed it to justify, almost entirely through the use of rhetoric alone, the use of lethal force through military action against anyone it labeled an “Islamist” (isla:mawi), or terrorist (irha:bi). Assad is able to then use what Bhuta calls “naked power” to reinforce his regime’s narrative and thereby legitimate its policies of violent repression.

Indeed, Assad’s naked power is apparent in the images of tanks and soldiers lining Damascus and occupying cities where protestors or FSA forces have amassed. Even as the regime encroaches upon the demonstrators and FSA fighters, Sana media outlets and Assad’s executive elites continue to reconstitute the legitimacy narratives of post-1948 and post-1963 Syria.

The interview with Mohammed seemed more candid as he was less concerned with regurgitating what he had heard on official news stations and more able to express controversial views, relative to Lebanese public opinion. On a linguistic level, there was a clear link between Mohammed’s speaking in unimpeded LCA and his sympathy with Syrian opposition movements.

While Farid minimized the role of the demonstrators early on and demonized the FSA and its allies, etc.

Mohammed expressed that, “il-mu'araDe 'am-ti'mel illy 'aleyyon” (the opposition is doing what it must). Mohammed, a Lebanese citizen, who had not been to Syria before, and who sources of information about Syrian events were largely in Arabic and nearly the same as the sources cited by Farid, could more easily relate with the Syrian opposition, and indeed demonstrators across the Arab region than Farid.

While many factors might explain why Farid chose to use more MSA than Mohammed, their code choices suggest an affinity between dialectical Arabic and the Arab Spring uprisings, as well as a relationship between MSA and support for the incumbent regimes. Dialectical Arabic is, more and more, becoming the preferred lingua franca of oppositionists in Egypt and Syria, but across the region as well. A very clear illustration of this powerful trend is in a Jadaliyya report marking the two-year anniversary of the start of the Syrian Uprising. Jadaliyya’s editors pieced together a “Social Media Bouquet from Syria” that featured an improvised oppositionist radio station called “SouriaLi” (literally ‘Syria is mine’), which is anchored entirely in Syrian Colloquial Arabic (SCA) or Educated SCA. Meanwhile, the Syrian regime continues to broadcast its narrative entirely through the medium of MSA. In an interview published on April 5, 2013 on YouTube, Bashar Assad gives an interview to the Turkish news station, Ulusal Kanal. The interview was clearly staged, in that Assad seemed to predict every one of the questions and had rehearsed, polished responses to each in a highly learnt and prepared MSA register. This political-linguistic tension represents one of the critical conundrums the Syrian regime faces presently. As it tries to subordinate the opposition by

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projecting its military power as well as its control of the media, expression, and information to restrict communication and perpetuate the myth that the demonstrators are all Salafists, or members of al-Qaeda, the regime is defining a new linguistic paradigm whereby MSA is increasingly the language of the powers that be and Colloquial Arabic (CA) is the argot of the downtrodden oppositionists. The Syrian regime is feeding—linguistically—as well as physically, into the very divisions between its loyalists and opposition forces that pigeonhole it into increasingly resorting to violence and disproportionate force against the very people from whom it desperately needs to gain approbation.

It may be that the Syrian regime’s decision to maintain the use of MSA in all contexts is intended to project a formal, official, authoritative stance, but notwithstanding the justification, there is a rising trend in Syria, and in the rest of the region, against political MSA as it has become a symbol of the status quo ante; the Arab Spring has ushered in a new age that requires a new idiom that speaks the language of the people to the people in conversation with the people.

**Nabatiyye, Lebanon Case Study – “Amina”**

I met with Amina in southern Lebanon where she is a retired mother and grandmother busy with family life at home. Unlike some of the other interview participants, I had sufficient time to get to know Amina, her political perspective, religious views, and many of her linguistic proclivities prior to the interview conversation.

Amina was born and raised in Nabatiyye where she was educated in Arabic and learned some basic French. She married in her early twenties and moved to a Francophone African country where her husband ran a small business. She identifies strongly as a Shi’i Muslim and, after recently completing the Hajj pilgrimage, she began dawning the hijab, or headscarf—this was a very
significant event in her life, she explained to me. She stressed that her husband is a Sunni Muslim, and that wearing hijab does not mean that she has exclusivist views on religion. Amina discussed her close friendships with people of other faiths, mainly Christians, across Lebanon: “naHne manna min nas mseyyaas:i:n, ana w jowze, is-siy:i:si ma bi-ta’ni:ne” (we aren’t political people, my husband and I are not concerned with politics). Amina explained that, in reference to her in-laws, “naHne ‘ayle ma ba’dh iktir” (we’re a family that spends a lot of time together). When she began speaking about her theological views, especially when talking about the Shi’i school of thought, her code choices shifted prominently toward MSA—this was clear in her pronunciation of words like “matha:hib” (schools of thought), where she did not substitute the interdental /th/ for the LCA sibilant, /z/. Amina’s utterance of entire phrases in MSA in mid-sentence amid an otherwise LCA system exemplifies what Meyers-Scotton refers to as “islands”.208 In the following sentence, for example, the parts in bold are MSA, while the rest is in LCA: “ya’ni mesalen naHna, al-shi’a, na’tarif bi-l-‘a’imma al-ithnay‘ashar b-‘innon ma’Su:mi:n” (I mean, for example, we, the Shi’is, acknowledge that the Twelve Imams are infallible).

Amina was keenly in tune with the political goings on in the Arab region. Amina regularly tracks some fifteen different television news stations across the Lebanese political spectrum, although she explained that she is a staunch advocate of Hizbollah and, as she shared with me upon meeting her, a diehard supporter of the Assad regime. Her LCA was of a distinctly southern ilk and, when speaking about religion, such as in her explanation to me of the difference, in her view, between the Shi’i and Sunni schools of thought, she often used LCA connectors and grammar mixed frequently with lexical borrowings from MSA. When she did borrow MSA connectors, albeit rarely, such as /li-Za:lik/, and /min heyde il-munTali:/, she would do so intersententially, rather than

208 Arabic Sociolinguistics, pp. 86.
break with LCA altogether and switch strictly into MSA. Occasionally Amina used the MSA definite article /al-/ as opposed to the LCA /il-/ such as in her pronunciation of “ar-rabi’ al-‘arabi:” (the Arab Spring). Eid calls this more subtle form of mixing, “diglossic code switching”. The /z/ pronunciation of the Arabic letter, /ذذ/, in Amina’s /li-zaːlik/ is a sibilant, which is characteristic of LCA, rather than the MSA pronunciation, a voiced interdental /θ/. Amina’s MSA maintained certain key LCA features, such as sibilance, diphthongization, substitution of the emphatic consonants /q/, /D/, and /TH/, and imala. Additionally, she strictly maintained the use of LCA connectors, including prepositions, transitional phrases, purposive and locative particles, and possessive structures.

Amina, unlike Farid whose code switching into MSA was more marked, engaged in intra-code switching where, using Myers-Scotton’s matrix language theory, system morphemes remain in LCA while content morphemes switch between LCA and MSA. Myers-Scotton tried to bridge the gap between sociolinguistics and theoretical linguistics by expanding on the conception of there being two kinds of morphemes, free and bound, to include content and system morphemes. In Myers-Scotton’s model, content morphemes assign thematic roles, and therefore include the agent or the experiencer in a sentence (nouns, adjectives, verbs). System morphemes do not assign thematic roles, and therefore encompass everything else (prepositions, definite and indefinite, possessive structures.

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211 A morpheme is the smallest unit of a language that has meaning and cannot be further subdivided.

negation, demonstratives, pronouns, tense conjugation, genitive exponents, and verbal aspectual particles).

Amina’s views on the Arab Spring uprisings were not surprising given her initial revelation of her support for the Assad regime, but also, this analysis argues, based on her code choices. That is, her marked tendency to use MSA frequently in our conversation indicates that she likely supports the Syrian incumbent regime and does not lend much credence to the claims and causes of the demonstrators and opposition fighters, including but not limited to the FSA. When I asked her what is meant by the phrase, “Arab Spring,” she explained,


The Arab Spring, they consider it Arab revolutions to change the regimes in all the countries of the Middle East, the Levant… and it might catch up later with the Gulf states, we don’t know. But we don’t call it an Arab Spring. We say that they want to change the regimes and the policies that no longer meet (the interests) of the West, their demands. And no longer meet their (the West) aspirations, and there came to be a thing called the resistance of the people—people are revolting against their rulers, they are rising up. When they (the West) began feeling the uprising of the people, they tried changing the regimes, and we can consider it an attempt at subterfuge and trying to fool the people. (As if to say) ‘We (the West) remove a president for you, we install a president.’ But they (the West), in the end, are installing those who agree with them, those who they want (in power).

Amina’s MSA code choices appear in bold in the above transcription. She begins her response mixing heavily with MSA in the first sentence but the MSA becomes subtler by the start of the second sentence and is present only in the form of content morphemes throughout the rest of the articulation. Her prevalent use of MSA matches the patterns that emerged during my participant observation and interviews. MSA, at the level of content morphemes, indicates an adapting of the
language and policies of the regimes toward the Arab Spring uprisings, whereas LCA, also at the level of content morphemes, demonstrates an affinity with the Arab Spring revolutionaries.

I challenged Amina on her claim that the Arab Spring is essentially a Western conspiracy, which coincides with the message broadcasted on Sana and the regime’s official position at the time of the interview. Amina immediately quipped in response, “il-yoːm mlnːi bi-suːrya ash-sha’ːb yaltafa ittifaːf kāmil Hawl ra’ːisu” (today we find in Syria, the people form a base of support, complete support, around their president). For Amina, “ma-fiː shiː ismu rabiː ‘arabiː, fiː shiː ismu gharb beddu yetHakkam bi-l-manTa’a” (there is nothing called Arab Spring, there is something called the West wanting to control the region). Amina explained that the situation in Syria means a great deal to her as a Lebanese citizen because she can take pride in the fact that the Assad regime is fighting daily for the Palestinian cause, which is the most important matter, in her perspective, for any Arab who maintains a sense of “uruːbe” (Arab identity, ‘Arabness’). She stresses that everyone must do what they can to free Palestine, but, by the end of her statement, she seems to change subject back to the Arab Spring and expresses her disdain for and incredulity toward it: “inni loː bidfaː demmi, bi-l-kilmi ana ib-Haːrib, bi-r-ra’ːi ana ib-Haːrib, bi-ḥabsa’T al-iːmaːn biːlbiː ana ib-Haːrib ar-rabiːː illy imsemmiːnu al-gharb ar-rabiːː al-‘arabiː, ana DiDu” (indeed if I would pay with my blood, with my words I fight, with my opinion I fight, with the simplest faith in my heart I fight the spring, that they, the West, call the Arab Spring, I am against it). In her next sentence she proclaims that she can “see that what the West calls the Arab Spring is a failed project, and the liberation of Jerusalem is very near, within one to three years at most.”

The interview with Amina was illustrative of the feasibility of the Syrian regime’s narrative of the Arab Spring to certain individuals with ties, be they imagined or ideological, to the objectives of
Syrian foreign policy, even if those official objectives may only exist on the rhetorical level. Amina seems to have a stake in the viability of Assad’s narrative and his projected identity as the ‘hero of the Arabs’ for upholding the Palestinian cause. Amina has interpolated into the Syrian regime’s military response against the Arab Spring uprisings across the country elements of pan-Arabism, anti-colonialism, Lebanese national security, and her religious values.

It is difficult, and likely impossible, to make an entirely definitive claim as to the relationship between an individual’s code choice and her/his political identity or affiliations. However, using Bassiouney stance-taking framework, I conjecture that Amina evaluates the “specific quality or value” of the Syrian regime’s linguistic code choices quite highly. Bassiouney postulates that linguistic code choice “reflects a particular political view,” or what she refers to as “stance.” Amina’s positive evaluation of the language of the Assad regime is then also an approbation of the political views reflected in specific messages conveyed. The second step in describing Amina’s stance toward the language of the Assad regime is determining the position she takes, which involves “claim[ing] to have some degree of certainty or knowledge.” Amina, in fact, demonstrates very little self-doubt or skepticism toward the Syrian regime’s various assertions about its own standing in the region, in the world, and in the face of the West and the Arab Spring. Finally, Bassiouney theorizes that alignment, the third step, takes place once the speaker has decided on a judgment of a particular situation. Amina has clearly aligned her stance in favor of the regime’s linguistic code choice and therefore its policies as well.

*Shahabiyya Village, Lebanon Case Study – “Yusef”*

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214 Ibid
Farid recommended that I meet with Yusef soon after I arrived in Lebanon. The three of us spent significant time together, which made it possible for me to observe Yusef’s speech patterns and listen to many of his political views prior to the interview. Like Mohammed, Yusef speaks very candidly and almost entirely in LCA, even when discussing his most personal political views. Yusef, in his twenties, is highly educated and spent time studying English, French, German, and Italian in Europe. He works and lives in Beirut as a professional in a technical field. However, Yusef was born and raised in a small village on the border with Syria, south of Beirut. Yusef identifies himself as a Muslim but, during the interview, did not identify directly as Shi’i or Sunni, instead insisting his religion was “‘ala mazhab il-islam” (of the school of thought of Islam). Yusef explained that he is not a very religious person and his family does not practice Islam beyond the basic principle that “id-din huwe il-xla:” (religion is good manners, or ethical conduct toward others). In other contexts Yusef revealed his alignment with Shi’i Islam and discussed the significance of his sister having married a Sunni—the point he made at the time was that his family was very open, and he used the word “infita:H” (enlightenment, open-mindedness) to describe his and his family’s approach to religion.

During the interview, Yusef, as expected given his code choices in accordance with Bassiouney’s stance-taking concept, expressed views in LCA that were overwhelmingly in support of the objectives of the Arab Spring. He acknowledged the Arab Spring as a credible social and political movement across the Arab region and sympathized with the peaceful demonstrators who demanded democratic and economic reform in their countries. He explained that his sources of information about the Arab Spring include, in this order, CNN, New TV, al-Manaar, which is Hizbollah-owned and operated, An-Nahaar, and Al-Jazeera. Yusef explained that he has a relative who used to work
for An-Nahaar, which is admittedly a more Western friendly newspaper, but one he takes seriously because of the family connection.

When I asked Yusef about the origins of the Arab Spring, he replied fully in LCA and demonstrated certain unmarked Syrian dialectical features. This influence on his speech patterns is not an unexpected phenomenon given the proximity of his hometown to the isogloss of the central Syrian dialects. The Syrian influences are bolded:


Now the Arab Spring launched, they were demanding, the issues started in Tunisia in Bouazizi, they say that’s what… but I imagine the dimensions of the Arab Spring, for sure, are a lot more than Bouazizi. The dimensions of the Arab Spring are (to do with) injustice… and the injustice that the people lived, under the pressure (oppression) of rulers who don’t care about anything but their own interests, the interests of their families and how to remain seated in the chair (of power) and secure the throne for themselves and for their children and for their grandchildren and make money and put money (away) in Switzerland, in the Maldives, and in I don’t know which other islands. And they (the rulers) amass huge stores of wealth (lit. ‘treasures’) like those of Muammar al-Qaddafi, Zein el-Abedine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, (and) like all those presidents whom you find creating empires, coming (into power) and ruling and sitting (staying in power) for twenty or twenty-five years (all the while) saying there is democracy(!), brother how can there be democracy (when) the foundation of democracy is the rotating (changing) of governing authorities?

Yusef’s stance in support of the Arab Spring is apparent from his demonstrably favorable evaluation of the “specific quality or value” of the linguistic code choices of the Arab Spring, namely a strong leaning toward colloquial Arabic. Yusef therefore positively assesses the political view, or “stance”, of the Arab Spring uprisings. He positions himself as a well-rounded observer of the events of the Arab Spring. He presents several sources of information that he claims to follow
regularly to evidence his familiarity with a broad spectrum of news that presents opposing perspectives from which he can then “choose what to believe” (fa ibshuf ana el-wujutun en-naZar ‘aleyi Sadde’ elly ibSadd’u ana). This statement underscores his delineation of views and establishes his claim to knowledge of the situation and a degree of certainty as to the accuracy of the views presented by different actors, in this case news sources. Yusef’s alignment, or judgment, is plainly on the side of the Arab Spring and therefore the language, or more precisely the code choices of the demonstrators across the region, which reflect a political view with which he agrees. He furthermore displays his agreement through his own code choices while speaking about the Arab Spring and describing the causes and objectives of the demonstrators, despite the lack of an Arab Spring uprising in his country of Lebanon. In Bassiouney’s terms, Yusef aligns his views as “pro-” Arab Spring and therefore configures other stances in relation to his own view as “anti-”, or in contravention. Yusef describes “the people” (esh-shu’ub), a shorthand for the demonstrators and all those who support the Arab Spring uprisings, as “muttahaDa” (persecuted) by their respective regimes. Bassiouny argues that alignment is an “act of standardizing or normalizing the relation between stances.” Yusef can then be understood to position his view in support of the Arab Spring and he then believes his position, and by extension that of the demonstrators, is the correct one vis-à-vis the regimes’ stances and those of regime loyalists in the region.

On the question of why the Arab Spring has not spread into Lebanon, Yusef argues that it is due to the “lack of the presence of a single figure who represents the source of the corruption whom the Lebanese people can blame and protest against.” For Yusef, the problems in Lebanon are diffuse and decentralized—he describes “corruption” (fesād) as ubiquitous and principally found on

the streets between people of different confessional networks, or what he more simply refers to as “sects” (Tawe:’f); he states that, “naHne bi-Lubnän mużtama‘ Ta’ifi” (we in Lebanon are a sectarian society).

While the stance-taking framework is, this research argues, very instructive in determining whether or not there is indeed a ‘language of the Arab Spring’ and, in turn, a ‘language of the incumbent Arab regimes’, no theory is without its limitations. Near the end of the interview, Yusef brought up some of the questionable or, what he termed “unnecessary”, tactics of the opposition forces in Syria. He did not refer to them as “terrorists” (irha:biyi:n) or use the word “Islamist” (islamawi), but he expressed concern over the rising sectarian tensions in the country and argued that the oppositionists should find alternate, peaceful means by which to depose Assad and force him out of the country. Yusef expressed that he believed Bashar al-Assad’s personality is not like that of Hosni Mubarak, and that Assad could therefore be reasoned with to a greater extent: “ennu ra’is ‘a:bel li-yetfɔ:hem ma’ak, Tari, mɔ:nu ‘a:si w ɔ:mid… la’ bashar: ‘am-y’tirif b-el-mishkle w làkin fi: kemɔ:n tadaxxlɔ:t xa:reziyye ‘ktir r’kbirə w itHawwel cS-Sira: ‘min Sira:’ selme di:moqra:Tc ‘ila Sira:’ musallalH” (He [Assad] is a president who is able to come to an understanding with you, he’s malleable (a soft-liner); he isn’t cruel and hard-headed… no! Bashar acknowledges the problem but there are also many large foreign (external) interventions and they’re (intervening states) turning the conflict from a peaceful democratic conflict into an armed conflict). Yusef did not go to the extent that Farid and Amina did in assigning all complicity for the violence in Syria to internal “terrorists” who are armed, funded, and supported by external, foreign actors, but he did mention that he believed United States, France, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia had gone too far in their support of “certain groups” in Syria who are becoming very “dangerous realities on the ground”.

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Amina and Farid, when asked in their interviews, could only seem to recall one of the major Arab Spring chants—coincidentally one of a handful that is formulated entirely in MSA—namely, “the people want the downfall of the regime.” Yusef, however, remembered several, including Egypt’s “kifa:ya” (enough), and “Hara:m” (wrong, shameful), which are both Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. He also brought up the famous Libyan opposition’s chant, “zenga zenga!” (street by street). This was re-appropriated by Libyan armed rebels in their hunt for Qaddafi in contraposition to the original connotation when it was uttered as part of a fiery speech by Qaddafi wherein he swore to track down every “rat” in the opposition “da:r da:r, zanga zanga” (house by house, street by street). Yusef demonstrated that he was aware of the etymology of the Libyan chant and translated it into Beirut LCA, “shəә shəә”, and Southern Lebanese, “zaru:b zaru:b”.

I prompted Yusef to discuss the slogan of the Arab Spring, “the people want the downfall of the regime.” I pronounced it in MSA and he immediately repeated it back to me in his cadence and dialect, “esh-sha’b yuri:d ’esqa:T en-niZa:m.” He talked about the ways the slogan was reformulated in Lebanon and mentioned a commercial for candy that used it satirically. More seriously, he raised the topic of a series of small-scale political demonstrations that used the chant and appended to the word “niZa:m” (regime) a definite article, /al-/ (‘the’), and the adjective “aT-Ta’ifi” (confessional or sectarian). This transformed the meaning to, “the people want the downfall of the confessional system,” in reference to the strict quotas set in place in the agreement that ended the Lebanese civil war. The agreement stipulates certain political positions in the Lebanese government must be, by law, reserved for members of the various confessional groups, or sects, regardless of election results.

Significantly, Yusef recited an anti-Assad chant heard throughout Syria: “ya: bashar ya: bashar beddna eT-Ta’ar!” (Hey Bashar, hey Bashar, we want you to fly [depart]). The protest-slogan
alludes to Tunisia’s Ben Ali famously boarding a plan and flying away to Saudi Arabia where he was granted asylum after only weeks of protests demanding that he depart, “irHal!”. The slogan takes advantage of some poetic license to rhyme “eT-Ta:r”, from the verb “to fly” but incorrectly formulated here, with “bashar:” (Bashar al-Assad).

Yusef also explained that there were new chants spreading in Syria that were concerning to him, such as, “el-mesi:Hī ‘a-beyru:t w el-’alawi ‘a-t-tä:bu:t” ([send] the Christian to Beirut and the Alawi to the coffin). To Yusef, this signaled increasing sectarianism and the infiltration of violence into the ideology of the uprising in Syria among the initially peaceful demonstrators who were ostensibly demanding democratic reforms, which did not, for Yusef, allow for the threat of mass displacement of Christian Syrians and the genocide of Alawis.

It is key that each of the chants Yusef could recall, with the exception of the slogan that I introduced in MSA, which he translated diglossically into LCA, were dialectical. He spoke for several minutes about the importance of Arabic dialects in the Arab Spring protests:

We (Lebanese people), before the Arab Spring I mean, had never heard Ben Ali or Qaddafi speak, or not seriously listened, and definitely not when they spoke in their accents (lahə2әtn), because we know we could not understand them; but when the revolutions (sowrәt) started we were really trying and, I remember on the news, they would translate sometimes with subtitles or just explaining verbally what the chants meant that we were hearing in French from Tunisia, or in other dialects. This is important to note, that not all Arabs understand each other automatically, but if we try because we know it’s important, like in the Arab Spring for example, we can find ways to understand the most important parts.

Discussion

Going into my first interview in Lebanon, I was weary to not be too presumptuous as to assume that I could very quickly assess the best way to approach translating my questions, which were originally written in English, into a form of Arabic that would not anchor the style of the conversation or unduly influence the code choices of the interviewee. Indeed, it proved to be more
difficult to discern an appropriate code with Lebanese speakers as many of interviewees perceived me as a fellow Lebanese speaker, and others were introduced to me by friends or family and thought my Arabic would be limited due to having been raised abroad (bi-l-ghurbe). Those who essentially saw me as a heritage speaker seemed to have made certain language choices consciously or unconsciously to accommodate me (leveling). One interviewee periodically stopped to ask me if I was able to follow what he was saying, and even interrupted other interviews to make sure I understood. It was difficult to know how best to react as my dialectology professors always advised that researchers should be as parsimonious as possible. Furthermore, I was taught that feigning a certain level of ignorance is a good practice as it triggers others to explain concepts more carefully or to provide more details in elaborating a story.

On the other hand, I often asked myself how I could assess whether the interviewees were at ease and speaking “naturally” in their Lebanese dialects? In fact, I was so concerned with creating a comfortable interview environment that, after conducting several test interviews in the United States in MSA, I re-considered the value of conducting interviews in formal Arabic and ultimately decided to translate extemporaneously into my family’s northern Lebanese dialect found in the southern rural suburbs of Tripoli. The risk that my MSA would trigger MSA or Educated Colloquial Arabic in the interviewee was ultimately too great. I initially believed that using MSA would allow me to more easily capture instances of code switching and the use of dialect. Ideally, then, if the interviewee spoke in MSA or ECA, and then, when asked a question about memorable slogans or the objectives of the Arab Spring, s/he switched into dialectical Arabic, ostensibly the ‘language of the revolutionaries’, that would illustrate the point that dialectical Arabic plays an important role in the transmission and re-transmission of revolutionary sentiments and/or socio-political objectives. If
the interviewee were, however, to speak entirely in LCA and refer to Arab Spring slogans in MSA or ECA, that would also be a significant and appreciable finding.

In essence, so long as the speaker met the requirements of the methodology (in Lebanon during the Arab Spring, native Lebanese Arabic speaker, in Lebanon at the time of the interview, over the age of 18, etc.), any language choices s/he made would be relevant and contribute to the study. The only potential problem would be if somehow my presence, my identity, my language choices, or those of the interview tool itself, had an undue effect on the choices of the interviewees. For that reason I chose to speak in my family’s dialect, the one I am most comfortable speaking, rather than attempt to disguise my identity or project an unintended air of formality by using MSA and potentially triggering an elite register and thereby restricting the code choices of the interviewee. I could not fully control for any of these potential spoilers prior to the interview phase, and so I simply had to be vigilant about traces or evidence that the speakers were actively leveling their language for me, and therefore producing unnatural or uncharacteristic speech. Theoretically, I could have accounted for this by engaging in participant observation for a long enough period of time before the interview stage to learn the code idiosyncrasies, or ‘idiolects’, of the people I intended to interview. Unfortunately, with only one month, I lacked the adequate time. I plan to return to Lebanon for longer stretches of time to correct for these shortcomings but, in the meantime, the current state of the thesis likely suffers somewhat from unassailable methodological pitfalls. I will need to devote additional space to describing this in the final analysis of the expanded research for my eventual dissertation.
Chapter 6: Conclusion: Politics, Identity & The *Arabic* Spring

In many ways the Arab Spring can largely be understood as the movement of ideas, attitudes, and political and social objectives across political borders through the medium of language. This analysis has demonstrated how the Arab Spring that began in December 2010 when Bouazizi lit himself aflame he kindled a regional conflagration underpinned by a set of discernible principles developed not in the pages of a scholarly article or the opus of a recognizable analyst but through the extemporized protest-slogans and impromptu pamphlets disseminated in the crowded squares of Arab cities from Fez to Baghdad. The proverbial “wall of fear” that kept many Arabs down in their respective states took place in headlines, Tweets, blogs, articles, speeches, Facebook walls and groups, and indeed radio, and books, but also by way of fiery slogans and blazing turns of phrase that gave rise to new nationalisms built on reinvigorated senses of “*sha'biyya*” (*people power*) and “*iSlah*” (*reform*), as well as “*thowra*” (*revolution*), and “*intifa:Da*” (*uprising*).²¹⁶

The Arab Spring has proven to be as rhapsodic as it is politically and socially episodic. The new vocabulary of the Arab Spring have been seared into the pages of Al-Jazeera, CNN, Al-Arabiyya, Al-Hayat, the New York Times, and countless RSS, Twitter, and Facebook feeds. These popular media offer what is perhaps the most accurate and telling account of the Arab uprisings that, in large part by dint of the words of millions of people seeking dignity, human rights, representative governance, and political-social reforms, brought down long-standing authoritarian regimes. Ben Ali, Mubarak, Qaddafi, and Ali Saleh had powerful connections to Western governments, massive militaries, significant armaments, and treacherous internal security apparatuses.

but could not effectively regain control of the dynamic, untraceable counter-narrative being articulated ad hoc by countless individuals that was poised to overtake the regime’s rhetoric, and indeed its grip on the reins of the nation state. The anonymity of these milyoniyat (protest crowds of a million or more people) and the spontaneity of their protest-slogans helped make the uprisings unstoppable and inevitable in the face of seemingly impossible odds.

The language of revolution, the idioms and idiomodes of the Arab Spring, provide critical socio- and politico-linguistic contexts that contribute to a fuller understanding of the overall regional situation and the localized iterations of the Arab revolutionary moment. In its more particular modulations, in Egypt and Syria, critical discourse analyses of the available and emergent leaked and published texts help to index and interpret mass-scale popular reactions in and outside of a corresponding politico-linguistic context. Relying largely on the framing works of Suleiman, Bassiouney, and Myers-Scotton, my findings corroborate the theory that language acts as a carrier and conveyor of revolutionary sentiments and that there is an incorrigible, if still somewhat elusive, relationship between loyalism to the incumbent regimes and the use of MSA register and support of, if not identification with, the thunwar, revolutionaries, of the Arab Uprisings and the choice to speak Colloquial Arabic.

Bayat's contention in "Refo-lutions", discussed in the section on “Counter Revolutionary Rhetoric” of this thesis, is that for reforms to take hold in post-revolutionary Egypt, Syria, et al, true and full revolutionary transformations must precede and, he contends, this has not yet occurred.\(^\text{217}\) Many would potentially take issue with Bayat's diagnosis—Dabashi comes to mind—and would instead prescribe long-term, slower, processual amendments devoid of further conflict or violent escalation. One common trend, however, among Bayat and his would-be contenders, as well as

\(^\text{217}\) (see footnotes 14 and 15 of this document)
Anderson, Laipson, Chomiak and Entelis, is the proclivity to demystify while at once deepening and complicating the way the Middle Eastern and North African peoples are described and analyzed. The Arab Spring has stemmed from a polygonal historicity that requires specific attention rather than broad-stroke generalizations. Anderson's piece is especially memorable for its preface that reminds the reader that Arab revolts and reform movements are nothing new and cannot be simply ascribed to the emergence of social networking technologies, Gene Sharp, or any other one, or particularly Western, germ that somehow infected the entire Arab region. If nothing else, there must be agreement that each iteration and form of uprising in MENA is Arab and not an aberration or a victory for the presumably non-Arab “West”. To assume or argue otherwise would underestimate the revolutionaries and perpetuate the most insidious of stereotypes that essentialize a diverse grouping of peoples as somehow unthinking, stagnant, complacent automatons rather than vibrant, reflexive, intelligent, thoughtful human beings capable of discerning their own destinies and, indeed, in the words of Edward Said, able to speak truth to power.

As for the brave individuals who continue to struggle against violent oppression, and express themselves fearlessly with a newfound strength and collective consciousness that gave birth to the Arab Spring and its many languages and socio-political identities, it is critical that academia respect the utterly irreducible complexities of what these demonstrators, fighters, and poets are doing. Abu-Lughod couches the discourse of identity formation within an idiom of overlapping tensions that is apt in considering the inter-relations of language, activism, and national identity in the Arab Spring uprisings. Identity formation, according to Abu-Lughod, takes place “between practices and their justifications, between ideals and behavior, between simple prescriptions and multiple interpretations, between a sense of the universal and the complexity of local and individual

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218 Ibid
experience.” Indeed, the identities of the revolutionaries protesting in Egypt, Syria, and across the Arab region are being formed and re-formed in the between spaces of politics, society, culture, religion, economics, and, importantly, language.

My findings illustrate examples that resonate with the theory that language acts as a carrier and conveyor of revolutionary sentiments in the Arab Spring. Language, Standard and Colloquial Arabic, serves as an event-catalyst by providing perlocutionary and illocutionary slogans, phrases, terms, and both literary and linguistic devices that can readily and quickly travel across borders. These lexical items are tools and weapons in the mouths of poet-warriors and more passive protestors alike as they provide an arsenal and technique with which to mount a resistance on the individual and collective levels against what may be perceived as corruption, injustice, or simply the stagnation of the status quo. These words and rhythms form an idiom of opposition that can, this report argues, be considered the language of the Arab Spring, and it is a veritable argot used transnationally in the Arab region that in and of itself is a critical form of revolutionary activism. That said, it can also be, and is, used to impel concrete physical actions toward social change in the form of protesting, signing petitions, boycotting, voting, etc. to further a regional, yet highly localized, political reform agenda.

The language of the Arab Spring initially aimed at instigating the downfall of long-time despots and autocrats and succeeded with incredible rapidity at toppling the regimes of Tunisia’s Ben Ali, Egypt’s Mubarak, Libya’s Qaddafi, Yemen’s Ali Saleh, and many predict that Syria’s Bashar Assad is next. The language of the Arab Spring verbalizes a set of attitudes and ideologies that are,

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219 See Writing Women’s Worlds, pp. 25. Abu-Lughod was not writing about the Arab Spring in this book, but her insights into identity are relevant to this research. Abu-Lughod, to be clear, aims in her book to dispel the idea that, “Islam is an all-determining factor in Muslim lives,” but she supports the argument that Islam is ubiquitously referenced by men and women in myriad occasions for different reasons. Pp. 19.
arguably, born out of a spirit of indignation and the desire to improve one’s standing and change society, and the nation state, for the better. This revolutionary spirit is perhaps encapsulated best in the sentimental-political transnational imperative that swept across the Arab region despite, or maybe because of, its inspirational simplicity and powerful clarity: “irHal!”

**Moving Forward: Expanding the Research**

Gauging the proportional efficacy of colloquial revolutionary language apropos to standard Arabic phrasings requires a comparative analysis and, accordingly, a diglossic tool. The participant observation I engaged in and the personal interviews I conducted helped add an important dimension of credibility to test what I termed the “resonance” of my arguments about the relationship between MSA and regime loyalism and CA and oppositional, revolutionary activism. However, further corroboration is needed on a much larger scale in order to augment the generalizability of my findings, or consider revising or restricting them, if need be.

I will seek to conduct further interviews with informants in the Arab region, but I also aim to finish and publish an online survey that would be available to anyone in the world with enough of a grasp of Arabic to follow the instructions therein. The survey would consist of phrases, slogans, lines of revolutionary songs/poetics, chants, and prosaic texts, as well as multimedia in colloquial Arabic variants and standard or Literary Arabic. I will ask survey-participants to react to each sort of language sample and will record their responses to inform a qualitative analysis of the aforementioned lines of inquiry that will include some semi-statistical observations. For the survey follow-up interviews, I will follow up with users who provided particularly compelling responses, especially to the open comments section available in each section of the survey—I will, of course,
have to choose from among the pool of participants who voluntarily provided their contact
information at the end of the survey.

In the coming year, I will use my prior entrée into native Arabic-speaking groups of English
as a Second Language students on campus at Georgetown University to identify survey-takers and
participants for personal interviews. As the first surveys are completed, I will test the online diglossic
research instrument prior to spreading it more widely through social media to Arab country
networks.

Test cases, or samples, will both be in Modern Standard and Colloquial variants; some
samples will serve as placebos in that they will not relate to Arab Spring events at all (e.g. poetry,
unrelated newspaper articles, phatic prose, etc.). Arab Spring-related texts will range in degree of
support for Arab Spring reform objectives and revolutionary sentiments from complete agreement,
“sympathy and espousal”, to complete disagreement, “rejection and refutation”. Another type of
question will be a score or rating prompt wherein the informant will be asked to read a short
selection of text that is either Arab Spring-related or a placebo, and asked to generally rate its impact
on her/his view of the Arab Spring as a regional socio-political movement on a scale of 1 to 10, with
1 connoting least impact, and 10 indicating the most impact. Finally, users will be able to comment
on any of the questions as well as on the language selections about which they were asked to answer
questions—this will be open-ended and also anonymous. The survey will conclude with a note of
appreciation but also a request to voluntarily provide contact information for potential follow-up
interviews.

The other step moving forward for the study is to further assess the question of whether or
not language explains or helps explain why the Arab Spring was not a singular, localized,
geographically limited event specific to Tunisia or Egypt. I cannot begin to effectively respond to that question until I have collected my data and could then scan for language choices across borders and over time. To do this, I am building a database of the major, and some minor, Arabic protest-slogans mainly from Syria and Egypt for the time being, but I will eventually expand it to encompass Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain, at least (see annex 4 for the beginnings of this work).

Beyond this version of the research, to expand it into a doctoral dissertation, I will need to be more discriminating in my data gathering and will need to give additional thought to my approach to the interviews, particularly the effects of my presence and my language choices on the codes interviewees select during the conversation. Language choices are also, potentially, a problem for the eventual survey. The questions in the survey will be formulated in MSA, while the texts participants are asked to rate and comment on are a mixture of MSA and various colloquial varieties. This may be a situation where I cannot know or use any established theory beforehand to predict how the language choices of the survey may or may not influence survey takers. There is also the possibility of selection bias, or ecological fallacy, as someone who does not have access to the Internet cannot take the survey. I may then need to ask if people with Internet access tend to use a certain variety of Arabic un-randomly more than the general population I am interested in. Furthermore, will the fact that the survey is written in MSA deter some and appeal to certain others? The only way to address these unsettling questions may be to just take a risk and carry out the study, as is, with its imperfections and make those deficiencies and unpredictable elements part and parcel of the analysis.

I will, in a later, expanded iteration of this thesis, also have to explain the tools in detail and parse out not only the responses to the questions as if the tools were neutral catalysts but also
describe and speculate as to the effect of the tools and of my own presence and identity, or positionality, in the study. This is not, however, an obstacle or necessarily a detriment to the research—in fact, by forcing me to account for these imperfections, my hope is that the final result will be more responsible, discreet, measured, and relevant.

Figure 10 Image from the Kafranbal Coordinating Committee. The sign reads: “(May the) regime and the opposition fall… (may the) Arab and Islamic nations fall… (may the) UN Security Council fall… (may the) world fall… (may) everything fall…”. Taken from Jadaliyya, available <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11050/social-media-bouquet-from-syria>. 

Annex 2) IBM ManyEyes Visual Database—Word Portrayal (selected imaging) [800k entries; x10 scale]
### Annex 3) Chart of Normal Frequencies for Select Politically Charged Arabic Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pointed &amp; Unpointed Stem (combined)</th>
<th>Word Type Frequency</th>
<th>Word Token Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jihad&quot;; &quot;Mujahid&quot;</td>
<td>جهاد 361</td>
<td>مjejادح 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Islam&quot;; &quot;Muslim&quot;; &quot;Salam&quot;</td>
<td>إسلام 272</td>
<td>مسلم 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Irhah&quot; (terrorism)</td>
<td>في 272</td>
<td>مفي 47465.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Fi&quot; (in—*test word)</td>
<td>قعد (القادة) 945</td>
<td>مقاد (القادة) 37064.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Al-Qaeda&quot;</td>
<td>طبل (القادة) 945</td>
<td>مطلب (القادة) 63.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Taliban&quot;</td>
<td>فوس (موافقة) 159</td>
<td>مفوس (موافقة) 11978.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Mufawadhat&quot; (negotiation)</td>
<td>صلاح (الصالح) 382</td>
<td>صلاح (الصالح) 1980.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;TaSaluhTim&quot;; &quot;MuSalaHTim&quot; (reconciliation)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Sirah&quot; (conflict, clash, struggle)</td>
<td>معركة (صراع) 361</td>
<td>معركة (صراع) 14881.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ishshibak&quot; (conflict, clash, fight)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Niza&quot; (dispute, discord, due)</td>
<td>نزع (نزع) 361</td>
<td>نزع (نزع) 14881.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hab/Hurub&quot;; &quot;MuHarib&quot; (war/war, warfare)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Qowmiya&quot;; &quot;Muqawama&quot;; &quot;Qowm&quot; (people, nation, resistance)</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;WaTani&quot;; &quot;WaTaniya&quot; (nation, national)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Kfr&quot;; &quot;Takfir&quot;; &quot;Kashfriin&quot;; &quot;Kashfrun&quot; (unbelief, takfir, unbelief: tahrir)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;irHal&quot; (imperative: Leave)</td>
<td>رحل (رحل) 0.5</td>
<td>رحل (رحل) 8718.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;IsQat&quot;; &quot;yasuQQT&quot; (overthrow, toppling, fall)</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;thawra&quot;; &quot;tha:ir&quot;; &quot;thawar&quot; (revolution; revolutionary, revolutionaries)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;intifa:DHa&quot; (uprising)</td>
<td>انقاض (انقاضة) 8.01</td>
<td>انقاض (انقاضة) 32.14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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### Annex 4) Databank (in progress) Arabic Chants & Slogans (left: Syrian, right: Egyptian)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Chants</th>
<th>Egyptian Chants</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entry 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Entry 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Entry 5</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Entry 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entry 8</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entry 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entry 10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entry 12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table is in progress and more entries will be added as the databank is completed.
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(Original Arabic Citations—not translated)


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