

# The Islamic State: An Experiment in Self-Fulfilling Dynamics

By Dennis J.D. Sandole, Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Relations, dsandole@gmu.edu

In 1928, the American sociologist W.I. Thomas uttered the words, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” This gave rise to the *Thomas Theorem* and, through the reframing of sociologist Robert K. Merton (1948), the “self-fulfilling prophecy” (SFP):

*The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition*

*of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the original false conception come true. This specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning (ibid.).*

Philosopher Sir Karl Popper (1976) converged on the same ontological territory covered by the SFP with his concept of the Oedipus effect (OE):

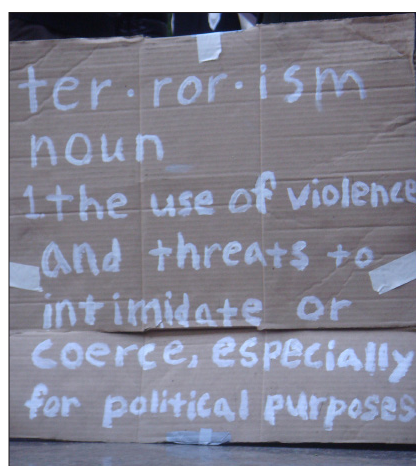


Photo: Flickr user Jagz Mario.

*One of the ideas I had discussed in The Poverty of Historicism was the influence of a prediction upon the event predicted. I had called this the "Oedipus effect", because the oracle played a most important role in the sequence of events which led to the fulfilment of its prophecy. ... For a time I thought that the existence of the Oedipus effect distinguished the social from the natural sciences. But in biology, too — even in molecular biology — expectations often play a role in bringing about what has been expected (ibid.).*

Whether we prefer “self-fulfilling prophecy” or “Oedipus effect,” the emergence of the brutal and barbaric system known as the Islamic State is — more and more — the result of such nuanced dynamics. For instance, one of the reasons used by American neoconservatives to justify the invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, was that the terrorist group al Qaeda — architect of the 911 attacks — was collaborating operationally with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and, indeed, was physically present in Iraq.

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COMMENTARY

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# Conflict Resolution in Indigenous Communities of Oaxaca, Mexico

By Martha A. Galicia Osorio, MS student, mgalicia@masonlive.gmu.edu

In the summer of 2015, I spent two months practicing conflict analysis and resolution in two communities in Oaxaca, Mexico: Zimatlán de Lázaro Cárdenas and San Sebastián Nopalera. These neighboring communities are part of an “ejido”- a community dotation of land granted by the Mexican Federal Government. Zimatlán has plain and humid lands where several tropical fruits can be grown while Nopalera is located in mountain lands.

Zimatlán and Nopalera have always had relations and even some family ties; however due to the limitation of land in the region, these communities finally had an armed confrontation in 2010. As a result, nine people died and others were injured on both sides. This resulted in the organization representing Zimatlán, CEDHAPI, and the organization representing Nopalera, Comuna Oaxaca, attempting to resolve the conflict between the parties, at the request of the communities themselves. Eventually, the communities signed an agreement at the Organization of American States (OAS) office in Washington D.C., and this is where I first met the representatives of parties to the conflict. The agreement they signed included the division of the “ejido,” but, it was not established with new physical and legal land limits.

Unfortunately, five years after the process of dividing the “ejido,” both parties are still afraid of aggression by the other, and this is why I felt compelled to help them resolve their issues.

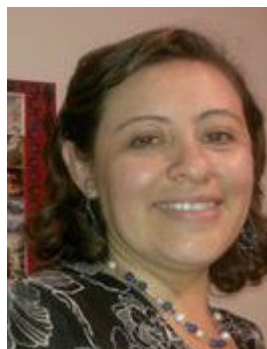
I decided to assist these communities by way of designing and facilitating workshops, to try to help them resolve their conflict. My main objective for the two communities was emotional recovery, since according to the reconciliation theories, it is a requisite for long term peaceful relationships. Thus, I started this process by conducting workshops with approximately 30 teenagers, 200 women, and 100 men from Zimatlán and Nopalera. The teenagers’ workshops were dedicated to grasping knowledge from the participants about the conflict and its consequence for them and their communities. After hearing from them about their reservations of the “other,” I introduced some “good communication” strategies to them to prevent misconceptions, which could lead to further violent conflict. In the case of the men of the communities, I went directly to the recognition of the causes of the conflict and then we practiced some problem solving exercises. With the women, the starting point was emotional healing. The women manifested their need to reach an agreement with the other community even as they expressed their disappointment on not being part of the initial agreement.

After the workshops, I attempted to analyze and

understand the causes of the conflict from the various groups’ points of view and then tried to replace their insecurity and fears with their understanding of their conflict, thus creating a sense of control and agency.

In designing these workshops, I used the knowledge and experience I obtained in the Reflective Practice in Interpersonal-Multiparty Conflicts course and the Conflict Analysis and Resolution Advanced Skills course taught at S-CAR. The emotional recovery workshops were taken from the Psychosocial Trauma and Healing course, also taught at S-CAR. I also had to carry out many activities that did not appear in my planning stage but later proved to be fundamental for the success of this project. This was a very important lesson that I learned. Before this internship, I did not understand why people said that most of the time spent for a facilitation or peace building project was dedicated to the planning stage. Now through this experience, I have a better grasp of its importance. In addition, this was a good opportunity to practice in a real setting many of the principles, theories, activities, and techniques I am learning at S-CAR. With regard to personal challenges, the skills that I acquired were those related to self-control. It was also very difficult for me to adapt to a very different context, including the people, food, and staying in small villages. In addition to that, I felt that my personal security was at stake as I was afraid that one group would consider me to be a spy. All of these experiences have me currently reflecting on whether working with communities is what I want to do in the future. Although part of the answer is yes, circumstances would have to be different. In retrospect, I consider that the work that I tried to implement has to be done by people living in the geographical and cultural context they are working in. Through this, they can be in a better position to dedicate more time to the conflict. In any case, this experience was a turning point for me as elements that I initially discarded, such as government involvement, cooperation from representatives, mistrust among people, as well as lack of time and resources all proved to be essential for any lasting peace process.

In conclusion, I learned a lot about the practical applications of conflict analysis and resolution skills to indigenous communities, as well as my own personal abilities and boundaries. I realize that working with indigenous communities could lead to a double challenge since aside from the material conflicts they may be experiencing, elements such as an identity conflict, economic development and modernization and even just keeping one’s language, religion and ancient traditions are equally important. My experiences in the field and at S-CAR have helped me put into perspective any future resolution of the conflict between Zimatlán and Nopalera. ■



Martha Osorio.

Photo: Martha Osorio.

# Celebrating the Power of Art that Builds Peace in Tunisia

By Sarah Kincaid, MS Alumna, smclewin@gmu.edu

In fall 2015, the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict (CRDC) hosted an art contest titled *Imagine Tunisia*. The goal of the contest was to support the creation of imaginative art that promotes peace and nonviolence. The winner of the contest, Ghassen Elhani, is a 30-year-old photographer who lives in Monastir, Tunisia and his submission focused on the role of Tunisian women in building Tunisia's future. "Tunisian women are part of our future," Elhani says. "Their struggle for equality, peace, freedom, and the hope to fulfill their dreams, are what I'm trying to show with this series of photos."

Elhani, who is originally from Maamoura, a small town in Tunisia, started taking photos three years ago. He used free photo tutorials from the Internet to teach himself. Today, he photographs for events, families, and private businesses. Elhani believes that artistic activities can help "citizens to understand different points of view" and how prejudice mentalities can divide communities.

Tunisia, a small country in North Africa, became famous in 2011 as the starting place of the *Arab Uprisings* - a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests in the Arab world. Tunisia is also one of the most progressive Islamic countries for women's rights and today, Tunisia has more women serving in parliament than the U.S. or France. But it is not just women on the rise in post-authoritarian Tunisia. There has also been an increase in public art.

I first traveled to Tunisia in 2010 to do a creative writing project on Tunisian hospitality to counter the Islamophobic ideas that were being perpetuated in the



Sarah Kincaid.  
Photo: Mason Creative Services.

wake of 9/11. As a tourist, I noticed huge pictures of Ben Ali plastered onto the sides of buildings and hovering over public squares. One can even say that the Ben Ali regime had established a sort of artistic omnipresence.

Janine DeFeo argues in *How Art Reflects Dictatorships and Revolutions* that "totalitarian art is not just propaganda." Rather, creating and displaying art is an exercise of power. In post-authoritarian contexts, there is also often a ritualistic destruction of symbols of the old powers. Tearing down statues of dictators is a common example. DeFeo argues that these attacks aren't "symbolic" but are actual moments of political change.

Likewise in Tunisia, after the revolution there was an increase of public art, such as an international mural contest in Djerba. Another project, *Artocracy in Tunisia* replaced photos of former president Ben Ali with playful portraits of young boys, laughing sisters, and produce sellers. Public spaces were returned to the people—not just through the right to assembly, but through the right to creativity.

The increase of public art in Tunisia is a platform for sustained peacebuilding. In *Appreciative Inquiry in Peacebuilding: Imagining the Possible*, Claudia Liebler and Cynthia Sampson point out that "our actions are linked to our image of the future." The *Imagine Tunisia* contest sought to support peacebuilding through the creation of images that depict hope for Tunisia's future. Liebler and Sampson point out that images of the future penetrate the mind on the subconscious level, shaping our responses to threats and perceptions of self and other.

It is my joy to cordially applaud Elhani's work, which emphasizes the role of women in Tunisia, on behalf of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict. ■



Women taking part of a debate on the relationship between Tunisian writers and publishers in Tunis.  
Photo: Ghassen Elhani.



A woman taking part of a march for doctors rights in Tunis.  
Photo: Ghassen Elhani.

initiatives

# Barbarism v Civilization? Paris, Beirut, and Beyond

By Sarah Federman, PhD Alumna, sfederma@masonlive.gmu.edu

In November 2015, the Center for Narrative and Conflict Resolution hosted an event titled, *Barbarism v Civilization? – Paris, Beirut, and Beyond*. This event was framed around the question of whether recent attacks represent not a clash of civilizations as Samuel Huntington posited, but rather a clash between what John Rawls calls the Society of Peoples versus Rogue States. The barbaric acts target Arab and Western Civilization alike so clearly the battle is not so simple as one between the Muslim and Non-Muslim world. The following introduces some of the contributions of the group.

Professor Sara Cobb agreed that this was not a simple battle between these two-civilizations. She cited an exploration she undertook of ISIS propaganda, noting that this preliminary narrative analysis of ISIS materials (English-only) talked about the group's desire for the return of the caliphate. The caliphate is a form of Islamic government directed by a successor of Muhammad — the Muslim Prophet. They believe a return of the Caliph would help realign Islam, which they believe is now corrupted by



Sarah Federman.  
Photo: S-CAR.

“shirkers.” They believe the majority of the Islamic world is shirking their responsibilities to the faith. Their frustrations with secularism and free choice promoted by the Western world are seen as a threat to pure Islam. That said, destruction of democratic regimes only seem to be part of the overall plan. They want to raise their children in their own system and not have them exposed to or influenced by outsiders.

This moved us into a discussion about voice and legibility. ISIS, at this point, has no legitimate voice on the global stage.

Their acts of violence are their voice. Their suicide attackers are killing without saying a word. Violence is how they become visible if not legible. A possible form of praxis would be creating a space for legitimate speech, though this is quite difficult given that engaging with ISIS is considered a crime. We are left with the question: “If speech is required to provide other modes of visibility beyond violence, how can we do this if they do not speak and we cannot speak to them?”

Other participants highlighted the Western world's attempts to position itself as only capable of “clean war” or legitimized violence while considering the violence of others extremism or terrorism.

A number of students expressed concern that national conversations circulated around the Paris attacks, neglecting those in Beirut, Bagdad, and even India. There was a feeling that all countries needed to come together in order to face this violence.

There was an activist agenda in the room as well with students wanting to have a voice on a national and international stage. Buzz McClain – who provides this intersection between George Mason University and the media – was in attendance and provided some insight on how to make voices heard.

A few individuals felt the discussion was too intellectual and did not speak to the pain in their hearts or the general confusion they felt. In response, the Center for Narrative hosted an *ISIS: World Café*.

The Narrative Center staff both present and former, organized an evening of candlelight and café music where students and community members could come in and have informal, café-style conversations that enabled people to share opinions as well as feelings. The World Café style event created “shifting conversations” by having participants change tables after fifteen minutes of conversation. The format not only generated a different tone of discussion, it also helped people interact with one another in more connected ways.

The World Café concluded with participants requesting that more cafés be held with a wider community group. If anyone is interested in participating in or organizing such a group please contact [cnrc@gmu.edu](mailto:cnrc@gmu.edu). More information of this event can be found at [www.languageofconflict.com](http://www.languageofconflict.com) ■

EVENTS

## Upcoming S-CAR Community Events

### Thursday, February 4, 2016

Development of Reconciliation and Civic

Equality Approaches in Georgia - Paata

Zakareishvili

3:00am-4:15pm

### Thursday, February 4, 2016

Legacy and Influence of Martin Luther King Jr.

12:30pm-2:00pm

### Wednesday, February 10, 2016

SPIGIA / S-CAR Graduate Career and

Internship Fair

2:00pm-5:00pm

For more, visit [scar.gmu.edu/events-roster](http://scar.gmu.edu/events-roster)

# Opinion: Building Resilience in the Middle-East Amidst Terror

By Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah, Adjunct Professor and President and Managing Director of Kommon Denominator, Inc.,  
A.jadallah@kdconsult.org

Many people would argue that the Arab world is facing unprecedented waves of violent extremism. Victims and targets have included ordinary people of all ages – men and women, girls and boys, civil and military personnel and institutions, and foreigners residing in or visiting the region.

In 2015, Syria's on-going crisis escalated, resulting in a large-scale exodus of Syrians. In addition, countless violent confrontations between religious and ideologically motivated extremist groups, the Syrian Government of Bashar al Assad, and the Syrian Free Army continued.

In Tunisia, the attacks against tourists resulted in a national state of emergency with a huge adverse impact on tourism.

In Egypt, the confrontations between the government and militias in the Sinai are ongoing.

In Lebanon, citizens continue to feel the threat of violent incidents, which highlights the tensions emanating from sectarian politics.

Iraq continues to experience strong waves of ethnic and sectarian violence, and confrontations with Daesh (ISIS) continue over territorial control. More concerning is the treatment of minority groups and attacks on the Azidi and Christian communities which resulted in world condemnation. Little has been done regarding their safety and well being.

In Bahrain, confrontations between the government and segments of the Shiite community over reforms continue and are framed in purely sectarian language. Jordanians feel daily challenges with the competition over jobs and resources from the huge influx of Syrian refugees as well as other Arab nationals escaping violence or seeking economic opportunities.

Yemen is suffering from a dire humanitarian crisis and political divisions including confrontations with and among extremist groups and militias.

In 2015, the bombing of mosques in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are examples of sectarian attacks that perhaps mask underlying political agendas. In Israel and Palestine, violent extremist attacks from both Israeli and Palestinian populations are on the rise.



Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah.  
Photo: Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah.

Regardless of the sources of the violence, questions continue to be raised as to why it seems to be readily accepted and adopted by certain individuals and or groups. Such acts continue to draw attention to causes that often feel very difficult to understand. The perpetrators are often demanding change in governments and governance models, or arguing for a renunciation of social values perceived to be mostly Western. The general consensus is that the so-called extremists believe that carrying out such violent acts would further their goals and agendas.

Scholars who adopt the "Devoted Actor Hypothesis of Conflict" argue that extreme acts take place when sacred values become embedded and strongly infused in a group's identity. Members of this identity group become willing to collectively defend and or advance their values through costly sacrifices and extreme violence. Their actions are shaped by a non-negotiable worldview and in defense of such values at any cost.

Though violent means often result in condemnation and resentment by the public, many are interpreted as representing real grievances tied to a genuine sense of discontent in the current state of affairs.

According to a recent study by the World Bank titled *Inequalities, Uprisings and Conflict in the Arab World*, the major factor for discontent in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) was not economic inequality. Rather, the report identified the continued frustration by the general public regarding their inability to attain equality and happiness in society. The study further cites dissatisfaction with the way things are run, corruption, and the inability of individuals to fulfill their aspirations as the primary mobilizers in the pre-and post-Arab Spring context.

## Recent S-CAR Media

### How a Monk-Turned-street artist sees New York City's Homeless

Roi Ben-Yehuda, S-CAR PhD Student, and Terence Cantarella  
tricycle 1/11/16

### Working for World Peace Here at Home

David J. Smith, Part-Time Faculty  
Baltimore Sun 1/9/16

### If You Want Revenge for 9/11, Don't Look to the Kids Who Lost a Parent

Sarah Federman, S-CAR PhD Alumna  
The Language of Conflict with Sarah Federman  
1/07/16

Conflict Analysts from S-CAR have appeared on 31 occasions since the last newsletter. These 3 represent a sample of those publications. For a complete list, visit <http://scar.gmu.edu/media>

OPINION

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## Alice Peck, MS Alumna

By Buzz McClain, Communications Manager, Strategic Communications, GMU, bmcclai@gmu.edu

When Alice Peck came to the United States two years ago from England to work on her master's degree in conflict analysis and resolution, she had visions of using those skills at the United Nations or at a peace-building outpost in an exotic locale.

One afternoon on Washington, D.C.'s Metro changed all that.

"I was coming out of Union Station and was struck by all the people who are homeless right outside of the station," she said. "And I was thinking, 'Here I am in the capital of the world's wealthiest, most powerful nation and yet...'

"How is this acceptable?" she wondered.

So Peck, who graduated in December with a Master of Science from George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, decided to study homelessness. She applied her conflict expertise to the subject, framing the condition as a form of "structural violence."

"I wanted to find out how certain individuals experiencing homelessness understand and make meaning of their situation," she said. She also wanted to understand "how their experiences relate to the broader structures of society, and the social, economic and political organization of Washington and the United States in general."

In other words, "Alice's thesis draws attention to the ways our structuring of space can be harmful to those who live on the margins of society," said Peck's advisor Tehama Lopez Bunyasi, a professor at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

To do her study, Peck, 25, immersed herself in the world of people who are homeless. Peck, who was raised in a forest in East Sussex, educated at



Alice Peck.  
Photo: Alice Peck.

private schools and graduated from the University of Bristol, found herself several days a week at a therapeutic day center for the homeless in Northwest Washington, D.C. operated by the non-profit So Others Might Eat.

She often ran the 8 a.m. meetings, helped serve meals, hosted a meditation group, played cards and assisted the 50 members typically on hand with the fussy details—such as filling out paperwork—of living in a capitalistic culture with no capital. She even took part in a protest to save a government-subsidized apartment building.

"The form of research I'm doing—ethnography—is 'participant observation.' You are there, and you are part of it, but just enough so that you can step back

and observe and think about it from a theoretical point of view academically."

Her blue sky dream is to "end homelessness, preserve affordable housing in the city and to find housing for all the people I am working with."

In the meantime, Peck has been offered a part-time position at the day center, where she will provide case management, operate therapeutic groups, and perform administrative work.

Said Lopez Bunyasi: "Alice's project has important implications for urban planning in that she is

describing, among other things, the great need for the creation and protection of public space where people can simply 'be.'"

Future urban planners might consider maximizing public space where sitting down and resting cannot be criminalized as well as making available public restrooms for the fulfillment of basic needs, Lopez Bunyasi said.

Gone now for Peck, without regret, are the dreams of the United Nations or exotic outposts.

"Academically, I hope whatever I write will have some value," Peck said. "But personally, this [experience] has profoundly changed me." ■



Shelter.  
Photo: Flickr user scribbletaylor.

## The Islamic State: An Experiment in Self-Fulfilling Dynamics

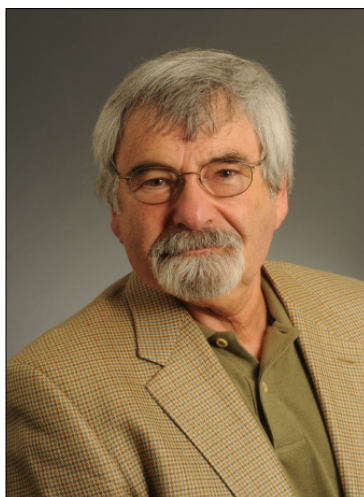
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When Provisional Coalition Authority leader, J. Paul Bremer eliminated the Iraqi Army and Ba'ath Party, disenfranchising thousands of Sunni Muslims in the process, he incentivized the formerly empowered Sunnis to fight back any way they could. One way was to establish al Qaeda in Mesopotamia with Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in charge. Once the American and other Coalition Authority forces withdrew from Iraq, al Qaeda in Mesopotamia morphed into the Islamic State for Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or, simply, the Islamic State.

The insidious operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy or Oedipus effect is clear in the case of the Iraq invasion and occupation: American, British and other political leaders entertained the originally false assumption that Islamic extremists – i.e., al Qaeda – were in Iraq. Their subsequent behavior, based on that false assumption, brought about the reality of that definition of the situation.

With the murderous attacks in Paris on “Friday the 13th,” 2015, the SFP/OE is destined for greater ontological alchemy: The discovery that at least one of the attackers may have entered Europe through Greece and then into France, disguised as a refugee, has given rise to the narrative that ISIS, al Qaeda, and/or other extremists are among the tens of thousands of Syrian refugees entering Europe, with some eventually destined for the United States. The assumption now being entertained by many is that these “faux” refugees will become part of sleeper cells, poised to commit acts of terrorism in the host countries that have given them sanctuary.

Not surprisingly, some European and American political leaders, sensing an opportunity to exploit the Syrian refugee crisis for personal gain, have advanced the argument that acceptance of Syrian refugees incurs the risk that terrorist Trojan horses will enter their communities, integrate themselves within their host countries as ticking time bombs, and then wait to be detonated by command of ISIS Central. This is precisely how some populist politicians have framed the ISIS-inspired San Bernardino attacks which occurred roughly two weeks after the Paris assault. Tens of thousands of Muslim refugees are now being dehumanized, demonized, and delegitimized simply because they are Muslim. By being excluded from social, political, economic, and other institutions – exclusion being a primary cause of violent conflict (Philips, 2014) – these desperate souls will be pushed



Dennis J.D. Sandole.  
Photo: Mason Creative Services.

into a frustration-aggression/violent conflict mode. As if to ensure such an outcome, David Bowers, the mayor of Roanoke, Virginia – a Democrat – has even invoked the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War 2 as one model of a possible response to this combustible enemy-image narrative (Weiner, 2015). In addition, at least 30 Republican governors have refused to accept any Muslim refugees for re-settlement in their states (BBC, 2015). And then there is Republican frontrunner Donald Trump's populist call “for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on” (CNN, 2015).

Edward Luce of the Financial Times is justifiably concerned that either Donald Trump or his ideological equivalent, Ted Cruz, will emerge as the Republican nominee to go up against Hillary Clinton in the race for the U.S. Presidency: “Then,” against that background, “the election is upended by a Paris-style terror attack – that dreaded ‘October surprise’” (Luce, 2016). In the meantime, the self-fulfilling dynamic is in full play, ensuring that a catastrophic overreaction will occur:

*The right worries that US Muslims are a fifth column. By goading such fears they make law-abiding citizens feel unwelcome and fuel the alienation that breeds terrorists. This is what ISIS wants (ibid.).*

What did Pogo say all those years ago? “We have met the enemy and he is us!” ■

### Recent S-CAR Books

#### **Peace Jobs: A Student's Guide to Starting a Career Working for Peace**

David J. Smith

#### **Practical Approaches to peacebuilding: Putting Theory to Work**

Pamina Firchow and Harry Anastasio, editors

#### **Libya's Displacement Crisis: Uprooted by Revolution and Civil**

Ibrahim Fraihat, Megan Bradley, and Houda Mzioudet

#### **Deconstructing Women, Peace and Security**

Sandra Cheldelin and Martha Mutisi

For more, visit [scar.gmu.edu/books-roster](http://scar.gmu.edu/books-roster)

## Building Resilience in the Middle-East Amidst Terror

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According to the study, measures of wellbeing show discontent with the availability of opportunities between the middle class and the poor and confirm their inability to have equal access to resources and opportunities. More importantly, this discontent is exacerbated when it comes to ethnic and sectarian divisions creating fertile ground for recruitment of individuals by extremists. Though there are no immediate remedies to such violent acts, I offer some thoughts for our shared consideration:

Most responses require the intervention of law enforcement and the engagement of the international community through technical and security support. The latest bombings in Beirut and Paris and the spill-over to other European countries demonstrate the clear links between local, regional, and global politics. It is important to call for immediate and long-term responses that respect international human rights law.

Partnering and working with religious institutions is imperative to promote interfaith understanding and collaboration on countering violent extremism. Divisions among the diversity of schools of thought in the Arab world make it difficult for such institutions to run a unified message of peace and acceptance, let alone collaboration. The lack of advancement on youth development and gender equality in the Arab world is uncontested and well documented. As a result, men and women of all ages are falling victim to recruitment by militias, extremists, and human and drug traffickers. In addition, the flow of arms is exponentially on the rise and the economy of war is clashing and getting in the way of any serious resolution to these issues.

Internationally coordinated actions are a must as the combination of arms and vulnerable populations seems to create the right recipe for extremist recruitment.

Violence in the Arab world, though rooted in context, is also tied to external factors. Conflict drivers that are leveraged by extremists include past and current traumas, as well as anger and resentment about the on-going demonization and dehumanization of Arab culture by outside actors.

Social cohesion is achieved when all segments of society manage to address intra and inter group conflicts responsibly and when society is able to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. Peace engines are effective in addressing drivers of conflict when all members of a society feel valued and acknowledged and when they find venues to participate in shaping their own future. Inclusionary politics are key to countering feelings of alienation.

People in the Arab world are looking for more meaning and for opportunities to dream of a better future in which they can realize their aspirations, feel respect for their traditions and culture, and reaffirm that their identity is valued by others. Theories of change that build on sources of resilience in Arab societies, with all their diversity, may offer and help address internal as well as external factors including structural and cultural sources of violence. Hopefully, future attempts to address violent extremism will build on such sources of resilience, especially those rooted in the values of the various traditions that make the rich mosaic of the region, i.e. those that promote peace, acceptance and inclusion. ■



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