



HAL
open science

Preventing a Mobilization from Spreading: Assad and the Electronic War

Rey Matthieu

► **To cite this version:**

Rey Matthieu. Preventing a Mobilization from Spreading: Assad and the Electronic War. Media in the Middle East, pp.89 - 106, 2017, 10.1007/978-3-319-65771-4_5 . halshs-03783590

HAL Id: halshs-03783590

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03783590>

Submitted on 22 Sep 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Metadata of the chapter that will be visualized in SpringerLink

Book Title	Media in the Middle East	
Series Title		
Chapter Title	Preventing a Mobilization from Spreading: Assad and the Electronic War	
Copyright Year	2018	
Copyright HolderName	The Author(s)	
Corresponding Author	Family Name	Rey
	Particle	
	Given Name	Matthieu
	Prefix	
	Suffix	
	Division	
	Organization	Iremam (CNRS)
	Address	5 rue du Château de l'Horloge, 13094, Aix en Provence, France
	Email	rey_matthieu@yahoo.fr
Abstract	<p>In March 2,011, a massive uprising broke out in Syria. It was quickly helped and fuelled by social media: social media activists linked the different protests and collected news to spread information outside Syria. The Assad regime attempted to counter this by using different tools which allowed the regime to survive by undermining public debate till today. Their own electronic services can be analyzed not only as an element of broader partnership (with foreign experts and companies) but also as a team which is guided by self-preserving values and interests.</p>	



CHAPTER 5

Preventing a Mobilization from Spreading: Assad and the Electronic War

Matthieu Rey

“No... using Skype is not secure. Do you remember how they arrested Mr. X? They had access to his personal data and they picked him up thanks to that.”¹ These few sentences encapsulate Syrian opinion towards the use of the Internet during the revolution. They highlight the immediate difference from other Arab contexts, such as the situations in Tunisia and Egypt. In December 2010 and January 2011, the wave of protests suddenly shed light on the importance of social media in the Arab World in the eyes of Western public opinion. Certainly, their social and political aspects have been scrutinized by researchers for a decade, but they remain marginalized in the scope of scholarly work.² The successive overthrow of Ben Ali and then Mubarak shook the Arab World and triggered extensive analysis of the recent trends which have shaped public opinion. Controversially, analysts and commentators apologized for not taking these developments into account; namely that social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter, and satellite channels triggered these movements. They looked to new heroes such as Egypt’s Walid

AQ1

M. Rey (✉),
Iremam (CNRS), 5 rue du Château de l’Horloge,
13094 Aix en Provence, France
e-mail: rey_matthieu@yahoo.fr



21 Ghonim and often overstressed their roles.³ From this perspective, a
22 new dominant narrative emerged from the turmoil: of youth using social
23 media to bring down old autocratic regimes.⁴ This approach did not
24 work in the case of Syria.

25 In contrast to previous uprisings, the regime did not shut down the
26 Internet but allowed access to new sites; it did not crumble in a few weeks,
27 but instead proved extremely resilient. This development needs some fur-
28 ther explanation. Studying the electronic response to the protest by the
29 Syrian regime may help us understand this particular evolution of events.

30 Is Syria an example of the official repression of the state against activ-
31 ists by deploying coercion? This chapter will detail the coercive processes;
32 this perspective is useful as many aspects of the electronic repression are
33 not well known. However, a first analysis of this topic has been advanced
34 by Delshād`Uthmān.⁵ I would like to outline the different aspects of the
35 repression and, by connecting them, to shed light on the concrete proce-
36 dure of how public policymaking is implemented in Syria.

AQ2

37 Scholars have tackled the issue of policy building in Syria with the
38 intention of shedding light on political practices.⁶ However, they have
39 not provided any insight inot the policies and the apparatus of power
40 on a day-to-day basis. The new context which emerged from the upris-
41 ing of 2011 clarified the relationship between institutions and their
42 actions. Legal institutions such as the intelligence services or the army
43 can also implement informal activities that depart from their scope of
44 competencies.

45 In order to analyze the use of social media and electronic repres-
46 sions, a few theoretical stances help to qualify the main stakes. First, I
47 will argue that an institutional process is ongoing to curb the revolution-
48 ary process that was sparked by the new behaviors that emerged from
49 the protest.⁷ Management of digital content is part of a broader scope
50 of public policies implemented in reaction to the unrest.⁸ I will argue
51 that even if neither the Syrian uprising nor any of the other Arab rev-
52 olutions were sparked by Internet activity, electronic counter-attacks shed
53 light on how the movement was prevented from growing. Institutions
54 conceive their aims with regards to the collective values of their mem-
55 bers. Negotiations and institutional effects unify these different voices in
56 a single policy.⁹

57 From this perspective, electronic repression highlights the impor-
58 tance of the informal aspects of the political fabric in Syria. Furthermore,
59 this point of view underlines the importance of framing reality. Erwin



60 Goffman was the first to insist on how interactions alter the views of the
61 actors.¹⁰ Daniel Snow and Daniel Cefai underscore the relations between
62 perceptions and facts. They show that framing reality creates important
63 material and symbolic resources.¹¹ However, building the narrative—the
64 dominant one against the others—cannot be understood without taking
65 into consideration the actors who produced the discourses. Finally,
66 as David Hakken notes, studying the Internet sphere leads to the focus
67 being placed on three levels—micro, meso and macro—each revealing
68 different elements.¹² I will mainly focus my attention on the meso level.

69 From this perspective, two different approaches are relevant in shed-
70 ding light on the institutional processes which affect policymaking. First,
71 Baathist regimes have been compared to a form of totalitarianism.¹³
72 These approaches highlight the classical dilemma of characterizing the
73 decision-making process in policy planning. Do they result from a per-
74 sonal initiative or is it several interplaying voices? In this matter, Syrian
75 electronic activists reveal the connection between the first circle¹⁴ and
76 the specific team targeting the Internet.

77 Consequently, the present study clarifies internal procedures which
78 shape the decisions. Arguing with Paul DiMaggio, Walter Powell and the
79 neo-institutionalist approach,¹⁵ electronic repression points to the out-
80 come of an institutional dialogue. Therefore, curbing protest and pro-
81 moting a new discourse on the regime and the opposition are converging
82 in highlighting internal dynamics of formal and informal institutions.
83 However, it seems necessary to firstly examine the role of the Internet
84 and social media before the crisis to assess how important they were.

85 At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the new president,
86 Bashar al-Assad, came to power. The “young president with blue eyes”
87 had been head of the Syrian Computer Company¹⁶ since the late 1990s,
88 following the death of his elder brother, Bassel al-Assad.¹⁷ In this struc-
89 ture, the leader recruited his men, who took over various positions from
90 the old guard. This very first step in “electronic” history of the regime
91 highlights the connection between the Internet and the rise of Bashar al-
92 Assad.¹⁸ If he initiated changes in matters of infrastructure and moderni-
93 zation of the country, the new president would not be able to maintain
94 the long seclusion of the country.

95 As a result, Internet providers and users remained few until the very
96 end of the twentieth century¹⁹ (Table 5.1).

97 The increase in usership reflected the rocky path of the Internet’s
98 development in Syria. As Delshād Uthmān points out, the whole system

**Table 5.1** Internet coverage in Syria since 2000

<i>Date</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
Percentage of users	0.5	6.5	17	19.5

99 has been controlled by the regime from the very beginning. The geog-
100 graphy of the network depended on its will to monitor the activity with
101 distribution of the electronic links from the capital and the coast, where
102 cables arrived, and subsequently reached second-tier cities.²⁰ Considering
103 this aspect, two different dynamics informed the use of Internet in Syria.

104 As the figures show, 2005 was a turning point. Internet activity
105 reached a certain level and reflected the contradictions of the new Syria.
106 On the one hand, it was a sensitive issue, as reports mentions, the regime
107 ordered different companies to track down all electronic activities.²¹
108 Basic laws allowed the regime to control how the Internet was used. If
109 Internet cafes proliferated, each user was supposed to present an identity
110 card and a log of the different screens were kept at the end of each ses-
111 sion.²² The mukhabarat (Intelligence Services) colluded in the process,
112 as a consequence, the Internet did not offer real free space.

113 On the other hand, online access was part of the new modern Syria.
114 In 2006, the president defended his new economic plan and the focus on
115 the Internet and telecommunications was correlated to economic growth
116 of two percentage points.²³ New technology became the new pillars of
117 the Syrian economy. (It also allowed the businessman Rami Makhluf, a
118 relative of Bashar al-Assad, to build his fortune.) Homes in the main cit-
119 ies had Internet access, as Syrians emphasized:

120 It was still expensive to buy a computer and to obtain access to the Internet.
121 The connection was very slow. It nevertheless created a new life. We could
122 have access to the world without being restricted by official media. Of
123 course, many websites remained forbidden. Any pages containing “Israel”
124 for example could not be accessed. However, it changed our view.²⁴

125 These few sentences highlighted the relationship between the Internet
126 and certain segments of the population. Mostly, in Damascus, then
127 in Aleppo, it was an important part of the new way of life that the
128 regime promoted. From this perspective, it facilitated a new kind of
129 socialization—the process of individualization. In the insightful remarks
130 of Asef Bayat, the Internet exemplified the urban effect on youth.
131 In urban areas, they learnt the social skills and resources to obtain



132 independence from the family.²⁵ The differences in Internet connectivity
133 between the Syrian provinces eventually increased.²⁶

134 Both capitals—Aleppo and Damascus—were well-equipped and
135 directly connected to external points. Secondary cities, such as Homs
136 and Hama, also received attention. However, networks went through the
137 capital and, therefore, the level of traffic was lower than in other places.
138 Gradually, the Internet reached other parts of Syria. However, this did
139 not narrow the spatial inequality between the cities. On the contrary, it
140 marginalized these territories still further. Internet distribution reflected
141 how Syria was modernized during the early part of the century.²⁷
142 Transport and educational institutions improved and were able to bring
143 people closer together. However, they led to centralizing activity in both
144 capitals.

145 “The University of Aleppo welcomed more than 55% of students who
146 were not from the city. Most of them came here, as there was no oppor-
147 tunity to pursue studies in their homeland. In Aleppo, the students met
148 and discussed. We first organized informal talks.”²⁸

149 I entered the University of Aleppo. We were living in dorms and shared
150 several activities, such. as watching TV, discussing classes, etc. When we
151 saw the downfall of Saddam Hussein on TV in 2003, we immediately went
152 into the street and demonstrated. It was not legal nor was it forbidden as
153 the regime was against the USA.²⁹

154 The new capitals were the new places where a specific socialization took
155 place and Syrian youth interacted with one another. The Internet fuelled
156 these processes during the decade leading up to the uprising. However,
157 its use was restricted to a small minority. Assessing the number of users
158 and the nature of their activity is relatively hard as a certain amount of
159 data can only be surmised—age, number of computers, literacy, family
160 relationships, number of Internet cafés—were all interplaying factors in
161 the use of the Internet. These inequalities and the two different aspects
162 of the Internet largely underpinned the role of the Internet in the upris-
163 ing and the electronic repression.

164 “Come see! There was a demonstration! Yes, in Damascus!”³⁰

165 Early February 2011, YouTube, newly authorized, helped to spread
166 the video of the first gathering in Damascus. Naturally, this website did



167 not trigger the revolt, nor was it decisive in setting Syrians against the
168 regime. On the contrary, the social and political dynamics of the revolt
169 were not sparked by the use of social media and the Internet. It was
170 attributed to peripheral marginalization and resentment against the abuse
171 of dignity.³¹ It first took place in Deraa and in coastal towns, before
172 spreading to new areas. In these developments, the Internet played a second-
173 ary role, but demonstrated being a decisive part of the events in April
174 and May 2011, by proving to the protesters that others were indeed par-
175 ticipating. In the words of an activist from Homs:

176 After the first demonstrations downtown, the regime launched massive
177 attacks. The sit-in was broken on the first night. Then, we took refuge
178 in our quarter. Each neighborhood became the main stage of the protest
179 of Friday. But, quickly, it became impossible to move from one part to
180 another. We knew from younger activists who knew how to use the inter-
181 net that other parts of Syria were involved in the protest. They showed us
182 on the computer other demonstrations, then from April 2011, Al-Jazeera
183 started to use video documenting the uprising. This gave us some hope.
184 But quickly, we lost electricity, connectivity and we were cut off from the
185 world. From June 2011 until my departure in March 2012, it became
186 really hard to know what was going on outside the neighborhood.³²

187 Certainly, at the very beginning of the uprising, activists' initiatives
188 helped to spread information and practical resources for organizing
189 protests.³³ A few groups, such as three Free Students (Ṭulāb al-hūrūrīn),
190 played a particularly important role in urban areas and coordinated
191 nationwide efforts.³⁴ However, all their activities and their results
192 remained deeply dependent on the local situation on the ground and
193 they failed to establish any kind of permanent structure to support the
194 revolution. In fact, repression increased quickly and became more effi-
195 cient by using the Internet.

196 As previously mentioned, the Internet in Syria was never free from
197 strict government control. However, in contrast to the Tunisian and
198 Egyptian cases, the regime was the first to allow access to Facebook,
199 YouTube, and Twitter which suddenly became available in February
200 2011.³⁵ A new Internet utopia was born. As several activists have pointed
201 out, contrary to common knowledge, they were unaware of these secu-
202 rity procedures. They started to discuss, to exchange information, to
203 express their anger or their joy through microblogging and YouTubing.



204 However, this new virtual space was usually being monitored by the
205 regime. The mukhabarat's services deployed blanket rules to accumu-
206 late control and arrest the protestors. Locally and nationally, initiatives
207 were taken to curb the use of the Internet as a means of protest.³⁶ This
208 first stance of coercive practices combined standard torture and a cam-
209 paign of arrests. The mukhabarat operated on two levels: on the national
210 level, Iranians and head figures adopted practices used during the Iranian
211 protest of 2009,³⁷ arresting key figures and using heavy torture was
212 conceived as the best tool to stop the upheaval. Several young leaders
213 disappeared. On the local stage, members of these services enjoyed rela-
214 tive autonomy. They did not target individuals, nor did they take into
215 consideration electronic materials, which could constitute evidence.
216 From this perspective, the dual strategy reflected the ambiguity of using
217 the Internet to practice mass repression. It is not possible to label all the
218 repressive tactics as public policy as they did not follow a common pat-
219 tern. This was, however, true on the national level.

220 From April 2011, new strategies emerged, often after beating the
221 "suspect" during the arrest they were brought to one of the branches
222 of the services. Jail capacities increased quickly, using any available space
223 to detain people, mostly underground. The new questions asked during
224 the interrogation focused on electronic accounts as the services wanted
225 to find out about the passwords that the activists used to access Skype or
226 Facebook. Where were their cameras and their mobiles? Any photos and
227 videos that were found constituted proof of plotting against the secu-
228 rity of the state.³⁸ The first aim of this policy was to avoid any alterna-
229 tive symbolic order emerging from the opposition. If we follow Christina
230 Fominaya's analysis, based on the work of Thomas Szasz, the Internet
231 provides a useful tool for building a symbolic order to counter the domi-
232 nant narrative.³⁹ Breaking the production and disturbing the producer
233 can stop a revolutionary discourse from unifying. It reflected the national
234 strategy to divide the country, in the virtual space.

235 This strategy of using basic tools and coercive apparatus marked the
236 launch of the virtual fight in Syria. Certainly, I do not want to overesti-
237 mate the role and the impact of the Internet in Syria. I assert that a small
238 majority of the activists was concerned by this method of fighting the
239 regime. These groups received greater attention from the security appa-
240 ratus in June and July 2011.⁴⁰ Indeed, a new initiative from the repres-
241 sive forces targeted Internet traffic and its volume decreased several times
242 in revolutionary neighborhoods. It was never switched off completely,



243 as had been intended in Egypt and in Tunisia. This policy highlighted
244 both the state of uncertainty towards the Internet between central and
245 local commands, and also the multipolarity in the chain of command.
246 After three months of demonstrations and clashes, the regime had mainly
247 responded with repression but it still pretended to look for a political
248 solution with a few reforms.

249 The first attack on Internet activity led activists from the Anonymous
250 group to retaliate.⁴¹ They focused largely on official websites, from min-
251 istries to local institutions such as the Chamber of Trade and Industry in
252 Lattakia. They exposed the vulnerability of the system and showed that
253 that it was possible to disseminate an alternative narrative. This dam-
254 aged official propaganda. An understanding of the severity of the offense
255 is linked to the nature of the government message: When the uprising
256 broke out, the regime initially denied the events, claiming that nothing
257 was going on. At the very least, it would concede that terrorist attacks
258 were affecting the country. From this perspective, slogans that were
259 being chanted shed light on the global strategy. While protesters chanted
260 “God, Syria, Freedom—that’s all”, the partisans of the regime answered
261 by organizing counter-demonstrations and shouting “God, Syria,
262 Bashar—that’s all.” These techniques were aimed to confuse the general
263 public’s perception of what was happening on the ground.⁴² Creating a
264 common call against the repression threatened this strategy. In this con-
265 text, attacks from Anonymous were immediately regarded as a substantial
266 threat. Two different strategies were formulated to counter the threat.
267 First, the repression targeted the cyber activists more precisely. Then, a
268 new team of hackers was organized.

269 The Internet turned out to be a useful tool in order to track activists.
270 Intelligence services followed new guidelines as they were unable to curb
271 the protest despite a massive campaign of arrests. Consequently, informal
272 groups who made up the resistance, such as *tansiqiyyat mahliyya* (local
273 coordination), needed to recruit new members, as the older ones dis-
274 appeared.⁴³ In addition, they had to become more cautious. As Evgeni
275 Morozov argues, the Internet turned into “net delusion”.⁴⁴ While most
276 of the activists spoke about their activism and were able to exchange
277 their views openly, they were being tracked on several forms of media.
278 In addition to using physical torture to get information, intelligence
279 services used digital media to deploy several nets of controls. For exam-
280 ple, “men in the middle” were able to surveil two sides of a dialogue
281 without the awareness of either side. Moreover, new procedures which



282 employed viruses and worms permitted the services to spy on computers
283 and increase mistrust.⁴⁵ Quickly, global networks countered the different
284 methods used by the services. A specific group from Anonymous helped
285 activists by deploying new secure means, such as TOR and VPN systems.⁴⁶ Communications improved but use of the Internet was no longer
286 viewed as a discursive space in which the revolution could build an alter-
287 native voice.

289 The two sides pitted their respective strengths against each other,
290 even though the regime could target the activists more precisely through
291 carrying out mass arrests. Moreover, from February 2012, the regime
292 launched the battle for the cities. In addition, bombing the neighbor-
293 hood led to a collapse of the infrastructure. It was no longer a prob-
294 lem of deliberating and exchanging views; rather, it became a struggle
295 to even secure access to electricity and Internet connectivity. The army
296 entered the neighborhoods and then the intelligence services tracked the
297 people down.⁴⁷ Several neighborhoods were cut off from the outside
298 world. During this new stage of the uprising, the main task of the activ-
299 ists became being connected. At the same time, the regime turned the
300 Internet into a useful way of tracking its opponents. Combining basic
301 methods of repression with spying on the Internet permitted an exten-
302 sion to the scope of the repression. Therefore, the regime had almost
303 monopolized the narrative built on the Internet, while the activists strug-
304 gled to exist by spreading news, videos, and analyses through the media.
305 As a consequence, using the Internet in Syria meant a national struggle
306 to frame a new narrative. But the Internet also provided a useful tool to
307 promote the regime's propaganda. From this perspective, it seems that
308 the regime "learned" how to use the Internet to its best advantage.

309 In 2012, WikiLeaks revealed that at the beginning of the upris-
310 ing, the president received advice on social media strategies from two
311 young politicians from the same generation as the president, who were
312 specially recruited to work in the electronic services.⁴⁸ Two years later,
313 Guilia Prati shows that the presidency was still experiencing problems
314 using Twitter. Bashar al-Assad (or those in charge of the presidential
315 account) focused their actions on Syrian hours, meaning in the time zone
316 of day-time Syria rather than the time zone in day-time Washington DC,
317 depriving the services of the efficiency by disconnecting Twitter activities
318 to the American public for example.⁴⁹ These two insights proved that
319 the regime was relatively unsophisticated in its use of the Internet but
320 it also highlights the very low level of institutionalizing. Assad's system



321 mainly works on a network of personal relationships. At the beginning of
322 the uprising, information services depended mostly on the departments
323 in the company of Ramī Makhhlūf. Therefore, the presidency could only
324 employ a few specialists. The two managers of the presidency were from
325 the same generation and background as Bashar al-Assad. They could not
326 fulfill the technological gap. Similarly, even if the presidency adopted
327 Facebook in 2007 and later Twitter, the regime could not make up for
328 the vacuum of activity in public relations.

329 When the uprising broke out, some youths from the new generation
330 who were well integrated within the regime took its side, and they com-
331 mitted themselves towards its struggle against the cyberactivists. They
332 soon became labeled as the “Syrian Electronic Army” (SEA). In June
333 2011, Bashar al-Assad acknowledged its existence and publicly thanked
334 “the brave fighters”.⁵⁰ Later, they changed into an offensive group, tar-
335 geting accounts and revealing secret passwords and IP addresses, which
336 led to a new wave of arrests. The group crashed public websites, and
337 surprisingly the majority of their targets were Israelis.⁵¹ Israel kept a low
338 profile in the Syrian struggle.⁵² Tactics and goals highlighted the limita-
339 tions of the group, but also its main constituencies. This informal group
340 gathered in order to support the regime. It was not clearly organized or
341 institutionalized.⁵³ Therefore, they supplied the regime with their ser-
342 vices and this electronic army has to be viewed as a group more than a
343 clearly defined state-run service.

344 With respect to its capabilities, the regime’s electronic fight cannot
345 be compared to that of Iran, Russia, or China. This is not to underes-
346 timate the capacities of Assad’s regime, but the assessment of its prac-
347 tices proved that it was sparked by personal and informal motivations.
348 It reflects a broader pattern of ruling and governing the country. This
349 informal nature matches the contradictory nature of public policy imple-
350 mented regarding the Internet. What characterized the regime was
351 mainly a multipolarity of the decisions, the absence of coordination
352 beyond a general framework, and general guidelines. From this perspec-
353 tive, Ian Kershaw’s concept—“working towards the fuhrer”⁵⁴—seems
354 particularly relevant in this context. The general principle of the policy
355 towards the Internet was based on a simple pattern: “working towards
356 the fuhrer” means that the leader launches general trends which allow
357 local actors to act in accordance to these considerations. Bashar al-Assad
358 issued different general guidelines: curbing “terrorism” in the country;
359 curbing dissidents’ voices; and pretending that the population supported



360 the regime and that it was under siege. Then, each department acted
 361 independently. Their abilities depended on their individual skills. Some
 362 services that were well connected with foreign partners such as Iranian
 363 ones were able to track opponents efficiently, while others conducted a
 364 massive campaign against all kinds of people. Then, the leader indicated
 365 what he viewed as the right policy but did not denounce the others.

366 To conclude, the Syrian case study provides insights on the idea of
 367 net delusion. I show how Internet repression dealt with public policies
 368 and reflects the political dynamics within the context of an authoritar-
 369 ian regime. Contrary to other studies, I analyze practices in the context
 370 of disturbances and upheaval. In most cases, scholars have brilliantly
 371 pinpointed how the regime reacts and provides special departments in
 372 order to use the Internet. In the Syrian case, the regime learned how
 373 to create electronic propaganda following the unrest. However, it was
 374 not able to systematize its treatment towards virtual spaces in Syria effec-
 375 tively. This explains why some areas which escaped Assad's control are
 376 still connected to the Internet. On the other hand, a systematic attack
 377 against cyberactivists was launched during the summer of 2011. Syrian
 378 practices against the free movement and the struggle for dignity were
 379 related directly to the nature of the regime. Its members who competed
 380 one against another tried to prove their high commitment by deploying
 381 a better repression. It remains highly repressive. Since 2015, this de facto
 382 decentralization has continued to grow as new providers appear by con-
 383 necting neighboring areas with countries such as Turkey. This learning
 384 process explains, on the one hand, the high level of repression and, on
 385 the other hand, its contradictions.

386

NOTES

- 387 1. Interview with an activist in Damascus, August 2012.
- 388 2. On social media Arturo Escobar, "Welcome to Cyberia. Notes on the
 389 Anthropology of Cyberculture", *Current Anthropology* 35(1994):
 390 211–231; Philip Howard and Malcolm Parks, "Social Media and
 391 Political Change: Capacity, Constraint, and Consequence," *Journal of*
 392 *Communication* 62(2012): 359–362; David Hakken, *Cyborgs@cyberspace?*
 393 *An Ethnographer Looks to the Future* (New York: Routledge, 1991); in the
 394 Arab world, Qitan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement*
 395 *Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Yves
 396 Gonzalez-Quijano, *Arabités numériques. Le printemps du Web arabe*
 397 (Paris: Acte Sud, 2012).



- 398 3. On an over-emphasized Walīd al-Ghonīm role, Elizabeth Thompson,
399 *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Movement in the*
400 *Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Harvard University Press, 2013).
- 401 4. Farhad Khosrokhavar nuanced this approach with his concept of “demo-
402 movement,” Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolution that Shook*
403 *the World* (New York: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).
- 404 5. On the Syrian case, see the delightful paper, Delshād `Uthmān,
405 “Al-Ittiṣālāt al-suriyya fī ḥāl ḥuṣūl al-darba al-`askariyya. Warqa `amal
406 tadrusu al-ākhtār allatī tuhaddidu al-khidma fī ḥāl al-darba awu fī ḥālā
407 iyqāf al-khidma bi shakli maqṣūdi wa al-ḥulūl al-is`āfiyya allatī min al-
408 mumkin tanfīdhha.” (The Syrians Communications in case of military
409 attack. Working papers studying the dangers which threaten the use of
410 the communication in case of military attack or in case of suspending on
411 purpose its use and the emergency solutions that can be implemented)
412 Washington, September 1, 2013.
- 413 6. Eyal Ziyer, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Assad and the First Years*
414 *of Power* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); David Lesch, *The New Lion*
415 *of Damascus: Bashar al-Assad and Modern Syria* (New Haven: Yale
416 University Press, 2005); Sylvia Chiffolleau, ed., “La Syrie au quotidien.
417 Cultures et Pratiques du changement,” *Revue des Mondes Méditerranéens*
418 *et Musulmans* 115–116 (2006).
- 419 7. Chaymaa Hassabo, On revolutionary and institutional processes, “Trois
420 ans de revolution,” (paper presented at *Culture politique arabe* Seminar,
421 Paris, 2012–2013).
- 422 8. Jean Pierre Filiu, *Le Nouveau Moyen Orient: les peuples à l'heure de la*
423 *révolution syrienne* (Paris: Fayard, 2013); Matthieu Rey, “Syria: between
424 revolution and repression, 2011–2013” (paper presented at *The Arab*
425 *Uprising 2011–2014: Between Revolution and Authoritarianism*,
426 Singapore, July 8, 2014).
- 427 9. This finding is based on Mary Douglas’ argument that institutions are
428 thinking. Mary Douglas, *Comment les Institutions pensent* (Paris: La
429 découverte, 2004).
- 430 10. Erwin Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of*
431 *Experience* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1986).
- 432 11. Daniel Cefaï, “La construction des problèmes publics: Définitions de situ-
433 ations dans des arènes publiques,” *Réseaux*, 14 (1996).
- 434 12. Hakken, *Cyborg@cyberspace: An Ethnographer Looks to the Future*, 20–23.
- 435 13. Mostly in the Iraqi case, Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party:*
436 *Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
437 Press, 2011); Chris Kutchera, *Le Livre Noir de Saddam Hussein* (Paris:
438 Oh! Edition, 2005).



- 439 14. The First circle refers to the close connected figures who rule Syria in
440 cooperation with the President Bashar al-Assad, Hanna Batatu, *Syria's*
441 *Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics*
442 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 443 15. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, eds., *The New Institutionalism in*
444 *Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- 445 16. This company was first established by Basel al-Assad, older brother of
446 Bashar al-Assad. He intended to promote the use of computers in Syria
447 by attracting Syrian engineers who graduated from prestigious interna-
448 tional universities. When he died in 1994, Bashar al-Assad inherited the
449 project and improved the capacities of this society.
- 450 17. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*.
- 451 18. "Internet Usage and Marketing Report: Syria," Internet World Stats,
452 accessed February 1, 2016, [http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/](http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/sy.htm)
453 [sy.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/sy.htm).
- 454 19. For the data, "Syrie," Statistiques Mondiales, accessed February 1, 2016,
455 <http://www.statistiques-mondiales.com/syrie.htm>; Barney Warf and
456 Peter Vincent, "Multiples Geographies of the Arab Internet," *Area*
457 39(2007): 83–98.
- 458 20. `Uthmān, "Ittiṣālāt al-suriyya," 12.
- 459 21. Reporter Sans Frontière, "Syrie, ennemie d'internet," March
460 12, 2012, accessed February 2, 2016, [http://fr.rsf.org/syrie-](http://fr.rsf.org/syrie-syrie-12-03-2012,42016.html)
461 [syrie-12-03-2012,42016.html](http://fr.rsf.org/syrie-syrie-12-03-2012,42016.html).
- 462 22. Observation in Damascus and Aleppo (June 2010).
- 463 23. In the late 1990s, Syria was not equipped in IT nor was its mobile net-
464 work well-developed. Implementing the new plan of computers and tel-
465 ephone and, then, improving them created a high level of growth. Ramy
466 Makhluḥ through two companies has monopolized this market. Fred
467 Lawson, *Demystifying Syria* (London: Saqi, 2009).
- 468 24. Interview with an activist (Damascus, June 2012).
- 469 25. Matthieu Rey, "2003, a new generation in Syria," in *Generations and*
470 *Protests* ed. Ratiba el-Hajj et al. (London: Routledge).
- 471 26. `Uthmān, "Ittiṣālāt al-suriyya."
- 472 27. Baudoin Dupret, Zouhair Ghazzal and Youssef Courbage, *La Syrie au*
473 *présent* (Paris: Acte Sud, 2006).
- 474 28. Interview with an activist (Gaziantep, October 2014).
- 475 29. Interview with an activist from Deraa in Damascus (June 2012).
- 476 30. Observation in Damascus (February 2012).
- 477 31. Matthieu Rey, "Body as a symbol of dignity, how Arabs merged to
478 defend the dignity," (paper presented at The Middle East in Revolt: the
479 First Anniversary, Melbourne, Victoria, March 17–18, 2012).
- 480 32. Interview with an activist in Bekaa Valley (October 2014).



- 481 33. Céline Pigeot and Alexandre Durant, “‘Nouvelles guerres de l’information’:
482 Le cas de la Syrie,” *Note stratégiques CEIS*(2012), accessed March 30
483 , 2015, <https://reflets.info/la-censure-du-net-en-syrie-mise-a-nu/>.
- 484 34. Interviews with a Syrian activist (Gaziantep, October 2014).
- 485 35. Christophe Varin, “Le Web à l’épreuve de la ‘cyberguerre’ en Syrie,”
486 *Etudes* 417(2012).
- 487 36. Céline Pigeot and Alexandre Durant, “Nouvelles guerres de
488 l’information”; Sophia Amine, et al., *Infowar in Syria: the Web Between*
489 *Liberation and Repression* (Beirut: CEMAM, 2012); Margaret Weiss,
490 “Assad’s Secretive Cyber Forces,” The Washington Institute, April 12,
491 2012.
- 492 37. Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*
493 (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).
- 494 38. Interviews in Damascus (June 2012).
- 495 39. Christina Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests,*
496 *Occupations and Uprisings are Changing the World.* Sociology for
497 Globalizing Societies (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 121
- 498 40. The regime had no elaborate services specializing in the Internet, before
499 2010. Olivier Danino, *L’utilisation stratégique du cyber au Moyen Orient*
500 (Paris: DAS, 2013).
- 501 41. Anonymous is an informal international network of activist and hacktivist
502 entities. The group became known for a series of well-publicized publicity
503 stunts and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on government,
504 religious, and corporate websites. During the Syrian uprising, two of
505 them led the help towards the Syrians (Neumann and Kheops).
- 506 42. Marc Gognon, “Graffitis et contre-manifestations volantes, des réponses
507 du pouvoir à la contestation syrienne,” in *Au Coeur des Révoltes Arabes:*
508 *Devenir Révolutionnaires*, eds. Amin Allal and Thomas Pierret (Paris:
509 Armand Colin, 2013).
- 510 43. Interviews with activists (Damascus-Hama, June 2012).
- 511 44. Morozov, *The Net Delusion*.
- 512 45. Helmi Norman, “The Emergence of Open and Organized Pro-
513 Government Cyber Attacks in the Middle East: The Case of the Syrian
514 Electronic Army,” OpenNet Initiative, accessed February 1, 2016,
515 [https://opennet.net/emergence-open-and-organized-pro-government-](https://opennet.net/emergence-open-and-organized-pro-government-cyber-attacks-middle-east-case-syrian-electronic-army)
516 [cyber-attacks-middle-east-case-syrian-electronic-army](https://opennet.net/emergence-open-and-organized-pro-government-cyber-attacks-middle-east-case-syrian-electronic-army).
- 517 46. Marc Gognon, “Les cyberactivistes ont besoin d’aide,” *Ceil sur la Syrie*,
518 December 12, 2011.
- 519 47. Wladimir Glassman, “Les ressources sécuritaires du régime,” in *Pas de*
520 *Printemps pour la Syrie. Les clés pour comprendre les acteurs et les défis de la*
521 *crise (2011–2013)*, eds. François Burgat and Bruno Paoli (Paris: la décou-
522 verte, 2013).



- 523 48. Olivier Danino, “Le soulèvement syrien à la lumière du cyber,” in *Les*
 524 *logiciels libres au Proche Orient. Société de l’information au Proche Orient*,
 525 ed. A. Nedelec (Paris, 2012).
- 526 49. Guilia Prati, “Between Propaganda and Public Relations: An Analysis
 527 of Bashar al-Assad’s Digital Communications Campaign”, *Journal of*
 528 *International Affairs*, March 9, 2015, accessed February 1, 2016,
 529 <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/propaganda-public-relations-analysis-bashar-al-assads-digital-communications-campaign/>.
- 530 50. “Syrian Electronic Army: Disruptive Attacks and Hyped
 531 Targets,” *Information Warfare Monitor*, June 25, 2011, accessed
 532 February 1, 2016, <http://www.infowar-monitor.net/2011/06/syrian-electronic-army-disruptive-attacks-and-hyped-targets/>.
- 533 51. Ibid.
- 534 52. Itamar Rabinovith, “New Israeli Policy Towards Syria: Should Israel
 535 Threaten to Intervene?,” *Brookings Blog*, February 13, 2015, accessed
 536 February 1, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/02/13-new-israeli-policy-on-syria-rabinovich>.
- 537 53. Romain Renier, “Qui se cache derrière l’armée électronique syrienne?” *La*
 538 *Tribune*, September 2, 2013, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.latribune.fr/technos-medias/20130902trib000782740/qui-se-cache-derriere-l-armee-electronique-syrienne-.html>.
- 539 54. Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of*
 540 *Interpretation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).
- 541
- 542
- 543
- 544
- 545

546

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 547 Batatu, Hanna. *Syria’s Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables,*
 548 *and Their Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- 549 Cefai, Daniel. “La construction des problèmes publics : Définitions de situations
 550 dans des arènes publiques.” *Réseaux*, 14 (1996).
- 551 Chiffolleau, Sylvia, ed. “La Syrie au quotidien. Cultures et Pratiques du change-
 552 ment.” *Revue des Mondes Méditerranéens et Musulmans* 115–116 (2006).
- 553 Douglas, Mary. *Comment les Institutions pensent*. Paris : La découverte, 2004.
- 554 Danino, Olivier. “Le soulèvement syrien à la lumière du cyber.” In *Les logiciels*
 555 *libres au Proche Orient. Société de l’information au Proche Orient*, edited by
 556 A. Nedelec. Paris, 2012.
- 557 Danino, Olivier. *L’utilisation stratégique du cyber au Moyen Orient*. Paris : DAS,
 558 2013.
- 559 DiMaggio, Paul, and Walter Powell, eds. *The New Institutionalism in*
 560 *Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- 561 Dupret, Baudoin, Zouhair Ghazzal and Youssef Courbage. *La Syrie au présent*.
 562 Paris : Acte Sud, 2006.



- 563 El Amine, Sofia, Stéphane Bazan, Sabrine Saad, Addis Tesfa and Christophe
564 Varin. *Infowar in Syria: the web between liberation and repression*. Beirut:
565 CEMAM, 2012.
- 566 Escobar, Arturo. "Welcome to Cyberia. Notes on the Anthropology of
567 Cyberculture." *Current Anthropology* 35 (1994): 211–231.
- 568 Filiu, Jean Pierre. *Le Nouveau Moyen Orient : les peuples à l'heure de la révolution
569 syrienne*. Paris : Fayard, 2013.
- 570 Fominaya, Christina. *Social Movements and Globalization: How protests, occupa-
571 tions and uprisings are changing the world*. London: Palgrave Macmillan,
572 2014.
- 573 Glassman, Wladimir. "Les ressources sécuritaires du régime." In *Pas de
574 Printemps pour la Syrie. Les clés pour comprendre les acteurs et les défis de la crise
575 (2011–2013)*, edited by François Burgat and Bruno Paoli. Paris : la décou-
576 verte, 2013.
- 577 Goffman, Erwin. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*.
578 Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986.
- 579 Gognon, Marc. *Les cyberactivistes ont besoin d'aide.* "Céil sur la Syrie, December
580 12, 2011.
- 581 Gognon, Marc. "Graffitis et contre-manifestations volantes, des réponses du
582 pouvoir à la contestation syrienne." In *Au Cœur des Révoltes Arabes: Devenir
583 Révolutionnaires*, edited by Amin Allal and Thomas Pierret. Paris: Armand
584 Colin, 2013.
- 585 Gonzalez-Quijano, Yves. *Arabités numériques: Le printemps du Web arabe*. Paris:
586 Acte Sud, 2012.
- 587 Hakken, David. *Cyborgs@cyberspace? An Ethnographer Looks to the Future*. New
588 York: Routledge, 1991.
- 589 Hassabo, Chaymaa. "Trois ans de revolution." Paper presented at Culture poli-
590 tique arabe Seminar, Paris, 2012–2013.
- 591 Howard, Philip, and Malcolm Parks. "Social Media and Political Change:
592 Capacity, Constraint, and Consequence." *Journal of Communication*
593 62(2012): 359–362.
- 594 Information Warfare Monitor. "Syrian Electronic Army : Disruptive Attacks and
595 Hyped Targets." June 25, 2011. Accessed February 1, 2016. [http://www.
596 infowar-monitor.net/2011/06/syrian-electronic-army-disruptive-attacks-and-
597 hyped-targets/](http://www.infowar-monitor.net/2011/06/syrian-electronic-army-disruptive-attacks-and-hyped-targets/).
- 598 Internet World Stats. "Internet Usage and Marketing Report: Syria." Accessed
599 February 1, 2016, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/sy.htm>.
- 600 Interviews with a Syrian activist. Gaziantep, October 2014.
- 601 Khosrokhavar, Farhad. *The New Arab Revolution that Shook the World*. New York:
602 Paradigm Publishers, 2012.
- 603 Kutchera, Chris. *Le Livre Noir de Saddam Hussein*. Paris: Oh! Edition, 2005.
- 604 Lawson, Fred. *Demystifying Syria*. London: Saqi, 2009.



- 605 Lesch, David. *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Assad and Modern Syria*.
 606 New Haven : Yale University Press, 2005.
- 607 Morozov, Evgeny. *The Net Delusion: The Dark side of Internet Freedom*. New
 608 York: Public Affairs, 2012.
- 609 Norman, Helmi. "The Emergence of Open and Organized Pro-Government
 610 Cyber Attacks in the Middle East: The Case of the Syrian Electronic Army."
 611 *OpenNet Initiative*. Accessed February 1, 2016. <https://opennet.net/emergence-open-and-organized-pro-government-cyber-attacks-middle-east-case-syrian-electronic-army>.
- 614 Pigeot, Céline, and Alexandre Durant. "“Nouvelles guerres de l’information”:
 615 Le cas de la Syrie.” Note stratégiques CEIS (2012). Accessed March 30,
 616 2015. <https://reflets.info/la-censure-du-net-en-syrie-mise-a-nu/>.
- 617 Prati, Giulia. "Between Propaganda and Public Relations: An Analysis of Bashar
 618 al-Assad’s Digital Communications Campaign.” *Journal of International
 619 Affairs* (2015). Accessed February 1, 2016, <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/propaganda-public-relations-analysis-bashar-al-assads-digital-communications-campaign/>.
- 622 Rabinovith, Itamar. "New Israeli Policy towards Syria: Should Israel
 623 threaten to intervene ?" *Brookings Blog*, February 13, 2015. Accessed
 624 February 1, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/02/13-new-israeli-policy-on-syria-rabinovich>.
- 626 Renier, Romain. "Qui se cache derrière l’armée électronique syrienne ?" *La
 627 Tribune*, September 2, 2013. Accessed February 1, 2016. <http://www.latribune.fr/technos-medias/20130902trib000782740/qui-se-cache-derriere-l-armee-electronique-syrienne-.html>.
- 630 Reporter Sans Frontière. "Syrie, ennemie d’internet." March 12, 2012. Accessed
 631 February 2, 2016. <http://fr.rsfo.org/syrie-syrie-12-03-2012,42016.html>.
- 632 Rey, Matthieu. "2003, a new generation in Syria." In *Generations and Protests*,
 633 edited by Ratiba el-Hajj, et al. London: Routledge, forthcoming.
- 634 Rey, Matthieu. "Body as a symbol of dignity, how Arabs merged to defend the
 635 dignity." Paper presented at The Middle East in Revolt: the First Anniversary,
 636 Melbourne, Victoria, March 17–18, 2012.
- 637 Rey, Matthieu. "Syria : between revolution and repression, 2011–2013." Paper
 638 presented at The Arab Uprising 2011-2014: Between Revolution and
 639 Authoritarianism conference, Middle East Institute, Singapore, July 8, 2014.
- 640 Sassoon, Joseph. *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*.
 641 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- 642 Statistiques Mondiales. "Syrie." Accessed February 1, 2016. <http://www.statistiques-mondiales.com/syrie.htm>.
- 644 Thompson, Elizabeth. *Justice interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional
 645 Movement in the Middle East*. New Haven: Harvard University Press, 2013.



- 646 `Uthmān, Delshād. “Ittiṣālāt al-suriyyafihālḥuṣūl al-darba al-`askariyya. Warqa
647 `amaltadrusu al-ākhtāralatītuḥaddidu al-khidmafiḥāl al-darbaawufihālātiyqāf
648 al-khidmabishaklimaḡṣūdiwa al-ḥulūlalis`āfiyyaalatī min al-mumkintanfīdhha.”
649 Paper presented, Washington, September 1, 2013.
- 650 Varin, Christophe. “Le Web à l’épreuve de la “cyberguerre” en Syrie.” *Etudes*
651 417(2012).
- 652 Warf, Barney, and Peter Vincent. “Multiples Geographies of the Arab
653 Internet.” *Area* 39 (2007): 83–98.
- 654 Weiss, Margaret. “Assad’s Secretive Cyber Forces.” *The Washington Institute*,
655 April 12, 2012. Accessed February 20, 2016. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assads-secretive-cyber-force>.
- 656 Wiktorowicz, Quitan. *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*.
657 Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- 658 Ziyer, Eyal. *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Assad and the First Years of Power*.
659 London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.
- 660

Author Query Form

Book ID: **448804_1_En**
Chapter No: **5**



Springer

the language of science

Please ensure you fill out your response to the queries raised below and return this form along with your corrections.

Dear Author,

During the process of typesetting your chapter, the following queries have arisen. Please check your typeset proof carefully against the queries listed below and mark the necessary changes either directly on the proof/online grid or in the ‘Author’s response’ area provided

Query Refs.	Details Required	Author’s Response
AQ1	Please check and confirm the author affiliation have been correctly identified. Amend if necessary.	
AQ2	Please check and confirm, in the sentence ‘However, a first ... Delshād’Uthmān’, the style of author name ‘Delshād’Uthmān’ varies throughout the chapter.	
AQ3	Please check and confirm if the inserted citation of Table 5.1 is correct. If not, please suggest an alternate citation.	
AQ4	Please clarify, the meaning of the term ‘majority’ in the sentence ‘I assert that a small majority...’.	
AQ5	Please provide the fullform for the term ‘TOR’ and ‘VPN’ in the sentence ‘A specific group from ...’.	

MARKED PROOF

Please correct and return this set

Please use the proof correction marks shown below for all alterations and corrections. If you wish to return your proof by fax you should ensure that all amendments are written clearly in dark ink and are made well within the page margins.

<i>Instruction to printer</i>	<i>Textual mark</i>	<i>Marginal mark</i>
Leave unchanged	... under matter to remain	Ⓟ
Insert in text the matter indicated in the margin	∧	New matter followed by ∧ or ∧ [Ⓢ]
Delete	/ through single character, rule or underline or ┌───┐ through all characters to be deleted	Ⓞ or Ⓞ [Ⓢ]
Substitute character or substitute part of one or more word(s)	/ through letter or ┌───┐ through characters	new character / or new characters /
Change to italics	— under matter to be changed	↵
Change to capitals	≡ under matter to be changed	≡
Change to small capitals	≡ under matter to be changed	≡
Change to bold type	~ under matter to be changed	~
Change to bold italic	≈ under matter to be changed	≈
Change to lower case	Encircle matter to be changed	≡
Change italic to upright type	(As above)	⊕
Change bold to non-bold type	(As above)	⊖
Insert 'superior' character	/ through character or ∧ where required	Υ or Υ under character e.g. Υ or Υ
Insert 'inferior' character	(As above)	∧ over character e.g. ∧
Insert full stop	(As above)	⊙
Insert comma	(As above)	,
Insert single quotation marks	(As above)	ƶ or Ʒ and/or ƶ or Ʒ
Insert double quotation marks	(As above)	ƶ or Ʒ and/or ƶ or Ʒ
Insert hyphen	(As above)	⊞
Start new paragraph	┌	┌
No new paragraph	┐	┐
Transpose	└┘	└┘
Close up	linking ○ characters	○
Insert or substitute space between characters or words	/ through character or ∧ where required	Υ
Reduce space between characters or words		↑