



Preventing a Mobilization from Spreading: Assad and the Electronic War

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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

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

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

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

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

In order to analyze the use of social media and electronic repressions, a few theoretical stances help to qualify the main stakes. First, I will argue that an institutional process is ongoing to curb the revolutionary process that was sparked by the new behaviors that emerged from the protest.⁷ Management of digital content is part of a broader scope of public policies implemented in reaction to the unrest.⁸ I will argue that even if neither the Syrian uprising nor any of the other Arab revolutions were sparked by Internet activity, electronic counter-attacks shed light on how the movement was prevented from growing. Institutions conceive their aims with regards to the collective values of their members. Negotiations and institutional effects unify these different voices in a single policy.⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

The increase in usership reflected the rocky path of the Internet’s 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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

NOTES

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



3. On an over-emphasized Walīd al-Ghonīm role, Elizabeth Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Movement in the Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Harvard University Press, 2013).
4. Farhad Khosrokhavar nuanced this approach with his concept of “demo-movement,” Farhad Khosrokhavar, *The New Arab Revolution that Shook the World* (New York: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).
5. On the Syrian case, see the delightful paper, Delshād `Uthmān, “Al-Ittiṣālāt al-suriyya fī ḥāl ḥuṣūl al-darba al-`askariyya. Warqa `amal tadrusu al-ākhtār allatī tuhaddidu al-khidma fī ḥāl al-darba awu fī ḥālā iyqāf al-khidma bi shakli maqṣūdi wa al-ḥulūl al-is`āfiyya allatī min al-mumkin tanfidhha.” (The Syrians Communications in case of military attack. Working papers studying the dangers which threaten the use of the communication in case of military attack or in case of suspending on purpose its use and the emergency solutions that can be implemented) Washington, September 1, 2013.
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8. Jean Pierre Filiu, *Le Nouveau Moyen Orient: les peuples à l'heure de la révolution syrienne* (Paris: Fayard, 2013); Matthieu Rey, “Syria: between revolution and repression, 2011–2013” (paper presented at *The Arab Uprising 2011–2014: Between Revolution and Authoritarianism*, Singapore, July 8, 2014).
9. This finding is based on Mary Douglas’ argument that institutions are thinking. Mary Douglas, *Comment les Institutions pensent* (Paris: La découverte, 2004).
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11. Daniel Cefāi, “La construction des problèmes publics: Définitions de situations dans des arènes publiques,” *Réseaux*, 14 (1996).
12. Haken, *Cyborg@cyberspace: An Ethnographer Looks to the Future*, 20–23.
13. Mostly in the Iraqi case, Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Chris Kutchera, *Le Livre Noir de Saddam Hussein* (Paris: Oh! Edition, 2005).



14. The First circle refers to the close connected figures who rule Syria in cooperation with the President Bashar al-Assad, Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
15. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
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18. "Internet Usage and Marketing Report: Syria," Internet World Stats, accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/sy.htm>.
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21. Reporter Sans Frontière, "Syrie, ennemie d'internet," March 12, 2012, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://fr.rsf.org/syrie-syrie-12-03-2012,42016.html>.
22. Observation in Damascus and Aleppo (June 2010).
23. In the late 1990s, Syria was not equipped in IT nor was its mobile network well-developed. Implementing the new plan of computers and telephone and, then, improving them created a high level of growth. Ramy Makhluḥ through two companies has monopolized this market. Fred Lawson, *Demystifying Syria* (London: Saqi, 2009).
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30. Observation in Damascus (February 2012).
31. Matthieu Rey, "Body as a symbol of dignity, how Arabs merged to defend the dignity," (paper presented at The Middle East in Revolt: the First Anniversary, Melbourne, Victoria, March 17–18, 2012).
32. Interview with an activist in Bekaa Valley (October 2014).



33. Céline Pigeot and Alexandre Durant, “‘Nouvelles guerres de l’information’: Le cas de la Syrie,” *Note stratégiques CEIS*(2012), accessed March 30, 2015, <https://reflets.info/la-censure-du-net-en-syrie-mise-a-nu/>.
34. Interviews with a Syrian activist (Gaziantep, October 2014).
35. Christophe Varin, “Le Web à l’épreuve de la ‘cyberguerre’ en Syrie,” *Etudes* 417(2012).
36. Céline Pigeot and Alexandre Durant, “Nouvelles guerres de l’information”; Sophia Amine, et al., *Infowar in Syria: the Web Between Liberation and Repression* (Beirut: CEMAM, 2012); Margaret Weiss, “Assad’s Secretive Cyber Forces,” The Washington Institute, April 12, 2012.
37. Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).
38. Interviews in Damascus (June 2012).
39. Christina Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations and Uprisings are Changing the World*. Sociology for Globalizing Societies (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 121
40. The regime had no elaborate services specializing in the Internet, before 2010. Olivier Danino, *L’utilisation stratégique du cyber au Moyen Orient* (Paris: DAS, 2013).
41. Anonymous is an informal international network of activist and hacktivist entities. The group became known for a series of well-publicized publicity stunts and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on government, religious, and corporate websites. During the Syrian uprising, two of them led the help towards the Syrians (Neumann and Kheops).
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