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The Absence of Nationalism during the Arab Spring

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I. Introduction

Mark Katz has been focusing on the topic of revolutionary waves for several years. According to him, a wave commences when a major revolution transpires in a particular nation within the international system. Soon after this central revolution takes place, subsequent revolutions can be expected in other countries. At times, these affiliate revolutions only occur in the same region as the central revolution.[1] This can be noticed if the first major revolutionary wave of the twenty-first century is taken into consideration. Towards the beginning of 2011, the authoritarian government in Tunisia was removed from power after a series of demonstrations. Following this central revolution, affiliate revolutions happened in other Arab states like Egypt and Yemen.

While this latest revolutionary wave has been in progress, it has become quite apparent that a key difference exists between it and prior waves. During preceding waves, dissidents often did not continue their campaigns for political change when their beloved countries were subjected to military attacks from abroad. Instead, they elected to assist the governments that were in the process of fighting against other nations. In the unstable Arab nations that have encountered attacks since 2011, this same patriotism has not been prevalent. Within the remainder of this article, this important change will be examined in greater detail. Inside the next section, we will look at the evolving political landscapes in two nations that experienced military attacks at the time of the communist revolutionary wave in the twentieth century. Once these analyses are completed, we will turn our attention to the static environments in two volatile Arab countries that have been forced to deal with military operations by outside parties over the past few years.

II. The Presence of Nationalism in Hungary and China

In the preceding section, attention was paid to how the first revolutionary wave of the twenty-first century began with the Tunisian upheaval in 2011. In order to find the genesis of the communist wave from the twentieth century, one has to look closely at the latter portion of 1917. At this point in time, V.I. Lenin and other ardent communists seized power in Russia. In the immediate aftermath of this historic upheaval, these men started to concentrate on engineering affiliate revolutions abroad. They were interested in generating political change in other states for two reasons. First of all, it was believed that additional proletariat revolutions would allow the workers in other countries to escape from the hardships associated with the capitalist system. Secondly, the surfacing of other communist regimes would prevent the recently formed Soviet Union from being surrounded by capitalist states. Various quotations indicate there was a general fear that such an arrangement would lead to the extinction of this nation. For example, on one occasion, Lenin said that his country would not last without "the mighty support of the insurrectionary workers of other countries."[2]

It should be noted that other leaders have displayed a concern about living standards abroad and encirclement in the aftermath of central revolutions. Once the French monarchy was toppled in the late 1700s, the new leaders of France elected to send numerous troops throughout Europe to replace other monarchies with republican governments. These officials were hopeful that these overt ideological interventions would ameliorate the living conditions for individuals who were being mistreated by these monarchies. In addition to this, they were looking to alter the power structure that was present in the world. If these monarchies remained in place, the new government in France would be isolated because of the ideological differences that existed between it and the monarchies.[3] On the other hand, if the monarchies were toppled, Paris would not have to fret about the issue of isolation. France experienced various setbacks as it conducted these operations to remove the monarchies from power, but new republican governments did surface within some countries.[4] When these other regime changes transpired, France began to move

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[1] Mark Katz, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Waves*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1997, pp.25-26.

[2] *V.I. Lenin, Collected Works,* Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1970, p.187.

[3] *Stephen Walt, Revolution and War,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996, pp.46-47.

[4] *Kyung-Won Kim, Revolution and International System,* New York: New York University Press, 1970, p.45.

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away from its uncomfortable position in the international system.

Multiple communist rebellions did not transpire in the immediate aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Instead, there was only one insurrection that occurred during this time frame. In the early portion of 1919, most of the individuals in Hungary were having a difficult time finding suitable employment. As one might expect, this widespread unemployment was leading to other problems within this nation, including a lack of food.[5] Count Michael Karolyi, the leader of Hungary, kept insisting that he possessed the ability to eliminate these problems, but the majority of the citizenry elected to abandon him and support a contingent of communists that was attempting to establish a new government. When Karolyi's regime was finally toppled, Bela Kun, a figure with strong ties to Moscow, assumed control of Hungary.

After the transfer of power, the suffering in Hungary just continued. Consequently, Kun was put in the same unenviable position as his predecessor. In other words, he began to come across dissidents who were calling for his removal from office. Within Political Order in Changing Societies, Samuel Huntington notes how maligned politicians often try to eschew this turn of events by implementing reforms. According to this prominent political scientist, reforms can be made on the domestic level by utilizing the blitzkrieg approach or the Fabian approach. The former entails a leader making all of his reforms at once.[6] One individual who utilized this approach was Kuang Hsu, the leader of China from 1875 to 1908. Between the months of June and September in 1898, Hsu implemented major cultural, political, and educational reforms that he believed would improve Chinese society. If reforms are made on multiple occasions, it can be said that the Fabian approach is being used.[7] This approach was actually utilized inside the Holy Roman Empire during the Protestant Reformation. In the middle of the 1500s, the Peace of Augsburg mollified many Lutherans within the Holy Roman Empire since it declared that Lutheranism could be worshipped in provinces if the princes, who were running them, were Lutheran. This agreement was obviously a step in the right direction, but it possessed one major flaw, which was how it did not recognize the other Protestant denominations as legitimate religions. During the following century, certain measures gave these sects equal status. For example, in 1648, the Peace of Westphalia allowed Calvinists to worship freely in the Holy Roman Empire.[8]

As the political pressure against the communist government in Hungary was increasing, Kun did not set forth a series of reforms all at once like Kuang Hsu did in the summer of 1898 or announce that he planned to make reforms on multiple occasions as leaders in the Holy Roman Empire did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead, he attempted to remain in power by deliberately drifting into a war with Romania.[9] When a military conflict did commence, Romanian forces quickly moved to within the outskirts of Budapest. The members of the Romanian military would have been able to seize control of the Hungarian capital if a particular development did not transpire during the latter stages of April. At this juncture, a lot of dissidents began to enlist in the Hungarian military. This increase in soldiers enabled Hungarian officials to assemble four new divisions in a rapid fashion.[10] These divisions went on to participate in a military campaign that pushed the Romanians past the Theiss, a major river that runs to the east of Budapest. In the aftermath of a successful campaign, an army usually sees a rise in membership. However, the Hungarian military actually lost numerous members in the aftermath of this victory.[11] Once these desertions started to occur, the Hungarians were defeated in the remaining battles of the war and Kun opted to resign from office.

The material towards the end of the preceding paragraph shows how several soldiers left the Hungarian military. Still, it does not shed any light on why they did not continue to stand behind Kun. If a book by the scholar Franz Borkenau is taken into consideration, it will be possible for us to realize why these individuals behaved in this fashion. In the middle portion of the twentieth century, Borkenau produced a study entitled World Communism: A History of the Communist International. At one point in this publication, he devotes some attention to the Hungarian war effort against the Romanians. During this discussion, he notes how the majority of the desertions transpired because Kun failed to ameliorate the living conditions within Hungary following the aforementioned triumph against the Romanians.[12]

Around the time that the war between the Hungarians and the Romanians was taking place, new communist parties were in the process of being established in other nations. The majority of these parties were surfacing in the Western world, but some parties were also starting to be seen in non-Western countries such as China. Towards the end of the 1920s, the members of the Chinese Communist Party were repeatedly unable to take control of various locations

[5] *Franz Borkenau, World Communism: A History of the Communist International,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962, p.113.
[6] *Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p.346.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Daniel Philpott, Revolutions in Sovereignty,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, p.88.
[9] Borkenau, p.122.
[10] Ibid., p.123.
[11] Ibid., p.131.
[12] Ibid., p.126.

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inside their homeland.[13] On some occasions, failure came about because the Communists could not secure enough popular support. One place where the Communists did not manage to attract a sufficient amount of followers was the city of Canton. In December 1927, Communist forces were confident that disenchanted workers would help them seize power in this urban area. However, once the uprising commenced, the laborers refrained from providing these fighters with any meaningful assistance.

If the members of the Communist Party encountered failure in a location where enough sympathizers were present, it was usually because they were overpowered by the National Republican Army, an organization that was in the process of backing out of an alliance with them. One of the most famous displays of Nationalist strength could be seen during the spring of 1927. At this time, Communist forces embarked on a campaign to acquire Shanghai. On March 21st, they were able to seize control of this city that is situated in the southeastern portion of China. In the immediate aftermath of this breakthrough, the Communists proceeded to organize a provisional government. The members of this regime never had an opportunity to make important economic and social changes since individuals from the National Republican Army removed them from power during the month of April. Chaing Kai-Shek, the leader of the National Republican Army, eventually asked Wu Zhihui to be the new ruler of Shanghai.

After the split between the Communists and Nationalists was completed, several Western nations started to refer to Kai-Shek as the true representative of the Chinese people. It is quite common for countries to provide a particular figure with various forms of assistance if they have identified him as a legitimate ruler of a nation. When Western states recognized Kai-Shek as the real leader of China, they predominately sent military aid to the Far East.[14] This assistance proved to be of great benefit to Kai-Shek's forces in their future offensives against the Communists. The majority of these operations did not transpire in urban areas such as Shanghai. Instead, they took place in hamlets throughout the Chinese countryside.

If one wants to understand why the village became the site of most Nationalist campaigns, one has to look at a crucial change that was made by the Communists. Following the Russian Revolution, a serious debate occurred between the leading Communist figures in the world about how uprisings should be conducted in other nations. The Bolsheviks were of the opinion that future insurrections should unfold in the same fashion as the one in Russia. In other words, small contingents of intellectuals should be assembled to help disgruntled laborers topple unappealing regimes.[15] There were communists in Europe who believed that workers were capable of generating political change without these vanguards. It is quite clear that the Bolsheviks were triumphant in this debate with the Europeans. After all, earlier in this section, we saw how operatives from the Chinese Communist Party attempted to spread communism by mobilizing the oppressed laborers in cities like Canton. After the failures of 1927, the party began to concentrate on mobilizing the members of the Chinese peasantry. In 1929, members of the party managed to establish a stronghold in Chalin, a village in southern Kiangsi.[16] During later years, operatives also became quite active in eastern Honan, northern Szechuan and northern Shensi.[17]

Towards the beginning of the 1930s, all of these rural areas were targeted by the Nationalists. However, the Communists, who were situated in southern Kiangsi, were subjected to far more offensives than the ones in eastern Honan, northern Szechuan, and northern Shensi. When these attacks transpired, the Communists would fight against government troops for a period of time. But once injuries and deaths started to increase, they were forced to move to safer locations. The most famous Communist relocation campaign took place in the fall of 1934. At this juncture, 90,000 Communists left Kiangsi to escape from Nationalist soldiers.[18] By the time this "Long March" concluded in Shensi, there were only 20,000 individuals remaining.[19]

These government attacks against the Communists eventually came to an end because Kai-Shek became preoccupied with a Japanes occupation. As the amount of Japanese soldiers on Chinese territory increased, there were various indications that the Communists were starting to assist Kai-Shek with his national liberation campaign. During 1936, communist operatives spread propaganda that encouraged citizens to participate in the resistance against the Japanese.[20] While the following year was in progress, a contingent of communist forces was integrated into the Chinese military. It did not take very long for the members of this unit to encounter success on the battlefield. In September 1937, they defeated a Japanese battalion in a battle at Pinghsingkwan, a village that is located in North Shensi.[21]

Earlier in this section, it was noted how the dissidents in Hungary were also involved in a successful

[13] *Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: from Comintern to Cominform,* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975, p.283.
[14] Borkenau, p.327.
[15] Ibid., p.45.
[16] Ibid., p.323.
[17] Ibid., p.324.
[18] *Barbara Tuchman, Stillwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45,* New York: Grove Press, 1985, p.141.
[19] Borkenau, p.330.
[20] Tuchman, p.157.
[21] Ibid., p.168.

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campaign during the early stages of the war against Romania. One might recall how a lot of these individuals left the Hungarian military in the immediate aftermath of this campaign. The communist rebels in China did not behave in the same fashion following their triumph at Pinghsingkwan. Instead, they went on to fight against the Japanese on several other occasions in the future. This dedication enabled the Communists to receive compliments from a number of figures from outside of China. For example, throughout 1938, Evans F. Carlson, a Brigadier General in the United States Military, praised the communist soldiers during various interviews with reporters.[22]

Before we turn our attention to the Arab Spring, an explanation should be provided for why the Communists remained so committed to the campaign against the Japanese. The conduct of the Hungarian dissidents demonstrated that some believe political change can still be generated when a war with another nation is taking place. There are others who insist that a successful upheaval cannot transpire until after a conflict ends. Multiple statements indicate that the Communists in China supported this alternative perspective. During 1936, an interview with Mao Tse-Tung, the leader of the Chinese Communists, appeared in the China Weekly Review. At one point, he said the following: "For a people being deprived of its freedom, the revolutionary task is not immediate Socialism but the struggle for independence. We cannot even discuss Communism if we are robbed of a country in which to practice it."[23]

III. A Lack of Nationalism in Libya and Syria

The last section commenced with a discussion about how the communist revolutionary wave of the twentieth century originated. This section does not have to start in the same fashion since it was already established that the first revolutionary wave of the twenty-first century began with the toppling of the government in Tunisia during the early stages of 2011. Later in 2011, more political unrest surfaced within Libya. The disenchanted citizens inside this country wanted to overthrow Moammar Gadhafi, a tyrant who had been in power since the late 1960s. However, most of them did not attempt to generate political change like the dissidents in Tunisia. In other words, they did not participate in a number of protests over a period of time. Instead, they elected to detonate explosives and engage in gun battles against soldiers aligned with the Gadhafi regime.

While this insurgency was in progress, various international leaders became concerned about the treatment of innocent civilians inside Libya.[24] Among them was Barack Obama, the forty-fourth President of the United States. Obama eventually tried to protect these individuals by having the American military set up a no-fly zone in Libya. It should be noted that the United States received valuable assistance from the United Kingdom, France, and Qatar as the no-fly zone was being constructed. The main responsibility of these nations was dropping bombs on military equipment that was being used by troops in the Libyan military. Shortly after the no-fly zone was established, the European countries assumed the task of preserving it from the United States. This leadership change enabled President Obama to drastically decrease American involvement in the Libyan air campaign. In fact, by the middle part of 2011, American participation in this initiative was limited to providing refueling and surveillance for the European planes that were maintaining the no-fly zone.[25] These forms of assistance were just required for a little while because European flights ceased later in 2011.

Before this military operation transpired, Gadhafi spoke to a Turkish reporter about how it would be received by the Libyan people. While this interview was in progress, he stated that "the Libyan people will see the truth, that what they want is to take control of Libya and to steal their oil."[26] He also predicted that citizens would "take up arms against" the United States and its allies.[27] If the conduct of the aforementioned rebels during the operation is taken into account, it will become quite apparent that Gadhafi turned out to be incorrect. Once this operation commenced, these fighters did not halt their insurgency like the Hungarian dissidents and Chinese Communists did when outside parties used coercion in their respective nations. Instead, they elected to continue fighting for political change. As the campaign against Gadhafi continued, the rebels actually began to receive assistance from some of the nations that were establishing the no-fly zone. For example, the United States sent weapons and other forms of support to these individuals.[28]

When Gadhafi's government was finally toppled, it became possible for the members of the Libyan opposition to devote the majority of their attention to the formation of a new government. Not surprisingly, they wanted to create a democracy that would be much more respectful of human rights. In the last section, Samuel Huntington's Political Order in Changing Societies was taken into consideration. Later

[22] Ibid., p.189.
[23] Mao Tse-Tung, Comments Made in an Interview that Appeared in *The China Weekly Review,* 1936.
[24] United Nations, Security Council Resolution 1973, 2011.
[25] Charlie Savage and Mark Landler, "White House Defends Continuing U.S. Role in Libya," *The New York Times,* June 15, 2011.
[26] Moammar Gadhafi, Comments Made during an Interview with a Turkish Reporter, 2011.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "CIA Personnel Operating in Libya, Officials Say," *The New York Times*, March 30, 2011.

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in the twentieth century, this analyst wrote another book called The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. At one point in this publication, he mentions how there are multiple developments that suggest a country is in the process of making a transition from authoritarian to democratic governance, including citizens being given the opportunity to participate in nationwide elections for the first time.[29] The first nationwide elections occurred within Libya in July 2012. During this month, the National Forces Alliance was selected by citizens to lead the Libyan parliament.

A popular uprising also commenced in Syria during 2011. Initially, it seemed as if this upheaval was going to resemble the one in Tunisia since numerous citizens participated in protests that were designed to bring down the government of Bashar al-Assad. However, once more time elapsed, it began to look like the Libyan rebellion because bombings and gun battles became more prevalent in Syria. This violent movement became a lot more formidable in the spring of 2011. At this time, Syrian security forces detained a thirteen year-old boy named Hamaz al-Khatib. While al-Khatib was in custody, he was beaten to death by his captors. After pictures of al-Khatib's mutilated and disfigured corpse were posted on a popular internet site named YouTube, numerous citizens started to volunteer for acts of violence.

Outside Syria, representatives of other countries often scrutinized al-Assad for mistreating citizens. Some of the harshest comments came from officials in Western nations. The leaders of Great Britain, Germany, and France even released a joint statement that encouraged al-Assad to resign since there had been a "complete rejection of his regime by the Syrian people."[30] Western politicians were calling for al-Assad's removal, but they did not appear to be willing to conduct a military operation within Syria. It was widely believed that leaders such as Barack Obama were reluctant to embark upon another mission in the Arab World since there was no United Nations Security Council Resolution endorsing this course of action. Usually, a measure does not come out of a body in the political realm because a majority elects to cast dissenting votes during a voting session. However, there are also times when a minority can keep a measure from surfacing. One domestic level body where minorities have thrived is the United States Senate.The filibuster has made it possible for small groups in this body to defeat measures on more than one occasion. For instance, in the spring of 2008, a contingent, which was led by Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, used this procedure to defeat a bill that would have provided tax incentives for energy production and conservation. It can be said that the United Nations Security Council is the international equivalent of the American Senate. After all, a veto power allows the five permanent members of this body to defeat any resolution. During 2011, no member of the Security Council presented a resolution sanctioning the utilization of force in Syria because Russian and Chinese vetoes were expected. Such a development was deemed to be inevitable since these nations were closely aligned with al-Assad's regime.

Western nations were not willing to intervene in Syria while the uprising was in progress. However, there was a Middle Eastern nation that chose to conduct attacks at this juncture. Prior to the insurgency, Syria had been subjected to multiple Israeli acts of aggression. In the spring of 1967, Israeli jets shot down six Syrian planes over territory that was controlled by Damascus.[31] This incident led to the commencement of a brief war between Israel and several Arab nations. By the end of this conflict, Israel was in possession of the Golan Heights, a piece of land that had belonged to the Syrian government for many years. Syrian personnel tried to regain the Golan Heights in the fall of 1973, but it remained in Israeli hands in the aftermath of this military campaign.

As one examines subsequent Israeli attacks against Syria, one begins to recognize that Israeli officials eventually became less interested in seizing Syrian territory. Towards the end of 2007, they attempted to halt a Syrian effort to develop weapons of mass destruction by carrying out an airstrike on a nuclear reactor. During the second year of the insurgency against al-Assad, Israeli planes dropped bombs on Syrian territory once again. Representatives of the Israeli government claimed that these attacks were necessary because the al-Assad regime was sending military equipment to Hezbollah, an extremist group in Lebanon that had attacked Israel on several occasions in the past.[32] While Israeli officials were insisting that coercion was justified, the members of the al-Assad regime were making predictions about how the Syrian people would respond to this aggression. The majority of these individuals were confident that citizens would choose to participate in a resistance effort against Israel.[33]

Syrian citizens did not develop a strong desire to partake in an armed resistance against the Israelis, but the ones, who had been attempting to bring down al-Assad's regime prior to the airstrikes, continued to

[29] Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p.125.

[30] David Cameron, Angela Merkel, and Nicholas Sarkozy, Joint Statement about the Situation in Syria, 2011.

[31] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, p.250.

[32] Jodi Rudoren, "Israel Finding Itself Drawn Into Syria's Turmoil," *The New York Times,* May 22, 2013.

[33] Anne Barnard and Neil MacFarquhar, "Assad Warns Israel, Claiming a Stockpile of Russian Weapons," *The New York Times,* May 30, 2013.

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fight for political change. This conduct obviously makes the Syrian rebels similar to the revolutionaries in Libya. After all, the Libyan dissidents also kept trying to alter the status quo once countries like the United States started to drop bombs on their homeland. Although the Syrian and Libyan rebels behaved in the same fashion in the aftermath of outside intervention, there is a key difference that can be found between them. Within the preceding pages, we learned that the Libyan fighters managed to overthrow the Gadfhafi regime shortly after the allied bombing campaign commenced. The Israeli bombing raids within Syria did not set the stage for the overthrow of al-Assad. Instead, the Syrian revolutionaries encountered a series of unappealing developments following the Israeli intervention. A rather important one was the loss of Qusayr, a city that is located near a major Syrian highway.[34] Once this urban area fell in the spring of 2013, it became much easier for al-Assad's forces to move military equipment and supplies throughout Syria.

If the Syrian rebels had been able to topple the al-Assad regime shortly after the Israeli intervention, the new government probably would have resembled the one that was erected in post-Gadhafi Libya. It is appropriate to presume that a democracy would have appeared in Syria because opposition members exhibited an affinity for this form of governance before the Israeli bombing raids commenced. In 2012, various opposition figures met abroad to discuss Syria's future. From different comments that were made to the press, it can be gathered that these participants thought Syrian citizens should be provided with the rights that are enjoyed by others in democratic countries. For instance, Mouaz al-Khatib stated that: "We demand freedom for every Sunni, Alawi, Ismaili (Shi'ite), Christian, Druze, Assyrian…and rights for all parts of the harmonious Syrian people."[35]

IV. Conclusion

Individuals would prefer to see the entities that they construct remain potent, but most begin to decline after a while. In recent years, analysts in the field of international relations have been insisting that states are in the process of declining. A lot of these figures have attempted to bolster this argument by pointing out how states do not appear to be as determined to uphold their sovereignty as they used to be. While previous centuries were in progress, most nations were reluctant to join international organizations because they feared that these bodies would infringe upon their sovereignty. However, during the early stages of the twenty-first century, the majority of the countries throughout the globe do not seem to have any qualms about joining international institutions. In fact, some of them have worked assiduously to be accepted into certain organizations. For instance, the leaders of Turkey have been trying to gain entry into the European Union for several years.

The decline of nations can also be noticed while looking at the actions of individuals who want to acquire power. In the preceding pages, the Hungarian and Chinese cases showed how campaigns for political change were often suspended during prior centuries when outside actors intervened militarily in unstable countries. These pauses transpired because the dissidents wanted to participate in resistance efforts, which were designed to defeat the parties that were responsible for the interventions. During the first revolutionary wave of the twenty-first century, other military interventions have taken place in volatile nations such as Libya and Syria. However, these interventions have not prompted Libyan and Syrian dissidents to join national liberation movements. Instead, as we saw in the last section, these individuals have elected to continue their struggles against oppressive regimes. Since the rebels in these nations have behaved in this fashion, it is appropriate to conclude that they are not patriotic like the dissidents who were involved in earlier revolutionary waves.

[34] Frederik Pleitgen, "Returning to Smoldering Ruins of Recaptured Syrian Town," CNN, June 21, 2013.
[35] Mouiz Al-Khatib, Comments Made About Syria during a Press Conference, 2012.

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