

Jeanie Sowers (University of New Hampshire), Erika Weinthal (Duke University) and Neda Zawahri (Cleveland State University), “State Deconstruction and the Targeting of Urban Infrastructure in the Middle East.”

This paper investigates damage to environmental infrastructure as a strategy of war-making in the contemporary Middle East, taking a very broad view of these tactics to include destruction of systems ranging from natural resource production to water and electrical infrastructure. The paper calls to reconceptualize the social effects of conflict, beyond conflict death counts and other popular indicators, arguing that the consequences of targeting environmental infrastructures have more profound and longer-term impacts for human livelihoods and individual security than previously considered in security studies. The authors investigate case studies including the Syrian uprising/Iraq/ISIS, state collapse in Yemen, and the Libyan uprising/NATO intervention. The authors argue that tactics of environmental destruction have become prevalent first because of the weakness of states themselves and second because of the involvement of outside powers in domestic conflicts, creating a situation where multiple forces are vying for control and nearly all are complicit in the destruction of local infrastructure.

Lana Salman (University of California, Berkeley) and Bernadette Baird-Zars (Columbia University), “From the fragments up: expansions of municipal autonomy in Syria and Tunisia.”

This paper argues that, perhaps counter to expectation, municipalities in Arab states have continued and even expanded their role in local governance in the post-2011 period. The authors contextualize current decentralizations within a longer trajectory of centralization during state-building, followed by an attempt at decentralization overseen by structural adjustment programs, and further delegation to municipalities during the current period, when central states are in the process of either re-organizing or collapsing, and municipal governments are stepping in to fill this void. This paper draws on case studies in Tunisia, where the authors use participant observation to research interactions between citizens and municipal agents, and Syria, where the authors research the enforcement of zoning laws in Hama. The authors argue that decentralization trends, whether top-down or bottom-up, represent a “rearrangement of old forms in new ways.”

Shamiran Mako (University of Edinburgh) and Valentine Moghadam (Northeastern University), “The Arab Spring and its Aftermath: Explaining Divergent Outcomes.”

This paper explains outcomes from the Arab uprisings in reference to four variables – state and regime type, civil society, gender relations, and international influences. The authors use Millian methods of comparison complemented by within-case analysis to identify a complex causal chain linking these variables with outcomes of democratization and reform (cases of Tunisia and Morocco), authoritarian reversal or persistence (cases of Egypt and Bahrain), and civil war / state failure (cases of Syria, Yemen, and Libya). In

particular, the authors identify the nature of international influence as a sufficient factor determining whether potential transitions may continue or collapse.

Nadine Abdalla (Freie Universität Berlin), “The Quest for Accountability and Socio-political Change in Egypt: Repertoire of Actions and Challenges for Youth Activism at the Local Level.”

This paper explores how youth activist movements have continued organizing to affect the Egyptian transformation following the initial 2011 revolutionary events. The paper provides detailed case studies of three movements – the Front of Municipalities in Egypt, the Municipalities of Al-Dokki and Al-Agouza, and the Popular Coalition of Ard Al-Liwaa – identifying three strategies of mobilization used by youth actors on the municipal level: street demonstrations, building new social structures and social capital, and forming alliances with various political actors. The author investigates key challenges of youth organization on the local level, showing how while certain movements have successfully mobilized to affect municipal decision-making, others have faced competition from longer-standing clientel networks, and some have faced cooptation from state authorities.