
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

IMES CAPSTONE PAPER SERIES

The Development of Governance in Rebel-Controlled Syria

Joseph Martin

April 2014

**THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

© Joseph Martin, 2014

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Methodology	9
The Development of Governance in Idlib Province	10
Factors that Hinder Effective Governance in Idlib	13
Competing Militias	14
Civil-Military Relations	16
Age Discrimination & Competing Governance Groups.....	18
Frequent Elections	26
Summary of Factors that Hinder Effective Governance in Idlib	28
How the U.S. Government Can Support the Development of Effective Governance	29
Strengthening Core Institutions	30
Training Civil Servants	31
Focus on Locality: Reduce national programming & stand-alone workshops	33
Conclusion	35
Appendix A	36
Appendix B	39
Appendix C	42
Appendix D	45
Appendix E	49
Works Cited	52

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the numerous people who helped me through this journey. In particular, I would like to thank my advisor, Steven Heydemann, for carving substantial time out of his more than full schedule to guide and mentor me through this ambitious project. His deep knowledge of both Syria and field research were invaluable. A special thanks to Sasha Siminoff and the Syria-based folks in his organization People Demand Change, LLC for their helpful insights and access to proprietary data and reports. As always, I appreciate the love and support of my family who with nail-biting approval supported my adventurous field-work.

Above all, I want to thank every Syrian who took the time to meet with me. Many activists I interviewed went beyond the traditional interview courtesies and pulled me into their world. The late nights I shared with them hearing their stories, experiences, hopes, and dreams will remain with me forever. I feel honored to have interacted, even if only for a short time, with such a remarkable group of people. Though not all will share the conclusions I have drawn in this paper, I hope that you all feel that I have represented your commentary and views accurately. I truly hope that you realize success in your endeavors to build a bright future for all Syrians.

Introduction

The Syrian civil war created a power vacuum in the rebel-held north. Largely liberated in mid-2012, northern Syria is in dire need of governance and reconstruction. Many Syrians in the north have no running water, limited access to electricity, and little to no access to basic municipal services.¹ Towns that acquire these services do it through independent means. In this environment, Syrians are looking to their streets and towns for governance and municipal services.

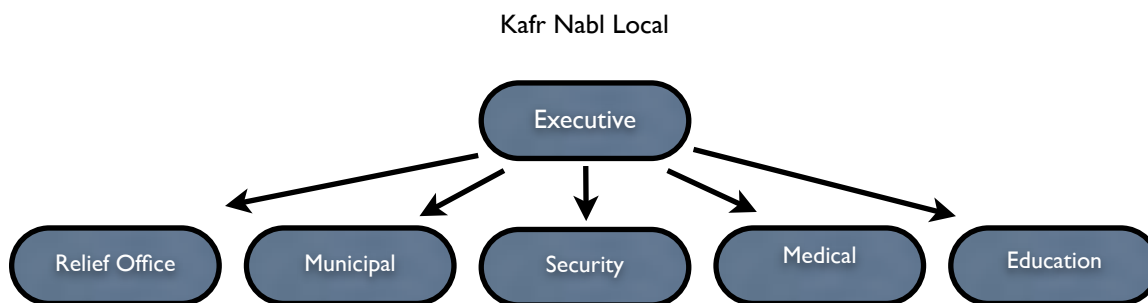
Despite challenges, Syrians across the north demanded local governance early in the revolution and organically formed town and city governments labeled in Arabic Al-Majlis Al-Mahli (“Local Council”). Numbered in the hundreds across Syria, local councils and associated militias form the bedrock of governance in the majority of Syrian territory today. These organizations attempt to fill the governance void² by building replica state institutions in their small jurisdictions, complete with education ministries, health and relief departments, and even media offices.³

¹ See Appendix A - E for municipal services statistics

² Prior to the Syrian revolution virtually all governance and services were dictated by the central government and Ba’ath political party. With the towns disconnected from the central government, they are forced to deal with the absence of both central and community governance.

³ See Appendix A - E for a description of each council’s organization

Figure 1 - Council Structure



The development of these councils' governance capabilities, however, has been slow at best since liberation in late 2012. This paper seeks to explain "why?" by identifying the factors that hinder and promote the development of effective governance in northern Syria. This study attempts to do this by analyzing five towns in Idlib province. As explained in detail in the following methodology section, the five towns chosen for this study are largely representative of Idlib, but the distinctiveness of Idlib may limit the generalizability of the findings across Syria. Detailed in the Idlib province section of this paper, the province does not have extremist groups that oppose civil governance, has strong trade routes and ties to international organization in Turkey, and has long been a rather isolated and strategically unimportant agrarian outpost of Syria. The province, however, quickly became strategically important at the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, however, due to its strategic location near Turkey, early liberation date, and "buffer zone" with Turkey that is free from the regimes air raids. Most important for this study, civil governance has been developing since Idlib's liberation in late 2012.

Focusing on Idlib province, this paper argues that the most important factors that *hinder* effective governance are competing militias, competing governance groups, weak

civil-military relations, age discrimination, and frequent elections. One or more of these factors have inhibited effective governance in each of the five Idlibi towns in this study, and interviews conducted with individuals outside of Idlib province suggest that these factors apply across northern Syria. These factors do not carry the same weight and affect different aspects of governance. For instance, competing militias and frequent elections affect the political stability of councils. Data shows political stability is most critical in the early development of governance as councils attempt to establish themselves. As they become established, they can exert more authority and weight in negotiations with militias and can better handle the destabilizing effects of elections.

Several of these findings are consistent with academic literature on civil war governance. Zachariah Mampilly recently argued that a multiplicity of militant groups in a town will dilute power to an unacceptable degree, making governance untenable.⁴ Jeremy Weinstein found that groups with more financial resources will act less democratic and are more likely to commit mass atrocities.⁵ Rothstein, Teorell, and Lapuente's studies on democracy found it difficult to correlate democracy and effective governance, and determined that effective governance was more predictive of the absence of civil war than was democracy.^{6,7} Roland Paris' research corroborated this, and went on to argue that when faced with weak or non-existent state institutions, "we need to start by

⁴ Mampilly, Zachariah. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2011. Print.

⁵ Weinstein, Jeremy, M. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.

⁶ Rothstein, B, and Teorell, J. "What is quality of government: A theory of impartial political institutions." *Governance* 2008: 21 (2): 165-190. Print.

⁷ Lapuente, V., and Rothstein, B. *Civil War Spain versus Swedish Harmony: The Quality of Government Factor. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Washington, DC., 31 Aug.-3 Sept., 2010*. Web.

constructing effective political and economic institutions before the introduction of electoral democracy and market-oriented adjustment policies.”⁸ Data from the towns in this Syrian project supports these arguments and builds on them, finding that non-inclusiveness/age discrimination, frequent elections, and weak civil-military relations are also important factors that inhibit the development of effective governance in Idlib, Syria.

This paper also identifies six factors that *promote* effective governance in Idlib: political stability and security, voice and accountability, rule of law, administrative effectiveness, control of corruption, and impartiality.⁹ Among these six factors, “general governance” -- a composite of rule of law, control of corruption, and administrative efficacy -- is the most important indicator of effective governance. Gilley, Levi, and Sacks developed the general governance indicator and found it had a higher impact on political legitimacy than democratic rights and welfare gains.^{10,11,12} Building upon their work, this Syrian governance project corroborates their findings, but argues that political stability should be added to the general governance equation, at least in the case of Syria.

Finally, the paper argues that the embryonic councils’ first priority should be institution building in five core areas: municipal services, relief, medical, education, and security. These core institutions are present in all five town councils studied and appear to

⁸ Paris, Roland. *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.

⁹ These factors are drawn from Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, the World Bank governance indicators, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation indicators. Numerous academic studies have validated these indicators.

¹⁰ Gilley, B. “The determinants of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries.” *International Political Science Review*. 2006: 27 (1): 47-71. Print.

¹¹ Gilley, B. “*The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy*.” New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Print.

¹² Levi, M, and Sacks, A. “Legitimizing beliefs: Sources and indicators.” *Regulation & Governance* 2009: 3 (4): 311-33. Web.

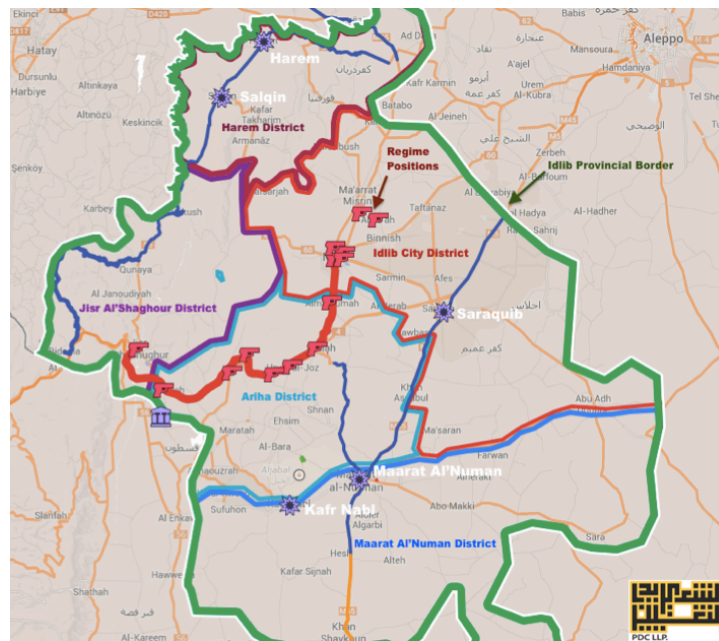
be the core institutions in councils across Syria. As the councils are autochthonous, these institutions should be viewed as reflective of the services Syrians demand from their local governments. The priority, therefore, should be capacity building in these five areas. A fascinating argument of effective governance development that supports this approach is the “structural-functional” theory, which argues that each government institution -- police, prisons, hospitals, schools, waste management, and water/electricity services -- has its own function; the organizations “work together to promote social stability.”¹³ According to this theory, strengthening institutions inherently leads to a unified system of functional parts which constitutes a dynamic equilibrium. Applying this theory to his research on governance reconstruction, Kalu argued that the priority immediately following a collapse should be rebuilding institutional capacity and legitimacy through delivering services.¹⁴ His research found that efficiency and accountability are built through the delivery of public services, such as reconstruction projects, medical supplies, schools, hospitals, and water services. These findings are directly applicable to the Syrian situation. This paper argues that supporting Syrians in building capacity in the five core areas of municipal services, relief, medical, education, and security would provide substantial gains in creating a stable functioning governance system that can be refined over time.

¹³ O’Halloran, Patrick. 2005. “Post-conflict Reconstruction: Constitutional and Transitional Power-sharing Arrangements in Bosnia and Kosovo.” In *From Power Sharing to Democracy: Post-Conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies*, ed. Sid Noel. Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005. Print.

¹⁴ Kalu, Kalu. “Institution-building, not nation building: a structural-functional model.” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* March 2011: 77: 120 - 37. Web.

Methodology

Eighty-five qualitative interviews were conducted between November 10, 2013 and April 5, 2014. Twenty-five interviews were conducted in Gaziantep, Turkey, ten in Washington, D.C., and the remainder were internal company surveys conducted from March to April 2014 by the development firm People Demand Change, LLC to which I was granted access for this research. The data from People Demand Change amounted to approximately 65 pages of town profile data in the form of questionnaires and interviews for each of the five towns studied in this project: Salqin, Saraquib, Harem, Maarat Al-Numan, and Kafr Nabl. I abridged the data for each town into three-page narrative profiles and have included these profiles in the appendix.



I chose Salqin, Saraquib, Harem, Maarat Al-Numan, and Kafr Nabl because of their relative proximity, population size, and similar liberation dates. Despite these

commonalities, the towns differ in important respects. Harem, for example, is largely protected from Assad's air campaigns because of its proximity to Turkey, while Maarat Al-Numan is near the front lines of combat in southern Idlib. At this point in the conflict, no town comparison will be perfect. These towns, however, cover virtually every geographic section of Idlib and from interviews conducted with people outside of Idlib, the struggles they face and town council operations are representative of towns across the north.

Most of the interviews I conducted were individual, but some of the subjects were interviewed in groups. Most interviews were conducted in English. Due to the security risks inherent to travel in Syria, I took advantage of workshops and similar events in Gaziantep to interact with and interview local council (government) leaders, civil society, civil servants, U.S. aid implementers, and civilians. I interviewed the heads of the three of the five local councils in this study, but activists accounted for the majority of interviews. To facilitate candor and out of concern for security, none of the interviewees will be identified by name or organizational affiliation in this report.

The Development of Governance in Idlib Province

Idlib province was liberated between July and December 2012.¹⁵ Before the revolution, the province was strategically insignificant. One activist jokingly illustrated this pre-revolution sentiment by saying, "Idlib, where is that? Is that part of Syria?"¹⁶ The revolution quickly raised Idlib's profile. The northern border shared with Turkey forms

¹⁵ See liberation date in Appendix A - E

¹⁶ Activist. Personal Interview. 12 March 2014.

the security belt, an area the Assad regime's airpower avoids due to tensions with Turkey. Idlib's location has enhanced its importance in four ways. First, millions of displaced Syrians have moved into this area for safety. Second, cross-border commerce and smuggling constitutes a supply route to much of northern Syria. Third, militias fight over control of this area for commercial benefits and shelter from Assad's air campaigns. Fourth, international organizations focus on this area because of its accessibility.

The development of local councils in Idlib began immediately after liberation. The initial iterations of councils commenced with the formation of informal groups that worked to provide basic town services, but needs quickly outpaced their capacity. This led to the formation of local councils. These local councils are officially recognized as town governance bodies by militias, citizens, and the Syrian National Council (SNC).¹⁷ Typically, councils that set priorities and show tangible benefits quickly gain legitimacy. In survey responses and interviews, people generally appeared to want progress in any area of governance, as needs dramatically outweigh resources and capacity.

Salqin is an example of the slow evolution of an official governance body. Historically controlled by a few pro-regime families, Salqin uncharacteristically joined the revolution early and the regime-loyal militia, Al-Shabiha, responded brutally. The informal governance body was born during the short, but intense liberation battle in September 2012. This "coordination group" evolved into a leadership council. As the leadership council gained strength, competing militias fought for control of council member appointments, which caused high turnover and power struggles that limited the

¹⁷ ---. "About Us: Who is the Syria Opposition?" *Etilaf*. 2013. Web. January 15, 2014.

council's effectiveness. In December 2012, extremist group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) shut down the council for its month-long reign. The official town council was finally formed in February 2014, immediately after ISIS was defeated and pushed out of the area.¹⁸

Although differences exist among towns and councils across Idlib, local councils have similar priorities. All towns studied in this project prioritized municipal services, relief, medical, education, and security and have dedicated offices and committees for each of these priorities. Militias, on the other hand, control both the security and legal system of Idlib towns. Militias give approval for council member appointments/elections and council operations. This makes strong civil-military relations imperative to effective governance. Interestingly, councils that have delivered tangible services are able to carve out more space and authority to govern. Militias have shown less willingness to confront local councils that effectively deliver services and are supported by the populace. This was the case in Kafr Nabl, where a strong core of activists, prominent families running the local council, and moderate militias were able to prevent ISIS from taking control of the city in late 2013.¹⁹ As a general rule, however, councils find it difficult to go “head-to-head” with armed militias. Typically, the better the civil-military relations, the more space a local council has to manage civil governance.

On the security front, Idlib province is controlled by moderate militias. Extremist group ISIS made a major push into the province in late 2013, but was defeated and pushed out in late January 2014.²⁰ Although many suspect ISIS will attempt to return,

¹⁸ See Appendix E for more information.

¹⁹ See Appendix C for more information.

²⁰ Anonymous head of a security map making firm. Personal interview. 14 March 2014.

Eastern Aleppo province is its stronghold and ISIS lacks the troop capacity to expand west, as evidenced by its inability to hold Idlib province for longer than a month. The main militias in Idlib are the Syrian Revolutionary Front (“SRF”), Islamic Front, Ansar al-Sham, various Free Syrian Army (“FSA”) battalions, and pockets of Jabhat al-Nusra (“Nusra”).²¹ These militias, except for Nusra, are generally moderate and supportive of civil governance.^{22,23}

Factors that Hinder Effective Governance in Idlib

Salqin, Saraquib, Harem, Maarat Al-Numan, and Kafr Nabl have struggled since liberation. Priority town projects for most of these five towns include electricity and water restoration and schools and hospital reconstruction.²⁴ A lack of funding, however, is the greatest hindrance to effective governance. Town council revenues consist primarily of a USD 40,000 annual stipend provided by the Syrian National Council (“SNC”) and the Assistance Coordination Unit (“ACU”).²⁵ Some councils are able to attract supplemental outside funding, but this external funding is reportedly small and sporadic. Aside from funding challenges, however, the councils are plagued by factors that *hinder* effective governance and further validate the structural-functional argument that institution building should be prioritized in the immediate aftermath of a collapse. The following is an analysis of five of the most important factors that *hinder* the development

²¹ See Appendix A - E for more information.

²² Anonymous head of a local council. Personal interview. 11 March 2014.

²³ Anonymous executive director of a U.S. aid implementer. Personal interview. 14 March 2014.

²⁴ See the priority projects section of Appendix A - E for more information.

²⁵ See Appendix A

of governance in Idlib: competing militias, poor civil-military relations, age discrimination, competing governance groups, and frequent elections.

Figure 3 - Hinderance Factors By-Town
(bold where factors are particularly debilitating)

Towns	Competing Militias	Poor Civil-Military Relations	Age Discrimination	Competing Governance Groups	Frequent Elections
Salqin	X	X	X		
Saraqib			X		X
Harem	X	X	X		
Maarat Al-Numan	X	X	X		
Kafr Nabl			X	X	X

Competing Militias

Competing militias is one of the most detrimental factors to the development of effective governance, especially when councils are initially establishing themselves, because it inhibits political stability, security, and the rule of law. As shown in Figure 3, every town with competing militias witnesses sever negative impacts on civil governance.²⁶ One prominent reason for this phenomena is that councils rely civil-military relations for security and legal needs, as well as the appointments/approvals of executive council members. Councils also must secure the approval of the “guys with guns” to engage in any activity in the town. Competing militias often use the council as a pawn in their power struggles by appointing council leaders. High turnover rates in

²⁶ See Appendix A, D, and E for specific accounts of competing militias in Salqin, Harem, and Kafr Nabl

council leadership, then, are an inevitable outcome of militias trading dominance. A single dominant militia, on the other hand, provides stability both in council member appointments and civil-military relations. Both organizations can build trust over time and cooperate on a range of initiatives.

Harem exemplifies the issue of competing militias. Although ISIS was pushed out of Harem and the FSA and the Front of Syrian Rebels (FSR) generally support the council, the competition between the militias for control of the town limits the council's space to govern. One citizen complained, "everything is controlled by the armed-groups, and they have the real power. Harem is on the border of Turkey...all the armed groups want to control Harem to earn money."²⁷ This struggle is reflected in Harem's inefficient use of strategic assets. The town's location at the nexus of critical trade and smuggling routes to Turkey should afford its council ample revenue-generating opportunities. Instead, militias compete for this income, and the council struggles to fund projects for basic services such as electricity, water, and hospital construction.²⁸

Competing militias also negatively affect the Salqin local council. The various iterations of local councils in Salqin prior to February 2014 were unstable and had limited power, because four armed groups were contending for control of the city. The first governance group was a militia-approved informal coordination group that evolved into a leadership council. This group had a narrow scope and was heavily dependent on whichever militia was ascendant. For a short period in January 2014, ISIS controlled the town and shut down council operations, but late in the month the Syrian Revolutionaries

²⁷ Appendix A

²⁸ See Appendix A for more information.

Front (SRF) defeated and expelled ISIS. SRF and FSA, both of which operate in Salqin, reportedly favor civil governance; in February these two militias supported the establishment of an official town council and have given the council more space to govern.²⁹

Civil-Military Relations

Closely related to competing militias is the need for strong civil-military relations. Ideally, the local council would oversee security, but the situation in Syria is far from ideal. Independent militias are a fact of life in the country. Councils must form strong relationships with militias for political stability, security, rule of law, and simply for the approval to operate. In practical terms, a council needs the militia to run a successful police force/security office and civil court system, to modulate council member turnover, and to authorize expansions of civil governance services and operations.

Cooperation between militias and local councils is mutually beneficial when militias are not ideologically opposed to civil governance. As a general rule, the FSA and moderate militias support local councils and tend to afford them significant operational space, so long as the militias are not engaged in intense turf battles. Many moderate militias now recognize that effective governance alleviates the militia's workload and community-relations issues. The missions of moderate militias and town councils,

²⁹ See Appendix E for more information.

therefore, are mutually beneficial. This creates a substantial opportunity for strong civil-military relations, a necessity for successful local councils.

Extremist groups such as ISIS, Nusra, and similar militias do not support civil governance. Generally, these groups take two approaches toward governance: they either shut down the council by force or allow it to operate within tightly circumscribed parameters. If the council has popular support, these extremist groups may move into the area and wait for the council to make a mistake and then capitalize on it, turning the council into a puppet government or shutting it down altogether. Frequently, extremist groups will attempt to form their own council; these tend, however, to be inept and/or disinterested in managing municipal services and general governance. Rather, they concern themselves primarily with controlling the streets, the legal system, and social policies.

Harem is illustrative of ISIS' approach to civil governance. ISIS controlled Harem for 22 days in January 2014. The group immediately disbanded the council and formed its own version of a governance body. This new governance body did not engage in relief efforts, community projects, or delivering municipal services. Instead, ISIS' attempt to establish a new order in Harem resulted in atrocities on a scale Harem had never before experienced, including the execution of 20 civilians at the Harem prison. After just 22 days, the FSA and the Front of Syria Rebels ("FSR") defeated ISIS and pushed it back to its stronghold in eastern Aleppo province. Immediately after ISIS was defeated in late

January 2014, the FSA and FSR gave Harem approval to form an official town council, which was organized the following month.³⁰

Kafr Nabl, on the other hand, exemplifies the “move in and wait” approach ISIS sometimes employs. Home of Idlib’s first demonstrations, Kafr Nabl was liberated by the FSA in July 2012. As the regime pulled out of the area, ISIS moved in, surrounded the city, and attempted to control it for months. The group harassed the city, arresting people and destroying the media office, among other predations. The FSA ultimately expelled ISIS from the area. Activists informally formed Kafr Nabl’s first governance group, focusing on cleanup projects, relief efforts, and humanitarian aid. The official town council was formed around April 2013.³¹ Kafr Nabl’s governance struggles since ISIS’ ouster have not involved civil-military relations or competing militias; rather, the town has wrestled with age discrimination tensions, competing government groups, and frequent elections, as explained in the following two sections.

Age Discrimination & Competing Governance Groups

Age discrimination in both directions hurts governance. This factor is generally seen across all towns as activists are generally being sidelined from executive committees and decision-making bodies. This factor appears to have a less potent impact on effective governance than the other factors until it reaches a breaking point that results in the

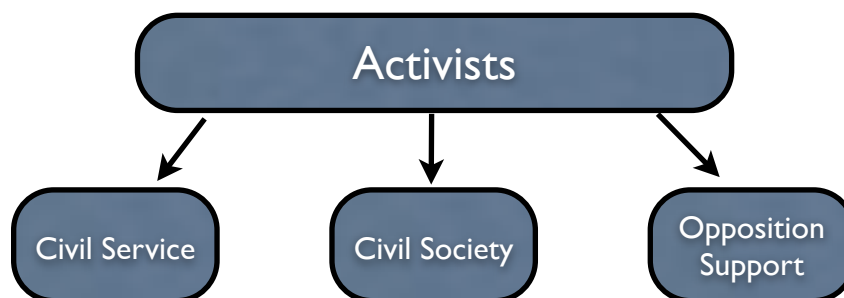
³⁰ See Appendix A for additional information.

³¹ See Appendix C for additional information.

emergence of competing governance groups, which debilitates the development of effective governance.

The crux of the age discrimination issue is the large age gap between activists and government/community leaders. The revolution gave young people a voice and influence, upsetting cultural norms and disrupting the long-standing status quo wherein the older generation dominates public discourse and decisions. This generational tension was less obvious when activists were engaged in peaceful protests, social media, and ad-hoc humanitarian projects, but intensified when this group of younger activists (ages 19 to 30) evolved beyond their initial activities and founded three new dimensions of Syrian society: civil service, civil society, and ad-hoc opposition support.

Figure 3- Activists Roles



Activists staff local council committees and offices, the workhorses of councils. These offices and committees typically set priorities, gather resources, and execute projects. As one aid implementer noted, “civil servant ranks are filled with activists who became humanitarian aid facilitators then formed the medical, humanitarian, and education offices of the local councils. They form the backbone of the organization and if they leave, the institution will collapse”.³² A positive outcome of this development is that

³² Anonymous executive director of a U.S. aid implementer. Personal interview. 14 March 2014.

these activists-turned-civil-servants form a stable core in the council. Elected council leaders come and go (with elections in some places as frequent as six months apart), but the civil servants remain and carry out the work in the long term.

Civil society is another area that attracts activists. Interestingly, activists are perfectly suited to carry out aid, reconstruction, and development projects. They see the panoply of needs in their towns and have formed organizations to address those needs. One interviewee, for example, was a 19-year-old who founded a human rights group. One successful initiative he took on was convincing a bakery owner to sell his goods to members of minority groups. He also engages in development projects and is employed by a U.S. aid implementer to execute a broad range of projects in Syria.³³ This is a common story in the country. U.S. aid implementers rely on Syrian civil society groups to execute projects in-country; this encourages activists to form various development or reconstruction organizations and/or to establish a range of civil society organizations in areas of interest. Syria's newly emerging civil society is fluid, with Syrians passing from one organization to another and founding new groups daily. This fluid civil society is also creating a sustainable block of active citizens that will continue to be a force in Syrian society for the foreseeable future.

Another aspect and driver of the development of civil society is the fear liberal activists have of a return to dictatorial governance. One activist expressed his motivation to build a strong and vibrant civil society as follows:

³³ Anonymous activist/humanitarian. Personal interview. 12 March 2014.

We need civil society to hold the local councils accountable. Without civil society acting as a check against the local council, the councils will be formed after the model of the regime. For example, there is limited free media in Idlib, but every council has a media office just like the regime did. We need good local councils. Ones full of bureaucrats that know how to grow the area and the government system. For instance, the council heads in Idlib have been relatives of militia leaders. So where are the civilians? Where is democracy?³⁴

The last major area that attracts activists is ad-hoc opposition support. Numerous Syrians remain engaged outside of both government service and civil society by serving in a support role or using their talents in an entrepreneurial way. One activist I met in Gaziantep, Turkey defected from military service and now designs smart phone applications (apps) for Syrians. His latest creation is an app that broadcasts local Syrian radio stations, allowing the user access to a range of local media and content from inside Syria. Another activist I met works as a translator at local council workshops and similar events. Activists are generally uninterested in returning to their “normal” lives or building a new life away from war. They are using their talents to build a new country. Their activities may change over time, but they will most likely remain engaged in public discourse and policy.

The gap between the older generation of community leaders and activists is a conflict that must be resolved for the development of effective governance. Activists are demanding impartiality and accountability from their government, as well as a seat at the

³⁴ Anonymous activist. Personal interview. 14 March 2014.

table; all of these are essential to effective governance. The activists interviewed in this study, however, tend to push age discrimination arguments to the point of discrimination against the older generation. Many of the activists I interviewed expressed a general feeling that they began the revolution and should continue to direct it, resulting in a wholesale dismissal of the skills, talents, and views of their elders in civil society and civil service arenas. On the other hand, the elder government leaders interviewed in this study indicated that while they valued the courage and determination of activists in the beginning, they see little value in the contributions of this group in the post-revolution period. The general view gleaned from interviews with government leaders was an appreciation for the sacrifices youths made early on, coupled to an unwillingness to trust them as equal partners in governance. The older generation embraces traditions and norms that privilege wisdom and experience, and thus finds it difficult to serve alongside younger people with different, but equally important, skills and knowledge.

Ma'aret Al-Nomaan is an example of age discrimination hindering effective governance. Both council members and civilians criticized the current incarnation of the council as ineffective. Activists, as well as numerous civilians, criticized the lack of participation of activists under 40 years of age. Older council members, however, were recognized as activists by most of the interviewees and commended for leaving their occupations early in the revolution to join the opposition. Although their sacrifices and participation in the revolution are also recognized, the younger activists (under 40 years old) feel marginalized from governance. One council member commented, "We're about to do new elections to reform the local council and [it's] really of need of it, and I

personally fear that the current members will remain in place with the help of the armed-groups. If this happens, the LC [Local Council] will remain bad and without any role or activities.”³⁵ The town has no running water or electricity, and its infrastructure has been severely damaged by heavy fighting and aerial bombardment. Although the town still faces disruptive and destructive fighting, the council is gridlocked by age issues, has no clear mission, and has struggled to execute basic projects.

A more salient example of the age discrimination issue can be found in Kafr Nabl. Largely unknown before the revolution, Kafr Nabl has achieved world renown because of its savvy activists. Nearly anyone who follows international media regarding the Syrian revolution recognizes the town by its signature communication method -- huge, clever banners.

Figure 4 - Kafr Nabl Banners



The older generation respects the role played by Kafr Nabl’s activists during the revolution. One council leader noted in a March 11, 2014 town survey, “Activists played

³⁵ See Appendix D

an important role in this at the beginning. They created amazing banners they displayed during demonstrations that gave Kafr Nabl a special reputation.”³⁶ As governance evolved, however, a schism emerged between the savvy activists and the older government leaders, which has hampered the development of effective governance in Kafr Nabl.

Tensions between these groups intensified during a hotly contested election between an activist-backed candidate and the representative of a prominent family. In the end, the prominent families prevailed, resulting in a perpetuation of the old system in which one representative is assigned to every 1,200 family/clan members--in essence, political representation is directly proportional to family size.³⁷ These representatives also serve as committee heads and vote for the council head. This process has sidelined activists and angered civil society groups. These two groups allegedly use the Union Revolutionary Bureau (URB), a powerful civil society organization, to compete directly with the council and execute a number of projects that should be under the purview of the council.

A town council leader bluntly commented on the URB vs. town council issue, saying, “I don’t think the council has much support. URB has more sources of support and always tries to make people hate us.”³⁸ Conversely, nearly all citizens interviewed recognized the local council as the official governing body, but most quickly added that the council must earn its legitimacy by delivering services. One citizen said, “the council needs to earn our trust. It needs to work on productive projects. It needs governance

³⁶ See Appendix C

³⁷ See Appendix C for more information.

³⁸ Ibid.

training, it needs to cooperate with other organizations like URB".³⁹ Kafr Nabl suffers from a situation in which older leaders, prominent families, and activists have not harmonized or devised efficient methods of cooperation; ineffective governance has been the result. Despite its international attention, savvy activists, and experienced leaders, the town has not completed critical projects like repairing its water system, power grid, rebuilding hospitals, or establishing a steady flow of foodstuffs. The town council and citizens reported that people in Kafr Nabl rely on rainwater and snow runoff for their water.⁴⁰

Age discrimination and competing governance groups are risks for other towns as well. If activists feel disenfranchised from a governance system, they will form their own civil society organizations and do things their own way, in competition with official government. On the other hand, if activists attempt to dominate the system, prominent families and the older leadership class will throw up stumbling blocks and demand a voice. To develop effective governance, both groups must learn to cooperate and integrate into a system of governance. This is not to say that all activists must be engaged in governance; civil society is also important. However, a civil society organization should never be an alternative or direct competitor to the local council. Impartiality, voice, and accountability are important factors of effective governance that must be developed over time.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Frequent Elections

Although only seen in two of the five towns in this study, frequent elections are a risk that could potentially spread and hinder the development of effective governance, as seen in Saraquib. The vast majority of interviewees prioritized elections and seemed comfortable with elections as frequent as twice a year. Syrians appear to becoming socialized to the idea that in a liberated society governments must have a mandate from the people to legitimately govern. Frequent elections, however, hinder councils' efficacy -- especially in the early days of development with institutions are weak -- by creating an unstable political environment and redirecting focus from meaningful projects and institution building and toward electoral logistics and campaigns. Saraquib, for example, holds elections every six months.⁴¹ Even if the same leadership is re-elected, the political process proves an almost constant disruption. To be sure, elections are not inherently bad. Voice and accountability are important factors of effective governance. However, voice and accountability can be achieved in other ways. In the aftermath of a complete governmental collapse, rebuilding institutions until they are functional and deliver a steady supply of core services should take precedence over elections.

Harem has achieved incremental gains in non-election-oriented voice and accountability. The local council recently divided the town into 14 neighborhoods and assigned a special committee to each. The neighbors' committee hears people's requests, grievances, and needs, and drafts reports to the local council's executive office. Most

⁴¹ See Appendix B

Harem citizens surveyed knew of these committees and approved of the initiative.⁴²

Saraqib has taken a different approach. The local council has formed three offices that engage with the community. The Office of Martyrs, Detainees, and Handicapped works with the families of those hurt and killed in action and coordinates with the local council to address their needs. The Advisory and Control Office monitors council activities, conducts audits, and receives new project proposals and passes them to the correct office. The Information Office manages council media and receives community feedback. These offices help the council connect and engage with the populace and understand its needs and requests on an ongoing basis.⁴³

Maarat Al-Numan, on the other hand, is in the process of massive new elections with an attendant restructuring of the council. This is not the first time this has happened to Maarat Al-Numan's young council. One council leader lamented the destabilizing structural changes that plague the council, commenting that the people are simply not satisfied with the council and constantly demand changes.⁴⁴ He argued that the people do not know what they want and that these unstable demands are reflected in the council they elect. This instability and ambiguity of mission limits the council's ability to get organized and execute projects.

Although collected data show that elections are important to Syrians, frequent elections can result in political instability, which is disruptive and vitiates progress on essential projects and institution building. In the short and long-run, institution building gives citizens what they continually call for: tangible services such as electricity, water,

⁴² See Appendix A for more information.

⁴³ See Appendix B

⁴⁴ See Appendix D

security, medical care, and education. Providing these services, in turn, helps the council gain legitimacy. The legitimacy and all-around benefits inherent to a functioning council outweigh the benefits of elections in the immediate aftermath of a complete collapse of government institutions, and thus institution building should be prioritized. Elections training, monitoring, and evaluation should be a later priority after government offices and institutions achieve functionality.

This is not to argue that elections do not matter; clearly they do, as numerous councils engage in frequent elections at the behest of citizens. Elections simply matter less than delivering tangible services. Syrians often vote in the hope of changing a broken system that is not delivering services. This is counter-productive, because it creates an unstable system and makes it difficult to execute projects and develop institutions. Pulling major segments of society into the governance system and developing an effective grievance process are short-term solutions that provide the basic elements of voice and accountability until institutions are strong enough to support elections.

Summary of Factors that Hinder Effective Governance in Idlib

Although few shining examples of effective governance exist among the five councils studied, none of them is a lost cause. The conditions are right for the development of effective governance in Idlib -- moderate militias generally support civil governance; the province is located near a plethora of international organizations, government groups, and aid implementers in Turkey; the area has been liberated for a

prolonged period of time; and Idlibis are currently seeking ways to fill the power void. However, competing militias, weak civil-military relations, age discrimination, competing governance groups, and frequent elections have hindered the development of effective governance in Idlib. Towns that can overcome these factors will realize improvements in their governance system. On the other hand, towns that continue to struggle with these five factors will continue to see stagnation and ineffective civil governance.

It must be re-emphasized, however, that progress on the majority of these issues and on building institutions in general is dependent upon steady revenue flows. Without revenues, councils cannot execute projects or build institutions. Revenue can come in many forms, one of the more salient of which is joint ventures with U.S. aid implementers to install water pumps, repair electricity lines, deliver mobile clinics, and other related projects. Revenues could also derive from increased funding by the SNC and ACU, or from other economic development projects geared toward revenue generation. A discussion of revenues is outside the scope of this study, but it would be remiss to neglect the obvious: projects and institution building rely on funding. All the training and workshops in the world cannot help a council execute more projects and develop effective governance when its revenues are merely USD 40,000 a year.

How the U.S. Government Can Support the Development of Effective Governance

The U.S. government recognizes that effective local governance in Syria is imperative to U.S. policy interests and has recently supported programming that focuses

on governance development. This support, however, can be improved in three ways: support the development of five core institutions, train civil servants, and focus on locality over national programming. These three policy adjustments would make a substantial impact of the development of effective governance by strengthening institutions and helping to directly address the hinderance factors detailed in this report. The following is an explanation of these policy recommendations and how they promote effective governance.

Strengthening Core Institutions

The U.S. government can support the development of effective governance by funding projects that strengthen the five core institutions of local councils.⁴⁵ Interviewees expressed common frustrations related to an apparent disconnect between U.S. aid implementers and local councils. It appears that local council members and civil society often receive project proposals formulated by aid implementers without any local council input or buy-in. This approach should be reversed. U.S. policy should empower local councils to evaluate needs, draft proposals, and then bring implementers and councils together to execute projects. As councils execute more projects that they own and drive, they will gain legitimacy and realize a decrease in demands for major structural changes and frequent elections, which destabilize councils. Furthermore, militias will be

⁴⁵ Municipal services, relief, security, healthcare, and education.

incentivized to refrain from using councils as pawns in power struggles as councils gain authority and popular support through delivering services.

Training Civil Servants

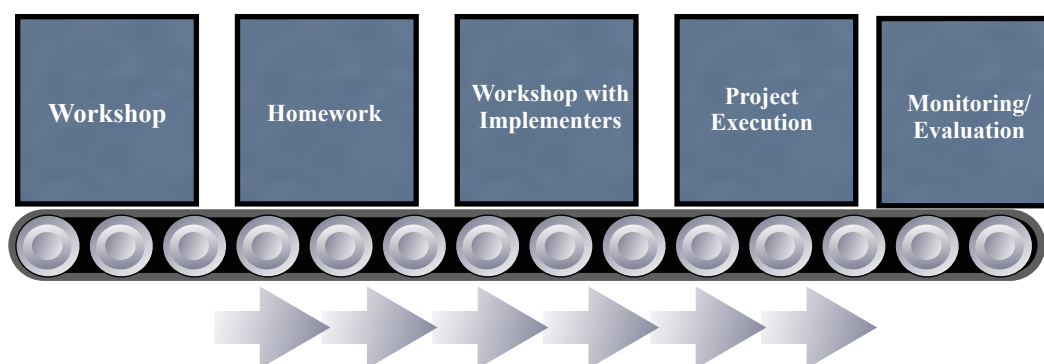
Closely related to strengthening institutions is training council members. The current method of training the executive committees and elected officials can be ineffective because of high turnover due to militias competition-related re-appointments and frequent elections. To advert the challenges of political instability, the U.S. government and associated aid implementers should work directly with civil servants, who form the stable core of the councils and carry out much of the actual work. One aid implementer argued, “They [civil servants] need to be trained on how to build institutions that are not dependent on individuals, but can operate as a sustainable government institution. Much of the local council training in the past has been with the top-level leaders and not the civil servants.”⁴⁶ The U.S. government should, therefore, shift its focus from the council’s executive officers to its civil servants. Keeping executive officers in the loop is important, but the emphasis should be on training and supporting this new class of civil servants. In the end, an effective civil servant class will dramatically enhance the operational efficiency of councils. This operational efficiency will strengthen and build core institutions, which will put pressure on militia groups to

⁴⁶ Anonymous executive director of a U.S. aid implementer. 14 March 2014.

refrain from interfering in council operations, which will help politically stabilize governance.

An effective method to capture both proposed policy changes -- developing institutions and training civil servants -- is the conveyor belt method. This simple concept would bring civil servants involved in a specific project through an organized and efficient series of steps to execute a project or achieve a defined training goal. For example, the method could be employed to help civil servants in a healthcare office establish a small clinic. In this scenario, they would first come to Turkey for a workshop to learn how to design a proposal and related pre-project preparations. They would then be sent home with the assignment to draft a proposal. A follow-up workshop would evaluate their proposal and connect them with medical aid implementers. The project would then be executed and all parties would later attend a debriefing to discuss the lessons learned for future projects.

Figure 5 - Conveyor Belt Method



The conveyor belt approach is effective and applicable to northern Syria for three reasons. First, it targets civil servants who form the stable core of councils. Second, it

trains councils both on project management and the U.S. aid system. Third, it develops institutional capacity.

Focus on Locality: Reduce national programming & stand-alone workshops

A national programming approach to the development of local governance has proven similarly ineffective. Several implementers I met had executed and were in the process of developing nationwide governance-related programming. The logic was that connecting local councils leaders from various towns and doing systematic training would encourage networking and lead to an integrated governance system. Although these efforts are well-intentioned, the U.S. government and aid implementers would gain significantly more traction by engaging with councils by locality, as cultural, economic, and political networks are localized, and the destruction of infrastructure has dramatically increased local pressures. The harsh reality is that many Syrians have limited access to phones, roads are destroyed, and travel is unsafe. Cities just a few hundred miles apart are now worlds away. At this first stage, local councils must make governance work in their jurisdictions. Further down the road and as governance stabilizes, councils can be encouraged to network and establish some form of cooperation or a nationwide system of governance.

Stand-alone workshops also detract from the development of effective governance because of their lack of follow-up or integration into a strategy that strengthens institutions and addresses the five hinderance factors identified in this report. This lack of

follow-up and the lack of a clear strategy with associated tangible projects diminishes their legitimacy in the minds of many attendees. One workshop attendee explained,

When I was told that I would go to a five-star hotel for seven days in Turkey, and they will pay me and give me good food, I said, ‘really?’ and I only came for this. I didn’t care about the information...the information isn’t treated importantly, and we don’t treat it importantly because every week it’s a new subject with no follow-up. It feels like a waste of money. The money could be used in much more productive ways to actually help Syrians. If you really want to help, you can’t help in this way. It’s ineffective. You are just wasting money and wasting time.⁴⁷

Workshops are powerful tools to support the development of effective governance when integrated into a strategy or a pathway toward an executable project or goal, as illustrated in the conveyor belt method above; however, as stand-alone events, their utility is greatly diminished. This powerful tool should be used to strengthen government institutions, help civil servants learn how to manage and execute projects, connect civil servants and council leaders to aid implementers, and provide a means for consistent communication and cooperation between the U.S. government and associated aid implementers and local councils. Workshops imbedded in a defined strategy for governance development would enable the parties involved to combat many of the five

⁴⁷ Anonymous workshop attendee. Personal interview. 11 March 2014.

hinderance factors outlined in this paper by strengthening institutions thereby supporting the council's ability to gain popular support and legitimacy through delivering services and governing more effectively. In the end, as councils become more effective at governing and delivering services, the less likely civilians will call for major structural changes and frequent elections, the less likely competing governance groups will emerge, and the less likely competing militias will interfere in council operations.

Conclusion

The development of effective local governance in Syria is important both to Syrians and the U.S. government. Nascent local councils have a long and difficult road ahead. Councils that can form strong civil-military relations, cooperate with potential competing groups, and create a stable political environment will achieve more effective governance. Moreover, councils that are able to develop institutional capacity will realize legitimacy gains and expand their operational latitude. The U.S. government has an opportunity to support this development by training civil servants and supporting projects that broaden institutional capacity. Syrians have already begun the process of organically forming councils, and are working to develop governance. Their efforts should be encouraged and supported. A prolonged power vacuum in the north is a dangerous situation for Syrians, moderate groups, and the U.S. government alike.

Appendix A

Profile: Harem Local Council

Liberated December 27, 2012, Harem was one of the last liberated towns in Idlib province. The 77 day battle between the FSA and regime army/Shabiha militia took a major toll on the community. Most regime army personnel and Shabiha militia members were killed during the battle and the remaining fled to Turkey. Located near border of Turkey, several rebel forces sought refuge in Harem from Assad's aerial bombardments. This strategic location also encouraged the expansion of trade routes and smuggling that have resulted in weapons flows, immigration, and power struggles for control of the town.

ISIS controlled Harem for 22 days in January 2014. During its rule, ISIS disbanded the local council and attempted to create its own governance body. ISIS committed numerous massacres, such as killing twenty civilians at the Harem prison. The FSA and associated group Front of Syrian Rebels defeated ISIS and chased them from the area. After ISIS was expelled, a local council was appointed.

The appointment of local council members around the time of liberation was a result of a particular group of leaders forged in the battle. During the 77 day battle, eight people emerged as leaders to instruct people and afterwards they coordinated the post-battle street cleanup. When the local council could be formally organized, these leaders were naturally appointed in cooperation with the most prominent battalion in the city, Lewa Shohada'a Idlib. The town reportedly has held some form of elections with 60 participants. The town council planned to hold elections in April 2014, but details of the process and procedure were not available. According to interviews with civilians, the majority of town council officials are appointed by militias and council members or staffers are typically previous government officials or activists. Civilians even disagree on the process of the selection of officials with some reporting that elections are held while other claim leaders are appointed.

Another citizen noted the armed groups tend to have more power because the council is not well funded and therefore unable to execute the many projects that are needed. This coupled with the presence of multiple competing armed groups limits the council's authority. The council is currently in discussions with the reigning armed group to resolve tensions between the role of the council and the armed group in governance. No auditing or mechanisms of accountability and transparency are in place. The council simply discusses and solves problems internally.

The local council has divided the town into 14 neighborhoods and assigned a special committee for each neighborhood. The committees hear people's requests, grievances, and needs, and it drafts reports to the executive office of the local council.

On the security side, however, the crime rate within the city is low. The town experienced two murders and few incidents of theft. The main industry for the city is smuggling goods from Turkey. This leads to many townspeople to generate relatively substantial income from smuggling and trade operations.

Local council offices:

Executive office, finance, general municipal services, education, law, refugee, estimates and planning, general relations, media, relief, agriculture, and health. Each office had a leader and committee.

Examples of Office Activities

Security Office -- police force (15 policemen) in charge of standard criminal arrests, traffic offenses. Civil court is also included in the security office that hear civil and criminal cases and works on conflict resolution.

Municipal Services Office -- manage electricity and oil supply, repair/reconstruct power grid, communications network, irrigation networks, and trash services.

Relief and Health Office -- this office came about after NGOs began providing food, clothes, medical supplies, and related goods to civilians. An office was establish to help facilitate and oversee these activities.

Education Office -- restore education buildings, providing education supplies, and managing education policy.

Town Statistics

Population: 27,700

Number of emigrants: 20,000 (from all over Syria)

Number of displaces people in surrounding areas: 3,000

Ethnic/Religious Breakdown: Sunni/Muslim

Municipal Services:

Water: Four water wells supplying the city

Sanitation: Trash and Sewer Services

Schools: 5 schools operating, one destroyed, and refugees occupying seven

Government Revenue: \$40,000/yr from provincial council, SNC, and ACU. Unspecified revenue from other sources, such as foreign aid and remittances.

Militas: Syria Martyrs Battalion (300 people), a member of the Syrian Revolutionaries Front,

Court System: Civil Court that follows standard Syrian legal code.

Major Town Projects (Completed): Bakery, water network repair, distribution of general relief packages

Priority Projects: Hospital, Electricity, Supplying water for 36 villages that rely on wells in Harem.

Town Needs: Hospital, reconstruction of government building, cleaning trucks, compost, and chloride for water purification.

Appendix B

The Local Council of Saraquib and its Countryside

Liberated on November 1, 2012, Saraquib is located on the main highway that runs from Aleppo to Damascus and Lattakia to Aleppo. The local council of Saraquib was established August 20, 2012. The offices of the council consist of the the following 11 offices: executive, judicial, financial, relief, utilities, medical and civil defenses, information, advisory and control, logistics support, security, education, and the office of martyrs, detainees and handicapped. Below is a short description of the activities of each office.

The official name of the council is the Local Council of Saraquib and its Countryside. Greater Saraquib includes 28 villages and 126,000 people (42,000 within city limits). Nine representatives from the countryside sit on the council. According to a working paper the council recently released, the council's mission is to institutionalize administrative and civil work in greater Saraquib in cooperation with militias.

The council holds elections twice per year. Preparations for a new elections are started by an independent advisory committee assigned by a general elections commission.

Requirements of Local Council Members:

- To be Syrian, and residing in Syria for one year at least during the crisis
- Do not have any relationship with the regime and intelligence
- Not to be member in the FSA, or any militia
- No criminal history

Authorities of the Local Council:

- 1- Regulation of Affairs in the town and countryside, concerning administrative and public services aspects, through committees and departments.
- 2- The Local is considered the only legal representative for Saraquib and countryside, and it has the right to (granting or suspending) procuration for an outsider representative.
- 3- Granting licenses and supervising public or private institutions practicing activities in the area (scientific, cultural, social, utilities, NGOs)

- 4- The Council has its own legal personality, in the full meaning, and the council head is considered the legal representative in front of law.

Judicial & Legislative Office: Independent by itself, interested in contracts, debentures and exchange orders.

Office of Financial Affairs: Regulating the movement of the local council's account (funds received and funds issued), and organizing the records related to these processes.

Office of Relief: Finding the norms and the standards, and regulating the distribution of relief supplies for needy people inside Saraquib and its countryside.

The Office of Utilities, Engineering and Reconstruction: Regulating the public Service. Furthermore, documentation of the destruction inside the town and its countryside.

Medical Office and Civil Defense: Regulating and controlling the methods for supplying patients and injured with the appropriate medicine, because of the present situation, and the way to distribute medical aid, and practicing civil defense when needed. and the suitable methodology for distributions of the urgent medical aid, civil defense procedures, removing rubble, extinguishing fires, and rescuing individuals.

The Information Office: It regulates and manages the information feedback of the council, and the coverage of its activities (printing, internet).

Advisory and Control Office: Studying projects and monitoring the activities of the council members, and regulating legal proceedings if they were condemned to be corrupt, and studying offers submitted by members of the council, and transferring it to the office concerned.

Office of Logistic Support: founding facilities and services to deliver aid and basic needs of people in the area during revolution time.

Security Office: Overseeing police force and supporting offices and courts, organizing military action in cooperation with the civil defense office.

The Office of Martyrs, Detainees and Handicapped: Finding a suitable mechanism and standards for counting the martyrs and their families, coordinating with the rest of the offices concerned.

The Office of Education: To activate the educational work inside the town, and the countryside, and meeting the needs of the whole area, in addition to the monitoring of schools, activating the role of culture.

Priorities of the council:

Removing rubble, resulting from air strikes, and shelling.

Trash removal and environment preservation .

Price monitoring and food quality

Appendix C

The Local Council of Kafr Nabl

The home of Idlib's first demonstrations, Kafr Nabl's liberation battle began July 2012 and lasted seven days. Once the Free Syria Army (FSA) controlled the regime's checkpoints, the regime pulled out and began a fierce air campaign that decimated the city's infrastructure and killed many people. ISIS surrounded the city and attempted to control it for months. During this time, ISIS harassed the city by arresting people, destroying the media office, and related aggressions. The FSA eventually pushed ISIS out of the area.

Governance was a priority for the citizens of Kafr Nabl. The war caused the collapse of governing institutions and created a power vacuum and space for corruption. People recognized a governing body was needed to rebuild the city and avoid a complete collapse and chaos. Activists played a unique role to help fill the void. One unique thing they did was create large banners with messages for Syrians and the international community. These displays were effective and regularly posted in major news papers and media around the world.

The local council of Kafr Nabl was founded around April 2013. The first six months was an unstable and difficult period for the council. The selection of council members was hotly debated. Some wanted well-educated figures and others wanted revolutionaries or military leaders. The military commanders at the time demanded council members be chosen from the ranks of the militias, but parties in the debate set the condition that council members be civilians. The people of Kafr Nabl voiced strong support that council members should be well-educated civilians and exclude rebels, revolutionaries, and older defected military commanders.

The council member selection process basically breaks down to each family surname or clan chooses one representative for every 1,200 family members. These representatives serve as council members and committee heads. These representatives also vote to select the council president.

This process evolved from the tense first months of the council's formation. During this time, prominent families demanded representation on the council. These families were traditionally strong supporters of the regime and many family members and close associates held sensitive positions in the Assad regime. The initial reaction of the parties involved in the town council selection process was to reject these people. Over time, however, the people caved into the pressures of the prominent families and accepted their

representatives. Each family nominated well-known figures. The number of representatives per family depended on the family's size.

The town held an election to select the head of the local council. The two main figures were Ibrahim Alqasem and Yasser AlSaleem. Ibrahim Alqasem is owner of the well-funded Nour Alhuda Charity Organization and backed by a wide-range of militas and organizations, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Yasser AlSaleem was backed by the Union Revolutionary Bureau (URB), an organization that supports media and civil society and is now arguably a competing town council.

The election originally favored big families, but then a carpool commenced to bring people out to a participating village, Jouneh, to vote for Ibrahim Alqasem, and he won. The majority of the town reportedly rejected the result and demanded a re-vote, but this request was denied by a town hearing called the Alhammamyat meeting. The Alhammamyat meeting resolved some of the tensions, however, by developing a power sharing agreement between Ibrahim Alqasem and Dr. Ali Sultan. Yaser AlSaleem, however, was excluded from the power sharing deal.

URB, the organization that back Yaser AlSaleem and that is supported by media and civil society organizations, is reportedly acting as a competing governing group. One council member put it bluntly, "I don't think the council has much suport. URB has more sources of support and always tries to make people hate us." Conversely, all citizens interviewed recognized the local council as the official governing body, but most quickly added that it needs to earn its legitimacy by delivering services. One citizen said, "the council needs to earn our trust. It needs to work on productive projects. It needs governance training, it needs to cooperate with other organizations like URB."

After this power sharing agreement was reached, a council of nine members representing prominent Kafr Nabel families and supported by milita commanders was formed. This agreement and selection process has continued to this day. The council was supposed to have a six-month member rotation, however, the power sharing agreement has discouraged rotations and changes in council representatives.

Council Offices: Relief, Security, Municipal Services, Medical, and Education

Office of Relief: Distribute relief supplies for the residents of the town, in a systematic and impartial method, in corporation with the NGOs , the Syrian Coalition, and the ACU.

The Security committee: The security committee consists of 24 members and a single commander. The committee is tasked with policing and dispute resolution. Lack of funding, however, limits its activities.

Municipal Services Office: Repairing roads, reopening bakeries, and similar projects.

Medical Office: Distribute medicine and maintain a pharmacy.

Education Office: Supports the SNC's Department of Education in administering and observing exams.

Town Statistics

Population: 27, 700

Number of emigrants: 32,000

Number of displaced people in surrounding areas: 7,000

Ethnic/Religious Breakdown: Sunni/Muslim

Municipal Services:

Water: No water available. Citizens rely on rain water and snow run-off

Sanitation: Trash and Sewer Services

Schools: Available, but number in operation is unknown

Electricity: Power source controlled by the regime and unreliable

Government Revenue: SNC & ACU

Court System: one Sharia & one Military Court

Major Town Projects (Completed): Repaired pot holes in the roads, basic cleanup projects, reopened a bakery, procured a large generator, and carried out numerous relief-related projects.

Priority Projects: Water, electricity, bread, and medicines.

Town Needs: Nearly everything is needed

Appendix D

Local Council of Maarat Al-Numan

Maarat Al-Numan is strategically located at the intersection of main highways that run from Lattakia to Damascus and Aleppo to Damascus. Limited protests broke out early on in the city and gradually the city was pulled into the conflict. The liberation battle began October 8, 2012. The two-day battle was exceedingly severe and the regime troops relocated to nearby military camp Wad-Deif. Continuous shelling and airstrikes decimated the town's infrastructure and approximately 95 percent of Maarat Al-Numan's citizens fled the city.⁴⁸ The remaining citizens and fighters formed a basic governance body, named the Revolution Leadership Council, to at least coordinate the protection of homes, markets, and related infrastructure.

Founded March 2013, the Revolution Leadership Council consisted of self-appointment members approved by militias groups. The council later changed its name to Maarat Al-Numan local council inline with naming conventions and governing structures emerging across Idlib province. The council is self-reportedly unstable and current leaders commented that people are not satisfied with the council and constantly demand structural changes. The current and former council head are Muslim Brotherhood members. The former head now serves the council's administrative minister. This leads many to view the council as controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood.

The selection process of council members was opaque. As chaos dramatically increased during and after the liberation battle, the military council, shura council, the Revolution Leadership Council, and independent committees meet to form an official local council inline with the factor emerging across Idlib. The result was the appointment of reportedly highly educated and qualified council members. All council members are reportedly over 40 years old and most are previous government officials. Councilmen also include three lawyers, an engineer, pharmacist, and an unspecified number of activists.

Both council members and civilians reported that the council is an ineffective organization in its current condition. Activists and numerous civilians criticize the lack of participation of activists under 40 years old. The council members, however, are recognized as activists by most of the interviews and credited with leaving their occupations early in the revolution to join the opposition as activists. At the same time, numerous younger activists complained that younger activists -- under 40 years old --

⁴⁸ The majority of the displaced citizens have not returned due to continued shelling and security issues.

were not represented on the council. One affiliated member commented, “We’re about to do a new elections to reform the local council and [it’s] really of need of it, and I personally fear that the current members will remain in place with the help of the armed-groups. If this happens, the LC will remain bad and without any role or activities.” Another more sympathetic activist commented, “The Local Council is trying to do its best, but me and the people will stay unsatisfied and we must understand that they’re working in a very hard circumstances and simply, God bless them.” Other than personnel complaints, interviewees criticized the lack of council activities. The town has no running water, electricity, and its infrastructure is decimated from heavy fighting and arial bombardments.

The self-reported challenges of the council and town include funding, competing armed groups, general absence of law, and continuous shelling and air strikes. The council is also largely isolated from other towns due to the destruction of phone lines and security/infrastructure challenges in traveling. Another major challenge is crime. The local council reported that theft was initially common, but crime rates have dropped approximately 50 percent due to the military council of the city enforcing civil law.

Council Structure

Offices: Executive, Medical, Utilities, Security, Legal, Relief, Engineering and Reconstruction, Education, Civil Defense, Information, and Financial.

Reportedly, there is a high-level of coordination between offices, and the community has contributed in supporting the council. For instance, the community restored the police station and security office, which helped get the police and security forced organized and ultimately reduce robbery-related crimes by about 50 percent.

Responsibilities of Offices:

Medical Office: Supervision of hospitals, medical points, dispensaries, and solving the problems facing them, aid supplies.

Utilities and Public Services Office: Conserving environment, transferring trash and rubble, remnants of war, Providing electricity, drainage, providing irrigation and all kinds of public services in general, and looking for the appropriate way to manipulate its problems.

Relief Office: regulating the distribution of humanitarian aid, and supervision on relief foundations, and organizing its job.

Educational Office: supervision of schools, coordination with educational foundations to facilitate education provision for students in Almaarah, and finding suitable solutions for problems facing the educational and administrative staff, and restoration of ruined buildings.

Engineering and Reconstruction Office: Estimating and documentation of damage.

Legal Office: computing crimes committed by the regime and documenting them.

Information Office: illustrating the activities of the council, filming them, in order to display them globally, communication via internet and social communication websites.

Police: Police forces and Security Office chase criminals, arrest thieves, looking in cases related to shabeeha and social problems concerned, resolving social problems between civilians and has nothing to do with militias, because the military council is concerned in this issue.

Town Statistics

Population: 120,000 (66,000 in city limits)

Number of emigrants: 54,000

Number of displaced people in surrounding areas: 100,000

Ethnic/Religious Breakdown: Sunni/Muslim

Municipal Services:

Water: No water available --100% of water infrastructure damaged

Sanitation: Limited trash and sewer services

Schools: 16 of 32 schools damaged -- one school funded by SNC, three funded by aid groups, and one official government school.

Electricity: No available electricity

Government Revenue: Three payments from SNC and ACU -- \$95,000, \$23,000, and \$70,000. No additional revenue from other organizations or groups.

Militias: Lewa Shohadaa Al-Maraa, Al-Nusra Front, Ahrar Al-Sham, Soqour Al-Sham (approx. 6,000 militiamen total)

Police: 35 policemen

Court System: Single Sharia Court (closed due to lack of funding). Clashes between courts, militias, and the government over judicial control.

Major Town Projects (Completed): Re-opening bakeries, distributing relief packages, electricity generator for the hospital, and digging a new water well.

Priority Projects: Water wells, medical equipment and medications, more relief packages, and elections.

Town Needs: Literally everything from water to electricity to every aspect of reconstruction.

Appendix E

Local Council of Salqeen

Located near the border of Turkey, Salqeen was historically controlled by a few big families with strong relationships with the regime. The town, however, joined the revolution early, and the Al-Shabiha responded brutally. Liberated in September 2012, the battle was hard-won. Nearby Al-Dwaile air force base reinforced the regime's positions in the town and the opposition was forced to take control of the base. After the opposition took control of the city and nearby air force base, local governance began to evolve. The original governance body was an informal coordination group that developed into a leadership council over time. In February 2014, the local council was founded as the official governing body of the town.

The various iterations of the local council prior to February 2014 had limited power because of competition amongst four armed groups for control of the city. For a short period of time, ISIS controlled the town making civil governance impossible. When governance was possible, council members were appointed by armed groups and had limited space to govern. This factor began to shift when ISIS was chased out by the Syrian Revolutionaries Front ("SRF"). The SRF and FSA, both groups represented in Salqeen, reportedly favor civil governance and in-turn give the council space to govern.

The local council, formed in February 2014, is generally supported by the people. All citizens interviewed recognized the council leaders as activists and many added that they are good men. One citizen commented, "Council members are good people. Until now there are three government officials who defected from the regime, a lawyer, and a doctor. Most of the members are activists." These types of commendations were always quickly followed with a call to do something. Interviewees unanimously reported that "everything is needed" and they were looking for the council to organize itself, set its priorities, and show activity and results. In short, citizens demand that the council clearly define what it wants to do, and then do it. Interestingly, citizens were not concerned with exactly what the council did. They recognized the challenges and limited resources available to the council. They simply demanded pick something material to work on and then show results.

The council manages education, basic municipal services, relief, medical services, and infrastructure. Consistently delivering these services, however, depends on the sporadic and limited funding the council receives from the ACU, SNC, and foreign aid groups. Council members and citizens reported the biggest governing challenges were unstable funding, competition between armed groups, and the risk that ISIS might re-take the city.

Regarding the competition between armed groups, once citizen commented, “council members need real training and the support of the people. We need armed groups to understand that their role is to fight the regime, not to control and govern cities.”

Salqeen’s crime rate is low and interviewees were more concerned with competition amongst militias than crime or security issues. As far as responsiveness to citizen’s concerns, the liberal-minded and secular council leadership values local input into governance. They are currently forming a research and evaluation office to listen to people’s input and request, and report its findings to policy makers. The council has made this a priority and most citizens interviewed were aware and approved of this initiative. The council also values communication and collaboration with nearby town councils and is looking for ways to interact more regularly with other councils.

Departments of the local council:

Security Office: police station with 37 policemen

Public Services: focused on distribution of aid, coordinating with aid and development groups, and responding to urgent requirements.

Medical Office: established a pharmacy. Many citizens, however, travel to Turkey for medical care.

Town Statistics

Population: 49,000

Number of displace in the city: 7,000

Number of displaces people in surrounding areas: 13,000

Ethnic/Religious Breakdown: Sunni/Muslim

Municipal Services:

Water: Water available -- no damage to the system due to the conflict

Sanitation: Trash and sewer services available

Schools: All schools are operational

Electricity: Regime controlled power source. Typically available six hours per day.

Government Revenue: modest stipend from ACU, SNC, provincial council, and foreign aid organizations.

Militas: Islamic Front, Syrian Revolutionary Front, and Free Syrian Army

Court System: single sharia court

Major Town Projects (Completed): Pharmacy, several relief campaigns, and support for schools.

Priority Projects: Few projects are in the pipeline due to lack of funding. The most important project was the establishment of a pharmacy. Current priorities is to continue to provide essential municipal services and the council develops, priorities will change.

Town Needs: Training, rule of law, and stable funding.

Works Cited

- Anonymous activist. Personal interview. 10 March 2014.
- Anonymous activist. Personal Interview. 12 March 2014.
- Anonymous head of a security map making firm. Personal interview. 14 March 2014.
- Anonymous head of a local council. Personal interview. 11 March 2014.
- Anonymous executive director of a U.S. aid implementer. 14 March 2014.
- Anonymous activists/humanitarian. Personal interview. 12 March 2014.
- . "Post-conflict Reconstruction: A Joint Project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Association of the United States Army." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. 2001. Web. January 20, 2014.
- . "About Us: Who is the Syria Opposition?" *Etilaf*. 2013. Web. January 15, 2014.
- . "The IMF's Approach to Promoting Good Governance and Combating Corruption: A Guide." *IMF*. 2005. Web. 21 January 2014.
- Carothers, T. "The 'Sequencing' Fallacy." *Journal of Democracy* 2007. 18(1): 12-27. Print.
- Diamond, L. J. "A quarter-century of promoting democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 2007: 18:118-120. Print.
- Gilley, B. "The determinants of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries." *International Political Science Review*. 2006: 27 (1): 47-71. Print.
- Gilley, B. "*The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy*." New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Print.
- Holmberg, S., and Rothstein, B. "Dying of corruption." *Health Economics, Policy and Law* (forthcoming) 2011. Web.
- Kalu, Kalu. "Institution-building, not nation building: a structural-functional model." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* March 2011: 77: 120 - 37. Web.
- Lapiente, V., and Rothstein, B. *Civil War Spain versus Swedish Harmony: The Quality of Government Factor. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Washington, DC., 31 Aug.-3 Sept., 2010*. Web.

- Levi, M, and Sacks, A. "Legitimizing beliefs: Sources and indicators." *Regulation & Governance* 2009: 3 (4): 311-33. Web.
- Mampilly, Zachariah. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2011. Print.
- O'Halloran, Patrick. 2005. "Post-conflict Reconstruction: Constitutional and Transitional Power-sharing Arrangements in Bosnia and Kosovo." In *From Power Sharing to Democracy: Post-Conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies*, ed. Sid Noel. Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. Print.
- Paris, Roland. *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.
- Rothstein, B, and Stolle, D. "The state and social capital: An institutional theory of generalized trust." *Comparative Politics* 2008: 40 (4): 441-459. Web.
- Rothstein, B, and Teorell, J. "What is quality of government: A theory of impartial political institutions." *Governance* 2008: 21 (2): 165-190. Print.
- Rothstein, Bo. "Defining and Measuring the Quality of Government." *The Quality of Government Institute* 2012. Web.
- Sjöstedt, M. "Thirsting for Credible Commitments: How Secure Land Tenure Affects Access to Drinking Water in sub-Saharan Africa." *Gothenburg: Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg* 2008. Web.
- Swaroop, V., and Rajkumar, A. S. "Public Spending and Outcomes: Does Governance Matter?" *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* May 2002: No. 2840. Web.
- Weinstein, Jeremy, M. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.