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## *Reconciling the Rift: International Mediation and Identity*

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**Reconciling the Rift: International Mediation and Identity**

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# Abstract

This thesis interrogates whether, and if so how, international mediation might shape the identities of the conflict parties. Proceeding from the position that identities are socially constructed, I examine two contemporary instances of mediation: stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, the early United Nations (UN)-led efforts in relation to the Syrian civil war; and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and UN-sponsored National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the initial phases of the peace process launched to resolve the Yemeni crisis. I investigate these cases by gathering and thematically analysing an original qualitative dataset comprising 74 semi-structured interviews, 50 press conferences and 110 official documents.

In essence, I argue that mediators and conflict parties, in partnership or in opposition, can reimagine the identities of the conflict parties within, and in response to, mediation. Mediation can operate as an arena in which identities are reconstructed while the very occurrence of mediation can trigger and fuel processes of identity reconstruction. Furthermore, the practice of mediation, and in particular the norms promoted through and contained within it, can serve to reconstruct identities.

My analysis variously reinforces, enriches and challenges the limited cohort of studies which has begun to consider the possible influence of mediation upon identity. Secondly, I contribute to our understanding of how identities in Syria and Yemen were transformed following the uprisings of 2011. Thirdly, I intervene in two intertwined debates within mediation studies: those surrounding impartiality and power. I demonstrate that examining processes of identity construction may strengthen our understanding of whether a mediator is viewed as being impartial. Moreover, and relatedly, I show how identity construction can be employed, by mediators, to convince and corral conflict parties, and to guide them towards particular solutions. Finally, by proving that mediation can intercede in processes of identity mutation, I demand a reassessment of our very understanding of third-party peacemaking: its purpose and effects.

# Reconciling the Rift:

# International Mediation and Identity

Sarah Angharad Mair Clowry

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# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AQAP | Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula |
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CSSR | Civil Society Support Room |
| EEAS | European External Action Service |
| EU | European Union |
| FSA | Free Syrian Army |
| FoS | Friends of Syria |
| FoY | Friends of Yemen |
| GPC | General People's Congress |
| G10 | Group of 10 |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| ISIL | Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant |
| LCC | Local Coordination Committee |
| SOC | National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces |
| NDC | National Dialogue Conference |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| OSE | Office of the Special Envoy |
| OSESGY | Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen |
| OAU | Organisation of African Unity |
| PDRY | People's Democratic Republic of Yemen |
| SNC | Syrian National Council |
| SRGC | Syrian Revolution General Commission |
| TGB | Transitional Governing Body |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDEF | United Nations Democracy Fund |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNSC | United Nations Security Council |
| UNSMIS | United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria |
| US | United States |
| YAR | Yemen Arab Republic |

## Statement of Copyright

## Declaration

The material contained in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. It is the sole work of the author. Material from the published or unpublished work of others which is used in the thesis is credited to the author in question in the text.

## Note on Transliteration

Arabic terms are used sparingly. On the rare occasions on which they are used, the International Journal of Middle East Studies Transliteration System is employed. Arabic proper nouns are presented in their simplified but widely-recognised format; for instance, I refer to the 'Huthis' as opposed to 'al-Ḥūthīyūn'. This decision was taken in order to increase the accessibility of the thesis. In direct quotations, the original spellings have been preserved while the preferred transliterations of their own names of Arabic scholars, public figures and interviewees have also been respected.

# Acknowledgements

# Chapter 1. Introduction

A little over a decade ago, tens of thousands took to the streets across the Middle East and North Africa in protest against authoritarianism, corruption and poverty. Almost without exception, the states swept up in the uprisings, dubbed the 'Arab Spring' in the West, convulsed into crises. The headiness of the early months of the demonstrations dissipated. Autocratic regimes tightened their grips, provoking eddies of violence and, ultimately, civil wars which persist to this day. As the death tolls mounted, international actors stepped in, offering to mediate settlements and transitions. However, as Nesrine Malik wrote in late 2020, on the anniversary of the uprisings, 'the phrase "Arab spring" has become synonymous with shattered dreams of liberation…Peaceful transition was simply impossible, at that time and in that manner'.[1] This thesis will examine two failed attempts at international conflict mediation which were launched following the 2011 protests: stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, the early United Nations (UN)-led mediation efforts in relation to the Syrian civil war; and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and the UN-sponsored National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the initial phases of the peace process launched to resolve the Yemeni crisis. This thesis will do so through the prism of the following, over-arching research question: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* Proceeding from the position that identities are socially constructed, I will gather and thematically analyse an original qualitative dataset, comprising 74 semi-structured interviews, 50 press conferences and 110 official documents, to develop a response. The aim will be to forge original interventions within both mediation studies and scholarship concerning Syrian and Yemeni identities.

## 1.1 The practice of mediation

This thesis interrogates whether, and if so how, international mediation might shape identity. Evidence of the use of mediation extends back to Ancient Greece: Thucydides wrote, in his description of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 431 BC, that the Epidamnians appealed to Corcyra for intervention, urging the city to 'broker a settlement' and 'put an end to the war waged by the barbarians'.[2] In the modern day, the rise in mediated settlements has been

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[1] Nesrine Malik, 'The Arab Spring Wasn't In Vain. Next Time Will Be Different', *The Guardian* (2020) [online], available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/21/arab-spring-people-movement [last accessed: 21 May 2021]

[2] Translation by Martin Hammond, *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 13

described as 'one of the notable trends of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries' and it has been claimed that there has been an 'explosion' in the supply of willing third-party mediators.[3] Before I outline the chief findings of this thesis, and the two cases of mediation under investigation in this study, this section will consider more broadly the practice of mediation, exploring the characteristics of third-party peacemaking which prompted the research question.

While 'definitions of mediators are as various as mediators themselves',[4] this form of conflict management entails the intervention of a third party in either an inter-state or civil war. This third party could be an individual, a group, another nation, an organisation, or could involve multiple parties, cooperating in either a formalised or an ad hoc manner.[5] In order to qualify as mediation, the intervention should not entail the use of physical force nor should the third party invoke the authority of the law.[6] The act of mediation is 'not a single processes' but, rather, 'a continuous set of related activities'.[7] Moreover, mediators can employ a range of strategies: these vary from the more passive, in which a third party may aid communication by sharing information and facilitating discussions, to an increasingly active approach, such as exercising control over or influencing the agenda of negotiations, the devising and enforcing of timetables, or attempting to re-frame the dispute. Lastly, that which has been termed a 'directive' strategy involves the shaping of the content of the settlement and the manipulation of the willingness of the conflict parties to resolve their differences, possibly through the use of incentives and sanctions.[8]

Traditionally, mediation has been a murky, secretive practice comprising clandestine negotiations conducted in secluded settings, convening political leaders and representatives of

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[3] Chester A. Crocker et al., *International Negotiation and Mediation in Violent Conflicts: The Changing Context of Peacemaking* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 61

[4] Chester A. Crocker et al., 'Introduction' in Chester A. Crocker et al. (eds.), *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2003), p. 7

[5] Jacob Bercovitch et al., 'Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations', *Journal of Peace Research* 28:1 (1991), p. 8; Crocker et al., *International Negotiation and Mediation in Violent Conflicts: The Changing Context of Peacemaking*, p. 81

[6] Bercovitch et al., 'Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations', p. 8

[7] Ibid

[8] Michael Butler, *International Conflict Management* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 128-31

armed groups.[9] However, mediation processes now often feature attendant mechanisms to broaden their inclusion[10] while more participatory, and thus more transparent, 'National Dialogues' are also 'increasingly popular' mediation tools.[11] Intended to grapple with 'crises of national importance',[12] and to offer the opportunity 'for meaningful conversation about the underlying drivers of conflict and ways to holistically address these issues',[13] inclusion and national ownership are deemed central to the very definitions of a National Dialogue. As Katrin Planta et al. have argued, 'National Dialogues are increasingly seen *per definitionem* as the most participatory and inclusive tool for conflict transformation';[14] moreover, Thania Paffenholz et al. have suggested that this 'largescale inclusion' can, in turn, help to 'generate ownership' of the outcomes of the mediation effort, thus enhancing its sustainability.[15] As we will see later in this chapter, the first case under investigation in this thesis, the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process, adopted a more conventional mediation format. The second case, however, featured a lengthy, comprehensive and wide-ranging National Dialogue Conference. This crucial difference between the two instances of mediation will be reflected upon.

The professed purpose of mediation is not to aid the victory of a particular disputant but, rather, to promote a settlement acceptable to the conflict parties and, more contentiously, the

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[9] Andreas Hirblinger and Dana Landau, 'Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking: Beyond Box-ticking and Photo Opportunities?', *Security Dialogue Blog* (2020) [online], available from: https://blogs.prio.org/SecurityDialogue/2020/02/strategies-of-inclusion-in-peacemaking-beyond-box-ticking-and-photo-opportunities/ [last accessed: 30 May 2021]

[10] Thania Paffenholz, for example, has identified nine different ways in which civil society actors might be included within mediation processes (Thania Paffenholz, 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion-Exclusion Dichotomy', *Negotiation Journal* 30:1, pp. 76-7)

[11] Susan Stigant and Elizabeth Murray, 'National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation', *United States Institute of Peace* (2015) [online], available from: https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/10/national-dialogues-tool-conflict-transformation [last accessed: 21 May 2021]

[12] No author, 'National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners', *Berghof Foundation* (2017) [online], available from: https://berghof-foundation.org/library/national-dialogue-handbook-a-guide-for-practitioners [last accessed: 21 May 2021], p. 21

[13] Stigant and Murray, 'National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation'

[14] Katrin Planta et al., 'Inclusivity in National Dialogues: Guaranteeing Social Integration or Preserving Old Power Hierarchies?', *Berghof Foundation* (2015) [online], available from: https://berghof-foundation.org/library/inclusivity-in-national-dialogues-guaranteeing-social-integration-or-preserving-old-power-hierarchies [last accessed: 21 May 2021], p. 4; see also: Stigant and Murray, 'National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation'; No author, 'National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners', *Berghof Foundation* (2017) [online], available from: https://berghof-foundation.org/library/national-dialogue-handbook-a-guide-for-practitioners [last accessed: 21 May 2021], pp. 20, 29, 82, 86; Thania Paffenholz et al., 'What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues?', *Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative* [online], available from: https://www.inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/report-national-dialogues-en.pdf [last accessed: 2 June 2021], p. 9

[15] Paffenholz et al., 'What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues?', p. 9; see also: Stigant and Murray, 'National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation'; No author, 'National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners', p. 21

mediator.[16] In brief, the purported aim is to support the parties in reaching a peaceful solution which they are unable, or unwilling, to reach alone. This method of conflict resolution, defined by an absence of force, is thus characterised as a benevolent, pacific intervention with humanitarian intent. However, if mediation *can* shape the identity of those who participate, this demands a reassessment of our understanding of third-party peacemaking.

Prominent mediators have hinted at the possibility that mediation, and mediators, may intercede in processes of identity mutation. Within his reflections on his role promoting peace in Palestine and Israel during the second *intifada*, Kofi Annan has claimed that accusations of terrorism were 'too often used to deny the Palestinians' political identity', while he also highlighted his appreciation of the 'compelling and legitimate narrative of Israelis', encompassing their 'uniquely tragic history'.[17] President Jimmy Carter's recollections of the Camp David Accords appear to recognise the sensitivity of symbolism within peacemaking; for instance, he recalls that 'Sadat [Egyptian President, 1970-81) said he could accept the entire Jerusalem proposal if there was provision for the flag of Islam to fly over Islamic holy places, but acknowledged that Begin [Israeli Prime Minister, 1977-83] would be reluctant to agree to this because of its symbolism of sovereignty'.[18] Alvaro de Soto, who served as UN Under-Secretary-General for the Middle East Peace Process between 2005 and 2007, mentions in his leaked End of Mission report how the Secretary-General of the UN is a '*normative mediator par excellence* [emphasis in original]'.[19] Even Henry Kissinger, notorious proponent of *realpolitik* and former United States (US) Security Advisor and Secretary of State, features the following observation in his memoirs once more in relation to the Palestine-Israel dispute: 'formal positions are like the shadows in Plato's cave…reflections of a transcendent reality almost impossible to encompass in the dry legalisms of a negotiation process'.[20]

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[16] William I. Zartman and Saadia Touval, 'International Mediation' in Chester A. Crocker et al (eds.), *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), pp. 437-8; Butler, *International Conflict Management*, pp. 120-1

[17] Kofi Annan and Nader Mousavizadeh, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 257, 269

[18] Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Arkansas: University of Arkansas, 1995), p. 398

[19] Alvaro de Soto, 'End of Mission Report', published by Rory McCarthy and Ian Williams, 'Secret UN Report Condemns US for Middle East Failures', *The Guardian,* (13 June 2007), [online], available from: http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2007/06/12/DeSotoReport.pdf and https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/13/usa.israel [last accessed: 4 February 2021], p. 40

[20] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years: The First Volume of His Classic Memoirs* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 342

A number of war-weary mediators seem to have grasped the potential for third-party peacemaking to interact with identity. Simply within the few, disparate quotations provided here, we can see arguments surrounding the importance of recognising a national identity within a peace process; an emphasis on narratives, symbols and norms which, as I will explore later in this thesis, constitute crucial means through which identities are created, conveyed and upheld; and a broader appreciation of the significance of social forces within third-party peacemaking. However, within mediation studies, the possible relationship between mediation and socially constructed identity has faced relative neglect. Yet identities tell us both who we are and that which we seek. Identities constitute interests, conditioning those actions which groups can pursue, and shaping our interactions with others. For identities to be recast within and through mediation, by mediators or by conflict parties, necessitates a concomitant recasting of our understanding of third-party peacemaking.

## 1.2 Principal arguments of the thesis and contributions made to existing scholarship

In essence, this thesis will indeed suggest that mediation can shape identity. The fundamental claim I will make can be formulated as follows: mediators and conflict parties, in harmony or in competition, may freshly imagine the identities of the conflict parties within and in reaction to mediation. Mediation may form a backdrop to processes of identity construction while the very occurrence of mediation can drive and provoke processes of identity construction. Furthermore, the norms and practices contained within mediation can reconstruct the identities of the conflict parties. More precisely, I will contend that the identities of the state or states at war may be reshaped in order to offer support to a particular conflict party's aspiration to govern; due to a perceived need to legitimise the mediation attempt; and/or following the promotion of norms. With regard to this latter point, I assess both the encouragement of the norm of democracy and, also, the influence of national ownership and inclusion, two mediation process norms.

By making these claims, I will refine, develop and challenge the scant existing literature surrounding the relationship between mediation and social constructed identity: literature which I will map and assess in Chapter Three, and from which I will derive three hypotheses for exploration within this thesis. The fundamental findings of this thesis, that mediation can shape the identities of the conflict parties, and the constituent claims which coalesce to form

this overall argument, represent an original contribution to mediation studies. Moreover, I will also suggest that my analysis demands a reconfiguration of our very understanding of mediation: its intent and its impact. However, I will also use my conclusions to intervene in two further bodies of scholarship.

Firstly, I will contribute to our understanding of how Syrian and Yemeni identities mutated following the demonstrations, and crises, of 2011. I will show that, within the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process, the Syrian national identity was reimagined: the national collective was reconstructed by both the mediators and the Syrian opposition. In harmony, these two groups meticulously built a fresh image of the Syrian people, depicting the nation as being bound together by suffering and by an aspiration for a democratic political system. Crucially, within the mediation efforts, it was the *national* identity of Syrians which was summoned and, moreover, *reshaped*: the national identity I detect differs from the national identity which scholars have claimed held relevance within Syria prior to the uprisings. However, sub- and supra-state identities were also invoked within the dataset. While their content was neither explored nor remoulded within and through the mediation process, this nevertheless demonstrates that the Syrian national identity summoned within the peace process was not without challenge. Indeed, I will propose that these efforts to recast the shared experiences and aspirations of the Syrian people within, and in response to, the mediation process may have masked an anxiety at the territorial and ideational fragmentation of the Syrian people amid violence.

Within the mediation efforts launched to solve the crisis in Yemen, I will suggest that the voices of the international officials represented within my dataset, together with a more limited number of Yemeni voices, sought to characterise the Yemeni people as being united by suffering, and as seeking reform, change, and a transition; occasionally, this was specified more precisely as democracy. However, a number of Yemeni voices expressed disagreement, depicting the Yemeni national experience, instead, as being suffused with revolution and resistance, and with opposition to the autocratic structures of Yemen. Moreover, this reconstruction of the Yemeni national identity was not as sharply depicted as was the case in relation to Syria: it was constructed with less clarity, and by fewer voices. This apparent clash and seeming timidity notwithstanding, once more it is the *national* identity of Yemenis which was reshaped, and which was *re-sculpted* in a deviation from the national identity observed by scholars prior to 2011. However, the notion of sub-state identities is also present within the

dataset showing, once more, that the national identity reconstructed within the third-party peace process was not uncontested.

In addition to considering the restructured visions of the Syrian and Yemeni national people conjured within the peace processes, and comparing these images to the various identities which have been argued to hold relevance in Syria and Yemen prior to 2011, I will also interrogate why it was the specifically national identities of Syria and Yemen which were articulated and considered within the peace processes, and why these national identities bore such similarity to one another. I will suggest that this finding is revealing of both mediation and the mediators implicated within the two cases under investigation.

Secondly, my proposal is that the findings of this thesis also demonstrate the need to better incorporate ideational concepts, such as identity, within the traditional debates contained within mediation studies; my suggestion is that, by systematically considering processes such as identity construction, such debates may be enriched. I will support this claim by considering the ramifications of my findings upon the intertwined and simmering debates within mediation scholarship surrounding impartiality and power. I will show that the intercession, by mediation and mediators, within ongoing processes of identity mutation can contribute to our understanding of whether, or not, a mediator may have been viewed as impartial. Furthermore, and relatedly, I will show how attempts at identity reconstruction can be wielded, by mediators, to configure, convince and corral parties and, thus, to guide them towards particular solutions. This contention also links to impartiality by revealing a bias of outcome. I will therefore demonstrate that, by considering identities, and their construction, it may prove possible to uncover further sources of impartiality and further sources of power at work within mediation.

## 1.3 Research design and introducing the cases

In order to develop these claims and to make these contributions to existing scholarship, I will adopt a case study approach, assessing two contemporary instances of mediation. A case can be defined as an 'instance of a class of events'; in other words, a phenomenon of scientific interest[21] which, in this study, constitutes mediation. This is a naturalistic, as opposed to experimental, research design, 'used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a

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[21] Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), p. 17

complex issue in its real-life context'.[22] While the decision to focus on two cases means the generalisability of my findings has been sacrificed,[23] the case study approach has been selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, 'depth of analysis' is 'one of the primary virtues of the case study method';[24] the design provides 'an opportunity for the researcher to gain a deep holistic view of the research problem'.[25] Secondly, and relatedly, by employing a case study approach, researchers are able to achieve 'high levels of conceptual validity'[26] as they are permitted the detail to measure variables accurately and to consider contextual factors. Chapter Two will demonstrate the importance of this: socially constructed identity is an inherently complex concept and demands flexibility, care and abundant data. Finally, I have elected to assess two cases within this thesis. While bearing a number of similarities, the cases also differ in critical ways. Indeed, the intention is that their diversity will reveal whether, and if so how, divergent approaches to mediation may, or may not, interact with socially constructed identity.

The following sub-sections will introduce the two cases selected for investigation. I will detail the two mediation processes, briefly narrating the 2011 Uprising in Syria and the ensuing civil war before outlining in depth Stages I and II of the Geneva Peace process. Next, I will turn to Yemen, and will follow a similar structure. I will conclude this section by drawing out the differences and similarities between the two cases, justifying their selection.

## 1.31 Syria: an overview of the 2011 revolution and civil war

The revolution in Syria awakened a few months after Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen but rapidly evolved into a civil war. The catalyst can be traced to the peripheral southern city of Deraa: the disproportionately harsh punishment inflicted upon a group of teenagers from the area, whose crimes had been to scrawl anti-government graffiti on the walls of their school, provoked demonstrations led by their families.[27] Syria's security forces violently struggled to quash the protests, igniting further resentment, and both the demonstrations and the ferocity of President Bashar al-Asad's response grew.[28] Thousands of Deraa residents were drawn to the streets and,

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[22] Sarah Crowe et al., 'The Case Study Approach', *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 11:100 (2011), p. 1
[23] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (California: SAGE Publications, 1984), p. 21
[24] John Gerring, 'What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?', *American Political Science Review* 98:2 (2004), p. 348
[25] Saša Baškarada, 'Qualitative Case Study Guidelines', *The Qualitative Report* 19 (2014), p. 1
[26] George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 19
[27] Diana Darke, *My House in Damascus* (London: Haus Publishing Ltd., 2014), p. 12; Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila al-Shami, *Burning Country* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), p. 38
[28] Darke, *My House in Damascus*, p. 12

before long, seemingly compelled by the deaths, casualties and arrests perpetrated by the regime, Syrians across the country rose up against the ruling party and demanded the release of prisoners, a new law permitting the organisation of political parties, and the repeal of Syria's Emergency Law.[29] Bashar addressed the Syrians in March 2011, but he refused to acknowledge the existence of a popular protest movement, claiming foreign enemies, Salafist terrorists, Saudi Arabia and Mossad were to blame.[30] The demonstrators began to increasingly call for the end of the regime.[31]

The revolution militarised, particularly following defections from Bashar's army, and initiated its first large-scale attack in June 2011.[32] The various militias coalesced into the Free Syrian Army (FSA), intermittently supported by a multitude of international actors, and the movement began employing guerrilla tactics to seize areas of the Syrian countryside.[33] These rebels were highly disparate, with each group often centred upon a particular individual, region or ideology, and, increasingly, many were Islamist in nature and dominated by al-Qaida-affiliated factions.[34] The various forms of violence which have erupted in Syria – organised state repression, armed resistance, jihadi violence and criminal activity – have been claimed to have led to more than 500,000 deaths and to have displaced 13 million.[35] At the time of writing, Bashar has managed to cling on and, moreover, has clawed back most of Syria, fortified by the Russian and Iranian governments.[36]

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[29] Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, *Burning Country,* pp. 37-8; Christopher Phillips, *The Battle for Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 2
[30] Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, *Burning Country,* p. 40; David Lesch, *Syria: The Fall of the House of Assad* (US: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 76-81
[31] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria,* p. 2
[32] Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, *Burning Country,* pp. 82-3; Phillips, *The Battle for Syria,* p. 2
[33] Yassin-Kassab and al-Shami, *Burning Country,* pp. 86-7
[34] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria,* p. 2
[35] Emile Hokayem, *Syria's Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 40
[36] No author (n.d.), 'Civil War in Syria', *Council on Foreign Relations* [online], available from: https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-syria [last accessed: 18 January 2021]

## 1.32 The Geneva Peace Process, Stages I and II (2012-14)

Stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process constitute a short, yet convoluted, period of peacemaking during the Syrian conflict.[37] It was ostensibly led by the UN. However, just as an array of regional and international actors, state and non-state, has contributed to the complexity of the Syrian crisis and the destruction wrought,[38] in the peacemaking realm, too, it is impossible to focus on a single actor and hope to capture the intricacy of the process. The summary here will therefore feature not only the actions and decisions of the Syrian 'disputants' and those of the UN, but also the choices made by the various states and groups implicated in this phase of the mediation attempt.

Although difficult to delineate, the period under study began with a failed UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution in early February 2012; the text would have called for a 'Syrian-led political process', echoing an earlier Arab League proposal, but both Russia and China wielded their vetoes, claiming the Resolution threatened Syria's sovereignty and that blame for violence in the country had not been apportioned equitably.[39] 'Outraged', former French President Nicolas Sarkozy promptly launched the 'Friends of Syria' (FoS), a coalition of Arab and Western states, which met for the first time in Tunisia in February 2012, 'marshalled international condemnation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad' and recognised the Syrian National Council (SNC) as 'a legitimate representative of Syrians seeking peaceful change'.[40] Having emerged in 2011, the SNC encompassed recent and long-term exiles opposed to al-Asad's government together with representatives of Local Coordination Committees (LCCs), activist bodies inside Syria which were coordinating protests across the country.[41]

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[37] In addition to the UN-sponsored process, parallel initiatives have also been launched to negotiate peace, the most prominent of which has been the Astana Process, sponsored primarily by Russia (for a recent analysis of the Astana Process, see: Charles Thépaut, 'The Astana Process: A Flexible but Fragile Showcase for Russia', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (2020) [online], available from: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/astana-process-flexible-fragile-showcase-russia [last accessed: 17 January 2021]). However, these parallel initiatives were launched after the period of study.

[38] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, p. 3

[39] UNSC, 'Bahrain, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: Draft Resolution' (S/2012/77) (4 February 2012)

[40] Ibid; No author, 'Sarkozy Pushes 'Friends of Syria' Group at UN', *Euractiv* (2012) [online], available from: https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/sarkozy-pushes-friends-of-syria-group-at-un/ [last accessed: 27 May 2020]; Arshad Mohammed and Christian Lowe, 'Friends of Syria' Condemn Assad but See More Killing'. *Reuters* (2012) [online], available from: https://www.reuters.com/article/syria-meeting-tunis/friends-of-syria-condemn-assad-but-see-more-killing-idINDEE81N0I320120224 [last accessed: 27 May 2020]

[41] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, pp. 106-7

Also in February 2012, Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the UN and recipient of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize, was appointed Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League on the Syria crisis and, one month later, he unveiled a fresh peace plan comprising six points. This scheme was successful in gaining the backing of the UNSC, and advocated once more for a political process headed by Syrians together with a cessation of armed violence in the country, the provision of humanitarian assistance, the release of detainees, the granting of access to journalists, and the guarantee of the right to peaceful protest.[42] In April of the same year, the UNSC adopted two Resolutions concerning Syria: 2042, which expressed support for Annan's 'Six-Point Plan' and authorised a team of unarmed military observers to monitor a ceasefire in Syria,[43] and 2043, which established the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), a deployment of 300 military observers to monitor a 'cessation of armed violence' and the implementation of Annan's proposal.[44] However, 'escalating violence' moved the commander of UNSMIS, General Robert Mood, to suspend the mission in mid-June[45] and, at the end of this month, Annan gathered together the Secretaries-General of the UN and the Arab League, together with the foreign ministers of China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), the US, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and the European Union (EU), to form an 'Action Group for Syria'. In the communiqué released by the group, the six points were reiterated, and the text also introduced the notion of the need for a 'Syrian-led transition' and the 'establishment of a transitional governing body which…should be formed on the basis of mutual consent'. Although no Syrian representatives attended these officials' one-day meeting, this event later came to be known as 'Geneva I'.[46]

A 'political process' to promote peace, including Syrian delegates, was not convened until January 2014. In the intervening period, Annan resigned; shortly after the release of the document, Russia and the US aired conflicting interpretations of the ambiguously-worded Geneva I communiqué and, when he abdicated his post in August 2012, the frustrated Envoy

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[42] UNSC, 'Bahrain, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: Draft Resolution'
[43] Ibid
[44] UNSC, 'Preliminary Understanding: United Nations Supervision Mechanism' (S/2012/250) (23 April 2012)
[45] No author, 'UN Observers Suspend Syria Work', *BBC* (2012) [online], available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18471686 [last accessed: 27 May 2020]
[46] UNSC, 'Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria' (A/66/865-S/2012/522) (6 July 2012); Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, p. 101

bemoaned the divisions within the UNSC.[47] The SNC fragmented and fell from favour while a broader opposition organisation, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (commonly abbreviated to SOC), received endorsement from those members of the international community opposed to al-Asad and was formally announced in November 2012. During a conference held by the FoS conference in Morocco in December 2012, SOC was declared 'the legitimate representative of the Syrian people', and the Coalition gradually drifted into the orbit of Saudi Arabia, receiving the majority of its funding from this state, in addition to substantial financial support from Qatar and Turkey.[48] Lakhdar Brahimi assumed the helm at the UN and the Arab League, replacing Annan, while the FoS together with a reduced consort, dubbed the 'London 11', continued to assemble, inviting members of SOC to their meetings and offering 'political and practical support'.[49] Lastly, the conflict in Syria continued to rage. At the point at which Geneva II was eventually initiated, more than 100,000 had been killed in the course of the violence, millions had been displaced or had sought refuge outside Syria, and chemical weapons had been used against Syrian citizens.[50]

Following pressure exerted by Russia, in November 2013 Damascus revealed that a Syrian government delegation would attend the negotiations but the process by which SOC acquiesced proved more tortuous. Members threatened to, and eventually did, abandon the Coalition, fewer than half of those who remained voted to participate, SOC attached preconditions to their attendance which were never met, and the composition of their delegation was shared only days before the conference.[51] Invitations to attend the opening of the talks in Montreux, Switzerland, were delivered to 44 states and organisations but, while Iran was originally among this number, the outrage this provoked within SOC, and Iran's refusal to declare their support for Geneva I, forced the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to issue a humiliating retraction.[52]

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[47] Ian Black, 'Kofi Annan Resigns as Syria Envoy', *The Guardian* (2012) [online], available from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/02/kofi-annan-resigns-syria-envoy [last accessed: 27 May 2020]

[48] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, pp. 114-6

[49] No author, 'UK Hosts Syria London 11 Senior Officials Meeting', *UK Government* (2013) [online], available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-hosts-syria-london-11-senior-officials-meeting [last accessed: 28 May 2020]

[50] No author, 'What is the Geneva II Conference on Syria?', *BBC* (2014) [online], available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24628442 [last accessed: 27 May 2020]; No author, 'Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria', *Human Rights Watch* (2013) [online], available from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/09/10/attacks-ghouta/analysis-alleged-use-chemical-weapons-syria [last accessed: 27 May 2020]

[51] Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, pp. 190-1

[52] Louis Charbonneau and Parisa Hafezi, 'Iran Invite to Syria Talks Withdrawn After Boycott Threat', *Reuters* (2014) [online], available from: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-un-iran/iran-invite-to-syria-talks-withdrawn-after-boycott-threat-idUSBREA0J01K20140120 [last accessed: 27 May 2020]

Two short rounds of talks between the Syrian delegations, mediated by Brahimi and his team, followed in the Palais des Nations in Geneva but very little was achieved. While an agreement leading to a three-day truce in the city of Homs was thrashed out,[53] Brahimi felt forced to bring the mediation effort to an abrupt close on the 15th of February 2014 with the words: 'I'm very, very sorry, and I apologise to the Syrian people.' He told the journalists congregating in the Palais that the Syrian government delegation had refused to discuss the notion of a transitional governing body (TGB) in parallel with their favoured topic of 'terrorism', provoking concerns within the opposition delegation that the government would never relinquish power. Brahimi therefore seemingly attributed the collapse of the talks to the intransigence of al-Asad's representatives.[54]

## 1.33 Yemen: an overview of the 2011 revolution and civil war

In Syria, it took months, and two separate Envoys, to eventually convene direct talks. During this time, the revolution descended into a ferocious conflict, violence which the mediation efforts proved incapable of quelling. In Yemen, the path taken during the same period diverged considerably despite emerging, once more, from popular protests. Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist and activist, kindled her country's revolution on the 15th January 2011; stirred by the ousting, by civilian protesters, of authoritarian former President of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, she demanded freedom of speech and criticised the restrictions placed upon journalists in Yemen.[55] Former President Saleh's attempts to change the state's constitution to allow him to run for a third term seemed to galvanise the movement, and the revolution grew, spreading to Taiz.[56] Driven by years of dissatisfaction with the regime, the youth and civil society representatives who led the initial protests harboured a 'long-standing frustration over the lack of economic opportunities and unemployment, flagrant corruption, government malfeasance, and food security, health, and education'.[57] The President retreated, promising to halt the amendment, as well as pledging intensified decentralisation, the

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[53] UN, 'Homs Agreement Mediated by the UN' (2014) [online], available from: https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1525 [last accessed: 18 February 2021]
[54] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (Geneva, 15 February 2014)
[55] Helen Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis: Autocracy, Neo-Liberalism and the Disintegration of a State* (London: Saqi Books, 2017), p. 35; Ginny Hill, *Yemen Endures* (London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2017), pp. 204-5
[56] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* p. 35; Hill, *Yemen Endures,* p. 206
[57] Erica Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', *United States Institute of Peace* Special Report 342 (2014) [online], available from: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR342_Process-Lessons-Learned-in-Yemens-National-Dialogue.pdf [last accessed: 17 February 2021], p. 2

establishment of a government of national unity, and salary increases for security and military personnel. Nevertheless, once Egyptian protesters proved successful in driving out their dictatorial ruler, Hosni Mubarak, Yemen's demonstrations against the ruling regime attracted increasing numbers of supporters.[58] Those loyal to the regime reacted with violence, yet the protests increased; by the 25th February 2011, 100,000 Yemenis had taken to the streets across the country and the capitals of all Yemeni governorates had 'Change Squares', overwhelmed by protesters.[59] When fifty protesters were killed by regime forces as they prayed in Sanaa's 'Change Square' on the 18th of March 2011, Major General Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar, a member of Saleh's Sanhan clan and a close associate of the President, defected along with his troops. Two tribal leaders also confirmed their support for the revolution.[60] It was at this stage that an external third party interceded.

## 1.34 The GCC Initiative, the Yemeni Transition and the National Dialogue Conference (2011-14)

The GCC intervened, brokering a proposal which recommended Saleh's abdication, protected by an immunity deal, after which elections would take place.[61] However, opposition leaders were unwilling to participate in the proposed unity government, an institution which the GCC had suggested should rule following Saleh's departure, and both they and Saleh prevaricated.[62] Meanwhile, the protests swelled ever further, with many activists equally dismissive of the GCC deal, deeming it 'an elite stitch-up that betrayed their demands for an entirely new system'.[63] On a number of occasions, Saleh refused to sign; following one instance on the 22nd of May 2011, forces loyal to Saleh clashed with tribal militia controlled by the al-Ahmar family in the Hasaba district of Sanaa and, when tribal sheikhs arrived to mediate, at least two were killed.[64] An outbreak of violence followed, ceasing only once Saleh was injured in a bomb blast on the 3rd of June 2011. He was evacuated to Riyadh and, forced to undertake several months of convalescence, Vice-President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi assumed control.[65] However, Saleh's son, Ahmed, retained power behind the scenes.[66] Violence erupted once more in

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[58] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* pp. 35 – 36
[59] Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 206
[60] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* p. 37; Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 209
[61] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* p. 38
[62] Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 210
[63] Ibid, p. 212
[64] Ibid, p. 213
[65] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* p. 38; Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 213
[66] Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 213

September 2011 and, although Saleh granted Hadi the authority to negotiate an agreement to facilitate early presidential elections, the protesters marched into the south of Sanaa, Saleh's domain, and the regime's gunmen opened fire as protesters flung rocks towards the military police.[67]

Saleh returned to Yemen, and activists continued to suffer casualties from sniper fire while shelling persisted in Hasaba.[68] A military stalemate persisted throughout the autumn of 2011; while Saleh could exert influence over three quarters of the capital and held the balance of conventional forces, he did not control quite enough to ensure victory against Mohsin's First Armoured Division which was rapidly gaining popularity due to the protection offered to protesters by these troops.[69] Earlier in the year, in April 2011, Jamal Benomar had been appointed as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Yemen; he began travelling to Sanaa, reporting monthly to the UNSC, and developed an Implementation Mechanism for the GCC Initiative in conjunction with Yemeni political leaders. Indeed, it was only following an intervention from Benomar that Saleh finally signed the GCC deal in November 2011.[70] Furthermore, it has been suggested that the crafting of UNSC Resolution 2014, which threatened sanctions against Saleh, also played a role in persuading the President to eventually relinquish formal power. Three months later, in a referendum with only one option, the Yemeni people acquiesced to Hadi adopting the role of caretaker President for two years.[71] However, in practice, Hadi assumed authority over no more than 20% of the military and security services and, although he began to remove Saleh's cronies and family members from key positions, he replaced such individuals with Yemenis originating from his own governorate, prompting accusations that Hadi's rule was proving 'more of the same'.[72] Hadi proved unable to manage the transition, creating a government of national unity which 'gained the reputation of being the most incompetent and corrupt in the country's history.'[73] It was in this context, in March 2013, with key political factions amassing ever more weapons,[74] that a National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the next step proposed within the GCC Initiative Implementation Mechanism, was launched.

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[67] Ibid, p. 215
[68] Ibid, p. 223
[69] Ibid, p. 237
[70] Ibid, pp. 240 – 241
[71] Ibid, p. 241
[72] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,* p. 41; Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 243
[73] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis,*, p. 40
[74] Hill, *Yemen Endures*, p. 260

Preparations for the NDC had begun almost a year earlier, in June 2012.[75] A select Technical Preparatory Committee, appointed by Hadi,[76] negotiated 'the structure, organization, rules of procedure, and management' of the NDC.[77] The group struggled to decide on the composition of the Dialogue; eventually, following advice from Benomar,[78] it was decided that 565 delegates, drawn from across Yemeni society, would attend.[79] Seats were awarded to a wide range of political parties,[80] and President Hadi was also afforded the right to appoint a further 62 delegates. However, the focus, at least superficially, was also on broadening participation beyond members of the political elite and on empowering the south:[81] forty seats each were

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[75] No author, 'National Dialogue Conference', *Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen* (no date) [online], available from: https://osesgy.unmissions.org/national-dialogue-conference [last accessed: 17 February 2021]

[76] Edward Burke, 'EU-GCC Cooperation: Securing the Transition in Yemen', *Gulf Research Center* (2013) [online], available from: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/166407/Edward_Burke_-_EU-GCC_Cooperation_Securing_the_Transition_in_Yemen_1042.pdf [last accessed: 17 February 2012], p. 16. Indeed, this author argues that the Technical Committee was formed from 'a few select people' and that 'the four men who most shaped its terms were the president, the prime minister Mohammed Basindwah, Abdul Karim Al-Eryani (former prime minister and respected elder statesman), and the UN Special Adviser', and, moreover, that 'some southern leaders refused to attend – demanding nothing less than full independence from the north'. Katia Papagianni has noted that the Technical Committee comprised 25 members (Katia Papagianni, 'National Dialogue Processes in Political Transitions', *Civil Society Dialogue Network* Discussion Paper No. 3 (2014) [online], available from: https://www.hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/National-Dialogue-Processes-in-Political-Transitions-January-2014.pdf [last accessed: 17 February 2021], p. 6; furthermore, it is worth noting that, in contrast to Burke, the UN claims that the Technical Committee involved 'all political factions and constituencies' (No author, 'National Dialogue Conference').

[77] No author, 'National Dialogue Conference'

[78] Christina Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference', (2013) [online], available from: http://www.bme.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/196/Journal_articles/Murray%20Yemen's%20National%20Dialogue%20Conference%20October%202013.pdf [last accessed: 17 February 2021], p. 6; Steven A. Zyck, 'Mediating Transition in Yemen: Achievements and Lessons', *International Peace Institute* (2014) [online], available from: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_mediating_transition.pdf [last accessed: 2 June 2021], p. 7. This author claims that Benomar performed 'micro-mediations' throughout the period in which the Technical Committee prepared for the NDC.

[79] Charles Schmitz, 'Yemen's National Dialogue', *Middle East Institute* Policy Paper 1 (2014) [online], available from: https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Charles%20Schmitz%20Policy%20Paper.pdf [last accessed: 17 February 2021], p. 6; Thania Paffenholz and Nick Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', *PRISM* 6:1 (2016), pp. 203-4

[80] These political parties included the General People's Congress (GPC), the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah), the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), the Nasserite Unionist Party, the Arab Socialist Bath Party, the Yemeni Unionist Congregation, the Union of Popular Forces, the National Council, al-Haqq Party, al-Hiraak, al-Huthis, the Rashad Party and the Justice and Development Party (Ali Saif Hassan, 'National Dialogue Conference: Managing Peaceful Change?', *Accord* Issue 25 (2014) [online], available from: https://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy-and-peace-processes#:~:text=Legitimacy%20and%20peace%20processes%3A%20from%20coercion%20to%20consent&text=Legitimacy%20matters%20for%20peace.,the%20bedrock%20of%20peaceful%20societies. [last accessed: 2 June 2021], p. 53

[81] In the years preceding the Uprising, Saleh faced serious unrest in the south; elements within a vocal and, on occasion violent, movement, known as Hiraak, had been leading calls for the secession (Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 2)

additionally allocated to 'independent' representatives of Yemeni youth, women and civil society; moreover, the political factions invited were mandated to ensure their nominations comprised those of southern origin (50%), women (30%) and youth (20%). The committee advertised the independent positions throughout the country, and more than 10,000 Yemenis applied in fewer than two weeks;[82] these 120 participants were then selected by the Technical Committee in an opaque process.[83]

The Committee also considered how the conference would be organised and overseen, electing to create a Secretariat for its management, a Presidium to further oversee its progress,[84] and a Consultative Committee to assist in resolving disputes.[85] All were populated by Yemenis. It was decided that the delegates, when they arrived in Sanaa, would be tasked with negotiating 'the future' of Yemen[86] with a view to creating a new constitution for the state.[87] To this end, they would be organised into nine Working Groups, each of which would grapple with a different theme and generate a series of recommendations. These nine themes were as follows: 'The Southern Question', 'Sadah',[88] 'Reconciliation and Transitional Justice', 'Statebuilding', 'Good Governance', 'Military and Security', 'Independent Institutions', 'Rights and Freedoms', and 'Sustainable Development'.[89] It was affirmed by the members of the Committee that any decisions taken through the NDC would operate on the basis of consensus,

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[82] Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', pp. 203-4

[83] Ibid, p. 204. Indeed, Murray has also remarked that 'agreement on these [independent] positions was difficult and there are allegations that many of them were filled by representatives of political parties' (Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference', p. 6)

[84] No author, 'National Dialogue Conference'. The functions of the Secretariat are listed here: No author, 'NDC Secretariat General', *National Dialogue Conference* [online], available from: http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=59 [last accessed: 18 February 2021]. The nine members of the Presidium, the majority of whom represent the main Yemeni political parties, are listed here: No author, 'NDC Presidency', *National Dialogue Conference* [online], available from: http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=92 [last accessed: 18 February 2021]

[85] This committee is also frequently referred to as the 'Consensus Committee', and included the nine-member Presidium, the Chair of each Working Group, and six additional members from the Technical Committee in a bid to broaden the inclusivity of this body. Saif Hassan, 'National Dialogue Conference: Managing Peaceful Change?', p. 52; Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference', pp. 5, 7. The tasks of the Consensus Committee, and its membership, are listed here: No author, 'NDC Consensus Committee', *National Dialogue Conference* [online], available from: http://www.ndc.ye/page.aspx?show=97 [last accessed: 18 February 2021]

[86] Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 203

[87] Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference', p. 4

[88] Sadah is a northern governorate and stronghold of the Huthi movement. Saleh's government waged a series of wars against the Huthis from 2004, and government shelling flattened much of the governorate (Gregory D. Johnsen, *The Last Refuge: Yemen, Al-Qaeda, and the Battle for Arabia* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), pp. 150-3; Marieke Brandt, *Tribes and Politics in Yemen: A History of the Houthi Conflict* (London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2017), in particular, pp. 153-335)

[89] No author, 'National Dialogue Conference'

and that they would be binding.[90] The Technical Committee also suggested the implementation of twenty 'confidence-building measures' in the months preceding the NDC; the majority were designed to build trust with Hiraak, a southern secessionist movement, and to attain greater Hiraaki participation in the NDC. Nonetheless, these proposals were not pursued.[91] Indeed, a number of Hiraakis refused to participate in both the Committee and the NDC and sought, instead, 'bilateral negotiations between the north and the south over separation, not to discuss the shape of the unified state'.[92]

During this period of the transition, in addition to Benomar, the international community also offered support through the Friends of Yemen (FoY)[93] together with a narrower collective of diplomats, the 'Group of 10' (G10). The FoY was launched in 2010 following a foiled al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) attack on an airliner bound for Detroit. While there were hopes that the FoY would serve as 'the logical mechanism for the international community to coordinate its response' to the Yemeni transition,[94] it was the G10 which proved more influential. An informal body composed of the permanent members of the UNSC, the EU, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and the UAE,[95] the group is proclaimed by the UK government to have helped 'ensure rapid and effective disbursement of donor funds and effective implementation of reforms to improve, governance, unify the military, strengthen security and

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[90] Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 204. Furthermore, as these authors write, it was decided that, in any first rounds of voting, no more than 10% of delegates could object should a motion or recommendation wish to pass while, if there was a need for a second round of voting, 75% of delegates would have to be in favour.

[91] Zyck, 'Mediating Transition in Yemen: Achievements and Lessons', p. 6. Murray has written that these points emphasised the building of trust with the south and in Sadah; they included 'requiring an official apology for the 1994 war, reinstating people who lost jobs in the aftermath of that war, the return of property seized after the war, the release of detained members of the Southern Peaceful Movement and the employment of southerners in central government institutions' together with 'an official apology for the damage caused by the conflict in Saada and the release of detainees'. Furthermore, as Murray notes, progress on enacting these recommendations was extremely slow and, as the NDC drew to an end, 'few had been addressed in any way' (Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference', p. 5)

[92] Peter Salisbury, 'Yemen's Southern Intifada' in *Yemen's National Dialogue* POMEPS Briefings 19 (2013) [online], available from: https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/POMEPS_BriefBooklet19_Yemen_Web.pdf [last accessed: 18 February 2021], p. 15

[93] The members of the FoY included Algeria, the Arab League, the European Union, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Brazil, the People's Republic of China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, the Russian Federation, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (co-chair), Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom (co-chair), the United States of America, the Republic of Yemen (co-chair), the GCC Secretariat, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Monetary Foundation, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, the World Bank, and the UN (No author, 'Friends of Yemen: How Has it Performed and Where is it Going?', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office* (2013) [online], available from: https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55375d834.pdf [last accessed: 18 February 2021], p. 2

[94] Ibid, p. 3

[95] Burke, 'EU-GCC Cooperation: Securing the Transition in Yemen', pp. 13-4; Schmitz, 'Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 17; No author, 'Friends of Yemen: How Has it Performed and Where is it Going?', p. 3

justice and promote strong economic growth'.[96] The diplomats in the G10 thought of themselves as the 'sponsors and guardians of the GCC initiative', and met weekly, playing a role in persuading various Yemeni factions to attend and commit to the NDC.[97]

The Dialogue launched, three months behind schedule,[98] on the 18th of March 2013, and was intended to last for six months.[99] Gathered within the opulent Mövenpick Hotel, perched above Sanaa, the delegates separated into their Working Groups and, as they began to re-think the future of their state, Yemenis experienced continued intervention from the UN, the G10 and various international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). International officials would seek permission to attend the negotiations, would offer 'capacity building' and lectures from 'experts', and conduct clandestine negotiations alongside the conference.[100] The UN claims that it 'facilitated dozens of Dialogue sessions, and at the request of the interlocutors, presented dozens of papers reflecting on the experiences of other countries'[101] while it has been reported that the Mediation Support Team of the European External Action Service (EEAS) offered international examples of best practice to the Secretariat and the Working Groups.[102] Nevertheless, Benomar and his team have been described as having played 'a relatively modest role in the conference'; the team was small, lacked Arabic speakers, and had 'no written or unwritten strategy or standard operating procedures' during these years.[103] Indeed, the Working Groups tended to be facilitated by Yemenis and, when conflicts occurred, the Consultative Committee would swoop in, escalating the most thorny of challenges to Hadi himself.[104]

While a number of the Working Groups progressed without difficulty, other teams faced profound disputes. In early August 2014, a number of Hiraaki representatives abandoned the conference in protest at the discussions,[105] and the six-month deadline for concluding the Dialogue was missed following deadlocks in 'The Southern Question' and 'Statebuilding'

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[96] No author, 'Friends of Yemen: Questions and Answers', *UK Government* (2013) [online], available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/friends-of-yemen-q-a [last accessed: 18 February 2021]

[97] Burke, 'EU-GCC Cooperation: Securing the Transition in Yemen', p. 14

[98] Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 4

[99] Ibid, p. 6

[100] Details gathered from the interviews conducted as part of this study

[101] No author, 'National Dialogue Conference'

[102] Burke, 'EU-GCC Cooperation: Securing the Transition in Yemen', p. 16

[103] Zyck, 'Mediating Transition in Yemen: Achievements and Lessons', p. 8

[104] Details gathered from the interviews conducted as part of this study

[105] Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 3; Indeed, Murray has argued that the Hiraak movement, within the NDC, is represented 'by moderates with limited following in the South' (Murray, 'Yemen's National Dialogue Conference, p. 2; see also Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 206)

Working Groups.[106] As August gave way to September, Hadi charged an exclusive sub-committee, known as the '8+8 Committee' due to its being formed of eight representatives from the north and the south, with finding a solution to the 'southern issue'.[107] In its 'Agreement on a Just Solution', the group, which included just one member of the Huthis, proposed the idea that Yemen should be federalised.[108] During the committee's discussions, 'Benomar was reportedly tasked to take a leading role in mediating between' the participants[109] but this committee could not reach consensus on the precise form which federalism would take.[110] Nonetheless, in January 2014, the conference produced its Final Report, detailing 1,800 ambitious recommendations for reform; the intention had been that each of these recommendations, developed by the Working Groups, would be voted upon but, on the day of the vote, Ahmed Sharif al-Din, one of the most prominent Huthi delegates, was assassinated on his way to the Mövenpick hotel and his fellow Huthi delegates withdrew.[111] Hadi himself waved through the submissions of the Working Groups, announcing that a further body would be formed to further deliberate the federalisation of Yemen. Within a few weeks, without broad consultation, this 22-member 'Region-Defining Committee', chaired by Hadi, proposed that the state would be divided into six.[112] All but the Huthi representative on the committee agreed; indeed, the Huthi movement argued that the distribution of natural wealth within the new map was unequal, depriving Sadah of resources and access to the sea. Other factions, too, expressed reservations, or rejected, the proposed federalisation of Yemen.[113]

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[106] Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 1

[107] Ibid, pp. 3-4; Tobias Thiel, 'Yemen's Imposed Federal Boundaries', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (2015) [online], available from: https://merip.org/2015/07/yemens-imposed-federal-boundaries/ [last accessed: 2 June 2021]

[108] No author, 'Outcome of the Subcommittee of the Southern Working Group: Agreement on a Just Solution to the Southern Question' (2013) [online], available from:
https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/140118_agreement_on_the_southern_question_en_final.pdf [last accessed: 18 February 2021]

[109] Zyck, 'Mediating Transition in Yemen: Achievements and Lessons', p. 9

[110] Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 4

[111] Ibid, p. 5; Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 205; details also gained from interviews conducted as part of this study

[112] Tobias Thiel, 'Yemen's Negotiated Transition Between the Elite and the Street', *London School of Economics* (2014) [online], available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2014/03/03/yemens-negotiated-transition-between-the-elite-and-the-street/ [last accessed: 18 February 2021]; Thiel, 'Yemen's Imposed Federal Boundaries'; Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', pp. 4-5; details also gained from interviews conducted as part of this study

[113] Thiel, 'Yemen's Imposed Federal Boundaries'; Yara Bayoumy, 'Yemen's Federal Plan A Bold Idea, But Many Hurdles Remain', *Reuters* (2014) [online], available from: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-politics-analysis/yemens-federal-plan-a-bold-idea-but-many-hurdles-remain-idUSBREA1M05720140223 [last accessed: 18 February 2021]; Paffenholz and Ross, 'Inclusive Political Settlements: New Insights from Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 205; Gaston, 'Process Lessons Learned in Yemen's National Dialogue', p. 4

The decisions made by this final committee marks the end of the period under study in this thesis. Following the conference, responsibility was passed to a Constitutional Drafting Committee. However, the conflict in northern Yemen had intensified during the NDC and, just one year following the conference, the Huthis marched into Sanaa, captured the presidential palace, forced Hadi into exile, and began marching south. The violence intensified as a Saudi Arabia-led coalition launched air strikes against the Huthis and bolstered factions in support of Hadi and southern separatism, the latter of which have also clashed with Hadi's forces in Aden.[114] Following a brief partnership with the Huthis, Saleh was murdered by the movement in 2017.[115] Over the course of the conflict, it has been estimated that 233,000 Yemenis have lost their lives, and that 3.6 million have been displaced, while the UN has documented 'shocking levels of civilian suffering'.[116]

## 1.35 Justifying the selection of the case studies

This section has explored the events of the two cases selected for investigation. These overviews will assist readers in grasping the empirical material presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. These chapters will foreground the voices contained within the dataset and, having chronologically detailed the two peace processes here, it will be possible for readers to follow their recounting of, and perspectives on, the events of the two mediation processes. Having charted the two mediation efforts will now also allow me to explore their similarities and differences, and explain how these will enrich the findings of this thesis.

Both mediation efforts were launched, and ostensibly spearheaded, by the UN with support offered by members of the international community and international NGOs. Both took place within the same period, between the years 2011 and 2014, and sought to resolve civil conflicts which had erupted in the same region of the world and which were provoked by the same trans-national demonstrations, seeking broadly similar aspirations. Both peace processes also failed to secure lasting peace: stage II of the Geneva Peace Process was abruptly abandoned. Brahimi could not persuade the two Syrian delegations to even agree upon an agenda for the

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[114] No author, 'Global Humanitarian Overview: Yemen', *UN OCHA* (2021) [online], available from: https://gho.unocha.org/yemen [last accessed: 17 January 2021]

[115] Patrick Wintour, 'Yemen Houthi Rebels Kill Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh', *The Guardian* (2017) [online], available from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/04/former-yemen-president-saleh-killed-in-fresh-fighting [last accessed: 18 February 2021]

[116] No author, 'Global Humanitarian Overview: Yemen'

negotiations. While the NDC did conclude having generated a vast series of recommendations, less than a year following its conclusion, the crisis was inflamed as the Huthis captured Sanaa and Hadi fled. Indeed, the two cases under investigation here merely mark the beginning of lengthy and ongoing peace negotiations.

Despite these similarities, the two mediation efforts took markedly different shapes: the Geneva Peace Process can be considered to have adopted a more traditional form of mediation, finally convening two opposing Syrian delegations for clandestine talks, overseen by the UN Envoy, in January 2014. In Yemen, the period of the peace process upon which I will focus began with secretive negotiations, including an exclusive group of political leaders and international actors and culminating in the GCC Initiative and Implementation Mechanism. Later, however, it expanded into a participatory, comprehensive and months-long National Dialogue. International actors remained present, particularly 'behind-the-scenes', but it was Yemenis who designed the NDC, who managed the NDC, and who facilitated the NDC. It was Yemenis who authored and approved its outcomes. The two mediation attempts were selected for investigation due to these differences; the hope is that their diversity will enrich the conclusions reached, potentially illuminating whether, and if so how, divergent approaches to mediation may, or may not, interact with processes of identity construction.

## 1.4 Thesis outline

This introductory chapter has offered a summary of the main findings of this thesis together with the contributions it will make to mediation studies and scholarship concerning collective identification in Syria and Yemen. It has also introduced the research design and case studies under investigation, justifying their selection. The remainder of the thesis will proceed as follows: in Chapter Two I will navigate the concept of identity, placing it within the social constructivist school of thought. Here, I will also survey existing literature which explores group identities in Syria and Yemen, focusing in particular on those arguments forged in the wake of the 2011 protests. Chapter Three will survey scholarship concerned with the relationship between mediation and identity. I will chart the findings reached concerning the multifarious impacts of identity upon mediation, before focusing in far greater detail on the limited number of studies which have explored the possible effects of mediation upon identity. From these, I will extrapolate three hypotheses for investigation. Chapter Three will also

introduce the intertwined debates surrounding impartiality and power in mediation. The final preliminary chapter, Chapter Four, will explore the methods used to gather and analyse the qualitative data which underpin the findings of this thesis.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I will assess the three hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three. Chapter Five will therefore focus on the manner in which mediation, identity, and legitimacy are intertwined; Chapter Six on two norms which were promoted over the course of the mediation efforts, and the interlinking of these attempts with identity; and Chapter Seven on the effect of inclusive mediation on identity. Chapter Eight will conclude the thesis, exploring the ramifications of the findings reached in Chapters Five, Six and Seven for our understanding of: the relationship between mediation and identity; the manner in which identities in Syria and Yemen have mutated following the crises of 2011; how processes of identity construction through mediation can affect perceptions of impartiality and power; and the need to reconfigure our very understanding of mediation in the light of the findings of this thesis.

# Chapter 2. Identity

## 2.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, this thesis will offer a response to the following, over-arching research question: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* The process of mediation was explored in Chapter One while the two mediation efforts under consideration were also outlined. In order to assess whether and, if so, how these two instances of mediation may have shaped the identities of Syria and Yemen, it is necessary to operationalise this latter concept. How might we define identity? How might identities be moulded? What kinds of data might reveal the nature of identities and the means by which they are constructed? By drawing upon a wide range of social constructivist texts, I will argue in this chapter that identities are forged as members of a given group, and as peers of this group, consider both that which the group is, and that which the group seeks. Identities are built as these themes are deliberated, until distinctive images and characters which define the bonds between members of the group are constructed. I will further contend that multiple identities may be held simultaneously, that identities can operate at a variety of different levels, that identities can mutate, that identities are infused with norms, and that identities may be built through processes of 'Othering'. I will also claim that the rhetoric of members of a political elite can provide, at the very least, hints as to the communally held identities of a group and thus forms a crucial data source.

By focusing upon the UN-led mediation efforts in Syria and Yemen, the findings of this thesis will contribute to our understanding of how Syrian and Yemeni identities developed following the uprisings of 2011. Therefore, the second section of this chapter will explore existing academic debates surrounding collective identification in Syria and Yemen. I will briefly examine the development of identities in the states prior to 2011. I will show that, in relation to Syria, traditional understandings of the state speak of a fragmented nation, torn between pan-Arab ties and sect-based affiliations; nevertheless, a nascent body of work also argues for the relevance of national belonging during the reigns of Hafez al-Asad and his son, Bashar. Following the outbreak of war, this divide persists: while academics have claimed that the nation was reimagined through the protests, and that a form of civic nationalism came to define the Syrian identity, a substantial number of scholars suggest, instead, that the uprisings and violence have served to further sectarianise Syria. Although group identities in Yemen have

received less attention by comparison with Syria, a similar debate can be detected. As I will show in this chapter, preceding 2011, authors tend to write of sub-state ties, of the divisions between Shafii Sunni and Zaydi Shia communities, the prominence of tribal affiliations, and the power of regional identities. Nevertheless, national solidarities are also evoked and, following the outbreak of the demonstrations, it has been argued that the Yemeni protesters called for the citizens to seize the state, and to create a new society infused with civic values. Sectarianisation has also been charted in Yemen, however, while authors have further claimed that identities at the level of the governorates, and at the level of the south, have wielded increasing power following the transition and its breakdown. Exploring these debates will allow me to, later in the thesis, compare my findings with those of others. Within the cases of mediation under investigation here, I will be able to assess whether we appear to be witnessing processes of identity sustainment, construction, reconstruction and/or deconstruction.

## 2.2 Understanding socially constructed collective identity

The concept of identity occurs regularly within social constructivist writing and it is this broader approach to the study of international relations which will both underpin this thesis and which will inform the operationalisation of identity deployed. Indeed, the research question guiding the study is rooted in this conceptualisation of identity; the notion that the process of mediation may be able to shape identity connotes an understanding of identity which is neither primordial nor static. In this first section I will outline the concept of identity according to social constructivists. I will begin by summarising social constructivism before considering how identity might be defined and researched. The final sub-section will briefly consider how causality is approached within social constructivism.

### 2.21 Social constructivism: a brief overview

A number of authors have attempted to distil social constructivism down to a few fundamental statements. Perhaps most well-known is Alexander Wendt's assertion that the school of thought can be represented by the following two assumptions: firstly, 'that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces' and, secondly, 'that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather

than given by nature.'[117] Stefano Guzzini has also offered two core principles in which he claims social constructivists are united: 'the social construction of meaning' and 'the construction of social reality',[118] with the first referring to the significance of our interpretations and use of language, and the second recognising that the resulting 'knowledge' then comprises that which we experience in day-to-day life.[119] Jeffrey Checkel's two tenets are pared down even further: he claims that the social constructivist approach is based on the suppositions that 'the environment in which agents/states take action is social as well as material' and that 'this setting can provide agents/states with understandings of their interests'.[120] I would offer the following summary: social constructivism focuses upon the manner in which ideas, or an ideational structure, make(s) up the social world. Furthermore, social constructivism considers these ideas to both regulate the behaviour of agents in addition to constituting their very character; depicts ideas as intersubjective and meaningful only in the collective sense; emphasises the awareness and consciousness of individuals and groups operating within this ideational structure and, therefore, their capacity to change social reality; and, finally, highlights the dynamism and contingent nature of the social world.

## 2.22 Operationalising identity

This section will chart the concept of identity. Before I begin, it is worth noting that, while the study of 'identity' occupies a prominent role within social constructivism, the concept has tended to defy clear, unanimous characterisation: as Rawi Abdelal et al. lament, 'the wide variety of conceptualisations of identity have led some to conclude that identity is so elusive, slippery and amorphous that it will never prove to be a useful variable for the social sciences'.[121] Nevertheless, I will attempt to offer an operationalisation here, highlighting the particular facets of identity which I believe to be of relevance both to the data gathered and to

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[117] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1

[118] Stefano Guzzini, 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 6:2 (2000), p. 149

[119] Emanuel Adler, 'Constructivism and International Relations' in Walter Carlsnaes et al. (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: SAGE, 2010), p. 95

[120] Jeffrey Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', 50:2 (1998), p. 325

[121] Rawi Abdelal et al., 'Identity as a Variable', *Perspectives on Politics* 4:4 (2006), p. 695; see also: Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society* 29:1 (2000), p. 1; Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East' in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 8; Thomas Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 19

my analysis. It is also worth noting that the material drawn upon in this section refers to various types of group identity, considering national identity together with transnational or supra-state identities, and sub-state identities. The sections which follow will draw out arguments surrounding how collective identities can be defined and formed; my suggestion is that this 'content', these 'mechanisms', and the data sources which can illuminate these are relevant to *all* collective identities. The means by which national identities, for instance, are built and sustained share similarities, I propose, with the manner in which alternative group identities are built and sustained. Furthermore, as will become apparent in the third and fourth sections of this chapter, scholars have pinpointed a wide range of identities, operating below and above the state, as holding fluctuating rates of relevance within Syria and Yemen. For this reason, the research question guiding this study does not specify the precise level of identity which may have been shaped through the mediation process: indeed, the precise levels characterised and reflected upon constitute a crucial finding of the thesis.

### 2.221 The 'content' of identity

Firstly, identity is thought of here as the 'basic character' of groups, as referring to their 'images of individuality and distinctiveness'.[122] Crucially, these are shared: 'social identities convey a sense of "we-ness"', of commonality.[123] The second critical assumption made is that identities are constructed, and they are constructed *by people*. As Thomas Risse argues, the bonds which fuse individuals together as a collective are formed as actors 'make sense of who they are and what they want'[124] or, as Felix Berenskötter contends, as meaning is given to the past and to the future.[125] Identities are thus 'collectively shared social constructions' based upon 'collective narratives of a common fate, a common history, and a common culture'.[126] They can be thought of as 'mental phenomena', or 'complex sets of information stored in the memory that shape cognitive processing'.[127] They are not 'presocially given', and they do not

[122] Ronald Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security' in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 33, 59

[123] Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, p. 25

[124] Ibid, p. 20

[125] Felix Berenskötter, 'Parameters of a National Biography', *European Journal of International Relations* 20:1, p. 264

[126] Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, p. 9, 25-6

[127] Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'Identity and Ideology in Political Violence and Conflict', *St. Antony's International Review* 10:2 (2015), p. 30

objectively exist and lie 'waiting to be discovered'.[128] We therefore need to gain an understanding of the 'self-understandings of group members' if we are to hope to gain an appreciation of a given identity.[129] Closely linked with this is my third assumption, that identities can change: 'they are not carved in stone', they are 'in process',[130] and their content is the outcome of ever-fluctuating processes 'of social contestation within the group'.[131] As Jonathan Leader Maynard has aptly summarised: identities are 'contingent, fluid, ideationally thick, and socially constructed notions of selfhood'.[132]

It is also presumed that crises, such as wars and military defeats, may be particularly likely to provoke 'identity conflicts', profound challenges to existing identities, and, possibly, rapid change following 'open, political debate'.[133] Relatedly and, as will become apparent in the chapters which follow, particularly relevant to the data gathered here is the notion that suffering, or collective trauma, can not only cause shifts in identity but, moreover, can come to define identity. Sevan Beukian has described collective trauma as the shared sense of having been 'subjugated to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon [a] group consciousness, marking their memories forever'.[134] Ernest Renan famously argued that 'suffering in common unifies more than joy does';[135] more recently, Gilad Hirschberger, drawing on a long tradition, has also theorised the interrelationship between shared suffering and the construction of group identities. This scholar cites Kai Erikson who evocatively claimed that collective trauma deals 'a blow to the basic tissues of social life', a blow which 'damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality'.[136] However, Hirschberger suggests that 'collective trauma' may also 'transform the way survivors perceive the world and understand the relationship between their group and other groups'. In turn, this might 'facilitate the construction of the various elements of meaning

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[128] Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, p. 20

[129] Ibid, p. 20

[130] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 21, 36

[131] Abdelal et al., 'Identity as a Variable', p. 700

[132] Maynard, 'Identity and Ideology in Political Violence and Conflict', p. 24

[133] Telhami and Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 29; Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, pp. 9, 32; Duncan Bell, 'Introduction' in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 5

[134] Sevan Beukian, 'Nationalism and Collective Trauma', *The State of Nationalism: An International Review* (2018) [online], available from: https://stateofnationalism.eu/article/nationalism-and-collective-trauma/ [last accessed: 21 May 2021]

[135] Ernest Renan (translated by Martin Thom), 'What is a Nation?' in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990), p. 19

[136] Gilad Hirschberger, 'Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning', *Front. Psychol.* 9:1441 (2018), p. 3; Kai Erikson, *Everything in its Path* (New York: Pocket, 1976), pp. 153-4

and social identity: purpose, values, efficacy, and collective worth'.[137] Indeed, suffering endured by groups, Hirschberger suggests, might become 'the epicenter of group identity, and the lens through which group members understand their social environment'. As meaning is made, 'a transgenerational collective self is pieced together', promoting 'group cohesion, a sense of group importance and common destiny, and a strong commitment to group identity'.[138] Furthermore, following the period of violence and suffering, 'the intergroup animosity that existed during the trauma is often replaced with memory wars over the attributions made for the trauma and the significance of the trauma for the image of both victim and perpetrator groups'.[139] Thus, collective trauma can also provoke an identity crisis by representing a threat to the self-image and belonging of perpetrators.

### 2.222 How are identities (co-)constructed?

A fourth assumption made is that the 'stories' told by members of a political elite, 'their official texts, rhetoric and symbols'[140] may, at the very least, provide clues as to the common social characteristics and aims of a group. Of course, 'the efforts' of members of a political elite 'to create, develop, and…popularise the idea of the nation and the national community'[141] constitute just one means through which nations, or groups, are imagined, and one limitation of this thesis is that I will not be able to reveal the extent to which the broader Syrian and Yemeni people have inspired, resisted and/or accepted the narratives which I will analyse.[142] Indeed, 'everyday knowledge' has long been neglected within international relations literature concerning identity[143] and, moreover, it may be the case that ties of belonging are most meaningfully generated from the grassroots.[144] Nevertheless, members of a political elite can

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[137] Hirschberger, 'Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning', p. 3. See also: Jeffrey Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 4
[138] Hirschberger, 'Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning', p. 4
[139] Ibid, p. 8
[140] Kathrin Bachleitner, 'A "Civic" Syria? Syrians and Syrian Refugees Envision Their Nation Amid Conflict and Displacement', *Nations and Nationalism* (forthcoming)
[141] Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese, 'Between "Imagined" and "Real" Nation-building: Identities and Nationhood in Post-Soviet Central Asia', *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 43:3 (2015), p. 372
[142] Liam Stanley and Richard Jackson, 'Introduction: Everyday Narratives in World Politics', *Politics* 36:3 (2016), p. 224
[143] Ibid, pp. 224, 227-8, 232
[144] Edward Said, quoted in Telhami and Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 6

still be assumed to play a vital role in constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing identities.[145]

A further three, intertwined, ideas also underpin the research undertaken here. These arise from the notion that identities are not only 'contested, imagined and reimagined, transformed and negotiated' by their members but also 'through their interaction with others'.[146] This has three implications: the first is the notion that identity is 'inherently relational',[147] intertwined with demarcations of an 'Other', a suggestion which constitutes a common thread within social constructivist theorisations: as Wendt writes, 'the daily life of international politics is an ongoing process of states taking identities in relation to Others, casting them into corresponding counter-identities, and playing out the result.'[148] For Telhami and Barnett, 'many definitions of identity begin with the understanding of oneself in relation to others'[149] while Risse has asserted that 'collectively held identities not only define who "we" are but also delineate the boundaries of the "Other"'.[150] Moreover, 'Othering', or 'naming', can be wielded 'as a form of social control';[151] as Maynard has contended, 'identities are not always self-generated and personal, they may be ascribed and even forcibly imposed'.[152]

The second implication is that 'the producer of an identity is not in control of what it means to others'.[153] The very meaning, or 'content', of identities is, at least in part, shaped by external groups, by their shared interpretations of behaviour. As Wendt describes at length, a state could be lauded as a 'hegemon' or condemned as an 'imperialist', dependent upon the community of nations' collective understanding of interventionist behaviour. He thus argues that 'the truth

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[145] David Lane, 'Identity Formation and Political Elites in the Post-Socialist States', *Europe-Asia Studies* 63:5 (2011), p. 926

[146] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 59. See also Stephen Saideman, 'Conclusion: Thinking Theoretically about Identity and Foreign Policy' in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 177; and James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 11

[147] Saideman, 'Conclusion: Thinking Theoretically about Identity and Foreign Policy', p. 183

[148] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 21

[149] Telhami and Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 8

[150] Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO' in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 367. See also Saideman, 'Conclusion: Thinking Theoretically about Identity and Foreign Policy', p. 178.

[151] Richard Harvey Brown, 'Cultural Representation and Ideological Domination', *Social Forces* 71:3 (1993), p. 658

[152] Maynard, 'Identity and Ideology in Political Violence and Conflict', p. 31

[153] Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security* 23:1 (1998), p. 175

conditions for identity claims are communal rather than individual'.[154] This, in turn, necessitates gaining an appreciation not only of the group members' perceptions of their collective, but also those of their 'peers'.

Thirdly, I will also proceed from the assumption that interactions with others, and the very existence of a group within particular social structures, can mould identities: 'the international and domestic societies in which states are embedded shape their identities in powerful ways'.[155] This notion is linked to the idea of 'socialisation', defined by Checkel as 'the process through which actors adopt the norms and rules of a given community'.[156] As Finnemore and Sikkink explain, 'in the context of international politics, socialization involves diplomatic praise or censure', which is reinforced 'by material sanctions and incentives'.[157] However, the concept of socialisation brings with it the 'analytic danger of neglecting agency', of treating groups 'as blank slates on which new values are inscribed'.[158] Thus, it will also be assumed that the concept of 'strategic social construction' holds weight in considerations of identity. This phrase is intended to capture the process by which 'extremely rational' actors 'maximize their utilities' by influencing others' identities[159] or, conversely, the possibility that groups will tactically reconfigure their identities in order to gain advantage.[160]

The consideration of these latter two possibilities is not intended to disempower Syrian and Yemeni identity constructors but merely to add a further prism through which we can attempt to gain an understanding of the way in which identity may have developed within, and through, the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process and the Yemeni transition years. In addition, the contemplation of the possibility that identities may be strategically constructed is not intended to imply a purely instrumentalist understanding of identity. As Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink have argued, 'if identities are constructed, this implies that actors have choices about

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[154] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 176-8
[155] Peter Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security' in Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 23
[156] Jeffrey Checkel, 'Socialization and Violence: Introduction and Framework', *Journal of Peace Research* 54:5 (2017), p. 592; see also: Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p 170
[157] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization* 52:4 (1998), p. 902
[158] Checkel, 'Socialization and Violence: Introduction and Framework', pp. 593, 594
[159] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 910
[160] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001), p. 411; David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 20

identities and might use rational calculations in constructing their identities'; this, in turn, means that identities may 'appear natural to members of groups even as individuals engage in projects of identity construction'.[161] Indeed, social constructivism has been argued to adopt 'a middle ground between primordialism and instrumentalism'[162] and, therefore, it will also be assumed that members of the political elite can both 'manufacture *and* manipulate [emphasis added]' identities, conceivably achieving both simultaneously, but it will be proposed that constraints prevail: an 'existing cultural fabric' can only be exploited so far.[163]

### *2.223 Norms and identity*

Abdelal et al. claim that 'norms' form an important element of identity[164] and, indeed, many social constructivists, almost imperceptibly, transition from discussing identity to invoking norms. Indeed, many authors define norms as collective expectations concerning the behaviour of actors occupying any given *identity*.[165] Norms are frequently divided into two main types: regulative and constitutive. The former 'operate as standards for the proper enactment or deployment of a defined identity',[166] ordering and constraining behaviour,[167] whereas the latter 'operate like rules that define the [very] identity of an actor',[168] creating 'new actors, interests, or categories of action'.[169] However, just as norms may guide identity, so too might identity shape the diffusion of new norms: it has been suggested that states comply with norms 'for reasons that relate to their identities as members of an international society'.[170] International norms are more likely to be conformed to if they resonate with states' domestic context, or complement or align with 'existing collective understandings embedded in domestic

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[161] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 411

[162] Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, 'Introduction: The Sectarianization Thesis' in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.), *Sectarianization* (London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2017), p. 7

[163] Telhami and Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 12

[164] Abdelal et al., 'Identity as a Variable', p. 696; see also: Annika Björkdahl, 'Norms in International Relations: Some Conceptual and Methodological Reflections', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15:1 (2002), p. 16

[165] See, for example: Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', pp. 327-8; Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 54; and Katzenstein, 'Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security', p. 5.

[166] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 54

[167] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 891

[168] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 54

[169] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 891; Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', p. 331

[170] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 902

institutions and political cultures'.[171] Furthermore, the greater the insecurity associated with a state's identity, the more likely it is, according to Finnemore and Sikkink, that a new international norm will be adopted.[172]

More broadly, it has been argued that norms 'provide people with a medium through which they may communicate'[173] and, furthermore, that actions are, at least in part, imbued with meaning through normative structures.[174] New, emergent norms, and competitions between such rules and those already in existence, are also envisioned by social constructivists,[175] while Finnemore's idea of norm entrepreneurs, 'committed individuals who happen to be in the right place at the right time to instil their beliefs in larger global social structures',[176] has gained a great deal of currency. Within this line of thought, it is emphasised that norms are not conjured from nothing; they are 'actively built' by norm entrepreneurs who 'call attention to issues or even "create" issues by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them'.[177] In Section 2.222, I introduced the ideas of socialisation and strategic social construction. These processes also hold weight in relation to norms. For instance, the potential for influential political actors to 'use society's norms for ulterior purposes' has been recognised.[178] Norm entrepreneurs are argued to be 'extremely rational': 'the utilities they want to maximize involve changing the other players' utility function in ways that reflect the normative commitments of the norm entrepreneurs'.[179] Furthermore, actors may conform to norms due to habit, duty, a sense of obligation, or their principled beliefs while they may also 'conform to norms because *norms help them get what they want* [emphasis added]'.[180] In Chapter Three, we will see that, while identity, as understood by social constructivists, has been relatively neglected by mediation scholars, the role of norms within mediation has received increasing attention in recent years.

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[171] Thomas Risse and Stephen C. Ropp, 'International Human Rights Norms and Domestic Change: Conclusions' in Thomas Risse et al. (eds.) *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 271
[172] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 906; see also: Amy Gurowitz, 'The Diffusion of International Norms: Why Identity Matters', *International Politics* 43 (2006), p. 43
[173] Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 17
[174] Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 5
[175] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 56
[176] Summarised by Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', p. 332
[177] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 897
[178] Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics*, p. 10
[179] Finnemore and Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', p. 910
[180] Ibid, p. 912

## 2.224 The differing levels of identity

Finally, it is important to highlight the various levels of collective identity. International relations theorists tend to focus on 'national identity'.[181] However, Middle East scholars have pioneered research into the numerous loci around which identities may form, perhaps simultaneously, and have scrutinised dynamics of unease between these different identifications.[182] Indeed, identity has been argued to play a central role within the Middle East and, moreover, 'much of the debate within Middle East studies about the role of identity…takes its point of departure in statements about how state identities in the region are challenged by other identities emerging from above or below'.[183] Overall, it is suggested that 'the region is marked by the simultaneous presence of multiple identities', with particular attention paid to the claim that it is 'not possible to simply assume that the territorial state is the source of the most important identity'.[184] Indeed, Raymond Hinnebusch claimed, in 2005, that 'the relative incongruity between state and identity is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Middle East state system'[185] while Ghassan Salamé, in 1994, dismissed the states of the region as nothing more than 'external, formal, legal skeleton[s]'.[186] An argument made by P. R. Kumaraswamy, in 2006, is notable in this regard and, as will become clear, is also significant in the light of my analysis of the data gathered as part of this study. His claim is that none of the countries in the Middle East has 'succeeded in evolving a national identity that reflects their heterogeneity' and, furthermore, that 'the region as a whole has been unable to address, let alone resolve, the core issue of national identity'.[187] We will see that this final argument has faced challenge from scholars of Syria and Yemen, and will also be challenged by the findings of this thesis.

More broadly, it is accepted that, just as individuals 'possess multiple notions of selfhood', such as class, ethnicity, gender and religion, so too might groups. These levels include national

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[181] Morten Valbjørn, 'Introduction: The Role of Ideas and Identities in Middle East International Relations' in Morten Valbjørn and Fred H. Lawson (eds.), *International Relations of the Middle East Vol. III* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2015), pp. viii-ix
[182] Ibid
[183] Ibid, p. ix
[184] Ibid, p. x
[185] Raymond Hinnebusch, 'The Politics of Identity in the Middle East International Relations' in Louise Fawcett (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 153
[186] Ghassan Salamé, 'The Middle East: Elusive Security, Indefinable Region', *Security Dialogue* 25:1 (1994), p. 20
[187] P. R. Kumaraswamy, 'Who Am I? The Identity Crisis in the Middle East', *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10:1 (2006), p. 63

identity but, also, state identity, 'the corporate and officially demarcated identity linked to the state apparatus'; regime identity, 'the self-conception held by [a] dynastic leadership';  and various sub- and supra-state identities. In the Middle East context, pan-Arabism, Islamism, sectarianism, class and tribal affiliations serve as just five examples. These multiple identities may 'vary in content, affective strength and quality, [and] social prominence', many may fade in relevance for most of the time, but all hold the potential to be activated.[188]

## 2.23 Social constructivism and causality

Having attempted to operationalise the concept of identity, I will now return to the broader theory of social constructivism, and the role of causality within this approach. This is important as these epistemological debates will have a significant impact on the scope of this study, shaping its aims, its methods and, eventually, its conclusions. Firstly, the extent to which it is accurate to characterise social constructivism as a *theory* of international relations has been scrutinised; indeed, a number of authors strongly condemn that which they perceive to be the failure of constructivists to develop an all-encompassing framework accompanied by hypotheses which can be tested in a straightforward way.[189] It is worth questioning, however, whether it is appropriate to stringently hold social constructivism to such positivist standards. As John Ruggie argues, constructivism is, unapologetically, best described as a 'theoretically informed approach'.[190] Inductive in its orientation, Ruggie claims that expanding 'the empirical and explanatory domains of international relations theory beyond the analytical confines of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism' is the guiding aim of this school of thought.[191]

Inextricably linked to this discussion is the role and, indeed, conception of, causality within social constructivism. 'Disarray'[192] can frequently be perceived here, often resulting from an

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[188] Maynard, 'Identity and Ideology in Political Violence and Conflict', p. 31

[189] Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', pp. 325, 338, 342; Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', p. 197; Guzzini, 'A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations', p. 148

[190] John Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 34

[191] Ibid, p. 27. See also Robert Jackson and Georg Sørenson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 214; Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smitt, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations* 4:3 (1998) p. 272

[192] Checkel, 'Review: The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory', p. 338

ambiguous use of language.[193] However, as Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen note, constructivists cannot subscribe to 'mechanical positivist conceptions of causality'.[194] As Emanuel Adler elucidates, while it may be appropriate to claim to have uncovered causal relations connecting entities and occurrences within the physical world, such deterministic laws are both improbable and inappropriate in relation to the social world. Instead, social forces can be argued to 'constitute' action and, thus, 'causality in [constructivist] social science involves specifying a time-bounded sequence and relationship between the social phenomena we want to explain and the antecedent conditions, in which people consciously and often rationally do things for reasons that are socially constituted by their collective interpretations of the social world and the rules they act upon'.[195] Indeed, it has also been claimed that, at best, constructivists can tease out speculative explanations following a 'process of successive interrogative reasoning', oscillating between explanation and the phenomenon under consideration.[196] I will return to these debates both when formulating my hypotheses in Chapter Three and when presenting my methods in Chapter Four.

## 2.3 Academic debates on collective identities in Syria post-2011

Having operationalised identity, and having considered the broader social constructivist approach, I will now survey the arguments which have been developed surrounding group identity in Syria and Yemen following the Uprisings of 2011; I will also, very briefly, consider academic debates concerning collective identities within these states prior to the stymied revolutions. Later in the thesis, this will allow me to assess whether, within the cases of mediation under investigation here, we appear to be witnessing processes of identity sustainment, construction, reconstruction and/or deconstruction within, and in response to, the peace processes. I will begin with Syria.

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[193] For instance, while Ronald Jepperson et al. claim that the majority of contributions to Peter Katzenstein's *The Culture of National Security* 'feature norms, culture or identities in causal arguments', the authors later dilute their phrasing, using words such as 'shape' or 'affect' to describe these relationships (Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', pp. 52, 54, 58, 60, 62, 66)

[194] Jackson and Sørenson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, p. 213

[195] Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics', p. 330; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 25

[196] Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*, p. 34

## 2.31 Collective identity in Syria prior to 2011

Traditional readings of Syria prior to 2011 speak of 'a state fragmented on identity lines',[197] 'devoid of any sense of national responsibility'[198] and torn between the persistent power of pan-Arabism and the similarly relentless, if at times concealed, pull of sect-based affiliation. Authors examine the politicisation[199] of 'sectarian boundaries'[200] through the divide-and-rule policies of the French;[201] the capitalisation 'on sectarianism as a social resource' within the political battles of the Bath party;[202] the Alawi[203] *'aṣabiya* – or kinship – claimed to form 'the backbone of the Asad regime';[204] the hardening of 'the communal solidarity of Alawis and other minority groups' during the 1980s rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood and the subsequent massacre, committed by the regime, in Hama;[205] and the increasing resentment harboured by the impoverished, and predominantly Sunni, peasantry towards Syria's crony capitalists, connected to Bashar by sect and family, in the decade preceding the protests.[206] Nevertheless, authors write, too, of the 'grand visions of Arab nationalism' espoused by Syria's

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[197] Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution?', *International Affairs* 88:1 (2012), p. 96

[198] Adel Beshara, 'Introduction' in Adel Beshara (ed.), *The Origins of Syrian Nationhood: Histories, Pioneers and Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 4

[199] Christopher Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', *Third World Quarterly* 36:2 (2015), p. 364

[200] Adham Saouli, 'The Tragedy of Ba'thist State-Building' in Raymond Hinnebusch and Omar Imady (eds.), *The Syrian Uprising: Domestic Origins and Early Trajectory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 19

[201] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 364

[202] Saouli, 'The Tragedy of Ba'thist State-Building', p. 19; Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Identity and State Formation in Multi-sectarian Societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria', *Nations and Nationalism* 26:1 (2019), p. 149

[203] Although it is now difficult to precisely report the contemporary demographics of Syria, prior to the civil war, the largest religious group, thought to be comprised of approximately 70% of civilians, denotes those who are, at least nominally, Sunni Muslims. 12% of Syrians are Shia, the vast majority of whom are members of the Alawi sect (Phillips, *The Battle for Syria*, pp. 10-1). While Alawism is officially considered to be within the Twelver tradition of Shia Islam, the place of the sect within the broader Shia movement is by no means either secure or accepted. The precise beliefs and practices of Alawism are closely concealed by the community (Torstein Schiotz Worren, 'Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria', MA thesis, (Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, 2007), available online: https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/16035 [last accessed: 3 February 2021, p. 60), and the group endured centuries of persecution in Syria.

[204] Ola Rifai, 'Sunni/Alawi Identity Clashes During the Syrian Uprising: A Continuous Reproduction?' in Raymond Hinnebusch and Omar Imady (eds.), *The Syrian Uprising: Domestic Origins and Early Trajectory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 243; Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution From Above* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 69-70; Christa Salamandra, 'Sectarianism in Syria: Anthropological Reflections', *Middle East Critique* 22:3 (2013), p. 305

[205] Saouli, 'The Tragedy of Ba'thist State-Building', pp. 24-5; Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 366

[206] Hinnebusch, 'Identity and State Formation in Multi-sectarian Societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria', p. 150; Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 367

elite during the French mandate,[207] with Arabism having been described as 'the most compelling integrating bond which alone had the power to compete with powerful sub-state loyalties in a heterogenous artificial state'.[208] Scholars claim that the idea of pan-Arab unity permeated Syrian society following the rise of the Bath[209] and that, following the seizure of power by Hafez, state schools indoctrinated citizens in Arab nationalism and the regime proclaimed Syria to be the champion of the Arab cause through its steadfastness in the face of Israel.[210] Bashar is also argued to have continued to promote Arabism and the claim has been made that, as recently as 2010, Syrians continued to feel 'a layer of Arab identity'.[211]

However, there is also a nascent body of work which argues for the relevance of a specifically Syrian national identity in the years preceding the protests. Thus, for one author, a 'sense of Syrian national identity', and of 'national belonging', 'blossomed' under the rule of Hafez: pride in the modern state and in a 'reworked' past was stimulated by the government-controlled media, education system and Bath Party apparatus.[212] For others, Syrians were bound together through official discourse emphasising the familial bonds 'between the people and the party leader';[213] by the religious nationalism promoted by Bashar;[214] and by 'everyday' acts. These

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[207] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 364; Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution From Above*, p. 18-9; Philip Shukry Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 411; Hinnebusch, 'Identity and State Formation in Multi-sectarian Societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria', p. 148-9

[208] Hinnesbusch, *Syria: Revolution From Above*, p. 19

[209] Andreas Bandak, 'Performing the Nation: Syrian Christians on the National Stage' in Christa Salamandra and Leif Stenberg (eds.), *Syria From Reform to Revolt Vol. II: Culture, Society, and Religion* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), p. 118; Hinnebusch, 'Syria: From 'Authoritarian Upgrading' to Revolution?', p. 96

[210] Hinnebusch, *Syria: Revolution From Above*, pp. 87-8; Christa Salamandra, *A New Old Damascus: Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 9-10; Christopher Phillips, *Everyday Arab Identity: The Daily Reproduction of the Arab World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 2, 29, 52

[211] Phillips, *Everyday Arab Identity: The Daily Reproduction of the Arab World*, pp. 59, 164, 161

[212] Eyal Zisser, 'Who's Afraid of Syrian Nationalism? National and State Identity in Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies* 42:2 (2006), pp. 184-91, 196

[213] Rahaf Al-Doughli, 'What is Syrian Nationalism? Primordialism and Romanticism in Official Baath Discourse' *Nations and Nationalism* (forthcoming); Rahaf Al-Doughli, 'The Symbolic Construction of National Identity and Belonging in Syrian Nationalist Songs (from 1970 to 2007)', *Contemporary Levant* 4:2 (2019), p. 152; Salwa Ismail, 'The Syrian Uprising: Imagining and Performing the Nation', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 11:3 (2011), p. 542. However, it must be noted that the work of Lisa Wedeen disputes the influence of this state-sponsored rhetoric. Wedeen has argued that 'Asad's cult operates as a disciplinary device, generating a politics of public dissimulation in which citizens act *as if* they revere their leader [emphasis in original]' and that this 'cult' served to 'isolate Syrians from one another' (Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 3, 6, 10)

[214] Paulo Pinto, 'The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict' in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.), *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2017), p. 126

acts have been argued to include inter-sect marriages and the development of a Syrian 'high' culture. They have also been suggested to include the process by which Syrians increasingly encountered and came to define themselves against both the Israelis and the Lebanese.[215] This apparent tussle, between national and sectarian meanings of belonging, prevails within scholarly examinations of identity in Syria post-2011, and I will explore these arguments in the following two sub-sections.

## 2.32 Re-inventing the Syrian nation through protest

A number of scholars have written of the nationalistic strains of the protests which erupted in 2011, the national belonging promoted by the opposition and, moreover, the specifically *civic* national identity of 'ordinary' Syrians following the conflict. According to Salwa Ismail, a new Syria was envisioned through these protests. Writing in the early years of the revolution, Ismail claimed that the protesters sought to 'reclaim the nation from the ruler', and 'engaged in a re-imagining of the nation' through 'symbolic production and practices of protest'.[216] She provides a series of examples: the hoisting of imposing national flags at demonstrations; the removal of public government iconography; the demands for rights for all Syrians regardless of religion or ethnicity; the persistent referral by protesters to 'the Syrian people' and to the unity, solidarity and diversity of this Syrian people; and an explicit rejection of sectarianism.[217] Shayna Silverstein has offered a parallel argument; she has observed that the Levantine folk dance, *dabka*, having been 'usurped by the state for ideological purposes', promoted by the Bath Party and, earlier, by Arab nationalist politicians as an 'emblem',[218] was transformed by protesters: 'demonstrations occasionally break out into what might be called radical dabka'; troupes costumed in the colours of the pre-Bath Syrian flag demonstrate 'how Syrians have taken back the streets, as well as the cultural symbols of their national heritage'.[219]

Phillips supports this interpretation, arguing that the initial protests were 'decentralised and local, but with national goals', speaking on behalf of 'the people' and of 'Syria'. He also

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[215] Yahya Sadowski, 'The Evolution of Political Identity in Syria' in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 139, 147, 150

[216] Ismail, 'The Syrian Uprising: Imagining and Performing the Nation', p. 542

[217] Ibid, pp. 542-3

[218] Shayna Silverstein, 'Syria's Radical Dabka', *Middle East Report* 263 (2012) [online], available from: https://merip.org/2012/05/syrias-radical-dabka/ [last accessed: 3 February 2021]

[219] Ibid

explores how the Syrian government countered such framing by emphasising its own 'nationalist credentials', with both 'sides' deploying 'inclusive slogans and symbols'.[220] Enrico Bartolomei charts a similar narrative in relation to the early months of the Uprising, claiming that the protesters, 'in their public statements and founding documents…began to forge a new political language that prioritized national affiliation over ethnic, religious or sectarian identities while affirming a commitment to a civil democratic state based on equal citizenship for all components of Syria'. He notes, for instance, how demonstrators issued a code of ethics which warned against 'sectarian thinking and behaviour'. Offering further detail, Bartolomei highlights that early FSA units also 'publicly embraced principles of non-sectarianism, framing their armed confrontation as a national liberation struggle' and that the SNC, too, sought to 'present itself as the legitimate representative of all segments of the Syrian people' while accusing al-Asad of attempting to 'fragment Syrian society and drive a wedge within mixed communities'.[221] Paulo Pinto, too, has argued that the protesters rejected sectarianism, proclaiming the Syrian people to be one,[222] while Reinoud Leenders has stated that demonstrators, in the initial years, 'successfully framed their uprising as a national endeavour' and 'managed, at least temporarily, to overcome Syrian society's strong if not predominant local, regional, and transnational identities'.[223]

Finally, two authors have made the claim that this civic nationalism which emerged during the early months and years of the protests has persisted and, crucially, has taken root at the level of the 'everyday'. Adélie Chevée has conducted a study of the revolutionary print press and its deployment, over almost a decade, of symbols of civic nationalism. She explores repeated references to the nation in the titles of periodicals published by those in opposition to al-Asad, and their use of the independence flag. She also considers in depth the newspaper *Souriatna* – meaning 'our Syria' – produced from 2011 until 2018, as a representative example. She shows how the writers, editors and illustrators cultivated an emphatic discourse of cross-sectarian, national unity, arguing that its front pages reimagined the nation, in civic terms, through creative deployments of the Syrian flag and map. Her conclusion is that *Souriatna* 'illustrates

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[220] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 359

[221] Enrico Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising' in Raymond Hinnebusch and Omar Imady (eds.), *The Syrian Uprising: Domestic Origins and Early Trajectory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 230-2

[222] Pinto, 'The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict', p. 128

[223] Reinoud Leenders, '"Oh Buthaina, Oh Sha'ban – the Hawrani Is Not Hungry, We Want Freedom!": Revolutionary Framing and Mobilization at the Onset of the Syrian Uprising' in Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel (eds.), *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 258, 256

a typical pattern of identity-making that has been too infrequently examined in current scholarship on the Syrian conflict: opposition actors…formulated identity claims around civic nationalism well beyond the first months of mobilization, and even after sectarian strife and political violence increased territorial fragmentation'.[224] Her arguments are supported by Kathrin Bachleitner, who conducted 200 interviews in 2019 – 100 with Syrians who have remained in the state and 100 with those who have sought refuge outside the country – to explore 'ordinary Syrians' ideas of their state'. She argues that a clear majority of respondents, 81%, described themselves as belonging to the 'national identity category Syrian', as opposed to selecting an ethnic or religious affiliation. Moreover, when questioned as to their shared social purpose, Bachleitner detects an 'overwhelming presence of…civic rationale': 'demands for a democratic, civic state based on the rule of law and secularism, as well as for a unified, yet pluralistic, nation and society frequently appear in respondents' vision of a future Syria'. This was primarily true both for those who identified with a Syrian national identity and for those who did not, and also dominated both the responses of those who fled and those who remained. Her conclusion, therefore, is that 'from the bottom-up, and at least when extrapolating from the minds of the Syrian individuals making up this study's sample population, a civic form of nationalism seems to prevail among the Syrian people'.[225]

## 2.33 Fragmenting Syria through civil war

Nevertheless, Ola Rifai, Christopher Phillips, Raymond Hinnebusch, Bartolomei and Pinto have all compellingly explored the sectarianisation of identities within Syria during the Uprising and civil conflict. The al-Asad administration, Sunni actors and external parties are all claimed to have fomented sectarian identities in response to the crisis, and it is argued that their discourse and actions – often painted as manipulative – ultimately took hold at the level of the 'everyday', painfully dividing Syrians according to sect. Rifai, for instance, has made the argument that, once the protests began, the Syrian government painted the opposition as an anti-Alawi movement in a bid to incite their security apparatus, which remained dominated by Alawi conscripts, to take up arms against the rebels, the majority of whom were Sunni.[226]

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[224] Adélie Chevée, 'From *Suriyya al-ʿAsad* to *Suryatuna*: Civic Nationalism in the Syrian Revolutionary Print Press', *Nations and Nationalism* (forthcoming)

[225] Bachleitner, 'A "Civic" Syria? Syrians and Syrian Refugees Envision Their Nation Amid Conflict and Displacement'

[226] Rifai, 'Sunni/Alawi Identity Clashes During the Syrian Uprising: A Continuous Reproduction?', p. 245

Phillips agrees,[227] and Bartolomei also expresses accord, exploring the manner in which the government contrasted the alleged aims of the opposition with their own, supposed, focus upon nationalism: he argues that the al-Asad administration 'aimed to undermine the legitimacy of the popular Uprising by portraying the demonstrators as foreign-backed takfiris and terrorists and to raise the spectre of sectarian strife in order to present itself as the sole guarantor of Syria's national unity'.[228] Pinto offers a similar reading while Hinnebusch, likewise, argues that 'the regime…saw its best chance to survive by rallying the minorities and reinforcing the cohesiveness of its Alawi base by painting the opposition as Islamist terrorists'.[229]

Violence, seemingly inflicted by one sect upon another, is argued by a number of these writers to have entrenched sectarian identification. Rifai claims that Sunni districts were targeted by forces clad in 'identifiers of their communal belongings' while Sunni protesters were tortured by soldiers 'speaking in tough Alawi accents'.[230] Indeed, Bartolomei writes of a 'depopulation campaign aimed at forcing Sunni civilians out of insurgent-held areas using artillery shelling, air strikes, and massacres of Sunni villages and neighbourhoods' before citing Joseph Holliday's comment that this served to harden 'sectarian lines as communities group[ed] together out of fear and the need for self-protection'.[231] Pinto states agreement, exploring, for instance, the repercussions of the massacre committed in Houla, in which Alawi-dominated *shabiḥa* militias were accused of slaughtering 108 people.[232] Rifai claims that this violence inflicted, seemingly ostentatiously, by Alawis upon Sunnis 'elicited a collective radicalization of Sunni identity' and that Sunni militants, too, wrought targeted harm upon Alawi militias.[233] Pinto thus writes of the murder of Alawi villagers by elements of the FSA from mid-2012, and the proliferating trend in which 'religious and local identities became territorialized as villages and towns organized defense forces along sectarian lines'.[234] Hinnebusch additionally highlights that, as Alawis disproportionately made up the security services, it was this group which 'suffered a large proportion of casualties' and that this also served to reinforce 'their in-

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[227] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 369

[228] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 225

[229] Pinto, 'The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict', p. 129

[230] Rifai, 'Sunni/Alawi Identity Clashes During the Syrian Uprising: A Continuous Reproduction?', p. 246

[231] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 227; see: Joseph Holliday, 'The Asad Regime: From Counterinsurgency to Civil War', *Middle East Security Report* 8 (2013), p. 19

[232] Pinto, 'The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict', p. 136

[233] Rifai, 'Sunni/Alawi Identity Clashes During the Syrian Uprising: A Continuous Reproduction?', p. 246

[234] Pinto, 'The Shattered Nation: The Sectarianization of the Syrian Conflict', p. 136

group solidarity around the regime'.[235] More broadly, he also invokes this 'security dilemma', maintaining that this volatile and threatening climate 'strengthened people's identification with and reliance for protection on sectarian communities'[236] and arguing that this, in turn, 'facilitated receptivity to sectarianism at the grassroots level'.[237] Indeed, Bartolomei's overall claim is that, over time, 'a dynamic of polarization emerged, in which religious identity groups increasingly held one another collectively responsible for violations, real and perceived'.[238]

The 'sectarian narrative' of those opposed to al-Asad has also been documented and assessed. Rifai has argued that the aforementioned 'radicalization of Sunni identity' was spurred on by Sunni clerics and activists who 'accentuated the line' between the two sects.[239] Furthermore, she has written of Sunni protesters' vow to rid Syria of Alawis, and to establish an Islamic Caliphate.[240] Bartolomei has, moreover, observed that the 'first half of 2012 witnessed the appearance of a strong Salafi-jihadist current within the Syrian armed opposition that described the struggle against the Asad regime as being essentially sectarian in nature'.[241] Derogatory terms were deployed to describe al-Asad's forces, such as 'Nusayri',[242] with Bartolomei making the argument that 'this sectarian narrative aimed at fuelling perceptions of community divisions along sectarian lines in order to gain the support of Syria's predominantly Sunni population'.[243] Hinnebusch has also noted that, 'as the regime…inflicted violence on unarmed protesters, the opposition increasingly adopted anti-Alawi and Sunni sectarian discourse, and as it also militarized, sectarian Islamist ideologies became the most effective recruitment tools'.[244]

Finally, external parties have been argued to have contributed to the sectarianisation of collective identification in Syria post-2011. According to Phillips, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey 'supported militia with pronounced sectarian elements' and, as Syrian paramilitaries

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[235] Hinnebusch, 'Identity and State Formation in Multi-sectarian Societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria', p. 151
[236] Ibid
[237] Ibid
[238] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 237
[239] Rifai, 'Sunni/Alawi Identity Clashes During the Syrian Uprising: A Continuous Reproduction?', p. 246
[240] Ibid, p. 255
[241] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 233
[242] This is a derogatory term for Alawis intended to imply their worship of their former leader Muhammad ibn Nusayr (Worren, 'Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria', p. 54)
[243] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 233
[244] Hinnebusch, 'Identity and State Formation in Multi-sectarian Societies: Between Nationalism and Sectarianism in Syria', p. 151

competed for funds from the Gulf regimes, 'many adopted more Islamic and sectarian characteristics to attract support'.[245] Supporting this, Bartolomei has argued that Hezbollah and other Shia militias 'developed a political discourse entrenched in radical political Shi'ism' which, in turn, 'functioned as formidable political tools to mobilize support and justify intervention'.[246] This author has also argued that, likewise, prominent Sunni clerics outside Syria deployed a 'virulent anti-Shi'i rhetoric, characterising the Syrian Uprising as Sunni jihad against a polytheistic Alawite regime and its Shi'i allies'.[247] Lastly, Phillips has claimed that 'Western media and policy makers reinforced a sectarian reading of the conflict', assuming ethno-sectarian agendas; 'lazily' describing the al-Asad administration as Alawi or, even, Shia; and reproducing reductive maps of Syria, crudely dividing the state according to religion.[248]

Therefore, despite the persuasive arguments made that a specifically Syrian national identity, albeit with variable meaning, has served to unify Syrians since the ascendancy of Hafez al-Asad, and was re-claimed and then sustained following the 2011 protests, a range of scholars has also compellingly analysed the strength of supra- and sub-state ties within the state. Following the Uprising, it has been credibly claimed that identities in Syria have been resolutely sectarianised. It also possible to perceive numerous links with the previous section in which identity was conceptualised. The authors surveyed in this section have explored how these identities have been constructed, claiming that it has been through the proclamation of symbols, through rhetoric, through cultural practices, through violence, and through processes of Othering. While the content of these identities has received relatively less focus, these scholars have nevertheless highlighted the values, aspirations, norms, reconceived histories and myths, and narratives of suffering and fear which have come to define the bonds between Syrians, and sub-groups within Syria. We have also seen that these practices and this political language have stemmed from within the groups considered, from members of the elite together with ordinary Syrians, but also from without.

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[245] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 370
[246] Bartolomei, 'Sectarianism and the Battle of Narratives in the Context of the Syrian Uprising', p. 236
[247] Ibid
[248] Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 370

## 2.4 Academic debates on collective identities in Yemen

By comparison with Syria, group identities in Yemen have been relatively neglected in academic studies; indeed, Yemen has occupied a 'marginal status in scholarship on the Arab world'.[249] Identity is often mentioned merely in passing, without conceptualisation or deep consideration, or synonyms for the term identity are employed. This section will outline the limited number of arguments which have been developed concerning collective identification in Yemen, mentioning also those studies which seem, clearly, to be deploying cognates for the concept. I will follow a similar structure to that which I adopted in relation to Syria, briefly overviewing arguments surrounding group identity in the state prior to 2011 before considering in greater detail scholarship on Yemeni identities following the Uprising.

### 2.41 Collective identity in Yemen prior to 2011

For the few scholars who have assessed the nature of collective identification in Yemen in the years preceding the Uprising, it is sub-state ties which dominate. Scholars write of the manner in which meaning was given to, and lines drawn between, Shafii Sunni and Zaydi Shia communities: it is argued that this occurred following the Sadah wars and their attendant political rhetoric, but also in response to, for instance, the regime's valorisation of Sunnism and castigation of Zaydism, the marginalisation of self-identified Zaydis in political life, and the defensive establishment of Zaydi political parties and schools.[250] For other authors, hinting at the notion of collective identity, 'tribal affinity' and 'religious sectarianism' coalesced to provoke violence in the northern region of Sadah[251] while, more broadly, tribal rapport has been argued to form 'one component of sociopolitical identification for many Yemenis', particularly 'in areas where the state [was] institutionally weak'.[252] Yet more scholars consider 'regional' identities to be of significance. In this understanding, Yemen was fused together

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[249] Laurent Bonnefoy and Marine Poirier, 'Dynamics of the Yemeni Revolution: Contextualizing Mobilizations' in Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel (eds.), *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 228

[250] Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 149, 157, 166-7; Stacey Philbrick Yadav, 'Sectarianization, Islamist Republicanism, and International Misrecognition in Yemen' in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.), *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2017), pp. 189, 196

[251] Clive Jones, 'The Tribes that Bind: Yemen and the Paradox of Political Violence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34:12 (2011), pp. 902, 903, 906-8

[252] Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*, pp. 171, 173; Sheila Carapico, *Civil Society in Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 64

post-unification as Saleh formed exploitative and divisive patron-client relations 'with various groups in other regions of the country',[253] provoking the emergence 'of a multiplicity of competing social identities throughout the country' and 'destroying what shared identification people had developed with the state'.[254] The existence of a 'distinctive South Yemeni identity' has also been posited, infused with 'the history of the South before 1967, by the South's period as an independent state (1967-90) and by a belief that the Saleh regime after 1990 abused the unity agreements to assert northern domination and exploitation of the South'.[255]

However, in contrast, Lisa Wedeen has written in great detail of Yemeni 'national solidarities' prior to the current crisis, characterising these as episodic.[256] She charts the disputed 'political narratives of nationalism' proffered by both the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR)[257] prior to unification, and the 'nationalist work' executed by historians, poets and radio broadcasters within the same period; she highlights the content of such discourses to have been 'an ancient Arabian past' intertwined with 'the promise of Greater Yemen'.[258] Wedeen also explores more contemporary drivers of everyday performances of national affiliation, including the efforts made by the state to combine symbols of the north and south during the tenth anniversary of unification and the nationally shared moral panic following a series of murders in Sanaa.[259] Lastly, scholars have also connected the 'focus on Yemeni unity', 'the sanctity of the Yemeni republic' and the appeals made to nationalism by both Saleh and al-Huthi preceding, and during, the Sadah conflicts with the enduring 'symbolic importance of a shared Yemeni identity'.[260]

I will now turn to the limited works which have explored the development of Yemeni identities post-2011, beginning with those authors who have focused on the re-generation of national ties

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[253] Stephen W. Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 10, 13, 16, 21, 304

[254] Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, p. 170

[255] Noel Brehony, 'The Role of the PDRY in Forming a South Yemeni Identity' in Helen Lackner (ed.), *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (London: Saqi Books, 2014), pp. 19, 21; Jones, 'The Tribes that Bind: Yemen and the Paradox of Political Violence', p. 907. However, Lackner disagrees, claiming that it is 'difficult to assert that there is a coherent Southern entity' (Lackner, *Yemen in Crisis*, p. 70)

[256] Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*, p. 220

[257] South Yemen was known as the PDRY between 1967 and 1990 while the North was known as the YAR between 1962 and 1990.

[258] Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen*, pp. 40, 57

[259] Ibid, pp. 84-5, 91-2

[260] Ibid, p. 149; Maria-Louise Clausen, 'Competing for Control Over the State: The Case of Yemen', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29:3 (2018), p. 564

shared by Yemenis before turning to those who have depicted this collective Yemeni identity as having fragmented further amid the crisis.

## 2.42 Generating national ties between Yemenis through protest

Although these authors do not use the term identity, Laurent Bonnefoy and Marine Poirier describe the 2011 protests in a similar manner to Ismail's analysis of the Syrian Uprising. Bonnefoy and Poirier highlight that the concept of the civil state rapidly became a crucial reference for Yemeni demonstrators, claiming that the Yemeni Uprising 'was defined as a project for a new society centered on the rule of law, social justice, the guarantee of basic freedoms, and the need for citizens to reclaim the state and politics'.[261] It is noted, too, that members of the Zaydi youth movement, who joined the demonstrators, did not merely espouse the 'Zaydi revival cause, which would have [had] an exclusive character' but sought to defend the rights 'of all those who [had] suffered political discrimination at the hands of the regime'.[262] Deploying terminology evocative of the concept of identity, their argument is that participation in the demonstrations 'generated powerful feelings of fraternity among camp dwellers and gave rise to unprecedent collective and individual practices' including the 'promotion of shared ground rules based on mutual respect and cooperation'.[263]

Stacey Philbrick Yadav has offered a similar assessment. She has written of the 'moments of solidarity across sectarian lines' which emerged during the protests, arguing that 'the process of shared collective action during the 2011 uprising revealed substantial overlap between rival Islamist organisations'.[264] She conducted a series of interviews with activists, and attended workshops and training sessions with these young demonstrators between 2011 and 2013, and has argued that 'activists cited the quotidian work of maintaining protest spaces as constitutive of a shared activist identity that was deeply republican in its focus'.[265] She also observes that that 'there was a clear rejection of sectarianism' and that 'there were moments of explicit political coordination between Houthi and Islahi youth that were characteristic of the potential of both political movements to advance republican aims'.[266] United, according to Yadav, they

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[261] Bonnefoy and Poirier, 'Dynamics of the Yemeni Revolution: Contextualizing Mobilizations', p. 232
[262] Ibid, p. 237
[263] Ibid
[264] Yadav, 'Sectarianization, Islamist Republicanism, and International Misrecognition in Yemen', p. 186
[265] Ibid, p. 193
[266] Ibid

expressed a desire for a 'civil state', 'premised on republican notions of political accountability, popular sovereignty, and rule of law'.[267] In addition to hints of national unity, then, we can also perceive here a suggestion that a new identity arose during the protests, that fresh, *civic* and *republican* ties between protesters were generated by the demonstrations, an argument also intimated by Bonnefoy and Poirier. Finally, in a further, albeit brief, offer of support for this interpretation, for Stephen Day, the 'best hope' for Yemeni national unity 'is to build on [the] new solidarities [created] among the population during the 2011 uprisings against President Salih's regime'.[268]

## 2.43 Fragmentation: sectarianism, tribalism and regionalism

Despite her assessment that the Uprising generated powerful national ties between demonstrators, Yadav also claims that this national solidarity was then undermined by the GCC Initiative, the transition which followed, the NDC and the ensuing civil conflict. She notes that the composition of the transitional government 'gave disproportionate power to existing political parties', benefitting Islah and the former ruling party, while the Huthis and Hiraak were excluded from the administration; they also faced sanctions and asset freezes by the US and the UN.[269] Yadav then argues that a further 'mechanism by which transition planners undid the possibilities for shared republican commitments and contributed to the sectarianization of the conflict was, paradoxically, the NDC itself': the inclusion of the Huthis 'in the most toothless of the transitional institutions underscored their exclusion from institutions of transitional governance with the power to shape policy'.[270] Furthermore, her argument is that the 'military campaigns led by Houthi militias and their Salih-loyalist allies, and by the Saudi-led coalition fighting on behalf of the transitional government, have engaged in collective punishment along sectarian lines'.[271] Yadav thus concludes that 'these everyday realities of the war in Yemen have torn the social fabric in ways that may be irrecoverable' and 'a Yemen polarized along sectarian lines is now a social fact with which postwar planners will have to

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[267] Ibid, p. 194. See also: Stacey Philbrick Yadav, 'Best Friends Forever for Yemen's Revolutionaries?' in *Yemen's National Dialogue* POMEPS Briefings 19 (2013) [online], available from: https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/POMEPS_BriefBooklet19_Yemen_Web.pdf [last accessed: 18 February 2021], pp. 18-20
[268] Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union*, p. 303
[269] Ibid, p. 194
[270] Ibid, p. 195
[271] Ibid, pp. 197-8

contend'.[272] The focus within Yadav's chapter is on the means by which Yemenis have begun to identify with fellow members of their sect as opposed to the meaning of these identities.

Turning to regional identities following the 2011 crisis, Helen Lackner and Raiman al-Hamdani have claimed that, 'within the south, there are numerous groups separated both by perceived identities and by competition over the region's sparse natural resources'; their 'allegiance', in the view of Lackner and al-Hamdani, 'is first to the memory of the "national" entities of Aden and the Protectorates and second to new political institutions and movements that emerged in the decades since unification'.[273] As an example, the authors claim that, within the governorate of Mahra, a remote region with a distinct culture and Himyari language, tribal and technocratic alliances have been fostered 'based on notions of a shared apolitical identity'.[274] Offering a more wide-ranging perspective, in the analysis of Peter Salisbury, national identity now holds little sway in Yemen: his argument is that 'the reality is that most Yemenis do not support either the President *or* the northern rebels; *rather, they are part of much smaller groups with their own identity*, ideology, grievances and political goals, from secessionists in the south to Salafists in Taiz and Aden and tribal leaders in the north [second emphasis added]'.[275] Furthermore, he claims that, as the transitional period floundered, and as Yemenis experienced a 'deterioration in security, in the provision of essential services and in economic opportunity', this served to weaken 'the sense of national identity', calcifying, instead, 'local and ideological identities'.[276] Turning more precisely to the composition of these identities, Salisbury has written:

> Lowland and southern Yemenis have long seen their identities as distinct from those in the historically dominant northwestern highlands. Taizis set themselves apart from what they see as a culture of corruption, patronage and violent dominance in the northwest, and often couch their descriptions of the highlands in terms of oppositional

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[272] Ibid, p. 198

[273] Raiman Al-Hamdani and Helen Lackner, 'War and Pieces: Political Divides in Southern Yemen', *European Council on Foreign Relations* (2020) [online], available from: https://ecfr.eu/publication/war_and_pieces_political_divides_in_southern_yemen/ [last accessed: 4 February 2021]

[274] Ibid

[275] Peter Salisbury, 'Yemen: Stemming the Rise of a Chaos State', *Chatham House* (2016) [online], available from: https://www.chathamhouse.org/2016/05/yemen-stemming-rise-chaos-state [last accessed: 4 February 2021], p. 4

[276] Ibid, p. 3

identities, in which sophisticated, educated, cultured and civic-minded Taizis are contrasted with an uneducated and vulgar tribal society.[277]

Therefore, in the understanding of Salisbury, class, violence, discrimination, tribal affiliations and political values have combined, post-2011, to instil distinct characters within Yemen's various regions; this, in turn, has eroded the notion of national belonging to the state of Yemen.

To summarise, notwithstanding the convincing claims that varying forms of a Yemeni national identity have taken hold within Yemen, and were reinvigorated in 2011, academics have also presented the argument that it is sub-state identities, relating to sect, tribe and geography, which dictate collectivity in the state. As with Syria, we can perceive links to the theoretical section which preceded this one. We can see that scholars of Yemen contend that these identities have been built through rhetoric, symbolism, and commemorative events, but also through feelings of exclusion, alienation, competition and exploitation. While the content of these identities are not always considered in depth, shared experiences, values, norms and aspirations have been argued to define these identities together with re-worked histories and narratives of shared suffering. Once more, this content has been developed, and these identities have been propagated, from above and below; however, in a way which is dissimilar to Syria, none of the studies assessed in this section has considered how Yemen's peers may have contributed to the construction of its many identities.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Identity, as conceptualised within social constructivism, is an intricate and contested idea. Nevertheless, I have argued that identities are formed, and re-formed, as members of a group consider both who they are and that which they seek. Identities are further shaped by interactions with a group's peers, by the shared perceptions of a group's peers, and by the social structures within which groups operate. These shifting identities which can operate, simultaneously or concurrently, at multiple levels are infused with narratives of the past and aspirations for the future.

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[277] Ibid, p. 35

I have also demonstrated that, just as understandings of identity are complex and multifarious, so too are academic debates concerning collective identity formation in Syria and Yemen. The subject has received sustained attention by scholars of Syria: for some, since the rule of Hafez, a national, Syrian identity has been encouraged from above and absorbed from below; for others, it was the Uprising of 2011 which re-imagined the Syrian national identity, fostering ties of belonging to the state imbued with civic values. Nevertheless, yet more writers argue, in contrast, that it is pan-Arab bonds or sect-based affiliations which have eclipsed other forms of collective identification in Syria. Manipulated and promoted by political and religious leaders, from both within and outside Syria; permeated with history and given further meaning by violence, trauma, and inequality; and seemingly seized upon and performed at the level of the 'everyday', these pan- and sub-state identities have waxed and waned, with sectarianised identities compellingly argued to have been entrenched following 2011.

Far fewer scholars have considered in depth the meaning of collective identity in Yemen. A specifically Yemeni form of belonging has been claimed to have been inspired and fostered, by the government, by poets and historians, and by citizens; moreover, similarly to Syria, it has been argued that the protesters of 2011 created a new, more civic, vision of the nation and of the meaning of the connections between Yemenis. However, sect identities, a tribal identity and various local, geographically motivated identities have also been posited to hold power within the territory: with the former, the discourse and calculating behaviour of members of the political and religious elite is emphasised while discrimination, suffering, and the perception of being under threat is also claimed to have driven this sub-state identification within Yemen. In relation to the latter, the focus of scholars is on the distinct and divergent experiences of Yemenis according to geography, particularly within the south.

Mapping these arguments within this chapter will allow me to compare existing understandings of Syrian and Yemeni identities with those identities which appear to have been summoned within and shaped through the processes of mediation under investigation in this thesis. I will be able to consider whether the socially constructed identities of Syria and Yemen mutated in response to the mediation attempts, and to consider which level, or levels, of identity appear to have been prompted to rise to the fore. Having charted this scholarship, I will be able to make an original contribution to this body of work, together with an original contribution to mediation studies. It is mediation studies to which I will turn next.

# Chapter 3. Mediation and Identity

## 3.1 Introduction

This thesis will explore the relationship between two concepts: mediation and identity. It will do so through the prism of the following over-arching research question: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* In Chapter One, I assessed prevailing definitions of mediation and reflected, in particular, on the alleged altruism and compassion inherent to the practice. There, I described mediation as a process of conflict resolution in which a third party intervenes in either an inter-state or civil war, and attempts to assist the conflict parties in reaching an acceptable settlement. This form of conflict management is voluntary and demands the consent of the conflict parties. I also noted that, while mediation does not entail the use of physical force nor should mediators invoke the authority of the law, mediators may, nevertheless, pursue a diverse range of strategies in pursuit of a peaceful settlement to violence. In Chapter Two, I operationalised identity, drawing upon social constructivist texts to paint a complex rendering of the concept. I defined identity as a collectively shared construction of a group: a distinctive image of selfhood which reveals both that which the group is, and that which the group seeks. I explored the ways in which identities may be sculpted and maintained, their content, their mutability, the various levels at which identities may operate, and the manner in which norms may serve to both regulate and constitute identities.

This chapter will chart that which we already know about the connection between mediation and identity. I have identified a number of studies which consider these two concepts, including those in which identity is merely one of many variables explored and those which focus upon clear cognates for identity and norms. I have divided these studies into two groups. The first group, which I will assess in Section 3.2, considers the impact of identity upon mediation and, thus, explores a reversal of the chain I will assess through my own research question. This body of scholarship attempts to uncover how the identities, of both the conflict parties and the mediators, may serve to shape various aspects of the process of mediation including the outcome of a given mediation attempt, the type of mediation strategy pursued, and the likelihood of mediation occurring. In addition to being united by their focus on the possible influence identity may have on mediation, these works are also united in the methods deployed and, relatedly, in the manner in which identity is defined. These studies explore substantial

quantitative datasets and, therefore, are more confidently equipped to tease out causal links. However, this approach means that identity tends to be operationalised in such a way that its more intricate and fluid characteristics are necessarily sacrificed. As I will explain, it would prove incoherent to attempt to build upon these findings in the light of both the conception of identity deployed in this study and my decision, more broadly, to be guided by a social constructivist approach.

Section 3.3 will then explore a second group of scholarship which, once more, considers mediation and identity. This second group differs from the first in that the scholarship contained within it echoes my research question, exploring the influence of mediation upon identity, and, moreover, it appears to conceive of identity in a way which aligns with social constructivist theorising. This second body of literature, however, contains far fewer studies than the first and is dominated by scholarship concerning norms; the majority of the works which incorporate norms, furthermore, neglect to connect their findings to identity. From these works I will derive three hypotheses, and it is through the assessment of these hypotheses that I will structure my own analysis of the data I have gathered and analysed. These studies will function as the foundation upon which I will build my own arguments. As will become apparent in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I will, variously, reinforce, enrich and challenge the hypotheses isolated in Section 3.3.

In Chapter One, I stated that the findings of this thesis will be used to intervene in two academic debates. The first debate concerns scholarship surrounding the development of Syrian and Yemeni identities post-2011, and this literature was mapped in Chapter Two. The second debate concerns impartiality and power in mediation. Therefore, the final section of this chapter, Section 3.4, will provide an outline of the arguments which have been developed surrounding the roles of impartiality and power within mediation. Furthermore, I will highlight that, while ideational forces have been incorporated within these discussions, specific considerations of identity have not. In Chapter Eight, I will return to these debates in greater depth, demonstrating that my findings contribute to our understanding of impartiality and power in the context of mediation. In turn, this supports my contention that the concept of identity, understood in social constructivist terms, must be better integrated within the analytical frameworks of mediation scholars.

## 3.2 Charting and interrogating the possible influence of identity on mediation

This section will scrutinise the first group of studies identified: those which explore, through quantitative methods, the effects of identity upon various aspects of the process of mediation. The identities assessed in these studies include both those of the conflict parties and those of the mediator. I will organise these studies according to their dependent variable, considering the apparent influence of identity upon mediation outcome, mediation strategy, and mediation occurrence, before concluding the section with studies which draw descriptive inferences surrounding those identities which appear most likely to mediate. In addition to highlighting the array of findings reached, together with the disagreements between the authors, I will also begin by demonstrating that the manner in which identity is captured within these studies does not align with the scholarship explored in Chapter Two, and conclude by contrasting the deterministic nature of these studies with my own, constitutive enquiry.

### 3.21 How is identity conceptualised within these studies?

How does identity tend to be represented within these studies? The manner in which the concept is captured varies. For instance, in order to explore the effects of identity in the seminal contribution to mediation studies of Jacob Bercovitch et al., published in 1991, mediators are ranked 'along a dimension ranging from government leaders to representatives of international organizations'.[278] This trend is indicative, and is continued in other works by Bercovitch and his collaborators: for example, Bercovitch and Alison Houston refer to the identity of both the disputants and the mediator, with the former involving the political and social structures of the parties and the latter the 'rank' of the actor in question. Political systems are divided into four categories (monarchy, democracy, one-party state and military junta), the 'domestic homogeneity' is measured according to the 'size and degree of fragmentation of ethnic, cultural or religious majorities/minorities' while the mediators are distributed across the following identity groups: private individual, representative or leader of a regional or international organization, or small or large state.[279] It is notable that different operationalisations of identity are deployed for mediators by comparison with the conflict parties, a decision which is not

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[278] Bercovitch et al., 'Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations', p. 15

[279] Jacob Bercovitch and Alison Houston, 'Why Do They Do It Like This? An Analysis of the Factors Influencing Mediation Behaviour in International Conflicts', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44:2 (2000), pp. 178, 180, 187, 190

explained. Meanwhile, Karl De Rouen et al. interpret the term identity to mean 'who', or 'what', the mediator is: for instance, whether the mediator is the 'representative of an international organization' or a 'private individual'.[280]

We can therefore see that academics contained within this group of scholarship have deemed the type or rank of a mediator, and the political and social systems of the disputing parties, to signify the identities of the actors embroiled in the mediation events they study. Further contributions incorporate similar variables, operationalised in a highly similar manner, into their analyses but do not use the term 'identity' to encapsulate the variables they investigate. Nevertheless, I will also explore the findings of these studies in this section. Moreover, a number of scholars purport to investigate the impact of 'culture' upon mediation. This variable is often operationalised in a markedly similar way to identity and, therefore, those studies which do so will also be assessed in this section. Culture, however, is also operationalised in slightly different ways. Russell Leng and Patrick Regan reduce the concept to the two facets of 'religion' and 'political culture', with the latter divided into the three categories of democratic, communist and non-communist authoritarian.[281] Within a study authored by Bercovitch and Ole Elgström, however, five dimensions are considered in their attempt to assess the impact of culture upon mediation outcomes: geographical proximity, political system, political rights, civil liberties, and religion.[282] Lastly, for Kanisha Bond and Faten Ghosn, political culture is quantified in terms of regime type while a state's social culture is measured across three dimensions: dominant religion, dominant ethnicity and dominant language.[283] I will consider the ramifications of these operationalisations in the conclusion to this section.

## 3.22 How does identity influence the practice of mediation?

I will now assess the apparent influence of identity, as conceptualised above, upon mediation. I will begin with its effect on mediation outcome. Bercovitch et al. argue that the impact of the

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[280] Karl De Rouen et al., 'Introducing the Civil Wars Mediation (CWM) Dataset', *Journal of Peace Research* 48:5 (2011), p. 665

[281] Russell Leng and Patrick Regan, 'Social and Political Cultural Effects on the Outcomes of Mediation in Militarised Interstate Disputes', *International Studies Quarterly* 47:3 (2003), pp. 438-40

[282] Jacob Bercovitch and Ole Elgström, 'Culture and International Mediation: An Empirical Assessment', in Jacob Bercovitch (ed.), *Theory and Practice of International Mediation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 239

[283] Kanisha Bond and Faten Ghosn, 'Cultural Similarity and Mediation Offers in Interstate Conflicts, 1945 – 1995', *International Negotiation* 20:2 (2015), pp. 280-1

identity of the mediator upon outcome is 'not completely clear' but the claim is nevertheless made that it is possible that a government leader 'has a better chance of mediating successfully'.[284] Also concerning the type or rank of mediator, Derrick Frazier and William Dixon argue that international governmental organisations are more likely to achieve success, followed by coalitions of states and then, finally, single-state actors. However, they argue all three can be effective.[285] Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner, on the other hand, contend that, unless non-state actors are involved, mediated agreements tend to be short-lived.[286]

Concerning the identities of the conflict parties, and their impact upon outcome, Bercovitch and Ole Elgström ascertain no relationship between the nature of a country's political system and the outcome of a given mediation attempt[287] but Bercovitch et al. propose that disputes involving multi-party regimes may be slightly more amenable to mediation than those involving other forms.[288] Supporting this latter finding, Russell Leng and Patrick Regan claim that mediation is more likely to succeed when parties share democratic political cultures.[289] Leng and Regan also conclude that mediation is more likely to succeed when the parties to the conflict both exhibit similar 'social cultures'[290] while Bercovitch and Elgström offer support for this analysis; in the second article, a very strong relationship is found between cultural differences and mediation outcomes, with divergence leading to fewer successful cases of conflict mediation.[291]

Scholars have also explored the causal relationship between identity and mediation strategy, and between identity and the likelihood that mediation will take place. Regarding the former, Bercovitch and Houston do not find the identity of the mediator to be significant in dictating mediation strategy.[292] Turning, now, to mediation occurrence, the focus has almost always been

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[284] Bercovitch et al., 'Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations', p. 15
[285] Derrick Frazier and William Dixon, 'Third-party Intermediaries and Negotiated Settlements, 1946 – 2000', Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds.) *International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches and Findings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)
[286] Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner, 'Overcoming Obstacles to Peace: The Contribution of Mediation to Short-lived Conflict Settlements', *International Studies Quarterly* 50:4 (2006)
[287] Jacob Bercovitch and Ole Elgström, 'Culture and International Mediation: An Empirical Assessment'
[288] Bercovitch et al., 'Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations'
[289] Russell Leng and Patrick Regan, 'Social and Political Cultural Effects on the Outcomes of Mediation in Militarised Interstate Disputes'
[290] Ibid
[291] Bercovitch and Elgström, 'Culture and International Mediation: An Empirical Assessment'
[292] Jacob Bercovitch and Alison Houston, 'Why Do They Do It Like This? An Analysis of the Factors Influencing Mediation Behaviour in International Conflicts', pp. 178, 180, 187, 190

upon the identities of the conflict parties. Thus, Burcu Savun claims that disputes involving democratic states are less likely to receive mediation;[293] this is an argument supported by Sara Mitchell et al. in which it is contended that democracies are less likely to be involved in claims between two other democracies.[294] J. Michael Greig argues that, within enduring conflicts, the occurrence of a polity change in one of the rivals within the previous twenty-four months, regardless of the nature of the shift, increases the likelihood that the rivals will request mediation.[295] However, in contrast to the findings of Savun, he argues that third parties appear to be drawn to democratic polity changes only.[296] Also alluding to the significance of democracy, Kyle Beardsley makes the argument that the potential of an adversary being negatively received by their domestic audience following a peace settlement increases the likelihood that third party involvement will feature in the conflict management process while the potential that the disputant will have to make concessions in order to reach a settlement has the same effect.[297] Lastly, Bond and Ghosn claim mediation offers are more likely to be extended when all participants in the peace process are culturally similar.[298]

Finally, large quantitative datasets have also been explored to infer descriptive conclusions surrounding identity and mediation. Therefore, De Rouen et al. conclude that the UN is the leading entity engaged in the mediation of civil wars, followed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the EU, and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).[299] Furthermore, Savun claims that major powers are more likely to mediate international conflicts.[300] An array of, often contradictory, findings have therefore been developed concerning the possible impact of identity upon a number of aspects of the mediation process.

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[293] Burcu Savun, 'Mediator Types and the Effectiveness of Information-Provision Strategies in the Resolution of International Conflict' in Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds.), *International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches and Findings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 108
[294] Sara Mitchell et al., 'Practicing Democratic Community Norms: Third-Party Conflict Management and Successful Settlements' in Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds.), *International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches and Findings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)
[295] J. Michael Greig, 'Stepping into the Fray: When Do Mediators Mediate?', *American Journal of Political Science* 49:2 (2005)
[296] Ibid
[297] Kyle Beardsley, *The Mediation Dilemma* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011)
[298] Bond and Faten Ghosn, 'Cultural Similarity and Mediation Offers in Interstate Conflicts, 1945 – 1995',
[299] De Rouen et al., 'Introducing the Civil Wars Mediation (CWM) Dataset', p. 665
[300] Savun, 'Mediator Types and the Effectiveness of Information-Provision Strategies in the Resolution of International Conflict'

### 3.23 Key differences between these studies and the approach of this thesis

Chapter Two presented a lengthy discussion of the concept of identity, charting its conceptualisation by social constructivist theorists. The collectively narrated experiences and aspirations of a people were argued to give meaning to the bonds which join together a group. As I noted in sub-section 3.21, a number of the operationalisations deployed within the works surveyed in this section certainly hint at these themes. However, the studies are not able to consider many crucial elements within the concept of identity. These include its intersubjectivity, the possibility that multiple identities may be simultaneously held by a group, and the manner in which identities may be debated and contested provoking shifts in shared selfhood. Furthermore, the aims of the majority of the interventions discussed in this section are deterministic. The authors enquire into patterns and appear to seek 'rules' dictating the occurrence, process and outcome of mediation, asking whether the identity, of both mediators and disputants, dictates mediation success, mediation strategy, and mediation acceptance. However, Chapter Two highlighted that social constructivism cannot subscribe to such 'mechanical positivist conceptions of causality'.[301]

Isolating a series of hypotheses from the studies charted in this section, and then assessing their validity in relation to the two cases of peacemaking under investigation in this thesis, would contradict the conceptualisation of identity proposed in Chapter Two and, moreover, would not adhere to the sequencing proposed within my own research question; I will explore the influence of mediation upon identity as opposed to the influence of identity upon mediation. It would also contravene the broader constructivist approach to causality. It is for this reason that I will use a second group of studies to guide my own analysis. These studies, while more limited in number, do not employ strict, deterministic language, they tend to explore identity in a social constructivist manner and, moreover, they consider the effect of mediation upon identity. It is from these works that I will derive three hypotheses which will guide the analysis of the data gathered in this thesis.

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[301] Jackson and Sørenson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, p. 213

## 3.3 Mediation and socially constructed identity: deriving three hypotheses for exploration

Roland Kostić has theorised that 'the creation of a state identity' forms a crucial element within the 'liberal peace model'.[302] As third-party peacebuilders impose 'state institutions, legislation, democratisation and human rights protection', they may also seek to impose an 'externally constructed national identity onto existing ethnonational communities in order to promote legitimacy for the [newly] created state institutions among the population'.[303] However, Kostić proposes that 'the identity-building component of external peacebuilding may…exacerbate the societal security dilemma which ethnic groups face in terms of threats to the continued existence of their identities and cultures':[304] 'in cases where members of ethno-national communities possess a vivid sense of community, often as a result of persecution or violent conflict, attempts to impose the western type of nation-state as a universal and normatively self-evident standard will reinforce ethnic solidarity and sharpen ethnic differences'.[305] The potential for 'societal reparation' is thus hindered as ethnic groups become further 'securitised', turning to their leaders to demand the protection of 'the identity of the group'.[306] Kostić has written of the manipulation and dishonesty inherent with this practice: external nation-building is concealed as liberal peacebuilding and 'wrapped in a veil of cosmopolitan ethics of assisting others'.[307] In brief, he contends that the process of peacebuilding may shape the identities of conflict parties; indeed, peacebuilders may inflict particular identities, and particularly national identities, upon conflict-riven states, while shrouding this practice from view.

Similarly, Stefanie Kappler has argued that 'representation', which she defines as a 'way of creating and (re)framing one's own or another person's identity', constitutes 'a powerful tool'

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[302] Roland Kostić, *Ambivalent Peace: External Peacebuilding: Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden, Report No. 78 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitetsstryckeriet, 2007), p. 16. The 'liberal peace' can be thought of as peace processes aimed towards encouraging the establishment of multi-party democratic systems and promoting 'the rule of law, human rights, free and globalised markets and neo-liberal development' (Oliver Richmond, 'The Problem of Peace: Understanding the "Liberal Peace"', *Conflict, Security and Development* 6:3 (2006), p. 292).

[303] Kostić, *Ambivalent Peace: External Peacebuilding: Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, pp. 18-9

[304] Ibid, p. 16

[305] Roland Kostić, 'Nationbuilding as an Instrument of Peace? Exploring Local Attitudes Towards International Nationbuilding and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Civil Wars* 10:4 (2008), p. 385

[306] Kostić, *Ambivalent Peace: External Peacebuilding: Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 19

[307] Roland Kostić, 'American Nation-Building Abroad: Exceptional Powers, Broken promises and the Making of "Bosnia"' in Mikael Eriksson and Roland Kostić, *Mediation and Liberal Peacebuilding: Peace From the Ashes of War?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 24

within peacebuilding' and operates as a means of reconfiguring societies.[308] Peacebuilding agencies can deploy representations to suppress the complexity of societies, and render them 'compatible with the idea of peace that is imagined and implemented'.[309] Nevertheless, such impositions can provoke 'counter-representations'; for instance, Kappler explores the invocations made, by a number of Bosnian agencies, of 'local society as shaped by its peaceful, socialist past with a high degree of solidarity among people'. She claims that this 'can be seen as a reaction to the discourses of numerous international peacebuilding actors, who are eager to create a *new* society, dissociated from its history and memory [emphasis in original]'.[310] Thus, as 'local' and 'international' actors develop both competing and/or cooperative imagery, peacebuilding processes can intervene in 'the development of alternative identities and representations of society'.[311] Once more, we can perceive the view that peacebuilding may intercede in processes of identity construction. In the arguments of Kappler, not only can peacebuilders corral societies into certain identities but this process, in turn, can provoke further identity contestation as communities resist the narratives espoused by external actors.

Kostić and Kappler focus on peace*building* as opposed to peace*making*. To what extent have explorations of peacemaking, a category of conflict management which encompasses mediation, considered and forged similar arguments? In other words, what do we already know about the possible influence of mediation upon socially constructed identity? This section will assess a series of studies in detail, all of which begin to develop arguments surrounding the connection between mediation and identity. From these studies, I will derive three hypotheses for exploration in this thesis. Assessing these hypotheses will permit me to forge a broader argument concerning the possible influence of mediation upon identity.

### 3.31 Hypothesis 1: Conflict parties may seek to legitimise their identities through participating in mediation

To begin, Karin Aggestam has explored the interplay between mediation and identity and, in contrast to the works surveyed in Section 3.2, this author conceptualises identity in a similar

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[308] Stefanie Kappler, 'Liberal Peacebuilding's Representation of 'the Local': The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina', Oliver Richmond and Audra Mitchell (eds.), *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 260
[309] Ibid, p. 263
[310] Ibid, pp. 268-9
[311] Ibid, p. 272. See also: Stefanie Kappler, 'The Dynamic Local: Delocalisation and (Re-)localisation in the Search for Peacebuilding Identity', *Third World Quarterly* 36:5 (2015), pp. 875-89

manner to social constructivists. For this author, identity is thought of as mutable and as being infused with narratives of past trauma. Her focus is upon protracted conflict: accompanied by illustrations drawn from the Palestine-Israel dispute and former US Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to mediate a resolution between 2013 and 2014, Aggestam makes a series of nuanced observations. Firstly, this author acknowledges that 'conflicting parties' preferences and interests are infused with identity politics' which, in turn, 'include claims for recognition and legitimacy'.[312] Recognition, for Aggestam, is intertwined with 'how the past, present and future are perceived by the parties'; particularly in the context of prolonged wars, groups seek acceptance, from their adversaries, of their narratives surrounding the conflict, narratives which form constituent elements of their identities.[313] Without such recognition, there will be 'a dissonance between the self-image' of groups 'and the image' which groups 'perceive others' have given them.[314] Moreover, such a 'denial of recognition' can be perceived 'as an existential threat'.[315] Indeed, in Aggestam's view, 'in protracted conflicts, the parties tend to hold diametrically opposed memories of conflict and perceptions of historical injustices' and this can 'constitute a strong driving force for the prolongation of conflict'.[316]

Citing Oliver Richmond,[317] Aggestam then claims that 'peace negotiations may' form the backdrop to 'severe contestations where the parties strive to achieve recognition and international legitimacy first, and compromise and conflict resolution second'.[318] In such instances, material incentives or sanctions may not address the resolution attempt: 'offering material benefits in compensation for deeper cultural values, which are linked to identity questions, may be seen as an insult by the parties'.[319] Indeed, Aggestam draws on the claims of Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod,[320] together with Andrew Schaap[321] and Patchen Markell,[322] to argue that 'mediators should', instead, 'encourage the parties to directly confront' their

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[312] Karin Aggestam, 'Peace Mediation and the Minefield of International Recognition Games', *International Negotiation* 20 (2015), p. 495
[313] Ibid
[314] Ibid, p. 501
[315] Ibid
[316] Ibid, p. 505
[317] Oliver Richmond, 'The Linkage Between Devious Objectives and Spoiling Behaviour in Peace Processes' in Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond (eds.), *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution* (Tokyo: UN University Press, 2006), pp. 66-8
[318] Aggestam, 'Peace Mediation and the Minefield of International Recognition Games', p. 503
[319] Ibid
[320] Scott Atran and Robert Axelrod, 'Reframing Sacred Values', *Negotiation Journal* 24:3 (2008)
[321] Andrew Schaap, 'The Proto-Politics of Reconciliation: Lefort and the Aporia of Forgiveness in Arendt and Derrida', *Australia Journal of Political Science* 41:4 (2006)
[322] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

historical grievances.[323] Disputants must be encouraged to 'reflect upon the diversity of historical experiences, [and] to re-evaluate national myths' and, following this, 'strike a historical compromise' based upon mutually acceptable definitions of 'fairness and justice'.[324]

However, Aggestam further cautions that, 'while the challenge of recognition needs to be addressed, mediators should at the same time strive to move beyond victimhood and historical grievances'.[325] A focus upon these may 'result in too much focus on the other and in antagonistic battles of who is the rightful victim in the conflict'.[326] Therefore, 'mediators should give appropriate attention to the struggle of recognition, but also to the ways they can assist the parties to acknowledge their untenable ontological conditions and political vulnerabilities in the conflict'.[327] After all, Aggestam further notes that conflict parties, 'in their quest for recognition', may accept a seat at the table 'primarily because it generates recognition and international legitimacy';[328] unless mediators are able to support conflict parties in listening to, and understanding, the experiences of one another, and facilitate the use of these narratives within an agreement, the peace process may be manipulated by the disputants and used as a space in which their oppositional identities, and antagonism towards their adversary, becomes entrenched.

Aggestam thus draws an intriguing image in which the identities of the conflict parties may drive their very participation in mediation: third-party peacemaking may be viewed and targeted as an arena in which groups demand the legitimisation of their identity and its attendant narratives. She also suggests, therefore, that mediation may serve to mould identity. This is apparent through her implication that the identities of the conflict parties may be recognised, or undermined, through the process of mediation but, also, through her counsel that identities must be confronted and reflected upon within negotiations. The crucial argument within Aggestam's study is that mediation may shape the identities of the conflict parties by constituting a space in which disputants may broadcast and develop their identities in search of legitimacy. To return to my own area of focus, I will therefore assess, in Chapter Five, the following hypothesis: *conflict parties may seek to legitimise their identities through*

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323 Aggestam, 'Peace Mediation and the Minefield of International Recognition Games', p. 504
324 Ibid, p. 505
325 Ibid, p. 510
326 Ibid
327 Ibid
328 Ibid

*participating in mediation*. By offering a response, I will build upon the suggestions of Aggestam, proposing three further ways in which mediation, identity construction and legitimacy can be said to intertwine. These three interventions, in turn, will support my overall contention that mediation might indeed shape identity.

### 3.32 Hypothesis 2: Mediators can use mediation to instigate normative change on the part of the conflict parties and this, in turn, can shape the identities of the conflict parties

The previous chapter argued that norms are intertwined with socially constructed identity; to reiterate briefly, norms both regulate identities, dictating appropriate behaviour, and constitute identities, defining a group's character and image. While constructed collective identity has been relatively neglected within mediation studies, the study of norms occupies a burgeoning place within the field. To summarise, it has increasingly been recognised that 'international peace mediators operate within a normative universe' and that, 'in interaction with the negotiating parties and other stakeholders, [mediators] are constantly involved in the application, creation and adaptation of different norms on various levels, whether consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly'.[329] Scholars suggest that mediation is, 'unequivocally', a foreign policy tool 'that can be used to diffuse norms'[330] and, moreover, that 'mediators' mandates have progressively extended from their core task of ending violence by assisting conflict parties to find a mutually acceptable agreement to upholding specific norms associated with durable peace agreements, such as human rights, gender equality, and inclusivity'.[331] Mediation processes have been characterised as 'an opportune time to promote international norms'[332] while it has also been posited that mediators 'inevitably' bring with them their own normative agenda to conflict resolution, and that this agenda must 'condition the establishment of an eventual normative framework that is expected to regulate the conflict and relations between conflict parties'.[333] In this sub-section, I will explore the variety of

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[329] Philipp Kastner, '*Glocal* Peace Mediators as Norm Translators', *Swiss Political Science Review* 26:4 (2020), p. 365

[330] Siniša Vuković, 'Norm Diffusion in International Peace Mediation' in Catherine Turner and Martin Wählisch (eds.), *Rethinking Peace Mediation* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021), p. 48

[331] Sara Hellmüller et al., 'How Norms Matter in Mediation: An Introduction', *Swiss Political Science Review* 26:4 (2020), p. 345

[332] Sara Hellmüller et al., 'Are Mediators Norm Entrepreneurs?', *swisspeace* Working Paper No. 3 (2017) [online], available from: https://www.swisspeace.ch/assets/publications/downloads/Working-Papers/b59c7cb279/Are-Mediators-Norm-Entrepreneurs-17-swisspeace-sara_hellmueller-julia_palmiano_federer-jamie_pring.pdf [last accessed: 4 February 2021], p. 6

[333] Siniša Vuković, 'Peace Mediators as Norm Entrepreneurs: The EU's Norm Diffusion Strategy in Montenegro's Referendum on Independence', *Swiss Political Science Review* 26:4, p. 453

arguments which have been developed concerning the interrelationship between mediation and norms together with the one occasion on which this relationship has then been linked to identity construction. From these works I will derive a second hypothesis for assessment in Chapter Six.

What kind of norms might be pursued in mediation? In 2015, Sara Hellmüller et al. attempted to categorise those norms which they perceived to be at work within mediation, distinguishing between 'content-related and process-related norms; between settled and unsettled norms; and between definitional and non-definitional norms'. By content-related norms, the authors denote that which might 'be negotiated during a mediation process, and…will eventually figure in the final peace agreement' whereas by process-related norms the authors are referring to 'how a mediation process is planned and conducted'; here, they offer as examples 'norms around inclusivity or the impartiality of the mediator'.[334] Settled norms are those which are likely to be 'internalized' and difficult to contravene whereas unsettled norms 'can be overridden without justification'.[335] Lastly, definitional norms pertain to the very nature of mediation; for example, 'the right to life' can, in the view of Hellmüller et al. be considered to be a 'content-related definitional norm in mediation' as 'the objective of a mediation process is based on norms that value a non-violent resolution of conflicts over military action'.[336] The notion is that any norm identified as operating within a third-party peace process will fit into each of these binaries. However, it also worth noting that Hellmuller et al. have also specifically commented that mediators 'are increasingly faced with normative demands reflecting the *liberal norms* of their mandate-givers [emphasis added]'.[337]

How might norms be pursued within mediation? An early study, published in 1991 by Brian Mandell and Brian Tomlin, explores the manner in which a mediator can instigate normative change in order to influence conflict resolution, illustrating the claims made with examples drawn from Henry Kissinger's mediation activities between Egypt and Israel in the period 1973-76. The authors contend that Kissinger was able to foster three norms to which both Israel and Egypt began to adhere, the norm of reciprocity, the norm of functional cooperation, and

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[334] Sara Hellmüller et al., 'The Role of Norms in International Mediation', *swisspeace* and *NOREF* (2015) [online], available from:
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3bba5eeac53a8f455f351617aeaf195e.pdf [last accessed: 4 February 2021], p. 5
[335] Ibid, p. 6
[336] Ibid, pp. 6-7
[337] Hellmüller et al., 'Are Mediators Norm Entrepreneurs?', p. 9

the norm of mediation negotiation,[338] and that this was achieved through the pursuit of four strategies. Firstly, they argue that Kissinger 'generated new learning by altering the preference structures of the parties', achieving this through 'pressing, compensation and integration strategies';[339] 'pressing' can be defined as the act of reducing 'the set of non-agreement alternatives available to the parties', 'compensation' entails 'increasing the number of agreement possibilities' and 'integration' involves 'the identification of a solution within a potential zone of agreement'.[340] Secondly, Mandell and Tomlin contend that Kissinger 'fostered repetitive behaviour by encouraging the parties to invest in a process of incremental peace-building whereby satisfaction with the successful implementation of an initial agreement generated sufficient momentum and incentive to manage greater risks of accommodation with third party assistance'.[341] Thirdly, the former US Secretary of State 'consistently rewarded new learning by compensating the parties with substantial financial and military aid and by committing the United States to guarantee compliance with all agreements reached by the parties'.[342] Finally, Kissinger 'facilitated congruence' by 'compelling the parties to make public their new intentions to the international community at large'.[343]

Siniša Vuković has also posited that norms can 'be diffused'[344] through mediation, illustrating his claims by exploring the mediation efforts of the EU in Montenegro between 2002 and 2006. Vuković explores a further practice through which a norm may be diffused within mediation: that which he terms 'reframing'. Within this process, according to Vuković, a normative solution to a given conflict is grounded within an existing normative system: in other words, the appropriateness of a resolution is explained to the conflict parties by the mediator, and presented as aligning with the normative inclinations of the disputants.[345] In a crucial departure from Mandell and Tomlin, and in an insight which aligns more closely with Aggestam, Vuković argues that 'mediators do not resort to material resources that create artificial pay-off structures, but only resort to discursive techniques aimed at defining the new perimeters within

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[338] Brian Mandell and Brian Tomlin, 'Mediation in the Development of Norms to Manage Conflict: Kissinger in the Middle East', *Journal of Peace Research* 28:1 (1991), p. 51
[339] Ibid, p. 53
[340] Ibid, p. 46
[341] Ibid, pp. 53-4
[342] Ibid, p. 54
[343] Ibid
[344] Vuković, 'Peace Mediators as Norm Entrepreneurs: The EU's Norm Diffusion Strategy in Montenegro's Referendum on Independence', p. 449
[345] Ibid, p. 457

which a solution may sought'.[346] Nevertheless, mediators may deploy 'soft power in the form of relations, legitimacy and emulation, in order to strengthen the justification for normative claims'.[347]

Norm diffusion through reframing is thus considered, by Vuković, to constitute 'a very proactive and assertive process performed by peacemaking norm entrepreneurs'.[348] However, offering a different perspective, Hellmüller has also suggested that norms are '*inter-subjectively constructed* between international and domestic actors [emphasis added]'; she argues that, in the context of the Geneva Peace Process and the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), the Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) and Syrian civil society actors negotiated the meaning of a particular norm. Her claim is that the OSE's interpretation prevailed thus decreasing 'the legitimacy of the CSSR in the perspective of civil society actors'.[349]

Having explored the types of norms which might be promoted within mediation, together with how they might be encouraged, I will now consider *why* norms might be encouraged, together with their intended and unintended effects. The overall argument of Mandell and Tomlin is that, during a mediation attempt, conflict parties may be compelled to adopt new norms. These new norms can come to define the relationship between the conflict parties, thus facilitating the reaching of a solution. Vuković, however, focuses both on the relationship between the disputants together with the negotiated outcome of the mediation attempt. His argument is that norms can be diffused by mediators within a mediation attempt in order to reduce tensions, to regulate relations between conflict parties, and to persuade conflict parties to pursue particular outcomes.

Turning to unintentional effects, Philipp Kastner has suggested that 'pushing a normative agenda too explicitly can affect' the 'legitimacy' of mediators 'and as a result, they might be sidelined by the negotiating parties'.[350] Offering support, Hellmüller et al. held interviews with 22 mediators, and they claim that these peacemakers 'described being constantly lobbied

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[346] Ibid
[347] Ibid
[348] Ibid, p. 457
[349] Sara Hellmüller, 'Meaning-Making in Peace-Making: The Inclusion Norm at the Interplay Between the United Nations and Civil Society in the Syrian Peace Process', *Swiss Political Science Review* 26:4 (2020), p. 423; see also: Jenny Lorentzen, 'Women's Inclusion in the Malian Peace Negotiations: Norms and Practices', *Swiss Political Science Review* 26:4 (2020), p. 501
[350] Kastner, '*Glocal* Peace Mediators as Norm Translators', p. 379

during peace processes' to include various normative provisions. However, those interviewed by Hellmüller et al. criticised this practice, arguing that such demands both neglect the need to work collaboratively with the conflict parties and, moreover, overestimate the 'power of the mediator'.[351] Furthermore, these authors found that 'most' of the mediators interviewed deemed it 'inappropriate' to encourage conflict parties to 'change their behavior' to emulate the normative inclinations of the mediators.[352]

A final intervention considers not only the role of norms within mediation but, moreover, the manner in which this aspect of mediation may have *an effect upon the identities of the conflict parties*. Kostić has characterised the US peacemaking intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), from early 1994, as 'a vivid example of the projection of American norms of civic nation-building in the Balkans'.[353] Briefly, Kostić holds that 'at an early stage the American mediators attempted through discursive practices and framings to *construct the recipient subject of their policies*, the Bosnian nation occupying the territory of Bosnia [emphasis added]'.[354] This author provides a number of examples of the norms promoted and the manner in which they were encouraged; for instance, he highlights that, in February 1994, the American administration expressed their support for 'a formal federation between Bosnian Croats and the Bosniak-led Bosnian government in Sarajevo', and that this federation formed 'a significant aspect of efforts to establish a balance against Serb power on the ground, as well as a way to give the Bosnian Muslims and Croats a single voice at the negotiating table'.[355] A second example given by Kostić is the manner in which much of the new BiH constitution 'was written by American legal experts projecting their own constitutional and political norms'.[356] Indeed, Kostić cites a US diplomat involved in the process, who argued that the mediation efforts sought to entrench a 'framework of society that followed liberal norms of democracy, free market economy and human rights';[357] the US thus pursued, through the promotion of norms

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[351] Hellmüller et al., 'The Role of Norms in International Mediation', p. 12
[352] Ibid. However, Mikael Eriksson and Kostić have argued that 'the normative element of a peace process is rarely publicly articulated'; on the contrary, the means by which norms are promoted are often 'concealed or disguised' (Mikael Eriksson and Roland Kostić, 'Peacemaking and Peacebuilding: Two Ends of a Tail' in Mikael Eriksson and Roland Kostić, *Mediation and Liberal Peacebuilding: Peace From the Ashes of War?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 10)
[353] Kostić, 'American Nation-Building Abroad: Exceptional Powers, Broken promises and the Making of "Bosnia"', p. 27
[354] Ibid
[355] Ibid
[356] Ibid, p. 28
[357] Ibid, p. 22; James C. O'Brien, 'The Dayton Agreement in Bosnia: Durable Cease-Fire, Permanent Negotiations' in William Zartman and Victor Kremenyuk (eds.), *Peace Versus Justice: Negotiating Forward- and Backward-Looking Outcomes* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 103

within the mediation process, the building of a new 'Bosnian nation', and to construct it in such a way to mimic the 'norms of civic inclusiveness and rights' deemed central to the 'American political identity'.[358]

Therefore, Kostić not only appreciates that mediation may function as a vehicle through which norms are promoted but, moreover, that this this practice, in turn, may serve to shape the identities of those 'receiving' third-party peacemaking interventions. The work of Kostić, in concert with the other studies cited in this sub-section, thus provokes the following hypothesis, which I will consider in Chapter Six: *mediators can use mediation to instigate normative change on the part of the conflict parties and this, in turn, can shape the identities of the conflict parties.* Within my response, I will assess two norms which appear to have been sought during the mediation efforts under investigation, one which can be considered to be 'content-related' and the other 'process-related', arguing that both seem to have interacted with the identities of Syria and Yemen. Exploring the promotion of these two norms through the peace processes, and examining their apparent effects upon identity, will contribute to my fundamental contention that mediation can serve to mould identity.

### 3.33 Hypothesis 3: The rationales used to justify inclusive peacemaking and the framing of those included can transform the identities of the conflict parties

The final study which I will examine here connects *inclusive* peacemaking with socially constructed identity. However, this is not the stated focus of the article: instead, the study seeks to reveal the 'politics behind the various approaches to inclusion' which, Andreas Hirblinger and Dana Landau argue, 'are characterized by international peacemakers' varying degrees of willingness to acknowledge, deal with and transform relationships of difference'.[359] Nevertheless, the authors regularly invoke the concept of identity and clearly conceive of it in a manner which appears to be aligned with constructivist writing: the authors appreciate, for instance, that individuals can hold multiple identities, and that the meaning of these identities can shift.

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[358] Kostić, 'American Nation-Building Abroad: Exceptional Powers, Broken Promises and the Making of "Bosnia"', p. 23

[359] Andreas Hirblinger and Dana Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', *Security Dialogue* 51:4 (2020), p. 306

Before I begin my analysis of the work of Hirblinger and Landau, it is worth briefly noting that the concept of inclusion has recently gained a great deal of prominence within peacemaking and peacebuilding policy, research and practice.[360] The increasing prevalence of inclusion represents a marked shift in the practice of mediation: as I explored in Chapter One, conventionally, third-party peacemaking is hidden from view, involving a select group of political leaders and members of armed groups. While empirical research into inclusion has been sharply criticised for its limitations and normative bias,[361] it has nevertheless been argued that inclusion can increase the sustainability, or durability, of the peace negotiated[362] while inclusion has also been framed as a moral imperative.[363]

Within the context of peacemaking and peacebuilding, the term 'inclusion' is contested.[364] Nevertheless, having declared inclusion to be a crucial element of effective mediation, the UN, in its *Guidance for Effective Mediation*, defines the concept as follows: 'inclusion refers to the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort'.[365] A broader definition, however, proposed by Collette Rausch and Tina Luu, suggests that an inclusive peace process will 'give *all groups in a society* the opportunity to be heard and to have their

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[360] Alexander de Waal, 'Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact' in Pamela Aall and Chester Crocker, *The Fabric of Peace in Africa* (Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2017), p. 165; Catherine Turner, 'Mapping a Norm of Inclusion in the Jus Post Bellum' in Carsten Stahn et al. (eds.), *Just Peace After Conflict: Jus Post Bellum and the Justice of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 130-46

[361] Comparative investigations into the influence of inclusive peacemaking have faced criticism for their failures to establish a causal link between inclusion and *sustainable* peace (Jan Pospisil, *Peace in Political Unsettlement: Beyond Solving Conflict* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), pp. 99-100; De Waal, 'Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact', p. 180). Furthermore, the inclusion project has also been condemned for its 'failure to distinguish between process and outcomes': it has been suggested that 'it is not yet clear whether, and if so how, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding set communities on pathways toward more inclusive societies' (Anastassia Obydenkova and Thania Paffenholz, 'Editorial: The Grand Challenges in the Quest for Peace and Democracy' *Frontiers in Political Science* 3:691999 (2021), p. 2; see also: Alina Rocha Menocal, 'Political Settlements and the Politics of Transformation: Where Do "Inclusive Institutions" Come From?' *Journal of International Development* 29:5 (2017), p. 560; Clare Castillejo, 'Promoting Inclusion in Political Settlements: A Priority for International Actors?' *NOREF* [online], available from: https://noref.no/Publications/Themes/Gender-and-inclusivity/Promoting-inclusion-in-political-settlements-a-priority-for-international-actors [last accessed: 22 May 2021], p. 4).

[362] See, for instance: Desirée Nilsson, 'Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace' *International Interactions* 38:2 (2012), pp. 243-66; Anthony Wanis-St. John and Darren Kew, 'Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion' *International Negotiation* 13 (2008), pp. 11-36

[363] De Waal, 'Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact', p. 165

[364] Ibid

[365] UN, *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation* (New York: United Nations, 2012) [online], available from: https://peacemaker.un.org/guidance-effective-mediation [last accessed: 6 February 2021], p. 11

concerns addressed [emphasis added]'.[366] Both these definitions lack specificity. How will the different 'groups' in a society be determined, how will their concerns be addressed, and how will they be heard? What does the UN mean by the term 'stakeholders', and how will they be represented and integrated into a process?

Moreover, by introducing the term representation, the UN further complicates matters. Isa Mendes, for instance, has claimed that inclusion within peacemaking can denote both participation *and* representation, two distinct concepts. We can think of participation as 'individual engagement' in the 'name of oneself'.[367] Representation, however, is a far more complex and disputed concept. Hanna Pitkin famously defined representation as 'the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact [emphasis in original]'.[368] While Pitkin further identified four different views of representation,[369] within a peace process we can argue that a representative will render 'present' the 'voices, opinions, and perspectives' of a 'segment' of society, or 'collective of people'.[370] It is clear, particularly within policy-oriented documents, that a 'segment of society' is often considered to be a synonym for the idea of a sub-state identity group. Thus, in discussions of inclusion, identity is often mentioned in passing: the idea that there exist multiple identity groups within a conflict-affected society is often invoked while the notion that an inclusive peace process might be able to unite these fragmented groups is also introduced.[371] However, identity is rarely defined. Moreover, the (likely fluctuating) content of these identities is not examined, and sustained consideration is not given to how inclusion might interact with these alleged identities.[372]

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[366] Colette Rausch and Tina Luu, 'Inclusive Peace Processes Are Key to Ending Violent Conflict' *United States Institute of Peace* Peace Brief 222 (2017) [online], available from: https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/05/inclusive-peace-processes-are-key-ending-violent-conflict [last accessed: 3 June 2021], p. 2

[367] Isa Mendes, 'Inclusion and Political Representation in Peace Negotiations: The Case of the Colombian Victims' Delegations', *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 11:3 (2019), p. 279

[368] Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 8-9

[369] Ibid, pp. 11-2

[370] Suzanne Dovi, 'Political Representation' in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition) [online], available from: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-representation/#PitFouVieRep [last accessed: 20 June 2021]; Mendes, 'Inclusion and Political Representation in Peace Negotiations: The Case of the Colombian Victims' Delegations', pp. 279, 280

[371] I will note examples of these two arguments in the paragraphs which follow.

[372] However, inclusion is often characterised as a norm. See, for instance: De Waal, 'Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact'; Turner, 'Mapping a Norm of Inclusion in the Jus Post Bellum'; Hellmüller, 'Meaning-Making in Peace-Making: The Inclusion Norm at the Interplay Between the United Nations and Civil Society in the Syrian Peace Process'

An exception is the work of Hirblinger and Landau. Overall, Hirblinger and Landau recognise that inclusion pertains 'not only to political voice and representation, but *to the identity of the included and their relationships* [emphasis added]'.[373] Through a content analysis of scholarship on inclusion and UN policy documents relating to inclusion, the authors distil three different rationales offered within academia and policy documents for inclusive peacemaking, each of which is accompanied by attendant 'framings' of the included. The latter two rationales and framings are deemed by the authors to interact with the concept of identity.

The first rationale detected by Hirblinger and Landau advocates for inclusion on the basis that widening participation will render the process more legitimate; this rationale claims that inclusion will ensure 'the process is representative of a broader set of identities and interests'.[374] Furthermore, their argument is that, in the context of this rationale, those included tend to be framed in 'open' terms. These include phrases such as 'stakeholders', 'communities', 'citizens', 'voices', 'perspectives' and 'civil society'.[375] While the authors mention the term 'identity' in their description of this rationale, the authors do not consider further how this justification for inclusion may interact with the identities included and, moreover, they deem the open framings associated with this rationale to be 'instrumental' and to 'brush over difference'.[376]

Nevertheless, in their discussion of the second rationale identified by these two scholars, they handle identity in greater detail. The authors claim that, within the second rationale, inclusion is demanded 'in order to empower and protect particular groups, based on the assumption that building peace requires strengthening the position of specific actors that have suffered in conflict, or who can be champions of peace'.[377] To be precise, in this rationale, inclusion aims towards protecting the rights of those included, 'enhancing their political voice, or addressing previous harm'. In relation to this rationale, according to Hirblinger and Landau, those included are framed 'in closed terms, as specific groups with a common identity trait, such as gender, language or ethnicity'.[378] As examples of closed terms, these authors mention 'women' and 'youth', references which are 'identifiable according to relatively clear criteria'.[379] These

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[373] Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 306
[374] Ibid, p. 307
[375] Ibid, pp. 310, 311
[376] Ibid, pp. 307, 311
[377] Ibid, p. 308
[378] Ibid, p. 308
[379] Ibid, p. 310

identity groups are thus 'accentuate[d] and fixe[d]';[380] in other words, such identities are entrenched through inclusive peacemaking and the manner in which the included are framed.[381] Indeed, Hirblinger and Landau contend that 'closed framings can lead to a competition for inclusion between fragmented interest groups',[382] thus exacerbating conflict between identity groups as opposed to transforming these relationships.[383]

The third rationale discovered by the authors argues for inclusion as a means through which relationships between groups can be transformed and rebuilt. Within this rationale, inclusion is called for as a means 'to transform and rebuild relations between groups'.[384] Citing John Paul Lederach, Hirblinger and Landau argue that this justification 'requires peacemakers to make sense of the web of relationships in which conflict occurs, before aiming at social change through rebuilding the social spaces that give people a sense of identity'.[385] The authors also refer to Rama Mani in their exploration of this rationale: in this third view, inclusion aims to create a community 'in which the past division of winners versus losers, victims versus perpetrators, "us" and "them" are overcome' but 'without erasing or evading differences between people'.[386] This would seem to suggest that, even if identity groups are not erased, a new, over-arching and unified identity would be generated through a peace process, and that any elements of identities which encourage animosity operating above or below this level would dissipate. Identities would be formed and reshaped through the practice of inclusive peacemaking and, specifically, through framing such inclusion as a means of transforming

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[380] Ibid, p. 308

[381] Indeed, Hirblinger and Landau note that Sumantra Bose has argued that such framing 'overlook[s] the nature of groups as mutable social formations' and 'that measures aimed at empowerment can entrench identities and conflict cleavages' (Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 308; Sumantra Bose, *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention* (London: Hurst, 2002)

[382] Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 308

[383] This view is supported, to an extent, by John Paul Lederach. He argues that a representational approach to inclusion 'can unintentionally spawn and exacerbate internal divisions within regions, identity groups and movements, each vying for more direct presence at the locus of power and decision-making' (John Paul Lederach, 'Forging Inclusive Peace' in Andy Carl (ed.), 'Navigating Inclusion in Peace Processes' *Accord* Issue 28 (2019) [online], available from: https://www.c-r.org/accord/inclusion-peace-processes [last accessed: 24 June 2021], p. 23). Mendes, too, has hinted at this idea: 'representation itself…helps turn loose social groups into collectivities by convening them as such' (Mendes, 'Inclusion and Political Representation in Peace Negotiations: The Case of the Colombian Victims' Delegations', p. 292). However, neither note that this effect is due to the way in which inclusion is framed.

[384] Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 309

[385] Ibid; John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

[386] Rama Mani, 'Rebuilding an Inclusive Political Community After War', *Security Dialogue* 36:4 (2005), p. 512; Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 309

relationships between the groups ensnared in conflict.[387] Within this rationale, those included are described in 'relational' terms, for instance through references to 'powerful' or 'marginalized' actors.[388] These references, the authors claim, 'derive their meaning from being situated in a specific sociopolitical context'.[389]

To summarise, Hirblinger and Landau offer an original exploration of the possible link between inclusive peacemaking – which, incidentally, can also be thought of as a mediation process-related norm although the authors do not characterise it in this way – and the construction, and de-construction, of the identities of the conflict parties. Their suggestion is that the justifications for inclusion and the language used to call for inclusion have effects on the identities within the states at war, either entrenching sub-state identities or encouraging the development of a new, over-arching identity. The decisions of the mediators and the shape of the mediation process can therefore be argued to shape the identities of the conflict parties. The arguments of Hirblinger and Landau therefore triggers the following hypothesis, which I will assess in Chapter Seven: *the rationales used to justify inclusive peacemaking and the framing of those included can transform the identities of the conflict parties.* I will explore the extent to which inclusion was sought and achieved, according to the voices represented within my dataset, combing the language used for evidence of the rationales and framings elucidated by Hirblinger and Landau. My findings will challenge the contentions of Hirblinger and Landau by suggesting that the first rationale, and open framings, can indeed by connected to identity construction. I will further propose that my own findings do not map neatly onto these authors' framework, and call for further empirical research into the connections between inclusion and identity.

## 3.34 Summary

To summarise, this second section has considered the limited number of works which have started to explore the possible connections between mediation and socially constructed identity. From these studies, I have distilled three hypotheses for exploration within this thesis. Through the lens of these hypotheses, I will be able to develop a response to the overall research question

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[387] This is supported, very briefly, by Rausch and Luu who contend that an 'effective peace process', which the authors imply must be inclusive, can 'knit together' the 'frayed fabric' of society (Rausch and Luu, 'Inclusive Peace Processes Are Key to Ending Violent Conflict', p. 2).
[388] Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 310
[389] Ibid

guiding this thesis: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* As I have intimated within this chapter, and as will become clear over the course of Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I will question and develop these hypotheses, forming my own original arguments surrounding the possible influence of mediation upon identity.

## 3.4 Contributing to mediation theory: impartial mediators and powerful mediation

The previous two sections have explored the mediation scholarship which reveals the contours of the relationship between mediation and identity. I began by assessing works which discuss the potential impact of identity, of both the mediators and the conflict parties, upon various aspects of the mediation process. However, I noted that the operationalisations of identity deployed do not align with the conceptualisation developed in Chapter Two and, moreover, that the findings explore a different direction of the relationship which will be enquired into here. I then assessed literature which has considered the possible effect of mediation upon identity, literature which either conceives of identity in a social constructivist manner and/or which considers the role of norms within mediation. From these studies, I extrapolated three hypotheses for assessment in this thesis.

This chapter has made clear the relative neglect of socially constructed identity within mediation studies. Indeed, it is worth briefly stating that the failure to integrate the spheres of international relations theory with scholarship on mediation has been routinely bemoaned.[390] Relatedly, it has often been highlighted that mediation scholars tend to rely upon the assumptions of realism without justifying, nor making explicit, this decision:[391] as Allard Duursma argues, 'much of the literature on international mediation draws on a materialist

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[390] See: Marieke Kleiboer and Paul t'Hart, 'Time To Talk?: Multiple Perspectives on Timing of International Mediation', *Cooperation and Conflict* 30:4 (1995), p. 312; Deiniol Lloyd Jones, 'Mediation, Conflict Resolution and Critical Theory', *Review of International Studies* 26:4 (2000), p. 647; Johan Hellman, 'The Occurrence of Mediation: A Critical Evaluation of the Current Debate', *International Studies Review* 14:4 (2012), p. 597; Crocker et al., *International Negotiation and Mediation in Violent Conflicts*, p. 58; Sarah Clowry, 'International Negotiation and Mediation in Violent Conflicts: The Changing Context of Peacemaking', *Peacebuilding* 8:3 (2019), p. 379

[391] Kleiboer and t'Hart, 'Time To Talk?: Multiple Perspectives on Timing of International Mediation', pp. 314-5; Stuart Kaufman, 'Escaping The Symbolic Politics Trap: Reconciliation Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Ethnic Wars', *Journal of Peace Research* 43:2 (2006), p. 201; Hellman, 'The Occurrence of Mediation: A Critical Evaluation of the Current Debate', p. 597

perspective', ignoring 'social structures when explaining mediation outcomes'.[392] Therefore, a response to my overarching research question will prove valuable, offering a sustained and original contribution to our understanding of the role mediation may play in shaping identity.

However, I will suggest that my findings also, more broadly, demand the incorporation of socially constructed identities within the analytical frameworks of mediation scholars. By better incorporating the concept of socially constructed identity, it may prove possible to revive and add greater depth to debates which constitute hallmarks of mediation literature. In order to demonstrate why, and how, socially constructed identities should be incorporated within the analytical frameworks of mediation specialists, the findings of this thesis will be used to refine and intervene in two intertwined debates within mediation scholarship: debates surrounding the roles of bias and power within mediation. This section will provide an overview of these two debates, concluding by highlighting the lack of consideration awarded thus far to socially constructed identities.

### 3.51 Mediator impartiality

Early scholars of mediation assumed impartiality to occupy a central role within this form of conflict management; as Peter J. Carnevale and Sharon Arad note, Oran Young's assertion that 'the existence of a meaningful role for a third party will *depend* on the party's being perceived as an impartial participant [emphasis added]' is oft-quoted.[393] Indeed, the UN still declares impartiality to be 'a cornerstone of mediation'.[394] An impartial mediator can be defined as a third party devoid of 'ties to any of the parties' and without a 'stake in the negotiated outcome'.[395] Such traits are believed to 'increase the parties' readiness to accept the mediator', to 'enhance the possibilities of getting information from the disputants' and, finally, to increase 'the perceived fairness of the proposed solutions'.[396] According to this line of argument, 'with

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[392] Allard Duursma, 'African Solutions to African Challenges: The Role of Legitimacy in Mediating Civil Wars in Africa', *International Organization* 74:2, pp. 295, 297; see also: Hellmüller et al., 'Are Mediators Norm Entrepreneurs?', p. 9; Hellmüller et al., 'How Norms Matter in Mediation: An Introduction', p. 347
[393] Peter J. Carnevale and Sharon Arad, 'Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation' in Jacob Bercovitch (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 40; Oran Young, *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 81
[394] UN, *United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation*, p. 10
[395] Natalia Chaban et al., 'Perceptions of EU Mediation and Mediation Effectiveness: Comparing Perspectives from Ukraine and the EU', *Cooperation and Conflict* 54:4 (2019), p. 508
[396] Ibid

a biased mediator, the disfavored party will be less likely to heed the mediator's suggestions for settlement, less likely to divulge information about underlying interests, and less likely to accept the mediator in the first place'.[397] It has been suggested that an impartial mediator will rely 'purely on persuasion', facilitating 'communication between the disputants' and formulating 'potential solutions based on the newly provided information';[398] this knitting together of bias and strategy will explored in greater detail later in this section. As recently as 2018, Elgström et al. concluded that 'a biased mediator may find that distrust from its partiality prevents it from engaging as a formulator and manipulator'.[399]

Nevertheless, these authors did concede that a 'special relation to one party may, at least in some instances, be an asset in bringing parties to the table'.[400] Indeed, a belief in the importance of impartiality has gradually begun to be challenged and the debate surrounding bias and mediation continues to simmer. A partial mediator can be thought of in opposite terms to an impartial mediator: a partial mediator will be invested in a particular outcome and may, also, be 'closer to one side than the other' in political, economic and/or cultural terms.[401] For a number of scholars, it is inevitable that mediators will be biased; as Saadia Touval and William Zartman have argued:

> …mediators are players in the plot of relations surrounding a conflict, and so they have an interest in its outcome; otherwise, they would not mediate. In view of the considerable investment of political, moral, and material resources that mediation requires and the risks to which mediators expose themselves, motives for mediation must be found as much in domestic and international self-interest as in humanitarian impulses. *Mediators are seldom indifferent to the terms being negotiated* [emphasis added].[402]

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[397] Carnevale and Arad, 'Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation', p. 41

[398] Siniša Vuković, 'Soft Power, Bias and Manipulation of International Organizations in International Mediation', *International Negotiation* 20 (2015), p. 415

[399] Ole Elgström et al., 'Perceptions of the EU's Role in the Ukraine-Russia and the Israel-Palestine Conflicts: A Biased Mediator?', *International Negotiation* 23 (2018), p. 315

[400] Ibid

[401] Carnevale and Arad, 'Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation', p. 39

[402] Saadia Touval and William Zartman, 'International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era' in Chester A. Crocker et al., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), p. 428

Bercovitch and Richard Jackson offer support, claiming that 'mediators bring with them consciously or otherwise, ideas, knowledge, resources and interests, of their own or of the group they represent', and that 'mediators often have their own assumptions and agendas about the conflict in question'.[403] Greig, too, has claimed that mediators 'play their role in negotiations and expend resources not only because they aim to resolve a dispute, but because they also seek to gain something from it'.[404]

As early as 1975, Saadia Touval proposed that such bias may prove to be an advantage: partial mediators, he contended, may be better equipped to encourage their favoured party to move towards a solution. Furthermore, in the view of this academic, the favoured party may wish to preserve its relationship with the mediator while the disfavoured party may seek to earn the mediator's good will: both disputants will, therefore, be more inclined to bend to the will of the external peacemaker.[405] In more recent years, building upon the work of Touval, scholars have proposed a number of reasons for which a partial mediator may prove to be an asset. Echoing Touval, both Andrew Kydd and Savun have claimed that only biased mediators can credibly counsel their favoured conflict party and encourage the granting of concessions and restraint.[406] Similarly, Vuković has pointed out that 'a biased mediator might be acceptable to a disfavored party because that specific third party may be the only one capable of mustering the necessary resources to produce incentives that could make a difference to the process'.[407]

Isak Svensson has agreed with much of this reasoning but has also added to it, further arguing that, whereas impartial mediators may 'hasten' to reach an agreement 'at the expense of its quality', on the other hand, 'biased mediators, seeking to protect their protégés, will take care to ensure that there are stipulations in an agreement guaranteeing the interests of their side'.[408]

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[403] Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson, *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty First Century: Principles, Methods and Approaches* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2009), p. 34

[404] Vuković, *International Multiparty Mediation and Conflict Management: Challenges of Cooperation and Coordination*, p. 20. See: Grieg, 'Stepping Into the Fray: When Do Mediators Mediation'

[405] Summarised by: Siniša Vuković, 'Strategies and Bias in International Mediation', *Cooperation and Conflict* 46:1 (2011), p. 113; and Carnevale and Arad, 'Bias and Impartiality in International Mediation', p. 42; see: Saadia Touval, 'Biased Intermediaries: Theoretical and Historical Considerations', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 1:1 (1975), pp. 51-69

[406] Chaban et al., 'Perceptions of EU Mediation and Mediation Effectiveness: Comparing Perspectives from Ukraine and the EU', p. 509; Andrew Kydd, 'Which Side Are You On?', *American Journal of Political Science* 47:4 (2003), pp. 597-611; Burcu Savun, 'Information, Bias, and Mediation Success', *International Studies Quarterly* 52:1 (2008), pp. 25-47

[407] Vuković, *International Multiparty Mediation and Conflict Management: Challenges of Cooperation and Coordination*, p. 13

[408] Isak Svensson, *International Mediation Bias and Peacemaking: Taking Sides in Civil Wars* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 3

Svensson claims that the reason for the increased effectiveness of biased mediators is due to four causal mechanisms: 'biased mediators share a basic interest in protecting their side'; biased mediators can 'generate private information, and credibly share such information, so that the parties can identify each other's true red lines and find a joint reference point for an agreement'; biased mediators are more capable in convincing 'their side to make concessions on the basic issues at stake'; and, fourthly, biased mediators appear 'more credible in the eyes of the vulnerable side and in protecting them against future exploitation through conciliatory offers'. Therefore, a biased mediator can 'counter-balance the risk for cheating on concessions'.[409] Moreover, the very acceptance of a biased mediator can be interpreted as 'a costly signal of conciliatory intent, enhancing the possibility that the parties can develop a sufficient amount of trust'.[410] Lastly, in developing arguments in favour of partiality, impartial mediators have also been criticised; to summarise, it has been suggested that 'neutral mediation and negotiations are often more protracted, achieving peace takes longer, and in the meantime suffering and destruction continue';[411] this argument does, however, contradict Svensson's claim that biased mediators will persist until a higher quality agreement is reached.

## 3.52 Mediation 'with muscle'

The disputes surrounding impartiality are interlinked with a second area of focus within mediation scholarship: the discussions surrounding 'pure' as opposed to 'power' mediation. Phrased succinctly, whereas pure mediation involves 'reasoning, persuasion, control of information and suggestion of alternatives', 'power' mediation, or 'mediation with muscle', entails 'the use of leverage or coercion by the third party in the form of promised rewards or threatened punishments' in order to 'move' the parties 'toward a settlement'.[412] Although it may be assumed that 'pure' mediators are necessarily impartial, and that it is only 'power' mediators who exhibit partiality, this has been challenged: echoing the aforementioned statements of Touval, Zartman, Bercovitch, Jackson and Greig, Vuković has suggested that even supposedly 'pure' mediators possess bias.[413] Indeed, as we will see, scholars have highlighted the role played by both 'soft' and 'hard' forms of power and, moreover, have

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[409] Ibid, p. 4
[410] Ibid
[411] Eriksson and Kostić, 'Peacemaking and Peacebuilding: Two Ends of a Tail', p. 7
[412] Ron Fisher and Loraleigh Keashly, 'The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation Within a Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention', *Journal of Peace Research* 28:1 (1991), p. 33
[413] Vuković, 'Soft Power, Bias and Manipulation of International Organizations in International Mediation', p. 417

emphasised the power held by mediators in their capacity to persuade, to control information and to formulate proposals. The term 'pure' could, therefore, be considered to be misleading.

Offering further detail on the idea of mediation with muscle, Vuković has summarised power mediation as follows: such a process entails the mediator affecting 'the substance of the bargaining process by presenting incentives or delivering ultimatums to the disputing sides'.[414] He further notes that 'mediators may manipulate parties' perceptions by resorting to threats to use coercive action (such as sanctions or military deployment) against them in order to increase the costs of non-compliance and continuation of conflict'.[415] Incentives may also be deployed 'in order to increase the attractiveness of a negotiated solution'; these incentives 'may be of a material nature and include provisions of financial aid and humanitarian aid, development assistance, security guarantees and implementation monitoring'.[416] On the other hand, such incentives may be less tangible, 'such as improvement of international reputation, legitimizing their cause, and/or enhancement of relations with particular external actors'.[417] In the context of 'power' mediation, it has been argued that a mediator's 'leverage' becomes crucial; Touval and Zartman describe leverage as 'the ability to move a party in an intended direction' and, moreover, characterise it as 'the ticket to mediation'.[418] Such power mediation, Fisher has argued, can be more accurately considered to be 'triadic bargaining in the sense that the third party *pursues specific interests for its own sake* [emphasis added]' and 'often leads to agreements that have future implications for the third party as a provider of continuing benefits and/or the guarantor of agreements'.[419] We can see hints, here, at the idea of bias once more.

While scholars have not only focused on 'hard' power and have appreciated the potential role of 'soft' power, the idea that identity construction may constitute a form of power within mediation and may, therefore, impact upon the perceived partiality of the mediator, has yet to be considered. For instance, in 2002, Carnevale proposed a typology of the different forms of strength which can be deployed to influence the course of mediation, a number of which can be considered to be 'social' as opposed to 'material'. Categorised under the broad umbrella of

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[414] Vuković, *International Multiparty Mediation and Conflict Management: Challenges of Cooperation and Coordination*, p. 27
[415] Ibid
[416] Ibid
[417] Ibid
[418] Touval and Zartman, 'International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era', p. 436
[419] Ron Fisher, 'Pacific, Impartial Third-Party Intervention in International Conflict: A Review and Analysis' in John Vasquez et al. (eds.), *Beyond Confrontation: Learning Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 41

'strategic strength', Carnevale suggested that mediators can arrive with: legitimate power, or the requisite influence to prescribe behaviour; sufficient information to render 'compliance with the mediator's request seem rational' and, concurrently, 'an understanding of the values and priorities of the parties'; expertise; 'status and prestige'; the capacity to coerce the parties, perhaps through the threat of the use of force; the ability to provide rewards or benefits; and, lastly, 'relational power', which Carnevale explains as a 'structural role', or the manner in which a mediator can 'take advantage of possible coalitions, or the threat of a coalition, with one side'.[420] For Carnevale, this final source of power is intertwined with the notion of bias.[421]

The second broader category posited by Carnevale is that of 'tactical strength': the machinations of the mediator, and their techniques and procedures. Within this category, Carnevale claims that there are four types of power: the control mediators can exert upon communication and the information available to the parties; the ability of mediators to restructure the disputants' images of one another 'by clarifying and interpreting events' and by providing cover for any concessions made; the manner in which mediators can create momentum; and, once more, the manipulation of the triad of relationships implicated within mediation.[422] As Carnevale claims, hinting at impartiality once more, 'in some cases, the mediator needs to steer a precise course between the disputants lest they alienate one side and lose their credibility' however 'the prospect of siding with one party is [also] an element of the mediator's strength'.[423]

Timothy Sisk has also forged an argument in favour of 'forceful' mediation, contending that mediators 'must act with determination, coercion, and incentives' to 'induce the parties to settle the conflict through negotiation'.[424] Sisk, too, recognises the diverse forms of power, encompassing both 'hard' and 'soft' force, which mediators may bring: 'powerful peacemaking comes not just from mediators with resources, such as military backing or money (although these help), but from the global credibility and integrity that international mediators bring to civil war negotiations'.[425] Indeed, Sisk also develops a taxonomy of power which encompasses

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[420] Peter J. Carnevale, 'Mediating from Strength' in Jacob Bercovitch (ed.), *Studies in International Mediation: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Z. Rubin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 28-30
[421] Ibid, p. 30
[422] Ibid, pp. 30-1
[423] Ibid, p. 31
[424] Timothy Sisk, *International Mediation in Civil Wars: Bargaining with Bullets* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 4
[425] Ibid

both the material and the ideational: as examples from his categories, mediators can make use of 'side-payments (material or symbolic) directly to the parties in conflict to induce them to modify their demands'; mediators can recognise or validate a group's cause or right to represent the people they purport to represent; mediators can publicly shame the parties; and mediators can deploy military force.[426] To summarise, it has become difficult to draw a distinct line between pure and power mediation, and to align such strategies with impartial and partial mediators.

**3.53 The absence of identity within debates surrounding mediator impartiality and powerful mediation**

This section has explored two intertwined debates within mediation scholarship concerning the roles of impartiality and power within third-party peacemaking. That which has not been considered within the work charted here is whether, and if so how, processes of identity construction might be considered to be a form of social power within mediation and might, in turn, alter the parties' perceptions of the impartiality of the mediator. We have seen how scholars have considered the roles of other forms of social power: academics have argued that perceived 'political' or 'cultural' closeness might impact upon the assumed impartiality of a mediator. The writers surveyed in the previous sub-section have also proposed that mediators' partiality is shaped by the 'ideas' they bring, and that soft power should also be thought of as mediation 'with muscle'. Such soft power, in the views of these authors, includes the ability to bestow legitimacy upon the conflict parties, to increase the reputation of the disputants, to improve their relationships, to make symbolic offerings, and the possession, on the part of the mediators, of expertise, status, and persuasiveness. These notions are linked to identity but there is a clear opportunity to develop this further and to more directly incorporate the concept of socially constructed identities, and the means by which they are imbued with meaning, into these debates.

In Section 3.3, I assessed the limited existing scholarship which grapples with the links between mediation and identity. These studies do not consider in depth the ways in which their findings may contribute to these two mediation debates surrounding impartiality and power. These works do, however, contain hints at these themes. We have seen the argument made that

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[426] Ibid, pp. 54-5

pursuing a particular normative agenda may dent the 'legitimacy' of the mediators, leading to their being sidelined; this appears to be a suggestion that the partiality of the mediators is affected by their pursuit of a normative agenda. Furthermore, it has been argued that many mediators consider it 'inappropriate' to persuade conflict parties to normatively emulate the mediator; again this could be a hint at the notion of impartiality. Power was considered in slightly greater detail within the scholarship assessed. Terms such as 'pressing' and 'compelling' have been deployed to describe the manner in which norms may be promoted, while we have seen 'reframing' described as 'proactive' and 'assertive'. Moreover, the *type* of power has also been considered. Reframing, for instance, has been described as a form of soft power. Furthermore, a debate was contained within the studies surveyed in Section 3.3 regarding incentives, and whether 'hard' or 'soft' incentives to promote behavioural changes were most appropriate and effective. Nevertheless, a sustained consideration of the links between processes of identity construction within, and in response to, mediation and the roles played by impartiality and power within mediation has not been attempted. Therefore, in Chapter Eight I will reflect on how the answer to my research question can augment and refine these two prominent, intertwined and unresolved debates in mediation scholarship.

## 3.6 Conclusion

Chapter Two considered in depth the concept of identity as it is understood by social constructivists. This chapter has explored the extent to which this version of identity, thought of as an ever-mutating, co-constructed vision of a group, created by its members and by its peers, has been incorporated within the analyses of mediation scholars. I began by examining an initial group of studies which have purported to explore the impact of identity upon various aspects of the mediation process. However, I highlighted that the operationalisations of identity employed differ from the conceptualisation I have developed in Chapter Two; that the findings of these studies adhere to more mechanical approaches to causality than those favoured by social constructivists; and that my own research question will explore the possible shaping effects of mediation upon identity as opposed to the effects of identity upon mediation.

I then assessed a second group of studies, more limited in number. These studies represent an initial attempt to uncover the ways in which mediation may serve to intervene in processes of identity construction; however, the majority focus upon the promotion of norms through and

within mediation, and neglect to connect their findings to the concept of identity. I closely explored these works and, from these, I have extrapolated three hypotheses for exploration within this thesis.

To conclude this chapter, I returned to the mediation scholarship, exploring two prominent, enduring and intertwined debates. The first concerns impartiality; I showed that scholars persist in questioning the merits and shortcomings of the perceived neutrality of mediators. The second concerns the role of power, both soft and hard, within third-party peacemaking. My argument was that, despite an appreciation by academics of mediation of the role played by social forces, the manner in which processes of identity construction may form a source of power, and may, therefore, affect the apparent neutrality of a third party, has yet to be theorised. By exploring and offering a response to my over-arching research question, and the three hypotheses developed in this chapter, I will therefore be able to make a contribution to these two mediation debates. In turn, this will demonstrate the crucial need to better integrate the concept of socially constructed identity within the analytical frameworks of mediation scholars. In the next chapter, I will detail the methods undertaken to develop my contribution.

# Chapter 4. Methods

## 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter will discuss the steps taken to offer an answer to my over-arching research question, and to evaluate the three hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three. The Syrian and Yemeni civil wars, and the mediation attempts of the UN and other members of the international community, persist to this day, challenging and complicating research into their contours. Moreover, as Alexander De Waal has highlighted, 'peace processes are very poorly documented'; recorded evidence, where it exists, is frequently 'locked away', hidden from both the public and researchers.[427] Due to the originality and exploratory nature of my research question, I have generated my own primary data to evaluate the hypotheses developed, and then interpreted this data through the prism of the concept of socially constructed identity.

The methods undertaken to develop an answer to my research question can be summarised as follows, with the first three having taken place simultaneously:

1. I conducted 74 semi-structured interviews with 73 interlocutors. These individuals were either participants in, or close observers of, the two cases of mediation on which I am focusing;
2. I transcribed 50 press conferences delivered at the UN during, and relating to, the two cases of mediation;
3. I gathered together 110 official documents concerning the two cases of mediation;
4. I completed a semi-inductive, iterative thematic analysis of the data gathered.

The following sections will reflect on these methods in greater depth, justifying their use and explaining how their limitations were mitigated against. Throughout this chapter, the methods selected to produce and interpret the data gathered will be linked to social constructivism; it will be made apparent that my view of knowledge, and how it may be created, aligns with the interpretivist perspective on social science research. The assumption is made that there are

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[427] De Waal, 'Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact', pp. 178-9

'multiple realities' and that these are 'contingent, [and] contextual';[428] that 'knower and respondent cocreate understandings'; that social research in itself can 'transform the world', expressing it within 'a series of representations';[429] that, in this thesis, I engage in 'knowledge *building* [emphasis in original]' as opposed to discovery; and that I myself, as a researcher, am 'located and shifting' within the project.[430] I will return to this final point to conclude the chapter, reflecting in depth on my 'positionality' and the possible impact of my personal identity upon this thesis.

## 4.2 Semi-structured interviews

This section will explore semi-structured interviewing; I will begin by describing the interlocutors consulted and the precise approach I took towards our conversations. I will then consider in greater depth the opportunities and challenges presented by semi-structured interviews before outlining my sampling strategy and the specific characteristics of so-called 'elite' interviews and remote interviewing.

### 4.21 Describing the interviews conducted

The reflections of those who participated in the mediation attempts under investigation form the major source of data upon which I will draw. Between March 2019 and March 2020, I conducted 74 semi-structured interviews with 73 interlocutors. Three of these participants discussed both the Syrian and Yemeni cases within our interview; I conducted a second, 'follow-up' interview with two of these participants; and one interview involved two participants simultaneously. These individuals include those Syrian and Yemeni politicians and members of civil society who were involved in the peace efforts and the international mediators in both case studies. Within this latter group, I am including individuals employed by the UN, diplomats, representatives of foreign states, and staff members of both international and local NGOs. A limited number of those interviewed were also 'observers' of the mediation attempts,

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[428] Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, 'Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research' in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research: Third Edition* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), p. 24; Patricia Leavy, 'Introduction' in Patricia Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 4; Johnny Saldaña, *The Fundamentals of Qualitative Research: Understanding Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 23
[429] Denzin and Lincoln, 'Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research', pp. 3, 24
[430] Leavy, 'Introduction', pp. 1, 4

including journalists, analysts, academics, Syrian activists, Yemeni politicians and activists, and former Western diplomats.

While many interviewees consented to their interview data not only being quoted but also linked to their names, with others consenting to their professional titles being connected with their words, the decision has been taken to provide each interviewee with one of twelve abbreviations. Each interviewee has also been given a unique number. Therefore, in the empirical chapters which follow, with the exception of those participants who permitted their words to be quoted but requested to remain entirely anonymous (and who are cited as Anonymous (1), Anonymous (2), and so on), quotations and thoughts will be attributed to one of the following abbreviations depending on their broadly defined role within the peace talks:

Table a) Interviewee abbreviations

| Interviewee Type | Abbreviation |
| --- | --- |
| Member of the Syrian Opposition and Delegate at Geneva II | SO, DaGII |
| Member of the Syrian Opposition | SO |
| Mediator in the Syrian Case Study involved in the Track I Process | M, S, TI |
| Mediator in the Syrian Case Study involved in a Track II initiative | M, S, TII |
| International Observer of the Syrian Case Study | O, I (S) |
| Syrian Observer of the Syrian Case Study | O, S |
| Delegate at the NDC | NDC, D |
| Member of the NDC Secretariat | NDC, Se |
| Mediator in the Yemeni Case Study involved in the Track I Process | M, Y, TI |
| Mediator in the Yemeni Case Study involved in the Track II Process | M, Y, TII |
| International Observer of the Yemeni Case Study | O, I (Y) |
| Yemeni Observer of the Yemeni Case Study | O, Y |

The decision to use abbreviations was taken in order to protect the interlocutors. However, the References list includes the precise names and roles, where consent was given, of the interviewees; in other instances, their roles alone are listed, or the phrase 'Anonymous Interviewee', according to the participants' wishes. In this list, providing it would not reveal the identity of the participant, the date and location/medium of the interview are also provided.

Of the 74 conversations held, 40 (54%) were conducted remotely through the following platforms: Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp (voice call), Telegram (voice call), by telephone, WhatsApp (messages) and by email. Only a limited number (eight, 11%) were conducted through the latter two means. The remaining 34 interviews (46%) took place face-to-face. I made short trips, to Geneva (May 2019), London (May 2019), Oxford (May 2019), Washington DC (September 2019), Istanbul (November 2019) and Amman (February 2020), to meet with interviewees in person, largely in professional or public settings. The majority of the discussions were conducted in English (67, 91%). Four (5%) face-to-face interviews were conducted in Arabic with the support of an interpreter, three of whom were employed, briefed beforehand and asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. In the final case, one interview participant provided a translation of my words for his colleague before translating his colleague's answers for my benefit; these two interlocutors elected to attend the interview together without prior warning and without having mentioned the need for an interpreter. This meant I was unable to formally employ a translator in this case. One interview participant, with whom I communicated over email, sought the help of a family member in translating his responses to my questions; once more, this was a decision taken by the interlocutor without prior discussion. Lastly, I conducted email exchanges in a combination of English and Arabic with two (3%) interview participants; these participants responded to my queries in Arabic and I translated their written answers. Excluding the eight interviews conducted in writing, almost all transcripts were shared with the participants for approval[431] and many interlocutors edited the transcripts in some way.

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[431] The interview transcripts resulting from interviews conducted with an interpreter present were not shared with the participants due to the language barrier while, on occasion, I was unable to access an email address for the participant and it was therefore not possible to share the transcript for approval.

Table b) Interview participants summary

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Interview Type** | | |
| Face-to-face | 34 | 46% |
| Remote | 40 | 54% |
| **Language** | | |
| English | 67 | 91% |
| Arabic (with interpreter) | 5 | 7% |
| Arabic (without interpreter) | 2 | 3% |

Table c): Syria case study interview participants

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Participant Type** | | |
| Member of Syrian opposition organisation and/or Syrian activist | 14 | 45% |
| International 'mediator' | 6 | 19% |
| Employee of Track II organisation | 4 | 13% |
| Observer (Syrian) | 1 | 3% |
| Observer (non-Syrian) | 1 | 3% |
| Anonymous | 5 | 16% |

Table d): Yemen case study interview participants

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Participant Type** | | |
| Participant in the NDC | 19 | 42% |
| International 'mediator' | 8 | 18% |
| Employee of Track II organisation | 3 | 6% |
| Observer (Yemeni) | 6 | 13% |
| Observer (non-Yemeni) | 1 | 2% |
| Anonymous | 8 | 18% |

**4.22 Reflecting on the method of semi-structured interviewing**

An interview can be defined as a conversation, usually one-to-one, between an individual and a researcher during which the latter party seeks to gain information or perspectives on a given topic or set of topics.[432] Within a semi-structured interview, the researcher approaches the interview with a guide which lists broad areas to probe with interviewees; however, the researcher is not obliged to rigidly adhere to these.[433] At the end of each interview, I asked whether the participants believed that 'identities' were important within the peace processes under study. With hindsight, this final question was the least effective; the question felt jarring, the participants were frequently uncomfortable with the concept of identity and, rather than considering how mediation might interact with identity, the participants would often reel off a list of identities they believed to be relevant to Syria and Yemen. Much of the material which will be considered in the chapters which follow derive from the earlier sections of the interviews as opposed to the responses given to the final question in the interview concerning identity. The interviews tended to last for approximately an hour, allowing for detailed reflection; however, occasionally, they lasted far longer. Prior to each interview I would ask participants to read a Participant Information Sheet, a Privacy Notice and to sign a Consent Form, all of which have also been included in Appendices A, B and C. These documents featured an overview of the focus of my PhD and therefore mentioned the concept of identity. In the interviews, I would emphasise my openness to the possibility that identity was not a crucial factor within the peace processes under investigation. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that these documents, and the final question posed in the interviews, may have influenced the responses of my participants.

The semi-structured interviewing method 'is sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus'.[434] Indeed, in semi-structured interviews, participants are permitted and, moreover, encouraged to digress from the topic if they so choose. Meanwhile, the researcher

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[432] Margaret Harrell and Melissa Bradley, 'Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups', *RAND National Defense Research Institute* (2009) [online], available from: Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups | RAND [last accessed: 8 February 2021], p. 6; Eleanor Maccoby and Nathan Maccoby, 'The Interview: A Tool of Social Science' in Gardner Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology: Vol. I Theory and Method* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1954), p. 449

[433] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 408. See Appendix D for a copy of my interview guide.

[434] Anne Galetta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), p. 24

must listen intently, reacting to responses by further exploring points deemed, by the interviewer, to be crucial, interesting or under-explained, and introducing further topics and questions not featured in the guide, if thought to be relevant by the researcher, based upon the data gathered during the interview. The purpose of the method is to receive rich, detailed answers within which interviewees reveal that which they believe to be significant in relation to the topic under investigation.[435]

I selected the semi-structured interview for a number of reasons. More generally, the capacity of the interviewees to dictate the flow of and, indeed, the topics covered within the interview is a distinct advantage; not only is the relationship between the researcher and the researched less hierarchical[436] but a far more accurate representation of the complexities of the social world, and the intricacies of the specific phenomena under study as understood by my participants, will hopefully have been provided. More specifically, at the interview phase, I was guided by a relatively focused, overarching research question: *does mediation shape identity?*[437] Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, and as I also emphasised to my participants, I wished to remain open to the possibility that identity might not prove relevant to the voices encompassed within the dataset and, therefore, a rigid interview guide would have been inappropriate. Furthermore, I did not firmly anticipate the precise nature of these identities (should they be mentioned or alluded to by my participants), the levels at which they may be said to operate, and the manner in which they were expressed, modulated and manipulated during the mediation events. Once more, it was therefore crucial that my participants were allowed the flexibility to explore, according to their 'lived experiences',[438] the multifarious aspects of both the mediation efforts and the concept of identity.

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[435] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Anchor, 1967); Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1995), pp. 8-9

[436] Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, p. 31; Pertti Alasuutari et al., 'Social Research in Changing Conditions' in Pertti Alasuutari et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2008), p. 7

[437] During the course of my analysis phase, I narrowed this question, eventually formulating it as follows: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* The problems with focusing solely on the identities of the conflict parties is reflected on in Chapter Eight.

[438] Margot Ely, *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles Within Circles* (London: The Falmer Press, 1991), pp. 2, 4; Robert Sherman and Rodman Webb, 'Qualitative Research in Education: A Focus' in Robert Sherman and Rodman Webb (eds.), *Qualitative Research in Education: Focus and Methods* (London: The Falmer Press, 1988), p. 7; Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1998), p. 11

Adopting a semi-structured approach was also the only coherent route I could take in the light of my decision to be guided by the social constructivist approach to international relations. This necessitates a belief that the search for precise 'measurements' of social phenomena is futile and falsely reifies the intricate and fluctuating social world which is made up of the intangible, mutable beliefs and experiences of many.[439] The constructivist approach to interviewing favours the semi-structured technique not only due to its inherent flexibility as outlined above, a technique argued to 'make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues'[440] but, crucially, due to the manner in which the role of the interviewer as 'co-constructor' of the data gathered and analysis offered is made more transparent. In summary, there are compelling reasons, in the light of my research project, to have employed the semi-structured interview during my data collection phase.

Nevertheless, alleged disadvantages to the semi-structured interview do exist. Interpretivists have argued that, as interviewers fail to immerse themselves in the social world of the participants, their ability to gain a full and accurate understanding of the phenomena they are scrutinising is diminished. Moreover, interpretivists also note that hidden behaviour is far less likely to come to light during an interview, nor are matters which interviewees take for granted but which may be of significance to the researcher prone to surface.[441] However, as my research concerns mediation attempts which have already occurred, it was not possible to observe the events myself. Furthermore, due to the highly confidential nature of mediation, it is highly unlikely I would have been able to gain access even if the processes were ongoing. Nevertheless, that I will rely on interviews nevertheless represents a limitation to my research.

## 4.23 Sampling strategy

I adopted a combination of three sampling strategies. The first was purposive sampling, 'a selection method where the study's purpose and the researcher's knowledge of the population

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[439] See: Herbert Blumer, 'What is Wrong with Social Theory?', *American Sociological Review* 19 (1954), pp. 3-10; Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague: Martinus, Nijhof, 1962), p. 59; Aaron Cicourel, *Method and Measurement in Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 107; Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge and Commitment in American Life*; Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (California: SAGE Publications, 1985); Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, pp. 31-4; David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2014), p. 16; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, pp. 26-7
[440] Svend Brinkmann, 'Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviewing' in Patricia Leavy (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 286
[441] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 493

guide the process';[442] I was aware of at least some of the organisations and actors who were involved in the mediation efforts on which I am focusing and I began by attempting to contact and secure access to these individuals. However, as the full array of participants involved in the mediation attempts are not publicly available, I also used 'snowball' sampling. This strategy 'involves identifying an initial set of relevant respondents, and then requesting that they suggest other potential subjects who share similar characteristics or who have relevance in some way to the object of study'.[443] The researcher then continues to request sets of names from further participants as the project progresses. A danger here is that 'respondents often suggest others who share similar characteristics, or the same outlook'; I therefore attempted to ensure that my 'initial set of respondents [was] sufficiently diverse so that the sample is not skewed excessively in any one particular direction'.[444]

However, the deeply sensitive and confidential nature of the topic; the limited time available for fieldwork (12 months); the manner in which my participants were geographically dispersed, with many displaced by war; the ongoing conflicts within Syria and Yemen; the political systems of many of the states involved in the mediation efforts; and the elite nature of my interviewees negatively affected the size and 'representativity' of my sample. For instance, in relation to the Syrian case study, I decided that I would not approach members of the Syrian government for interviews. Firstly, this was due to their inaccessibility: their membership of a largely isolated dictatorship, ensconced in a state waging a war against its own people. Secondly, I was concerned that, by meeting such individuals, I might severely limit the number of members of the Syrian opposition willing to speak with me. As will form a crucial topic in the chapters which will follow, the rift between the opposition and the government runs deep while the brutal 'security' practices of the two al-Asad administrations drove many members of Syria's political opposition from the country. Members of the opposition were far more accessible as interview participants and, therefore, hindering my capacity to speak with them by being known to have met members of the government would have also greatly limited the overall sample. However, readers of the claims contained within this thesis must remain aware of my lack of interviews with members of al-Asad's government.

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[442] Oisín Tansey, 'Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling', *Political Science and Politics* 40:4 (2007), p. 769
[443] Ibid, p. 770
[444] Ibid

Furthermore, once more in relation to Syria, my sample of interviewees who represent external states is strongly skewed towards the West: of those who were willing to be cited in a non-anonymised format, I was able to speak with British former members of parliament and diplomats together with US officials. However, these were not the only states closely involved in the mediation effort.

Concerning Yemen, I was successful in interviewing at least one Yemeni participant in six of the nine Working Groups; however, I was unable to speak to a member of the 'Good Governance', 'Military and Security', and the 'Independence of Special Entities' Working Groups. Nevertheless, I was able to interview members of the Presidium, the Consultative Committee, the Technical Committee, the Secretariat, and the Secretary-General himself. I spoke to 'independent' youth, women and civil society representatives but a more limited number of the political parties: for instance, I interviewed representatives of the General People's Congress (GPC), Islah and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) but crucially, while I did interview those from the south of Yemen, I did not manage to interview a member of Hiraak nor did I speak with a representative of the Huthis. These weaknesses in my sample can be attributed, at least in part, to the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Moreover, as with Syria, those representatives of external states with whom I spoke in relation to Yemen were all from the West, from the UK, the EU and the US.

Notwithstanding these limitations, it nevertheless should also be noted that my goal was to build a rich and varied dataset but not to comprehensively represent all different groups which participated in the mediation attempt. I did not seek statistical 'generalisability'; I knew this would prove deeply challenging given the phenomenon under study and, moreover, was not an appropriate measure of success for qualitative research. Instead, following Sarah Tracy, I sought 'rich rigor', 'sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex…data and time in the field', and 'credibility', to be gained through 'thick description, concrete detail…crystallization [and] multivocality'.[445] I believe this was achieved through the high number of detailed interviews conducted, with a variety of participants, in a number of different locations and through remote means.

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[445] Sarah Tracy, 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Inquiry* 16:10 (2010), p. 840

### 4.231 Who are the Syrian 'opposition'?

It is also worth briefly reflecting, here, on the Syrian 'opposition' and that which the phrase denotes. In Chapter One, I briefly outlined how the Syrian opposition swelled and splintered during the stages of the Geneva Peace Process under investigation. I will offer more detail here in order to further illuminate the sample of interview participants consulted. Prior to the Uprisings of 2011, Syrian civil society had been described as a 'wasteland'.[446] Following Bashar's ascendancy in 2000, and his initial seemingly milder approach to governance, a proliferation of human rights organisations and discussion forums ushered in the 'Damascus Spring': parliamentarians, business professionals, academics and opposition activists penned a manifesto which called for 'comprehensive political reforms' and which was signed by more than 1,000 civil society activists.[447] While a brutal crackdown followed,[448] 'scattered and secretive activists' had nevertheless been drawn from the shadows. Dissidents 'became aware of each other's existence, and the language of reform was injected into political discourses'.[449] Nevertheless, the 'opposition' in Syria, if it could be called that, remained fragmented, deeply divided, and plagued by state repression.[450]

It has therefore been suggested that 'the 2011 uprising took the Syrian opposition by surprise as much as it did the regime'.[451] The groups which came to represent the opposition in the mediation period under study gradually emerged during the course of the early years of the protests. In April 2011, for instance, after 150 figures signed a 'National Initiative for Democratic Change', an umbrella group named the Syrian National Coalition for Change was established. This movement united opposition activists in exile, many of whom then gathered together with other elements of the Syrian opposition at a conference in Antalya in Turkey in May and June 2011. This conference elected a consultative and an executive council but this meeting, and those which followed, led to 'splits and disagreements'.[452] Soon, the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change was formed, and then the Syrian Revolution General Commission, and then, in August 2011, the Syrian National Transitional Council.

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[446] Joshua Landis and Joe Pace, 'The Syrian Opposition', *The Washington Quarterly* 30:1 (2007), p. 49
[447] Ibid, p. 47
[448] Ibid, pp. 47-8
[449] Ibid, p. 48
[450] Ibid
[451] Jonathan Spyer, 'The Syrian Opposition Before and After the Outbreak of the 2011 Uprising', *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 15:3 (2013), p. 53
[452] Ibid, pp. 53-4

However, the absence of influential Kurdish parties within this Transitional Council, and suspicions surrounding 'the possible behind-the-scenes role of the Muslim Brotherhood', led to the formal establishment, in October 2011, of the SNC.[453]

During the latter half of 2011 and the majority of 2012, the SNC functioned as 'the main point of reference for countries backing the opposition'.[454] However, while it brought together the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, individuals instrumental in the Damascus Declaration, the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC), the LCCs, tribal leaders, and a number of Kurdish parties, it was criticised for its under-representation of Syria's minority communities.[455] The SNC was also troubled by 'continuing splits and schisms' and it has been argued that it failed to unite 'the opposition behind a clear program and strategy'.[456] The SNC fairly rapidly gave way to a new confederation. At a meeting held in Doha in November 2012, Syrian opposition groups and figures announced the formation of SOC. A second umbrella group, SOC replaced the SNC, although the SNC was subsumed within it.[457]

My interview participants largely comprise members of SOC (many of whom were also involved in the SNC and other earlier bodies); those who were members of the earlier bodies, and in particular the SNC, but who did not join SOC; and a limited number of opposition 'activists' who, for a variety of reasons, did not find a place within the formal opposition bodies. In the References list, I specify interlocutors' roles within the opposition, provided this does not contravene the requested anonymity of the participant. When I use the phrase 'opposition', and when interlocutors use this phrase, we are referring to members of these official bodies together with activists opposed to the al-Asad government.

## 4.24 Elite interviewing

The individuals I interviewed can be considered to be members of the 'elite'. With regard to the international officials with whom I conducted interviews, the participants were close to, or

[453] Ibid, pp. 54-6
[454] No author, 'The Syrian National Council', *Carnegie Middle East Center* (2013) [online], available from: https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/48334?lang=en [last accessed: 31 May 2021]
[455] Spyer, 'The Syrian Opposition Before and After the Outbreak of the 2011 Uprising', p. 56
[456] No author, 'The Syrian National Council'
[457] Joseph Daher, 'Pluralism Lost in Syria's Uprising: How the Opposition Strayed from its Inclusive Roots' *The Century Foundation* (2019) [online], available from: https://tcf.org/content/report/pluralism-lost-syrias-uprising/ [last accessed: 31 May 2021]

are themselves, policymakers. They possessed varying levels of authority and control within the mediation processes, are/were employed by prestigious organisations (such as the UN or the civil services of governments) or are/were the elected or appointed officials of the states which attempted to become involved in the mediation attempts. I also interviewed employees of international and local NGOs; while such individuals arguably possess less influence than international officials, diplomats and politicians, they nevertheless exerted varying levels of agency and weight within the mediation processes and tended to be highly-qualified and experienced peacemakers and peacebuilders.[458]

In relation to the Syrians with whom I spoke, such individuals can also be thought of as 'elite': they are/were high-ranking members of the official Syrian opposition organisations and, relatedly, tend(ed) to possess some form of power within either Syria or the Syrian diaspora and, furthermore, within the international community. Once more, they tend(ed) to be highly educated, influential, equipped with financial resources and/or in prestigious (self-)employment, and, moreover, senior in age. Concerning the Yemeni process, a far larger swathe of Yemeni society was incorporated within the National Dialogue. However, as explored in Chapter One, it is nevertheless the case that the manner in which these individuals were selected meant that those known only to the highest echelons of power tended to be invited to the negotiations and, indeed, representatives of the main Yemeni political parties remained predominant.

The process of interviewing elites is fraught with challenge; indeed, even the very term 'elite', and that which it implies, is contested.[459] Nevertheless, if we follow the definition proposed by Darren Lilleker, that elites can be thought of as 'those with close proximity to power of policymaking',[460] this would seem to apply to many of the participants described above.

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[458] Catherine Goetze has claimed that 'peacebuilders represent the social type of…the bourgeois or middle-class man (or woman) whose main capital is their (distinguished and distinctive) education' (Catherine Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace: A Social Analysis of Peacebuilding* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 12), further arguing that 'international peace experts across different organizations and missions hold positions of authority because they hold many other powerful resources through which they impose their ideas as "right"' (Catherine Goetze, 'Response to Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley's Review of *The Distinction of Peace: A Social Analysis of Peacebuilding*, *Perspectives on* Politics 16:2 (2018), p. 499)

[459] Michael Woods, 'Rethinking Elites: Networks, Space, and Local Politics', *Environment and Planning* 30:12 (1998), p. 2101; Katherine Smith, 'Problematising Power Relations in "Elite" Interviews', *Geoforum* 37:4 (2006), p. 645; William Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', *Qualitative Research* 11:4 (2011), p. 432

[460] Darren Lilleker, 'Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield', *Politics* 23:3 (2003), p. 207

Researching the behaviour, motivations, opinions and recollections of elites poses 'significant methodological difficulties that have dramatic effects both on the manner in which research is practised and the character of knowledge claims that it produces';[461] I will summarise these obstacles below and explain the ways in which I attempted to mitigate against each one.

### 4.241 Access

A number of authors pessimistically note the extreme difficulty faced by researchers in their attempts to gain 'entry' to elites.[462] Although, as Katherine Smith astutely cautions, it is important to be aware that other groups in society are by no means any easier than elites to access,[463] a significant element of, and potential obstacle within, my methods was the process of seeking access to my intended interview participants. The existing literature on elites suggests a number of strategies which may ease the process of access. Teresa Odendahl and Aileen Shaw recommend 'extensive preparation, homework, and creativity on the part of the researcher, as well as the right credentials and contacts'[464] while Catherine Welch et al. suggest that a researcher must emphasise her/his institutional affiliation(s).[465] Furthermore, Frederik Thuesen proposes that 'networks, social capital, and trust are often paramount for gaining access to elites'[466] while Joel Aberbach and Bert Rockman advise that the interviewer must be 'politely persistent' and should write a brief letter or email 'on the most prestigious, non-inflammatory letterhead you have access to, stating your purpose in a few well-chosen sentences'.[467] At the outset of my data collection phase, I possessed no prior links to the groups of individuals described in the preceding section, nor had I previously worked in either Syria or Yemen. Moreover, even discovering the names of the relevant individuals, together with their contact details, proved a challenge as the identity of all the participants in the peace

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[461] Joseph Conti and Moira O'Neill, 'Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Global Elite', *Qualitative Research* 7:1 (2007), p. 63

[462] See, for example: Ibid; Smith, 'Problematising Power Relations in "Elite" Interviews', p. 648; Rosanna Hertz and Jonathan Imber, 'Introduction' in Rosanna Hertz and Jonathan Imber (eds.), *Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods* (California: SAGE, 1995), p. viii

[463] Smith, 'Problematising Power Relations in "Elite" Interviews'

[464] Teresa Odendahl and Aileen Shaw, 'Interviewing Elites' in Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research* (California: SAGE, 2002), p. 307

[465] Catherine Welch et al., 'Corporate Elites as Informants in Qualitative International Business Research', *International Business Review* 11:5 (2002), p. 614

[466] Frederik Thuesen, 'Navigating Between Dialogue and Confrontation: Phronesis and Emotions in Interviewing Elites on Ethnic Discrimination', *Qualitative Inquiry* 16:10 (2011), p. 620

[467] Joel Aberbach and Bert Rockman, 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews', *Political Science and Politics* 35:4 (2002), pp. 673, 674

processes on which I am focusing are not publicly known. Thus my own 'networks' and 'social capital' were limited.

However, as advised, I did thoroughly research the individuals and institutions in which I was interested and compiled lists of potential participants and possible means of contacting them. For some, their professional or personal email addresses, or telephone numbers, were available online. For others, I contacted their organisations to request to be connected with the participant, or contacted the participant through their professional or personal social media profiles. I also conducted similar research into potential 'gatekeepers';[468] such individuals included academics and journalists, more accessible colleagues and acquaintances of those whom I wished to contact, and the media wings of the organisations for which my participants work[ed]. When making contact with potential participants, I emphasised, as recommended, my institutional affiliation and funding body, and succinctly explained the purpose of my research and of the proposed interview; a template email has been attached in Appendix E. The inaccessibility of many of my interviewees did, however, as previously discussed, mean my sample became more limited. The use of additional data sources, as described later in this chapter, was deployed to mitigate against this limitation and it remains the case, in my view, that sufficient interviewees were consulted to create 'descriptions and explanations' that are 'bountifully supplied, generous, and unstinting' and to produce a dataset which is 'complex', 'multifaceted', with 'multiple and varied voices', markers of successful qualitative research.[469]

The 'elite' status of my interviewees did, however, aid access in one sense. The majority were proficient in English which meant that I was able to conduct most of my interviews in my native language. Nevertheless, having asked participants to converse in a language which is not their first may have had negative repercussions on the quality of the data gathered; it has been argued that 'impoverished' interviews may be the result due to the additional effort

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[468] See: Robert Broadhead and Ray Rist, 'Gatekeepers and the Social Control of Social Research', *Social Problems* 23:3 (1976), pp. 325-36; Lisa Campbell et al., 'Gatekeepers and Keymasters: Dynamic Relationships of Access in Geographical Fieldwork', *Geographical Review* 96:1 (2006), pp. 97-121; Carolyn Wanat, 'Getting Past the Gatekeepers: Differences Between Access and Cooperation in Public School Research', *Field Methods* 20:2 (2008), pp. 191-208
[469] Tracy, 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', pp. 841, 844

required by the interviewee.[470] In addition, studies have found that 'when interviewees speak in a second language they perceive themselves as less confident, happy and intelligent'.[471] I made attempts to reduce these possibilities; interview participants were provided with detail on the subject matter of the interview prior to our meeting and, indeed, were given a full interview guide if requested. Moreover, I ensured both the language and the tone I used were clear and easily comprehensible for those for whom English was not their native tongue.

In addition, a limited number of participants requested to speak in Arabic and, in these instance, I made arrangements for the interviews to be supported by the presence of an interpreter. Interpreters were used only on occasion but it is nevertheless worth briefly surveying the challenges associated with the use of translators during interviews and the steps I took to mitigate against these. Firstly, it has been argued that interpreters must be familiar with the topic of the interview; that there is a risk interpreters can 'change meanings by omission, revision, and reduction of content';[472] that interpreters can influence the responses received from participants; and, lastly, that interpreters should be considered to be co-creators within the research process and thus involved, to an extent, within the analysis phase.[473] In a bid to reduce these risks, the three interpreters employed were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, which has been included in Appendix F, and it was communicated to my participants that this had taken place; the aim was to ensure the participant remained comfortable discussing the sensitive issues which we explored. I also ensured the interpreter was provided with the interview guide prior to the interview and offered the opportunity to ask any questions she/he may have had in relation to the topic. I requested that the interpreter translated both my questions and the responses of the interviewee comprehensively and in a manner which retained a closeness with the original words. During these interviews, I made notes on the words of the interpreter as I did with my interviewees in other conversations and

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[470] Perry M. Nicassio et al., 'Emigration Stress and Language Proficiency as Correlates of Depression in a Sample of Southeast Asian Refugees', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 32 (1986), pp. 22-8; Joseph Westermeyer, 'Working With an Interpreter in Psychiatric Assessment and Treatment', *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 178:12 (1990), pp. 745-9 (cited in Craig Murray and Joanne Wynne, 'Researching Community, Work and Family with an Interpreter', *Community, Work and Family* 4:2 (2001), pp. 158-9)

[471] Frank Kline et al., 'The Misunderstood Spanish Speaking Patient', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137:12 (1980), pp. 1530-3; Felicity De Zulueta, 'Bilingualism and Family Therapy', *Journal of Family Therapy* 12:3 (1990), pp. 255-65 (cited in Murray and Wynne, 'Using an Interpreter to Research Community, Work and Family', p. 159)

[472] Rachel Berman and Vappu Tyyskä, 'A Critical Reflection on the Use of Translators/Interpreters in a Qualitative Cross-Language Research Project', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 10:1 (2011), p. 181; Cesar Aranguri et al., 'Patterns of Communication Through Interpreters: A Detailed Sociolinguistic Analysis', *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 21:6 (2006), pp. 623-9

[473] Murray and Wynne, 'Using an Interpreter to Research Community, Work and Family'

ensured I maintained eye contact with the interviewee as opposed to the interpreter, responding non-verbally to their responses in an effort to build up a level of rapport similar to that which would usually be achieved. Furthermore, I am proficient in Levantine Arabic and was therefore able to follow the majority of the conversations held with Syrian participants. I should also note that, on occasion, participants would slip, briefly, into Arabic, at which point I remained able to understand and engage. Moreover, participants would infrequently search for a term in English, repeating the Arabic term and its synonyms; together, we would try to find an appropriate translation. I also translated two emails myself; as per my requests to the interpreters employed, I attempted to keep my own translations as close as possible to the original words of my participants.

### *4.242 Conduct within elite interviews*

Scholars offer a range of advice in relation to the process of the interview itself. The first concerns the interview guide. Lilleker counsels that elite interview participants should be given time to consider the questions and topics which will be explored prior to the interview;[474] however, due to the limited time available to elite interviewees[475] and my desire to conduct truly semi-structured interviews, I took the approach of sharing with my interviewees the broad topic on which we would focus but offering a more detailed interview guide only if this was specifically requested.

The literature is divided with regard to recording or note-taking during elite interviews; while recording means that no utterances of the participant are likely to be lost, and that the researcher is able to be fully engaged in the conversation, 'the presence of a tape can be inhibiting…so if the material is contentious it may be wiser to consider taking notes only'.[476] The topic under study here is highly confidential, sensitive and politically charged and, for the Syrian and Yemeni participants, their countries remain in crisis and under violent, volatile and authoritarian rule; therefore, in a bid to increase the comfort of my participants and, hopefully, to deepen the quality of the data gathered, I decided to take notes as opposed to recording the content of the interviews. While this means the style of the notes is less conversational and that the participants' precise words may not have always been captured, I attempted to mitigate

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[474] Lilleker, 'Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield', p. 209
[475] Conti and O'Neill, 'Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Global Elite'
[476] Lilleker, 'Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield', p. 210

against this by typing up the notes immediately after each interview to ensure as accurate a representation of the conversation as possible was provided. I also shared these notes with participants for their approval, allowing the interviewees to make any changes, additions or retractions. Many participants did take this opportunity and, on occasion, made sweeping changes to the transcripts. I felt that this was an important element of my aim to empower the participants and to ensure that I had truly gained their consent and trust. It was also revealing to see which sections were deemed by my participants to be too sensitive for inclusion, or the manner in which they edited their language for direct quotations. Finally, it has been noted that elites, to a greater degree than other 'types' of participants, may become distracted during interviews: for example, their telephones may ring, a meeting may be called, or their personal assistants may interrupt the interview.[477] I was prepared for this eventuality and, indeed, such moments did occur. I viewed these moments as an opportunity to gain an insight into the professional lives and demands of my interviewee, offering valuable contextual information.

### *4.243 Contested authority*

Many discussions of elite interviews devote a great deal of consideration to the subject of power relations within interactions with such individuals. For instance, John Fitz and David Halpin and Odendahl and Shaw chart their experiences of interviews with elites as being shaped by the interviewees' own sense of authority.[478] This is often described in relation to the flow of the interview, with authors feeling that interviewees dictate the questions asked: as Conti and O'Neill describe, 'he was providing answers and my questions were, to some degree, secondary'.[479] Lewis Anthony Dexter also claims that 'a good many well-informed or influential people are unwilling to accept the assumptions with which the investigator starts; they insist on explaining to [her or] him how they see the situation, what the real problems are as they view the matter'.[480] Indeed, in addition to selecting their own questions and topics to explore, it has been remarked that elite interview participants may question the very nature and strategy of the research and the researcher; less explicitly, they may embark on unrelated

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[477] Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', p. 438
[478] John Fitz and David Halpin, 'Ministers and Mandarins: Educational Research in Elite Settings' in Geoffrey Walford (ed.), *Researching the Powerful in Education* (London: University College London Press, 1994), pp. 32-50; Odendahl and Shaw, 'Interviewing Elites'
[479] Conti and O'Neill, 'Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Global Elite', p. 72; see also: Lilleker, 'Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield', p. 210; Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', p. 434
[480] Dexter, *Elite and Specialised Interviewing*, p. 19

monologues in a bid to evade and deflect questions and particular topics and, as a number of authors note, this is perhaps linked to the media training which many elites often receive.[481] This can lead to feelings of despondency and 'inadequacy' on the part of the researcher.[482]  I was aware of this risk and viewed this as an important insight into the character of the interviewee and as an indication of either that which they believed to be most significant in relation to the subject or that which they felt most comfortable in projecting or, rather, promoting. I kept a field diary and, following interviews, I noted down any reflections on such issues. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a number of the interviews did feature the challenges described above: this, in turn, must have had an impact upon the shape of the conversations and the data co-generated.

### *4.244 Crystallisation*

Linked to the discussion above, elite interviewees might approach interviews with a certain purpose or narrative to promote, may have received media training in how best to communicate this message, and may also misrepresent their own position. Furthermore, my interviewees could have simply remembered events inaccurately; after all, the mediation attempts upon which I am focusing concluded more than five years ago and the peace processes have persisted during the intervening period. As described above, the narratives proffered by my participants have been treated as such, as representations of their experiences and worthy of analysis regardless of the 'truth' of the matter.

To grapple with instances in which it is difficult to discern events, the technique often suggested is one of 'triangulation', the 'use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked'.[483]  However, 'triangulation does not lay neatly over research from interpretive, critical, or post-modern paradigms that view reality as multiple, fractured, contested or social constructed'. Multiple sources converging on a particular point does not mean a 'specified reality is correct' as the very belief that there is a singular truth to be found contradicts the philosophical underpinnings of my research.[484]  Nevertheless, I have sought to 'use multiple sources' in a bid to allow

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[481] See, for instance: Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', p. 438
[482] Conti and O'Neill, 'Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Global Elite', p. 70; Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', p. 437
[483] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 386
[484] Tracy, 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', p. 843

'different facets of problems to be explored', to increase the scope of the research and to deepen my understanding.[485] This practice has been referred to by Laura Ellingson as 'crystallisation';[486] as Laurel Richardson poetically describes, a crystal 'combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach…crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions'.[487] Thus, I have sought to incorporate as many views and perspectives as possible within my research but the aim was not to verify the perspectives of my sources against one another but, rather, 'to open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue'.[488]

## 4.25 Remote interviewing

The interview participants with whom I spoke are scattered across the world; the conflicts in Syria and Yemen have endured and, indeed, intensified since the periods of mediation on which I am focusing, forcing many of those who were involved in the peace talks to flee. A high number of Yemenis and Syrians are now concentrated in nearby locations such as Istanbul, Beirut and Amman; however, many more have found refuge in a variety of cities in Western Europe, North America and Australia. As for the international officials who were involved in the peace process, many of these individuals have left their former positions and moved to different roles, organisations and locations. I undertook short field trips to meet interview participants in person; indeed, I sought where possible to meet interview participants face-to-face, allowing the interviewees to suggest the professional or public location in which they would feel most comfortable meeting. This allowed me an insight into crucial settings, such as the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the offices of a number of Track II organisations, the SOC headquarters in Istanbul, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY) building in Amman and, on occasion, the businesses and homes of my interview participants. These glimpses into the lives of my participants deepened my understanding of their experiences and their personalities and, I believe, strengthened our rapport. However, in order to widen and intensify my sample, I also conducted a number of the interviews remotely,

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[485] Ibid
[486] Laura Ellingson, *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research* (California: SAGE, 2008)
[487] Laurel Richardson, 'Writing: A Method of Inquiry' in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research: Second Edition* (California: SAGE, 2000b), p. 934
[488] Tracy, 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research', p. 844

using video call software such as Skype and Zoom where possible, but also using telephone, email and direct messages if these were the only feasible options. Remote interviewing, as is the case with elite interviewing, is accompanied by its own set of advantages and disadvantages, and there are recommended strategies for mitigating against the latter.

Just as digital technologies are becoming ubiquitous in everyday life, particularly following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, so too are such technologies 'starting to form an integral part of the toolkit of many social scientists'.[489] However, the face-to-face interview persists in being promoted and viewed as the 'gold standard'[490] with online interviews 'presented as a second choice'.[491] Four intertwined reasons tend to be offered for this with the first relating to the alleged loss of contextual data pertaining to the environment of the interview and the body language of the interviewee. As Robert Weiss writes, the richness of seeing a person during an interview can be lost;[492] Susie Weller supports this assertion, claiming that, even if video communication is used, 'these digital bodies are fundamentally coarser', and that 'thicker information' and 'body talk' can both be, unfortunately, absent.[493] Henrietta O'Connor et al. also note that the loss of non-verbal cues can prove challenging.[494] Relatedly, it is also argued that it can prove more difficult to foster a rapport within online interviews which, in turn, can lead to shorter and less detailed conversations.[495] This is the experience of Azadeh Forghani et al.; these authors explain that, as there was 'less shared context', it proved difficult to make 'informal small talk' at the beginning of their remotely-conducted interviews, a technique believed to foster a warmer and more natural connection between the interviewer

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[489] Susie Weller, 'Using Internet Video Calls in Qualitative (Longitudinal) Interviews: Some Implications for Rapport', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20:6 (2017), p. 613; see also: Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: SAGE, 2000); Christine Hine, 'The Internet and Research Methods' in Nigel Gilbert and Paul Stoneman, *Researching Social Life* (London: SAGE, 2008), pp. 304-17; Dhiraj Murthy, 'Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research', *Sociology* 42:5 (2008), pp. 837-55; Sally Seitz, 'Pixelated Partnerships, Overcoming Obstacles in Qualitative Interviews Via Skype: A Research Note', *Qualitative Research* 16:2 (2016), pp. 229-35

[490] Judith McCoyd and Toba Kerson, 'Conducting Intensive Interviews Using Email', *Qualitative Social Work* 5:3 (2006), p. 390; Hannah Deakin and Kelly Wakefield, 'Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers', *Qualitative Research* 14:5 (2014), p. 604

[491] Deakin and Wakefield, 'Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers', p. 604

[492] Robert Weiss, *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Studies* (New York: The Free Press, 1994)

[493] Weller, 'Using Internet Video Calls in Qualitative (Longitudinal) Interviews: Some Implications for Rapport', p. 621; see also: Deakin and Wakefield, 'Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers'

[494] Henrietta O'Connor et al., 'Internet-Based Interviewing' in Nigel Fielding et al., *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods* (London: SAGE, 2008), pp. 271-89

[495] Weiss, *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Studies*

and the interviewee.[496] In addition to being unable to ease into a conversation, the beginning of online interviews is often dominated by technological trials as participants and interviewers alike hesitantly check the connection.[497] It can also be challenging to maintain eye contact with participants over video chat.[498] An additional ethical risk is also posed within online interviews as there is a 'small possibility that the video transmission could be intercepted by other individuals (e.g. hackers) and the person's identity and data could be revealed to a third party'.[499] Lastly, it has been noted that last-minute cancellations appear to be more prevalent for remote interviews by comparison with those which take place face-to-face and it has been suggested that 'participants [feel] less committed to a video chat interview'.[500]

These challenges are compounded within interviews conducted by email and using direct messages. I only completed a very limited number of interviews in this way, and only when interlocutors requested to complete the interview in this manner; the reason cited was often the poor internet services in Yemen, which inhibited video or voice calls, but it may have also been the case that the interviewees simply felt more comfortable, and more secure, conducting the interviews with this degree of distance between us. Many of the advantages of the semi-structured interview were hindered in these conversations; I was unable to engage with, and encourage my participants to speak using non-verbal techniques and, while I was nevertheless able to pose 'follow-up' questions, these were less natural than they would have been within a conversation. Moreover, I could not pick up body language or tone of voice from my interviewees.

Where necessary, steps were taken to mitigate against the risks of remote interviews. For instance, as it may be more difficult to build rapport in remote interviews, I ensured the initial questions posed were those which could be considered less challenging, only proceeding to the more difficult or sensitive questions later in the conversation.[501] With regard to the ethical risks, I ensured that only secure software was used and I was cognisant in advance of the risk that I

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[496] Azadeh Forghani et al., 'Conducting Interviews with Remote Participants' in Tejinder Judge and Carmen Neustaedter, *Studying and Designing Technology for Domestic Life: Lessons from Home* (Massachusetts: Elsevier Inc., 2015), p. 18
[497] Weller, 'Using Internet Video Calls in Qualitative (Longitudinal) Interviews: Some Implications for Rapport', p. 617
[498] Ibid, p. 622; Forghani et al., 'Conducting Interviews with Remote Participants', p. 20
[499] Ibid, p. 14
[500] Ibid, p. 16
[501] Weiss, *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Studies*; Forghani et al., 'Conducting Interviews with Remote Participants', p. 19; see also my interview guide presented in Appendix D.

may receive cancellations, factoring this into my planning. Moreover, it is also important to be aware that a number of authors challenge the views summarised above. Indeed, it could be argued that the use of video calls, especially if the interview takes place in the interview subject's home or office, may offer a more personal insight into the world of the participant than would have been gleaned had the interview taken place in a meeting room or a public location such as a café. This in turn means, in my remote interviews, that I may conversely have had an even greater opportunity to 'observe the everyday', the 'mundane', information that could help me to 'better understand participants and their life situations'.[502] Moreover, the close-up facial image often provided by software such as Skype arguably facilitates 'a more intimate connection and feeling of close physical proximity, conducive to the building of rapport'; this, in turn, can also limit distractions, strengthening the connection and focus of the interview.[503] Furthermore, should interviews be conducted by telephone, the 'interviewer effect' is decreased; participants are less likely to be influenced by the physical characteristics of the interviewer.[504] It has even been suggested that participants may be more likely to be open to responding to sensitive or embarrassing questions posed over the telephone due to the perceived divide between themselves and the questioner.[505] Lastly, and linked with the previous discussion concerning elite interviewing, it has been suggested that remote interviews may be more efficient when approaching elites, and that this group prefers the flexibility provided;[506] if conducted remotely, elites can speak while travelling, at a time which suits their demanding schedules, and can rearrange with ease. They also do not feel the pressure to arrange security clearance for the researcher nor to find suitable, private spaces within their places of work to conduct the interview. I may therefore have been able to secure a greater number of interviews, and thus a richer array of voices within my analysis, by electing to use remote interviews in addition to in-person interviews.

## 4.3 Press conferences

The second source of data upon which I draw in making my claims is a series of press conferences delivered by the international mediators, implicated external states and

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[502] Forghani et al., 'Conducting Interviews with Remote Participants', p. 29

[503] Weller, 'Using Internet Video Calls in Qualitative (Longitudinal) Interviews: Some Implications for Rapport', p. 617

[504] Deakin and Wakefield, 'Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers', p. 605

[505] Ibid; Clare Madge and Henrietta O'Connor, 'Online Methods in Geography Educational Research', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 28:1 (2004), pp. 143-52

[506] Harvey, 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', pp. 435-6

representatives of the Syrian and Yemeni conflict parties. I introduced this second data source due to the inherently partial nature of the interview data gathered, due to the limitations of my sample, and in a bid to achieve further crystallisation. The interviews provided memories of the participants' actions and thoughts during the period under study. The press conferences, however, constitute data generated at the time of the mediation efforts; nevertheless, once more, I should emphasise that the purpose of examining this data is not to 'verify' the accounts provided in the interviews but, instead, to deepen my understanding of the case studies and the perspectives of those involved. Furthermore, by consulting the press conferences, I have been able to gain an appreciation of the apparent experiences and opinions of individuals with whom I was not able to hold an interview. These include individuals who have passed away since the mediation attempt, and individuals whom I was unable to contact despite my best efforts and individuals, such as representatives of the Syrian government, whom I decided not to approach for interviews.

## 4.31 Describing the press conferences transcribed

During my data collection phase, the UN website 'UN Live United Nations Web TV'[507] featured a number of videos of press conferences delivered in Geneva during the stages of the Syrian and Yemeni peace processes on which I am focusing. This website also included a video of the opening of Geneva II in Montreux. The archive of videos was difficult to navigate;[508] indeed, the site has since been redeveloped. To try to ensure all relevant videos were included in the dataset, I reviewed all videos listed once I entered the search terms 'Syria' and 'Yemen'. I narrowed my search to those recorded between 2011 and 2014 and then included all videos which concerned the UN-led peace processes as well as, in the case of Syria, press conferences which discussed UNSMIS. In total, I transcribed 50 press conferences. These videos have been listed in the References section. Due to the redevelopment of the website, the original links to the videos are no longer valid (although all the videos do appear to be being moved to the new site). However, I have downloaded all the press conferences included in the dataset and these audio-visual files are available on request.

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[507] Available from: http://webtv.un.org/ [last accessed: 11 February 2021]. This link now redirects to the redeveloped site (https://media.un.org/en/webtv/) [last accessed: 30 June 2021]

[508] Due to these difficulties, there is a possibility that additional press conferences were delivered, were not found in my searches and, therefore, have not been included in my dataset.

Table e) Press conferences: Syria case study

|  | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Delivered by:** | | |
| Representatives of the Syrian opposition | 3 | 7% |
| Representatives of the Syrian government | 7 | 17% |
| Representatives of external states | 3 | 7% |
| International 'mediator' | 28 | 67% |
| Combination of above | 1 | 2% |

Table f) Press conferences: Yemen case study

|  | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Delivered by:** | | |
| Representatives of external states | 4 | 50% |
| International 'mediator' | 4 | 50% |

## 4.32 Reflecting on the use of press conferences as data

The press conferences consulted in this study can be considered to be political press conferences, 'an institutionalized form for communication between leading politicians and journalists'.[509] Press conferences tend to feature a brief introduction and conclusion (usually delivered by a Chair), 'an uninterrupted and monological speech made by the politician [or politicians] responsible', and 'an interactional phase'.[510] In this interactional phase, the journalists present pose questions to the politicians. The journalists in attendance, and other press and media authorities observing the developments, can be thought of as 'the receivers and hearers'; however, 'the ultimate audience is the international community of politicians, and more importantly, the general public who are being represented by their leaders'.[511] Aditi Bhatia has remarked that political press conferences 'provide excellent data to study how

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[509] Göran Eriksson, 'Follow-Up Questions in Political Press Conferences', *Journal of Pragmatics* 43 (2011), p. 3331
[510] Ibid
[511] Aditi Bhatia, 'Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Press Conferences', *Discourse & Society* 17:2 (2006), p. 177

ideologies are discussed and negotiated, how power relations are asserted, and how political differences on difficult issues are discussed and communicated in a positive way'.[512]

Political press conferences, nevertheless, entail specific characteristics, some of which could be perceived to be limitations. As Bhatia has noted, 'speakers in a press conference come prepared with a speech, and answers to potential questions, written in advance by a team of trained communication diplomats and specialists'; indeed, Bhatia therefore describes the politicians delivering a press conference as the 'animators rather than authors of the material they use'.[513] Moreover, in press conferences, politicians 'court' the press, and 'feed' their 'egos', in a bid to ensure favourable coverage.[514] Press conferences serve a particular purpose: they may be intended to inform but they are also, undoubtedly, intended to persuade one's audience and to promote oneself, one's group and one's strategy. Furthermore, the information delivered during these conferences is partly dictated by the questions, and therefore the interests and partisanship, of the journalists present. This does not mean the data is not revealing but, rather, that the data is revealing of the manner in which the groups and individuals encompassed by this data source wished their peers and their constituents to perceive the mediation efforts and their role within them.

When transcribing the press conferences, I ensured the resulting transcripts reflected as closely as possible the style in which the words were spoken, incorporating, for example, pauses and verbal exclamations.[515] I also marked frequent 'time stamps' on the transcripts, allowing me to return to the precise points of the video to include analysis of body language and environmental context.

## 4.4 Official documentation

Lastly, I gathered together a third data source which can be categorised as 'official documentation'. International conflict mediation is veiled in secrecy. Written primary sources such as meeting transcripts, minutes and agendas were unavailable for analysis. I therefore identified an alternative series of written records produced during, and in relation to, the two

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[512] Ibid, p. 174
[513] Ibid, p. 177
[514] Ibid, p. 174
[515] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, pp. 481-6

mediation efforts. The purpose was to further broaden and deepen the sample of voices contained within the dataset in a bid to mitigate against the aforementioned limitations of my sample of interviewees, and the sample of individuals represented within the transcribed press conferences. In total, I gathered 110 such documents.

Table g) Official documents: Syria case study

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Document Type** | | |
| SNC Press Releases | 2 | 3% |
| SOC Press Releases | 31 | 45% |
| UN Documents | 14 | 20% |
| FoS and London 11 (UK Government) Press Releases | 22 | 32% |

Table h) Official documents: Yemen case study

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Document Type** | | |
| GCC Initiative Documents | 2 | 5% |
| NDC Documents | 3 | 7% |
| UN Documents | 26 | 63% |
| FoY (UK Government) Press Releases | 10 | 24% |

## 4.5 Semi-inductive thematic analysis

The information gleaned from the primary data gathered was then combined to create a rich image of the two conflict mediation attempts within which the various, and varied, perspectives of those who participated in or observed the mediation efforts were presented. Following this synthesis, I conducted a semi-inductive, iterative thematic analysis of the primary data in order to address my over-arching research question, and to assess and respond to the three hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three.

**4.51 Describing the process of thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method often used by qualitative researchers yet it is rarely delineated. It can be defined as 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'[516] and, in this project, entailed the following steps:[517]

i.   Firstly, I immersed myself within the primary data.

ii.  I then generated an initial set of codes, 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data'.[518] Drawing upon the material assessed in Chapters Two and Three – my knowledge of the concept of identity, how it may be constituted and sustained, my knowledge of existing academic debates surrounding identity in Syria and Yemen, and my assessment of the limited existing literature concerning the relationship between mediation and identity – I generated codes which I believed could offer an answer to my over-arching research question and could be used to assess the three hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three. I explored the data produced by hand, assigning each code a colour or symbol, and highlighting the data associated with each code with this colour or symbol. Occasionally, data fitted within multiple codes.

iii. Having explored all the data once, I then reviewed the 162 codes generated, organising these into broader categories and then themes, the latter of which capture 'something important about the data in relation to the research question' and represent 'some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset'.[519]

iv.  I then refined the themes created through returning to the dataset and the initial set of codes. On occasion, I discovered additional data to code, or decided data also belonged within a second code. I also re-organised a number of the categories and combined themes.

v.   Lastly, I named each theme, selecting five which would be analysed and interpreted in depth in order to answer my research question. These five are Suffering, Democracy and Reform, Discord, National Ownership, and Inclusion. As will become apparent,

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[516] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3:2 (2006), p. 79
[517] Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', pp. 87-93
[518] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London: SAGE, 2014), p. 4
[519] Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', p. 82

many of these themes, and their attendant categories and codes, are distributed across more than one chapter and, therefore, are analysed to respond to more than hypothesis.

The five themes selected, and the categories and codes contained within them, are listed in the table below:

Table i) Themes, categories and codes selected for analysis

| Theme | Categories | Codes |
|---|---|---|
| Suffering | Terror | Fear, Threat, Flee |
| | Agony | Hurt, Anger, Injustice, Neglect, Poverty |
| | Courage | Bravery, Sacrifice |
| | Defenceless | Vulnerability, Fragility, Weakness, Innocence |
| | Brutality | Destruction, Force, Attack, Violence, Terrorism, Massacre, Humanitarian needs, Victimhood |
| | Oppression | Repression, Regime, Dictatorship, Tyranny, Silenced, Detained, Trapped |
| Democracy and Reform | Liberal democratic governance | Democratic institutions, Elections, Representation, Accountability, Long-lasting support for democracy, Justice, Law, Citizenship |
| | Liberal values | Human rights, Freedom, Dignity, Civil state |
| | Openness | Voice, Transparency, Consultation, Pluralism, Diversity, Difference |
| | Transformation | Transition, Change, Reform, Novelty, Peace |
| Discord | Brutality | Destruction, Attack, Violence, Battle, Injustice |
| | Terror | Fear, Threat, Flee |
| | Oppression | Repression, Monopoly of power, Marginalisation, Silenced, Locked up, Trapped, Unwilling to negotiate |
| | Rivalry | Competition, Exclusion, Regime, Concealment, Manipulation, Blame, Divisions |

| | Accusation | Traitor, Foreign Agent, Outsider, Terrorist |
|---|---|---|
| | Sub-state groups | Youth, Women, Newcomers, Political elite, Minority groups, Religious groups, Ethnic groups, Class, Sectarianism, Secularism, Urban and rural divisions, Geography, Tribe |
| National Ownership | Authority | Leadership, Control, Agency, Power, Responsibility, Independence, Sovereignty, Strength, Voice |
| | Intrusion | Interference, Dictate, Manipulation, Blame, Neo-colonialism, Force, Outsider |
| | Frailty | Futility, Weakness, Failure |
| | Camaraderie | Friendship, Support, Assistance, Nurture, Coordination, Cooperation, Competition |
| | International frameworks | International documents, UN resolutions |
| Inclusion | Embracement | Inclusivity, Representation, Participation, Voice |
| | Clarity and Collaboration | Communication, Consultation, Transparency, Coordination, Cooperation |
| | Obfuscation | Concealment, Exclusion, Disconnect |
| | Sub-state groups | Youth, Syrians inside Syria, On the ground, Minority groups, Religious groups, South Yemen and Southerners, Regional or geographic groups, Women, Newcomers, Political elite, Civil Society, Stakeholders, Pluralism, Diversity, Comprehensive |

A more detailed version of this table is included in Appendix G. The version there includes illustrative fragments of text to accompany each code, offering further insight into how I approached, understood, organised and analysed the data gathered.

Why were these themes selected for analysis? How do they align with the operationalisation of identity developed in Chapter Two, and how will they be deployed to assess the three

hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three? It will be recalled that, over the course of the following three chapters, I will evaluate and offer a response to the following three hypotheses:

1. *Conflict parties may seek to legitimise their identities through participating in mediation.*
2. *Mediators can use mediation to instigate normative change on the part of the conflict parties and this, in turn, can shape the identities of the conflict parties.*
3. *The rationales used to justify inclusive peacemaking and the framing of those included can transform the identities of the conflict parties.*

The table on the following page outlines which theme will be used to assess which hypothesis, in which chapter, and will briefly comment on the links between the theme and the theoretical material and mediation scholarship charted in Chapters Two and Three. It should further be noted that a number of the themes will be used to assess more than one hypothesis.

Table j) Connections between the themes, hypotheses, and conception of identity

| Theme: | Hypothesis and chapter: | Link to operationalisation of identity: |
|---|---|---|
| Suffering | 1 (Chapter 5) | In Chapter Two, I noted that narratives of collective trauma frequently form the focal point of shared, constructed identities, drawing together individuals and shaping how members of a collective view the world and understand their relationships with others. |
| Democracy and Reform | 1, 2 (Chapters 5 and 6) | I consider democracy to be both an aspiration and a norm, whereas reform is characterised as an aspiration only. In Chapter Two, I explained that the deliberation of shared aspirations forms a crucial thread within group identities. I also argued that norms are intrinsically linked to identity construction, serving to both regulate and constitute identities while Chapter Three demonstrated that mediation scholars have started to consider how the promotion of norms within mediation may shape conflict parties' identities. |
| Discord | 1, 3 (Chapters 5 and 7) | The theme of discord contains within it evidence of Othering, the casting of external groups into counter-identities, together with evidence of antagonism between groups included in the peace processes. Furthermore, this theme also includes debates surrounding sub-state identity groups; in Chapter Two, I noted the varying levels of identity and the relevance of these debates to scholarship concerning group identities in Syria and Yemen. |
| National Ownership | 2 (Chapter 6) | National ownership is a process-related mediation norm and, as explored in Chapters Two and Three, norms have been argued to shape identities. Existing scholarship has not yet theorised how this norm may shape identities but, in Chapter Two, I noted the varying levels of identity and I will assess whether |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | the focus on the level of the national within this norm shaped the level of identity constructed in the mediation attempts. |
| Inclusion | 3 (Chapter 7) | Inclusion is a process-related mediation norm. As explored in Chapter Three, scholars have theorised that the promotion of inclusion, and the manner in which the included are framed, can interact with identity. |

## 4.52 Reflecting on the method of thematic analysis

Thematic analysis could be conducted entirely inductively;[520] in other words, the codes, categories and themes generated by the researcher derive from the data rather than the researcher's pre-defined questions or preconceptions. The approach taken here can be thought of instead as 'semi-inductive'.[521] At the point at which I undertook the method of thematic analysis, I had conducted prior research into the identities deemed by specialists to be of importance within Syria and Yemen. I had also conducted research into identities more broadly, with a specific focus on the manner in which they are conceptualised within the social constructivist approach to international relations. I therefore approached the data armed with this knowledge and having developed an overarching research question concerning mediation and identity. I also approached the data with three, broad and open, hypotheses.

There are risks associated with the approach I took; it is possible that my 'analytic field of vision' was narrowed.[522] However, it is also worth considering the extent to which researchers can truly 'free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments'.[523] Nevertheless, I attempted to limit my own biases by prioritising the generation of data-driven codes and, where possible, codes which use the precise words of my primary sources.[524] I also devoted considerable time to immersion within the data in a bid to enhance my 'sensitivity to its meanings'[525] and, moreover, to ensure that I remained cognisant of the data as a whole.[526]

## 4.6 Positionality

At the outset of this chapter, I commented that I myself, as a researcher, am 'located and shifting'[527] within this study. Specifically, I view research as 'a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants'.[528] Kim England has suggested 'that we approach the unequal

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[520] Ibid, pp. 83-4
[521] Braun and Clarke refer to this as a 'theoretical' thematic analysis (Ibid, p. 84)
[522] Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', p. 86; Richard Boyatzsis, *Transforming Qualitative Information* (California: SAGE, 1998), p. 30
[523] Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', p. 84
[524] Carol Rivas, 'Coding and Analysing Qualitative Data' in Clive Seale (ed.), *Researching Society and Culture* (London: SAGE, 2012), p. 372
[525] Ibid, p. 368
[526] Ibid
[527] Leavy, 'Introduction', p. 4
[528] Brian Bourke, 'Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process', *The Qualitative Report* 19:33 (2014), p. 1

power relations in the research encounter by exposing the partiality of our perspective', by locating 'ourselves in our work' and by reflecting 'on how our location influences the questions we ask, how we conduct our research, and how we write our research'.[529] My (perceived) views and values, linked, of course, to my (perceived) gender, race, class, socioeconomic status and educational background[530] inevitably shaped the evolution of this study and, in particular, my interactions with my interlocutors. I will excavate, here, some of the ways in which my personal identity interacted with the research process.

Firstly, I believe my 'positionality' guided, at least in part, the theoretical framework and case studies selected, the hypotheses and research question formulated, and the methods used. The decision to focus upon mediation and, more specifically, mediation of the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars, was influenced by a number of elements of my personal identity. For instance, my experience having lived and worked in Palestine at the time of the breakdown of the US-led mediation efforts between 2013 and 2014 drew me to the topic. Furthermore, my personal response to the Syrian and Yemeni conflicts drew me to the case studies: in other words, my wish to contribute to furthering our understanding not only of these devastating conflicts but also the failed efforts to bring to an end to the violence there. As I wrote my funding application, in late 2016, Syria and, to a lesser extent, Yemen, were rarely far from news headlines.

I approached this study with committed openness and remained, throughout the preparation, data gathering and data analysis phases, attuned to the possibility that identity may not prove relevant within the two cases under investigation. Nevertheless, the concept of identity was always present, from the very outset of this project and I have, ultimately, forged an argument surrounding this idea. What drew me to study identity? I was partially drawn to the concept of identity due to its allegedly central role within the politics of the Middle East, an academic debate which I discussed in Chapter Two. That identity has faced relative neglect within mediation studies also encouraged my focus on the concept. However, I was doubtless also partially drawn to the concept, and to social constructivism, for reasons pertaining to my personal identity: I believe that my educational background in Music may have led me to feel an affinity with the concept of identity, an abstract, intangible idea often imbued with meaning through cultural practices. In addition, scholars have found that, in the field of international

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[529] Kim England, 'Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research', *The Professional Geographer* 46:1 (1994), pp. 86-7
[530] Bourke, 'Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process', p. 1

relations, 'women are more likely [than men] to describe themselves as constructivists'. It has been suggested that this is because constructivism better reflects how women 'experience the world', capturing the constrained, intersubjective 'choices' which face women,[531] and the manner in which these structures can mutate. It is therefore also possible that my gender guided my focus upon identity as conceptualised by social constructivists.

Thirdly, it has also been found that women are more likely than men to conduct qualitative research;[532] while a reason is not offered by the authors, as I have explored in this section, constructivist research is necessarily interpretivist. Concepts such as socially constructed identity cannot be captured well by quantitative methods. If more women are drawn to interpretivist paradigms, it is perhaps unsurprising that more women also conduct qualitative research. More precisely, the more egalitarian qualitative methods selected, in which research participants were encouraged to guide the conversations as far as possible, and in which an emphasis placed upon securing meaningful consent, are also connected to my own political values and views and, thus, my positionality.

Furthermore, the ways in which my gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background and professional experience were 'read' by my research participants, and the ways in which particular opinions and principles were then ascribed to me, must have shaped the information which my participants elected to reveal and the ways in which they framed it. Indeed, participants would frequently ask how I became intrigued by the topic under study or became interested in the 'Middle East', which often led to conversations surrounding my professional and personal experience in Palestine. In one memorable exchange, a participant extrapolated from this aspect of my identity that, due to my having lived in Nablus, in the West Bank, I must not only be left-wing and a member of the UK Labour Party but, moreover, that I was likely to be opposed to Western military intervention in Syria. This was a rare example in which an interlocutor articulated his assumptions surrounding my identity to me, but others must also have made judgements and this is likely, in turn, to have guided that which they felt secure in sharing. Moreover, it is possible that certain interlocutors felt more comfortable conversing with me, or that I felt more at ease holding interviews with them, due to elements of my identity; these dynamics, too, will have shaped the nature of the interviews. I attempted

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[531] Daniel Maliniak et al., 'Women in International Relations' *Politics and Gender* 4:1 (2008), pp. 123, 133
[532] Ibid

to reduce the effect of my presence as a far as possible, revealing little about myself and my own views on the topic under study and allowing the participants to lead the conversations; nevertheless, my institutional profile does outline my educational background and professional experience, and my appearance, native language and accent can disclose, or provide clues to, other aspects of my identity. I used neutral language, wore muted clothing, and had not published my views on the topic under study during the data collection phase; nevertheless, it is inevitable that my identity, and the identities of my interlocutors, shaped our interactions, and that the ways in which I was sited within the project fluctuated depending on the context and the interviewee.[533]

When analysing the data, and when deciding how to respond to the hypotheses formulated, I selected themes which seemed, to me, to be most prevalent within the data, and thus of greatest significance to the voices represented. I also selected themes which seemed most appropriate to the theoretical framework selected, and to the hypotheses developed. However, there is, of course, a possibility that my selection, and my interpretation of these themes, were guided at least partially by my identity. As examples, there is a possibility that my professional experience working in an international organisation led to my being more attuned to the subtle ways in which such institutions wield power, and thus more likely to notice remarks made in this vein within the dataset; or I may have better understood, and thus prioritised, the views of those interlocutors who shared identity traits and values with me. I attempted to mitigate against my own biases, continuously reflecting, during the analysis and writing phases, on the possible ways in which my identity might be guiding me towards certain findings. I also sought to reduce this limitation by maintaining a strong connection with the data: the analysis phase can be described as iterative as I returned multiple times to the raw data to assess whether the codes, categories and themes derived were indeed coherent and valid. I also ensured numerous quotations were interwoven within my analysis, allowing readers to consider whether they agreed with my interpretations. Nevertheless, I would describe this limitation as inescapable, despite the steps taken to reduce its effect.

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[533] Lynne Haney, 'Homeboys, Babies, Men in Suits: The State and the Reproduction of Male Dominance', *American Sociological Review* 61:5 (1996), p. 776

## 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter represents the final preliminary section of this thesis. I have described the four steps undertaken to generate the following three empirical chapters. I have explored in depth the process of semi-structured interviewing, outlining the precise approach I took and the sample of interviewees consulted. I have described the press conferences transcribed and the official documentation gathered. Lastly, I have explained the method of thematic analysis. I have been transparent in exposing the various limitations inherent to my approach, and the means by which I have attempted to mitigate against these weaknesses, while I have also explored my own personal identity, and the manner in which my positionality may have interacted with the data collected and the analysis produced. Throughout the data collection and data analysis phases, I scrutinised my motives, aims and approach, reflecting upon the data gathered, their meanings, the impact of my project upon interlocutors, and my broader interaction with the research 'site'.

# Chapter 5. Mediation, Identity Construction, and Legitimacy

*[The] underlying conflict is about control of the Syrian state and the future of the Syrians as a people.*[534]

*...in Yemen, I saw a nation in turmoil and a state on the verge of collapse.*[535]

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will forge three interconnected arguments, all of which will combine to support my overall contention that mediation may shape identity. More precisely, my claims will demonstrate that mediation can form an arena in which mediators and conflict parties engage in processes of identity construction and, furthermore, that the very occurrence of mediation can induce these processes. In this chapter, I will analyse three themes detected within the dataset: Suffering, Democracy and Reform, and Discord. In Chapter Three, I extrapolated the following hypothesis from Aggestam's work for investigation in this chapter: *conflict parties may seek to legitimise their identities through participating in mediation.* In response, I will build upon Aggestam's contention by proposing three further ways in which mediation, identity construction, and legitimacy, according to my interpretation of the data gathered, can intertwine.

Firstly, I will argue that, in stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, the Syrian opposition, in partnership with the official mediator and members of the international community, co-constructed two fresh facets of the Syrian national identity. These facets present the Syrian national experience as being distinguished by suffering, and the nationally held aspiration as being a transition to a democratic political system. My argument is that, having reimagined the Syrian people in this manner, the Syrian opposition not only demonstrated their compassion for, and understanding of, the Syrian people but also then aligned their movement with this vision of the Syrian nation, emphasising that their members had, likewise, faced persecution and a long struggle for democracy. This indicates that, in the context of civil war mediation, conflict parties and mediators can wield processes of identity construction as a means to

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[534] M, S, TI (2)
[535] Jamal Benomar in UNSC, '6878th Meeting S/PV.6878' (4 December 2012)

legitimise a particular conflict party and to justify its claims of representation. In turn, this fortifies my fundamental argument that identity can be shaped within mediation.

Secondly, I will claim that mediators and conflict parties can reimagine the identities of the nations in civil conflict in a bid to legitimise the intervention of a third party. I will draw, once more, on the presentation of victimhood, by both the Syrian opposition and the international mediators, as being the unifying experience of the Syrian people; I will then argue that this construction may have served to rationalise and defend both consenting to, and launching, a process of third-party mediation. The perceived need for third-party involvement may have therefore, at least in part, inspired the shape of the national identity imagined during the peace process; again, this argument therefore upholds my overall claim that mediation can shape identity. However, in this second section, I will also draw upon data concerning the Yemeni case study. While the mediators implicated in this second process did seem to envision the Yemeni people as being united by suffering, the Yemeni voices represented within the dataset appear to offer resistance. This suggests that processes of legitimising mediation through identity construction may not necessarily proceed smoothly, and may be met with challenge on the part of the conflict parties.

Thirdly, I will show how conflict parties may construct their identities against an 'Other' within a mediation process, suggesting that this may take place in an attempt to legitimise their movements' claims of representation and ambitions to rule. Here, I will draw on the Syrian case once more, showing that both the Syrian government delegates at Geneva II, and the Syrian opposition members with whom I held interviews, may have engaged in practices of Othering. I will suggest that, in the direct negotiations at Geneva II, the Syrian government delegates sought to castigate the Syrian opposition members and their supporters, condemning their lack of 'Syrian-ness' and implying, therefore, that the Syrian government boasted the right to speak on behalf of, and to legitimately rule over, Syrians. However, the manner in which Syrian opposition members described these heated exchanges within the interviews I held may also represent an attempt on behalf of these interlocutors to similarly rebuke the Syrian government, and to characterise their representatives as both vicious and unreasonable. This narrative, in turn, may have been promoted in order to imply their own faction's more peaceable and rational nature, a further attempt, therefore, at legitimisation. Thus, once more, I will reveal the manner in which mediation can form a backdrop to processes of identity construction.

Finally, I will briefly outline the broader implications of these three arguments. I will reflect on the level of the identities characterised; their differences from and similarities to the identities explored in existing scholarship concerning group identification in Syria and Yemen; the strength of the identities imagined; and the possible repercussions of my analysis on our understanding of the relationship between the mediators and the conflict parties and, in particular, the perceived impartiality of the mediators. It is worth mentioning that, in this chapter, I will examine narratives surrounding the victimhood of the Syrian opposition movement, the Syrian people, and the Yemeni people. The intention is not to deny the suffering of these three groups. The Syrians and the Yemenis have, unquestionably, endured brutality.[536] However, we must nevertheless examine why it is this facet of the Syrian and Yemeni national experiences which was emphasised, within the data gathered, to the exclusion of other possible strands within the context of the two mediation efforts under examination in this thesis.

## 5.2 Legitimising conflict parties by reimagining the nation

### 5.21 Who are the Syrian people? A nation held hostage

In Chapter Two, I operationalised the concept of collective identity; following Risse, I suggested that identities are constructed as actors 'make sense of who they are and what they want',[537] and as their peers contribute to such debates. These 'collective narratives', of the past and the future, coalesce to form the character of groups, to constitute their 'images of individuality and distinctiveness'.[538] I also proposed that collective trauma may be particularly likely to draw individuals together, and to inspire a sense of commonality. Building upon these claims, here I will assess the theme of Suffering. I will argue that, within the dataset, those voices represented sought to portray the Syrian people as being bound together in victimhood, and that this national experience was depicted both in the context of, and in later reflections on, the mediation process. To begin, according to those members of the Syrian opposition with whom I held interviews, the bond which unites the 'Syrian people' is suffering at the hands of

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[536] No author, 'Syria: Events of 2020', *Human Rights Watch* [online], available from: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/syria [last accessed: 8 April 2021]; No author, 'Yemen: Events of 2020', *Human Rights Watch* [online], available from: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/yemen [last accessed: 28 June 2021]

[537] Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, p. 20

[538] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 59

the al-Asad government. In their words, the Syrian people, imagined as a unified collective, are 'refugees'[539] and 'detainees'.[540] They have been 'kidnapped',[541] 'killed',[542] starved,[543] abandoned,[544] 'tortured'[545] and 'slaughtered';[546] they are 'wounded',[547] and they have 'lost everything'.[548] They have been exiled,[549] driven from their homes,[550] and they have faced 'atrocities',[551] 'massacres',[552] chemical weapons attacks,[553] 'repression'[554] and 'violence'.[555] Moreover, they have endured this 'injustice'[556] and 'tyranny'[557] for decades.[558] They are, it is emphasised, 'victims'.[559] In the statements, press conferences and speeches released and delivered by the SNC and SOC during the years of Geneva I and II, the Syrians, once more invoked as one, are characterised in a similar fashion. Much of the same imagery and terminology are deployed but, additionally, the nation is also characterised as an 'unarmed'[560]

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[539] SO, DaGII (4); SO, DaGII (3)

[540] SO, DaGII (2); SO, DaGII (4); SO, DaGII (5)

[541] SO, DaGII (4)

[542] SO, DaGII (4); SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (5); SO (4)

[543] SO, DaGII (2)

[544] SO (4)

[545] SO, DaGII (4); SO, DaGII (6); moreover, a third interview participant claimed that 'there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners, there were those they didn't even have the space to torture' (SO (4)).

[546] SO, DaGII (3)

[547] SO, DaGII (4)

[548] Ibid

[549] As one interviewee worded it, 'people are scattered here and there' (SO, DaGII (2)).

[550] SO (2)

[551] One participant used this term twice, clarifying that it was al-Asad who had committed these atrocities (SO (2)).

[552] SO, DaGII (5); SO (5)

[553] SO (2); SO, DaGII (2); SO (6)

[554] One interviewee mentioned this twice in our conversation: (SO (2)); moreover, a second remarked that al-Asad 'closed all the forums, all the Damascus Spring forums, and some of these people were put in jail' (SO, DaGII (3)); and a third interlocutor commented that 'the response from the government became more bloody and more severe, there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners' (SO (4)).

[555] SO (2); SO (7). Moreover, a second mentioned the 'bombing [of] civilians' (SO, DaGII (6)); while one interlocutor used the phrase, 'under these attacks' (SO, DaGII (2)).

[556] SO, DaGII (3)

[557] SO, DaGII (5)

[558] SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (1); SO, DaGII (5); SO (5)

[559] One interlocutor spoke of the 'victims of the regime' (SO (1)); a second noted that 'the UN said, very clearly, that this was the worst humanitarian situation since the Second World War' (SO, DaGII (3)); a third interlocutor mentioned the following: 'this regime should be in court, tried against the war crimes it is committing' (SO, DaGII (2)); while one interlocutor stated that 'the humanitarian implications have been disastrous' (SO (4))

[560] SOC, 'President Ahmad al-Jarba's Speech, Geneva, Switzerland' (23 January 2014); SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference' (2012)

and 'innocent'[561] people in need of 'protection',[562] 'under siege',[563] 'attack[ed]',[564] 'humiliated'[565] by a 'military dictatorship',[566] facing a 'murderous onslaught'[567] and entrapped in 'a living hell'.[568] Indeed, many of the SOC official statements conclude with the phrase, 'We ask for mercy for our martyrs, health for our wounded, and freedom for our detainees'.[569]

Furthermore, during the interviews, Syrian participants would recount instances in which they sought to emphasise this alleged strand of the Syrian character during the negotiations, within the halls of the Palais. For instance, one described to me how she 'was asking, all the time…appealing to the regime to just discuss humanitarian needs, detainees, those who had been kidnapped, ceasefires'.[570] A further interviewee deemed it particularly significant that 'the official representatives of Bashar al-Asad were listening to us talking about state-sponsored terrorism, detainees, killings and the criminal nature of the security apparatus…the experiences of the Syrian people under the regime since the Bath party took over in 1963', later remarking on the way in which al-Jarba, in a speech delivered in Montreux, 'showed images of the massacres', commenting that 'we used it [Geneva II] to raise awareness'.[571] Indeed, one interlocutor claimed that it was this facet of the Syrian national identity, the suffering of those who remained in Syria, which motivated the very participation of SOC in the peace process: 'we did not feel we [had] the luxury to say no to sitting with these criminals, if I say no then I should be one of the ones inside Syria, under these attacks – I don't have the luxury, they need a solution.'[572]

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[561] SOC, 'Statement from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces to Syrian People' (23 January 2013); SOC, 'Demands of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces' (20 April 2013); SOC, 'Syrian Coalition President Holds First Meeting with JSR Brahimi and Urges UN to Support Political Solution in Syria' (25 September 2013); SOC, 'UN-Arab League Envoy Brahimi Should Maintain Neutrality' (7 November 2013); SOC, 'President Ahmad al-Jarba's Speech, Geneva, Switzerland'
[562] SNC, 'Arab League Initiative' (n.d.)
[563] UN Live, 'Syrian Opposition Coalition Representatives – Press Conference' (25 January 2014)
[564] Ibid
[565] SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference'
[566] Ibid. SOC also used similar phrases: 'murderous regime' (SOC, 'Statement from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces to Syrian People') and 'tyrannical regime' (SOC, 'Mission of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi' (29 October 2013))
[567] SOC, 'Statement from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces to Syrian People'
[568] SOC, 'President Ahmad Al-Jarba's Speech at the End of First Round of Negotiations in Geneva' (31 January 2014)
[569] This phrase features in twelve SOC press releases.
[570] SO, DaGII (4)
[571] SO, DaGII (5)
[572] SO, DaGII (2)

Within the interviews I held with international mediators and officials involved in the peace talks during these years, and with close observers of the mediation efforts, I detected far fewer occasions on which my participants would feel able to characterise the entire Syrian people. Nevertheless, of those who did, a number did tell, once more, a narrative of suffering: they would mention the brutality experienced by Syrians,[573] the deaths,[574] hurt,[575] political repression,[576] torture,[577] displacement[578] and destruction witnessed,[579] together with the chemical weapons attacks inflicted.[580] More overtly, one participant, an expert in 'Track II' mediation, mentioned to me that they (sing.) had once been asked by UN Development Programme (UNDP) officials, 'what unifies Syrians?' This interlocutor told me that their (sing.) response went as follows: 'the legacy of pain, victimhood, the legacy of conflict'.[581] Furthermore, one US official recalled how she attempted to persuade members of SOC to attend the peace talks by reminding them that, 'regardless of the result, you would have all the international community descend, the whole world would be watching, and you can highlight the plight of the Syrians.'[582] It would seem to have been a strategy, then, encouraged by at least one official, for members of SOC to characterise the Syrians as 'suffering', specifically in the international arena of the negotiations.

Moreover, within press conferences delivered by international actors at the UN involved in the mediation attempt, these officials and politicians seem far more willing to depict the Syrian nation as a whole, and their portrayal overwhelmingly overlaps with that of members of the Syrian opposition. The word 'suffering',[583] often accompanied by the qualifiers 'immense'[584] and 'unspeakable',[585] are uttered over and over, and it is stressed that the Syrians are

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[573] One international official remarked that 'there was fighting on the ground, it intensified' (M, S, TI (1)); a second mentioned violence, together with the 'bombs raining down on opposition areas' (Anonymous (1))

[574] M, S, TI (1)

[575] M, S, TI (3)

[576] M, S, TII (4)

[577] O, S (1)

[578] Ibid

[579] Anonymous (1); M, S, TI (1)

[580] M, S, TI (1)

[581] M, Y, TII (3)

[582] M, S, TI (1)

[583] This term is used twenty-five times in press conferences delivered at the UN.

[584] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Media Stakeout' (11 January 2013); UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (31 January 2014) (in this press conference, Brahimi also describes the suffering endured as 'unspeakable' and 'unacceptable'); UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (15 February 2014)

[585] UN Live, 'John Kerry (USA) – Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria' (22 January 2014); UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (31 January 2014)

'innocent',[586] 'defenceless'[587] 'civilians'.[588] The historical nature of the abuse faced is mentioned on one occasion by Brahimi,[589] while the unity of the population, their connection with Syria, and their collective trauma, are alluded to by the then-US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who describes the 'entire nation' as being held 'hostage'.[590] Brahimi, too, feels able to speak on behalf of the internal thoughts of Syrians as a whole: 'I think we know a little bit what the people of Syria are thinking, the people of Syria are thinking, please get something going that will stop this nightmare and, and this injustice that is inflicted on the Syrian people'.[591] By framing the characterisation in this way, Brahimi removes himself as a constructor, and appears to be merely repeating the Syrians' own conception of themselves.

Finally, within official documents and statements released by the UN and the FoS, it should be noted that there are fewer attempts to depict the Syrian experience as cohesive, and as being marked by victimhood. UN resolutions and the Six Point Plan do lament and condemn the violence and bloodshed within Syria,[592] and call for urgent humanitarian assistance,[593] thus painting a similarly bleak impression of life in the country. However, the documents,

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[586] Clinton in Clinton, UN Live, 'H.E. Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton (United States), H.E. Mr. William Hague (United Kingdom), H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov (Russian Federation) On the Situation in the Middle East' (12 March 2012); UN Live, 'Briefing by Joint Special Envoy for Syria and the Head of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria' (22 June 2012); Laurent Fabius (France) and William Hague (UK) in UN Live, 'First Meeting, Geneva Conference on Syria' (22 January 2014); UN Live, 'John Kerry (USA) – Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria'

[587] Clinton in UN Live, 'H.E. Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton (United States), H.E. Mr. William Hague (United Kingdom), H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov (Russian Federation) On the Situation in the Middle East'

[588] UN Live, 'Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, to Brief Press on the Status of Deployment of the UN Observers in Syria' (1 May 2012). The following phrase was also used by Mood: 'the Syrian population, civilians, are suffering' (UN Live, 'Major General Robert Mood – Opening Statement to the Press' (15 June 2012)); a similar phrase was used in UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (20 December 2013); and this was mentioned on four occasions by Ban Ki-moon in UN Live, 'Ban Ki-moon and Lakhdar Brahimi – Joint Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria' (22 January 2014)

[589] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Media Stakeout' (11 January 2013)

[590] Kerry in UN Live, 'First Meeting, Geneva Conference on Syria'

[591] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (11 February 2014)

[592] UNSC, 'Resolution 2042 (2012) S/RES/2042' (14 April 2012); Annan's Six-Point Proposal which is included as an annex to the aforementioned Resolution 2042; UNSC, 'Preliminary Understanding: United Nations Supervision Mechanism S/2012/250' (23 April 2012); UNSC, 'Resolution 2043 (2012) S/RES/2043; UN, General Assembly, Security Council, 'Agenda Item 34: Identical Letters Dated 5 July 2012 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria)' (A/66/865-S/2012/522) (6 July 2012); UNSC, 'Resolution 2118 (2013) S/RES/2118' (27 September 2013); UNSC, 'Resolution 2139 (2014) S/RES/2139' (22 February 2014); UK Government, 'London 11 Final Communiqué' (22 October 2013); UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2011/612' (4 October 2011); UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/77' (4 February 2012); UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/538' (19 July 2012)

[593] UNSC, Resolution 2042; Annan's Six-Point Proposal (in UNSC, Resolution 2042); UNSC, 'Preliminary Understanding: United Nations Supervision Mechanism'; UNSC, Resolution 2043; UNSC, Resolution 2139; UK Government, 'London 11 Final Communiqué'; UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2011/612'; UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/77'; UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/538'

statements and speeches of the FoS and its members tend to be more direct in framing this suffering as a distinctive characteristic of all Syrians: for instance, William Hague, the then-UK Foreign Secretary, at the FoS meeting in Tunis in February 2012, claimed that, 'today, we must show that we will not abandon the Syrian people in their darkest hour';[594] moreover, the statements of FoS are also more explicit in their apportioning of blame: for instance, this is 'suffering at the hands of the regime', maintained Hague in 2013 at a London 11 gathering.[595] My initial argument, therefore, is that a particular strand of the Syrian collective identity seems to have been built, propagated, and quite possibly believed in, within stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, and within reflections on this mediation attempt. The thread constructed characterises the Syrian people as being joined together in suffering, and there are indications that the mediation environment was targeted as an arena in which this vision of the Syrian identity should be emphasised.

## 5.22 What do the Syrian people seek? Democracy and the ousting of al-Asad

In addition to the argument that collective identities are formed as states make sense of 'who they are', I have also posited that members of a group are brought together as they consider 'what they want', and as those external to the group influence, and offer their perspective on, this matter. In this second sub-section, I will claim that a clear, national interest is voiced repeatedly by both the Syrian opposition and those actors involved in mediating the conflict: it is claimed that democracy is the universally-held aspiration of Syrians and, relatedly, it is also often claimed that the fall of the al-Asad government is desired by the nation. Beginning with members of the Syrian opposition, and their conception of the collective aims of the Syrian people, as one of my interviewees phrased it: '*each Syrian* [was] working towards the same goal. A fight to choose their President and their Prime Minister [emphasis added]'.[596] Another linked 'Syrians', broadly defined, with this goal, arguing that 'Syria is about the Syrians – it is about, how can we move the country from this thuggish mafia to rule of a state. Parliamentary, presidential.'[597] A further interlocutor stated that 'Syrians, we have lost everything just to see democracy, freedom.'[598] Such claims are repeated far more frequently, and in stronger terms,

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[594] UK Government, '"We Must Show That We Will Not Abandon the Syrian People in Their Darkest Hour"' (24 February 2012)
[595] UK Government, '"London 11" Meeting on Syria' (22 October 2012)
[596] SO (4)
[597] SO (1)
[598] SO, DaGII (4)

within the press conferences, official statements and speeches of the SNC and SOC. For instance, in a speech delivered by then-President of the SNC, Burhan Ghalioun, at an FoS conference in Tunis in 2012, this narrative is constructed emphatically. At one point, he argues the following:

> What the Syrian people seek – *all the Syrian people* – is a government that knows the true meaning of accountability and responsibility. What the Syrian people seek is a government bound by the rule of law and under which all citizens of all segments of society are free and equal in their rights and national obligations. The Syrian people, *all the Syrian people*, want an end to the rule of a mafia family and the establishment of a forward-looking, democratic, civil state in this new era…A system of government under which all Syrians have equal opportunities… [emphasis added].[599]

This repetition of the phrase, 'the Syrian people', qualified twice with the aside, 'all the Syrian people', is marked, and we can observe once more that it is claimed that this national collective seeks a liberal democratic system, a system which cannot include al-Asad. In the official statements released by SOC, which include reproductions of speeches delivered at FoS conferences and at Geneva by Ahmad al-Jarba, President of the Coalition between the years 2013 and 2014, the alleged ambitions of the Syrian people as a whole are also frequently conveyed. These hopes are often prefaced with the word 'legitimate',[600] as though they should not be questioned, and the aims are similar to those stated above: a 'democracy' is continually mentioned,[601] together with 'freedom',[602] 'justice'[603] and 'universal rights'.[604] This is also

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[599] SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference'
[600] SOC, 'UN Vote is a Clear Message: Assad Must End Brutal Suppression of Syria's Democratic Uprising' (15 May 2013); SOC, 'Mission of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi'; SOC, 'The Assad Regime's Contradictory Remarks on Geneva II' (6 November 2013); SOC, 'The Assad Regime Renounces the Very Basis for Geneva II' (28 November 2013)
[601] SOC, 'UN Vote is a Clear Message: Assad Must End Brutal Suppression of Syria's Democratic Uprising'; SOC, 'Syrian Coalition President Holds First Meeting with JSR Brahimi and Urges UN to Support Political Solution in Syria'; SOC, 'Mission of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi'; SOC, 'The Assad Regime Renounces the Very Basis for Geneva II'; SOC, 'Syrian Coalition Calls on UNSC to Pass Resolution on Humanitarian Access' (11 February 2014)
[602] SOC, 'Friends of Syria Meeting in Doha' (24 June 2013); SOC, 'Summary of Mr. Al-Jarba Speech Delivered to the Expanded Friends of Syria at the United Nations' (27 September 2013); SOC, 'Mission of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi'; SOC, 'Geneva II is a Chance for the International Community to Prove Its Seriousness' (26 November 2013); SOC, 'The Assad Regime Renounces the Very Basis for Geneva II'; SOC, 'Syrian Coalition Calls on UNSC to Pass Resolution on Humanitarian Access'
[603] SOC, 'Mission of Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi'
[604] SOC, 'Summary of Mr. Al-Jarba Speech Delivered to the Expanded Friends of Syria at the United Nations'

framed as a means of escaping 'decades of oppression and exclusion';[605] in other words, it is claimed that the Syrian people seek to escape the grip of their repressive government.

Within none of my interviews with international mediators were the ambitions and desires of the Syrian people as a whole stated. In press conferences delivered by international actors, however, both tentative and more direct statements are made in this vein. For instance, then-UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, claims that 'the legitimate demands of the Syrian people' are 'the same demands that people across the Arab world have been making for more than a year now',[606] thus implying the Syrians seek democracy and the ousting of their government. Annan is both direct, describing the 'aspirations of the Syrian people' to be 'democratic',[607] and more guarded in his claims:

> …we must move quickly forward on the political process to meet the aspirations of the Syrian people. We must commence a comprehensive political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition. This must enable a Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, plural political system in which citizens are equal regardless of their affiliations or ethnicities, or beliefs.[608]

In this representative passage, Annan moves from expressing his desire to deliver the hopes of Syrians to claiming that there needs to be a transition to democracy in the country, thus implying the two are one and the same. Kerry also feels confident in describing at length the 'hopes' of the 'Syrian people' 'for the future of their country'; once more, he mentions the need for the freedom to protest and resist, and states that 'the resolution to this crisis cannot be about one man's insistence or one family's insistence about clinging to power';[609] the removal of al-Asad is therefore once more claimed to be longed for by all Syrians. In 2013, Brahimi, makes a more understated claim, and also displays uncertainty, even as he voices it, that he might have the power to speak on behalf of the Syrian people as a whole:

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[605] Ibid
[606] UN Live, 'Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League, on the Situation in Syria – General Assembly' (5 April 2012)
[607] Ibid
[608] Ibid
[609] UN Live, 'John Kerry (USA) – Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria'

> …my feeling is that the Syrians – I think there is, there is near unanimity and, no, not
> unanimity, but certainly a large, large consensus among Syrians – whether they are in,
> actively engaged against the government or not – they all want to give up this
> presidential system and have a parliamentary system.[610]

Brahimi here stumbles over his words, and corrects himself, before presenting the desires of Syrians to be an ousting of al-Asad as President and the introduction of a parliamentary system (presumably a democratically elected parliament). Nevertheless, Brahimi grows in confidence in his ability to express the interests of the Syrian people during this period; as the chief mediator brought the first round of Geneva II to a close, he claimed that 'both sides understand that the Syrian people are longing for a genuinely democratic Syria, where governance is transparent and accountable and based on human rights and the rule of law'.[611]

The hopes of the Syrian people tend not to be expressed directly within the UN resolutions crafted during this period of mediation. However, the Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria, which was convened by Annan, describes in detail the alleged desires of 'the people of the Syrian Arab Republic'. These are claimed to be a 'genuinely democratic and pluralistic' state, a 'multiparty democracy' in which there exists compliance with 'international standards on human rights' and 'equal opportunities and chances' are offered for all.[612] Moreover, the statements released and speeches made following gatherings of the FoS are forthright in their ability to present and promote the ambitions of Syrians as a national collective. As the Chair of the FoS meeting in February 2012 succinctly phrased it in their [sing.] conclusions, 'the aspirations of the Syrian people [are] for dignity, freedom, peace, reform, democracy, prosperity and stability'.[613] Later in 2012, it is mentioned that the Friends are determined to 'facilitate a Syrian-led political transition leading to a civil, democratic, pluralistic, independent and free state…one which determines its own future based on the collective will of its people'.[614] If this transition is 'Syrian-led', and if it will lead to the outcomes listed, this phrasing implies that the described state is that which the Syrians desire. This foregone conclusion is repeated by Hague in April 2012[615] but, beyond 2012, we no longer see

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[610] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (28 August 2013)
[611] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (31 January 2014)
[612] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria
[613] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (27 February 2012)
[614] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (1 April 2012)
[615] UK Government, '"Our Task is to Pressure the Regime in Damascus into Implementing Kofi Annan's Six-Point Plan in Full and Without Any Further Delay"' (1 April 2012)

declarations of the desires of the Syrians in FoS statements. To summarise, my interpretation is that, within the dataset, the longings of Syrians, presented as unified, are articulated within the context of, and within reflections on, the initial years of the Geneva Peace Process as being for democracy and, in the rhetoric of certain actors, for the overthrow of al-Asad. This is propagated by both the Syrian opposition together with a number of the international actors involved in the peace process.

**5.23 The Syrian opposition and the Syrian people: Discursively united as one**

We have seen how the members of the Syrian opposition and those involved in mediating the conflict represented within my dataset persistently painted the Syrian people as suffering, and as seeking both democracy and the removal of al-Asad. This sub-section will show that, simultaneously, the members of the Syrian opposition captured within this study sought to associate their movement with this reimagined version of the Syrian national identity: suffering and democracy were claimed to be central to the opposition and, in particular, their experiences and aims within the mediation efforts.

However, firstly I would like to suggest that the previous sub-sections have demonstrated the frequency with which members of the Syrian opposition would feel able to make statements purportedly on behalf of the Syrian people as a nation within the mediation efforts, and within reflections on the peace talks. My interview participants and the members of the opposition represented in the other data sources analysed seem to be communicating their alleged capacity to understand, and speak on behalf of, all Syrians, a rhetorical move which associated their organisations, and aims, with the Syrian nation. This thus legitimised the SNC's and SOC's aspirations to govern. My interpretation is that the opposition was keen to cement an image of its movement as being responsible for highlighting, and alleviating, the suffering of the Syrian people; in turn, this placed the Syrian nation and its people seemingly at the forefront of the opposition's strategy and narrative, a clear attempt to claim an association with this reworked version of the Syrian national identity. Supporting my analysis is the portrayal by one of my participants of a particularly moving moment within the talks at Geneva II:

> …for example, at one point – there was an incident with Yarmouk refugee camp – it
> was under siege – we brought a photo of a new-born baby – he was dead because of the

famine – you could see his ribs, he was really thin…we printed out the picture and handed it to him [Bashar al-Jaafari, Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UN]…when we took the picture out, we were trying to get a glimpse of their humanity, *to see if they were still Syrian, still one of us* – but there was nothing – they put their heads down to avoid looking at the picture [emphasis added].[616]

The same interlocutor later elaborated on this point, linking this moment even more specifically to the notion of a Syrian national identity: 'that's why I told you, we showed the baby, from the camp, from Yarmouk – we were aware of the Syrian identity – we were looking for a glimmer of that light – they [members of the government delegation] failed, they did not have the feeling'.[617] My interviewee thus connected compassion with 'Syrian-ness' in a bid, I argue, to deploy identity construction as a means of legitimisation within the peace negotiations.

Secondly, my interlocutors would frequently recount their own personal suffering, and that of their family members and activist colleagues. Thus, a participant described to me, in graphic detail, the treatment of their (sing.) friend and colleague, a fellow activist and peacemaker: 'they detained the peacemakers, the activists – and then they used to put cigarettes on their bodies while torturing them. I had a friend, I will show you a picture of his body, what they did to him'.[618] Other interviewees mentioned their own arrests, and the manner in which the al-Asad government began to target them and their families, particularly following the 2011 uprisings: 'I was detained, of course – it was mentioned that they [the Syrian government] would kill me';[619] 'and then I had to hide, to lay low – people in the regime, they started to create websites, pushing for my killing, saying that I needed to be killed, that I was an agent for Mossad';[620] 'I had to flee with my two children – they said they wanted to kill me';[621] and, for one Syrian opposition member, who had long been forced to leave Syria, 'they jailed, detained my brother and tortured him'.[622] Indeed, many emphasised the personal sacrifices they had made by even participating in the opposition, and in the negotiations, stressing how difficult it was to take part. 'I want to put in your mind how difficult is it to have our role',[623]

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[616] SO, DaGII (2)
[617] Ibid
[618] SO, DaGII (6)
[619] SO, DaGII (2)
[620] Ibid
[621] SO, DaGII (4)
[622] SO (4); see also: SO (3)
[623] SO, DaGII (6)

commented one of my participants, while one evocatively claimed that, 'when you come out of these negotiations, me and many others – our stomachs, our guts, felt like they were shredded and punished – it was very hard to feel like this'.[624] Al-Jarba, in a speech delivered at the end of the first round, affirmed that participating in the mediation efforts 'was not an easy task', that sitting across from the regime was akin to 'drinking from a poisoned chalice while the criminal was killing our women, children, young men and women, and elderly'.[625]

Thirdly, the majority of the members of the Syrian opposition I interviewed went to great lengths to emphasise not only the historic legacy of the opposition within Syria but also the efforts they had expended over the years to promote their cause. For instance, one member of the opposition, when I invited her to describe her role within the SNC and SOC during the years of this mediation attempt, gave me an extensive description of her history of activism and, moreover, her family ties to the opposition;[626] another provided a great deal of detail on his personal involvement in, and support for, the Damascus Spring and the Damascus Declaration;[627] while a third interviewee remarked, in response to the same question, that 'I think it would be good to give you a little background about myself and how I was in women's rights and a human rights activist before 2011'.[628] Lastly, one senior member of SOC spent the vast majority of our interview narrating his years-long involvement in activism, offering merely cursory details on his involvement in the peace talks.[629] My interlocutors would also emphasise the democratic qualities of SOC; for instance, a number stressed that the way in which their delegation engaged during the mediation attempt allowed a number of members of the team to present ideas. This was contrasted with the behaviour of the delegation representing al-Asad: 'only one person from the regime spoke…so you could see two different mentalities there. One backed a dictatorial regime with one voice, one single message – but we had a pluralistic delegation, with different views combined.'[630]

Therefore, I would like to propose that, within the early stages of the Geneva Peace Process, having co-created a newly imagined vision of the Syrian nation, an image distinguished by suffering and an aspiration for democracy, the members of the Syrian opposition then sought

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[624] SO, DaGII (2)
[625] SOC, 'President Ahmad Al-Jarba's Speech at the End of First Round of Negotiations in Geneva'
[626] SO, DaGII (2)
[627] SO, DaGII (3)
[628] SO, DaGII (4)
[629] SO, DaGII (1)
[630] SO, DaGII (3)

to align their movement with this construction, and to emphasise their compassion for the Syrian people. My suggestion is that this represented an attempt to legitimise one particular conflict party: the delegates representing the Syrian opposition. My conclusion therefore differs from that of Aggestam, suggesting a further way in which a search for legitimacy may drive identity construction within mediation. While Aggestam finds that conflict parties may seek recognition from their opponents of the narratives which constitute their identities, I have found that conflict parties may seek legitimacy by reconstructing the identity of the nation they wish to represent, and then associating their movement with this construction. I have also found that mediators, and implicated members of the international community, may contribute to this identity building, and legitimisation, process. More fundamentally, this initial claim, built through an assessment of the themes of Suffering, and Democracy and Reform, supports my overall contention that identity may be shaped within mediation.

## 5.3 Legitimising mediation by reimagining the identities of the nations at war

The initial section of this chapter explored how the Syrian people were presented in the dataset during, and within reflections upon, the initial stages of the Geneva peace process. The first sub-section claimed that the collective experience of Syrians was declared, by both the voices of the international community and the Syrian opposition captured within the dataset, to be that of profound suffering. Then, I suggested that this construction may have served to legitimise the Syrian opposition; they, too, presented suffering as being central to their experiences as individuals and as a movement, thus rhetorically linking their faction with the image of the Syrian people which was built.

In this section, on the basis of the evidence already explored, I will make a second claim. I would like to suggest that constructing the Syrian people as being bound together by victimhood within the Geneva Peace Process may have served further forms of legitimisation. Firstly, this construction may have operated as a means for the Syrian opposition to legitimise consenting to third-party mediation. Secondly, this construction may have served to legitimise the international community launching, and expending a great deal of effort upon, the peace process. Indeed, I would propose that, within stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, it is possible to perceive a process of identity construction functioning as 'subjectification'.

Drawing on Robert Benford and David Snow,[631] Roger Mac Ginty has defined 'subjectification' as 'the perceptual construction and discursive framing of individuals and societies to suit wider goals', arguing that, 'in a liberal peace context,[632] political actors will construct a narrative or narratives that justifies a particular set of actions'.[633] He highlights that, through subjectification, citizens of a given state may be rendered 'mono-dimensional', and cast in roles 'subordinate to those engaged in the recasting: victims, grateful beneficiaries, innocent bystanders'.[634] Subjectification is not a process reserved for external actors: as Mac Ginty claims, 'virtually all actors – internal and external – engage in some form of subjectification in order to understand their social environment and to legitimize their role in it'.[635] Based upon the evidence explored in the previous section, the Syrian people, and the Syrian opposition, appear to have been cast as disempowered victims, in desperate need of rescue. Notably, this construction arose as the result of harmonious refrains, taken up by both the mediators and the Syrian opposition: by both 'internal' and 'external' players. However, whereas the evidence relating to Syria seems to map, with ease, onto the concept of subjectification, in relation to the Yemeni process, the evidence is more contested. I will turn now to the characterisations of the Yemeni experience offered within the dataset; after presenting this evidence, I will then explore the ramifications for my argument concerning identity construction, subjectification and legitimacy in the context of mediation, and for my overall claim that mediation can shape identity.

**5.31 Contesting the Yemeni national identity: Between resistance and suffering**

This sub-section will explore the characterisations of the Yemeni people within the dataset and will assess, once more, the themes of Democracy and Reform, and Suffering. I will argue that the Yemeni voices captured appear to develop two strands of the Yemeni identity in their reflections on, and in the context of, the mediation attempt. The first, which is developed by

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[631] Robert Benford and David Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment' *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), pp. 611-39
[632] Thania Paffenholz has recently argued that despite rhetorical normative shifts within the academic and policy spheres, and despite the fierce criticisms of the liberal peace made within academia, peacemaking and peacebuilding practice remains wedded to many of the tenets contained within the liberal peace model (Thania Paffenholz, 'Perpetual Peacebuilding: A New Paradigm to Move Beyond the Linearity of Liberal Peacebuilding' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15:3 (2021), pp. 367-85)
[633] Roger Mac Ginty, 'Between Resistance and Compliance: Non-Participation and the Liberal Peace' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 6:2 (2012), pp. 168-9
[634] Ibid
[635] Ibid

Yemeni voices, depicts the Yemeni people as being united by the 2011 Revolution and its progressive ideals. However, the second presents the nation as being defined by suffering, and is largely, although not exclusively, developed by the international mediators and members of the international community captured within the dataset.[636] To begin with the first thread, one Yemeni interlocutor, a member of the revolutionary youth and a participant in the Statebuilding Working Group, sought to distinguish the political culture of Yemen from that of Syria, having noticed that I was conducting research into the two countries. She commented:

> One thing I would also mention – I noticed that you are also working on Syria? Well, the situation in Yemen is totally different to the situation in Syria. Yemen is very different, has a very different background in terms of the political culture, the political parties – people are really engaged, ordinary people. In Syria, it is only the party – only the opinion of one party. But Yemen has a history of being a de-centralised country…so the case of Yemen is different, the revolution is different – it was very successful in that point in time.[637]

Two further Yemeni interview participants repeated a similar sentiment, both of whom had joined the Uprising. One speculated that 'part of why 2011 was important for so many Yemenis' was due to the way in which the protests 'provided' citizens 'with a new identity', with that which he termed 'civil-society thinking'.[638] A further interlocutor, who did not participate in the NDC but was prominent within the Revolution, argued that 'being Yemeni is something new – our last names are based on the villages we come from – national identity is very new – it solidified with the revolution'.[639] Her argument, therefore, was that the protests united Yemenis, imbuing the national character with the ideals fought for by the revolutionaries. Taken together, we can perceive hints at the notion that Yemen and, by extension Yemenis, are joined together by their commitment to multi-party politics and the ideals of the 2011 Revolution and, moreover, that it was the Uprisings which drew the national people together. However, it must of course be borne in mind that these three participants were all revolutionaries and, moreover, that very few interlocutors expressed this idea.

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[636] However, I should note that in comparison with the Syrian case, very few interview participants, and none of the international officials with whom I spoke, attempted to characterise the collective Yemeni people during our discussions of the mediation efforts.
[637] NDC, D (4)
[638] NDC, D (2)
[639] O, Y (4)

Furthermore, two participants alluded to a second facet of the Yemeni national identity, one closer to the Syrian character depicted in the previous chapter. One interview participant, a close observer of the transition but not a participant in the NDC or the negotiation of the GCC Initiative, mentioned that the Yemeni people had been 'poor for a long time'.[640] Secondly, a delegate to the NDC mentioned within our conversation 'the deterioration of the economy and the stagnation of production', further elaborating that 'people were really fed up', that the Yemeni people were struggling under the burden of 'the level of violence and incidents, the rise and rise of al-Qaida'.[641] The Yemeni representative to the UNSC also, within UNSC meetings in 2013, focused upon the 'humanitarian suffering'[642] of Yemenis and the destruction wrought by 'terrorism and subversive acts'.[643] Such a depiction can be perceived within the NDC Final Report, too, which was penned by the Yemeni participants in the Conference; however, in this document, the agony of Yemenis is often depicted as historical, with the implication being that the revolution, transition, and the NDC, had ushered in a new era. For instance, in the recommendations made by the Southern Issue Working Group, it is claimed that the proposed 'new federal state shall represent a complete break from the history of conflict, oppression, abuse of power and monopoly of wealth',[644] a sentiment echoed by the participants in the Rights and Freedoms Working Group: in this chapter of the Final Report, the authors claim there will be a 'break from the past of tyranny'.[645] The chapter composed by the participants in the Sadah Working Group more broadly discusses the 'suffering' of this northern region, also mentioning the 'internally displaced' and 'wounded',[646] while the Concluding Statements of the report recall the 'violent and bloody wars' endured by Yemenis, conflicts in which 'thousands of people' have been 'wounded and killed' and which have unleashed 'vast destruction' and reveal the 'weakness of the State, failures of its institutions, weak development and foreign influences'.[647] Therefore, to summarise, very few of the Yemeni voices represented within the dataset made claims on behalf of the Yemeni people. Of those who did, two opposing visions of the nation appear to have been offered: one which emphasises the resistance of Yemenis, and another which underscores their victimhood.

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[640] O, Y (2)
[641] Anonymous (6)
[642] The representative of Yemen in UNSC, '7037th Meeting S/PV.7037' (27 September 2013)
[643] The representative of Yemen in UNSC, '6976th Meeting S/PV.6976' (11 June 2013)
[644] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 6
[645] Ibid, p. 140
[646] Ibid, p. 13
[647] Ibid, p. 230

However, within the data gathered representing the international mediators and members of the international community, the bond uniting the Yemeni people is firmly claimed to be that of victimhood. Within the press conferences transcribed in relation to the Yemeni transition, all of which were delivered by external parties, the Yemeni people are implicitly portrayed as a besieged nation, faced with profound crises in the humanitarian, economic and security sectors. For instance, then-President of the Security Council Hardeep Singh Puri intoned the following in August 2011: 'the members of the Security Council expressed their grave concern at the serious deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation in Yemen', continuing by noting that these officials 'were deeply concerned at the worsening security situation, including the threat from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula'.[648] Benomar, later in the year, likewise remarked that 'the Yemeni people have suffered throughout this crisis', further claiming that 'this crisis [has] had severe implications in terms of the economic, humanitarian and security aspects'.[649] The notion of these three sectors having 'deteriorated' is repeated on a number of occasions[650] while the 'violence',[651] 'unrest',[652] 'lawlessness'[653] and 'human rights violations'[654] endured by Yemenis were also regularly evoked. Benomar also introduced, in 2011 and 2012, the idea of the 'fragility'[655] of Yemen and, by extension Yemenis, together

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[648] UN Live, 'Security Council president H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (9 August 2011)

[649] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar (Special Adviser on Yemen) – Security Council Media Stakeout' (11 October 2011)

[650] This is repeated twice in UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar (Special Adviser on Yemen) – Security Council Media Stakeout' (11 October 2011); UN Live, 'Sir Mark Lyall Grant (UK) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (21 October 2011).

[651] UN Live, 'Sir Mark Lyall Grant (UK) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout'; UN Live, 'Peter Wittig (Germany) on Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (21 October 2011); UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, UN Secretary-General Special Adviser on Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (28 November 2011). Also, 'fighting' is mentioned in UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser for Yemen' (25 January 2012).

[652] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, UN Secretary-General Special Adviser on Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (28 November 2011)

[653] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011)

[654] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar (Special Adviser on Yemen) – Security Council Media Stakeout' (11 October 2011); UN Live, 'Sir Mark Lyall Grant (UK) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout'; UN Live, 'Peter Wittig (Germany) on Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout'

[655] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011); UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser for Yemen' (25 January 2012)

with the attacks on basic infrastructure endured[656] and, once more, their 'dire' humanitarian needs.[657]

This theme of the suffering and vulnerability of Yemenis is also apparent within the official documents gathered; the UN resolutions, UNSC press releases, UNSC meeting minutes and UK Government statements concerning meetings of the FoY. The 'grave concern' of members of the international community is noted in Resolution 2014 (2011)[658] while, once more, 'human rights abuses and violations', the 'deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation', the 'increased threat' posed by Al-Qaida and 'terrorism' more broadly, the 'violence', 'attacks', the 'targeting of infrastructure', and the need for humanitarian aid are repeated over and over.[659] In a departure from the press conferences, official documents also raise the 'the killing of innocent Yemeni people', the 'hundreds of deaths' of 'civilians', the 'increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees in Yemen', the use of children in the military and by armed groups, the detainment of protesters, and the 'challenges from spoilers'.[660] The resulting image is of a people plagued by menace, exposed to the internal threats of a repressive government and military, and domestic terrorist movements, unable to access 'basic supplies

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[656] UN Live, 'Security Council president H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout'. The following is also mentioned in 2012: 'al-Qaida has expanded its activities', that there are a number of Yemeni provinces outside 'government control' and that there have been 'attacks on oil pipelines, electricity grids, electricity lines and this is affecting the, the economic situation in the whole country and making life simply very difficult for most people' (UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser for Yemen' (25 January 2012)).

[657] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser for Yemen' (25 January 2012)

[658] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014 S/RES/2014' (21 October 2011)

[659] These appear within: UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2051 S/RES/2051' (12 June 2012); UNSC, 'Resolution 2140 S/RES/2140' (26 February 2014);  UNSC, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2012/8' (29 March 2012); UNSC, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2013/3' (15 February 2013); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Yemen' (24 June 2011); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Yemen' (9 August 2011); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Yemen' (24 September 2011); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Situation in Yemen' (26 January 2012); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Yemen' (21 May 2012); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Yemen' (13 September 2012); UNSC, 'Security Council Press Statement on Friends of Yemen' (28 September 2012); UK Government, 'Friends of Yemen to Meet in Riyadh' (23 March 2012); UK Government, 'Friends of Yemen Meeting a 'Critical Moment'' (23 May 2012); UK Government, 'Yemeni President Hadi Visits UK Ahead of Friends of Yemen Meeting in New York' (24 September 2012); UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary at the United Nations General Assembly Friends of Yemen Ministerial' (27 September 2012); UK Government, 'UK to Host Friends of Yemen Meeting in March' (22 January 2013); UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary's Opening Remarks – Friends of Yemen' (7 March 2013); UK Government, 'The Friends of Yemen Ministerial Meeting Co-Chairs' Statement' (7 March 2013).

[660] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2051'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2140'; UNSC, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2012/8' (29 March 2012); UK Government, 'UK to Host Friends of Yemen Meeting in March'

and social services',[661] and faced with turbulence and cruelty. This is both powerfully and insistently conveyed.

However, within the transcripts of UNSC meetings conducted concerning Yemen between 2012 and 2014, a shift can be perceived. To begin, in relation to the official documents, the Yemeni people are conveyed in a similar manner to that which is described above. Once more, it is noted that 'the Security Council expresses its strong concern about intensified terrorist attacks, including by Al-Qa'ida, within Yemen', while the 'formidable economic and social challenges confronting Yemen', and the abandonment of Yemenis 'in acute need of humanitarian assistance' are, once again, lamented.[662] The familiar string of injustices and indignities endured by Yemenis are also repeatedly raised;[663] however, following the signing of the GCC Initiative, the landscape of Yemen is deemed to have improved: in December 2012, Benomar proclaimed that 'an air of normality has taken hold in most parts of the country', and that 'the fight for control of the cities by rival militias has ended'.[664] In the same meeting, the representative of South Africa to the UNSC similarly remarked that 'significant progress has been made in moving the country towards democracy and stability',[665] a refrain also seized upon by the representative of Portugal.[666] Such a sentiment is repeated in 2013; for instance, the representative of Pakistan commented that 'Yemen has walked back from the precipice'.[667] Nevertheless, the 'vulnerability in Yemen'[668] continues to be a concern. Lastly, the notion of suffering features within the GCC Initiative Implementation Mechanism: 'as a result of the deadlock in the political transition, the political, economic, humanitarian and security situation has deteriorated with increasing rapidity and the Yemeni people have suffered great hardship'.[669]

To conclude, there appears to be a contrast between the image of Yemenis provided by the admittedly few Yemeni interview participants who discussed the national character of Yemen:

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[661] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'

[662] The President of the UNSC in UNSC, '6744th Meeting S/PV.6744' (29 March 2012)

[663] See the vast majority of representatives present at UNSC, '6744th Meeting', UNSC, '6776th Meeting S/PV.6776' (29 May 2012), UNSC, '6878th Meeting', UNSC, '6976th Meeting'; UNSC, '7037th Meeting'

[664] Benomar in UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

[665] The representative of South Africa in UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

[666] The representative of Portgual comments that Yemen has 'come a long way' in UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

[667] The representative of Pakistan in UNSC, '7037th Meeting'

[668] Benomar in UNSC, '7037th Meeting'

[669] 'Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)' (5 December 2011)

as we have seen, within my conversations, the Yemeni people are empowered, they are politically conscious, civil-minded and united by revolutionary fervour. However, a far weaker, and indeed abject, national people is constructed by the international documents analysed and by a very limited number of Yemeni interview participants. There seems to be an attempt, therefore, at subjectification to legitimise the mediation intervention, an attempt largely conducted by international voices in the arena of the UN during the mediation effort. However, unlike the Syrian case, there also appears to be a level of resistance to this subjectification, a clash between two competing constructions of the Yemeni identity. This, in turn, indicates that efforts to build new identities in order to legitimise the interventions of third parties may not proceed without obstacles.

More broadly, this section has represented a second deviation from the arguments of Aggestam. I have suggested that, rather than seeking legitimacy for their identities from their adversaries, conflict parties, together with mediators, may engage in processes of subjectification, possibly in a bid to justify third-party intervention. Fresh identities can be imagined in which the nations at war are defined by suffering. Identities can therefore be built in order to legitimise the very intervention of a third party. This argument provides fortification to my over-arching claim, demonstrating that mediation can provoke identity mutations: in the two cases under investigation, a perceived need to legitimise the peace processes induced a reimagining of identity in both Syria and Yemen.

## 5.4 Mediation, 'Othering', and legitimacy

In this chapter, I have made two arguments concerning the interconnections between mediation, identity construction and legitimacy. Firstly, I argued that conflict parties and mediators can employ processes of identity construction as a means to legitimise a particular conflict party and to justify its claims of representation. Secondly, I claimed that mediators and conflict parties can reimagine the identities of the nations in civil conflict in a bid to legitimise the intervention of a third party. Taken together, these two claims support my more fundamental contention that mediation may not only function as an arena in which identities are shaped but, moreover, that mediation can trigger these reshaping processes.

In this section, I will make my final claim by assessing the theme of Discord. I will suggest that conflict parties can construct their identities against an 'Other' within a mediation process, and will propose that this may take place in an attempt to legitimise their movements' claims of representation and ambitions to rule. I explored the process of Othering in Chapter Two, explaining that 'collectively held identities not only define who "we" are but also delineate the boundaries of the "Other"';[670] groups form their identities in relation to those of their peers, casting 'Others' in counter-identities which, in turn, can further illuminate their own self-conceptions. Here, I will present an illustrative body of evidence which depicts the nature of the relationship between the Syrian opposition and the Syrian government delegations during the direct talks at Geneva II. This body of evidence seems to imply that the Syrian government delegation attempted to exclude the opposition delegates, and their supporters, from claiming allegiance with 'Syrian-ness', castigating their opponents as 'foreign' 'traitors'. The purpose of such allegations may have been to emphasise their own connection with the Syria and, therefore, their legitimacy to represent and continue to rule the state. However, the manner in which Syrian members of the opposition with whom I held conversations recounted these interactions in our interviews may represent a second effort at Othering; within these interviews, the Syrian members of the opposition seem to be recounting these stories to present the Syrian government delegation as antagonistic and unreasonable, incapable of entering into mediated negotiations. By characterising their opponents as aggressive, and diametrically opposed to their own movement, the Syrian opposition delegation thus casts their own identity as a peaceable, rational and a legitimate representative of the Syrian people within the peace process.

Many Syrian interlocutors devoted sections of our interviews to describing the vicious attacks they and their colleagues had endured during the mediation attempt; frequently, the attacks, according to the recollections of the members of the Syrian opposition, rejected the 'Syrian-ness' of the opposition while my interlocutors regularly stressed that these verbal assaults took place in the international arena. For instance, one commented the following: 'I was there in the same room as them – I saw how they acted, attacking people…Accusing us of lying, of being an enemy of Syria'.[671] Indeed, this interviewee continued on this theme, recalling the reaction of al-Jaafari to her presentation concerning human rights violations: 'he was publicly saying in

[670] Risse-Kappen, 'Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO', p. 367
[671] SO, DaGII (4)

front of the UN that we were traitors, that if I came back I would be killed, I would be homeless, that I would never see my home again – trying to deny what I'm saying'.[672] A second narrated a similar tale: 'with the head of the negotiations, Bashar al-Jaafari – you can feel that the main reason he was there was to provoke us…he would tell us that beheading was waiting for us, that we were agents of foreign governments, terrorists'.[673] A third interlocutor supported this narrative: 'there was name-calling. The regime delegation would say the opposition were terrorists', later remarking that 'the regime policy was that we were all Islamists';[674] a fourth also commented that 'they [the government delegation] were accusing us of being terrorists, of being foreign conspirators';[675] and a fifth explained that 'the strategy of the regime was based on…provoking others and accusing the opposition delegation of being terrorists, and that they do not represent anyone'.[676] This notion that al-Jaafari accused SOC, within the context of the negotiations, of being 'foreign agents' was also repeated by a number of other interlocutors.[677] An international official noted this dynamic too: 'the opposition – they called themselves the Syrian negotiating committee. The government was furious, said that they were terrorists, and not Syrians', later commenting that 'the government questioned the opposition's Syrian-ness, considered them to be foreign agents. But the other side made it clear they were Syrians'.[678]

We can see here a profound fracture, performed and emphasised during the negotiations; this divide between the two delegations will be returned to in Chapter Seven. We can also perceive the way in which al-Jaafari, and those with whom I held interviews, linked the accusations made with the notion of 'not being Syrian'. In order to express his distaste for members of the Syrian opposition, and to express his separation from the movement, al-Jaafari denied the opposition delegation's very claim to be, and to represent, Syria, and members of the Syrian opposition recognised and recalled this attack five years later; these accusations seemed to have remained fresh in their memories. Indeed, it may contribute to understanding why members of the opposition, within our conversations and within the official documents and press conferences analysed, sought to associate their movement so firmly with the national identity of Syrians seemingly constructed during the talks. Lastly, by recalling these attacks, this represents an example of counter-Othering; the image of the Syrian government delegation

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[672] Ibid
[673] SO, DaGII (2)
[674] SO (1)
[675] SO (2). He repeated this four further times.
[676] SO, DaGII (6)
[677] SO, DaGII (1); SO, DaGII (5); SO (8); SO (4)
[678] Anonymous (1)

created is one of antagonism and viciousness while the Syrian opposition are cast in the role of victims, once more, and of reasonable representatives of the Syrian people, capable of interacting within the international sphere. My suggestion is that this engagement in Othering represents a further means by which identity construction and legitimisation, within the context of mediation, may intertwine. Moreover, this suggestion further supports my proposal that mediation may witness and provide scope for processes of identity construction.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the following hypothesis: *conflict parties may seek to legitimise their identities through participating in mediation*. I have offered a tri-partite response. I have taken inspiration from Aggestam's proposal, unearthing three further ways in which legitimacy, identity construction and mediation may interweave. Firstly, within the data I have gathered and analysed, the conflict parties do not seem to have sought legitimacy for their competing versions of their states' national identities; instead, both a conflict party and a mediator appear to have wielded processes of identity construction in order to legitimise a particular conflict party. In the context of, and in reflections on, the early stages of the Geneva Peace Process, the Syrian national people were reimagined, by both the mediators and the Syrian opposition, as being joined together in victimhood and in their aspiration for a democratic political system. My interpretation is that the Syrian opposition, in doing so, emphasised their empathy for, and knowledge of, this reconstructed version of the Syrian national people. Furthermore, the Syrian opposition also presented their movement as sharing these two attributes, discursively linking the new Syrian national identity with the Syrian opposition thus legitimising this conflict party's right to participate in the peace process and their political aspirations in Syria.

Secondly, I argued that this imagining of the Syrian nation as being united in suffering also contributed to a process of subjectification, enacted by both the mediators and the Syrian opposition; this construction of the Syrian identity served to legitimise the intervention of a third party, and legitimise the consent, by the Syrian opposition, to the intervention of a third party. However, in the case of Yemen, I claimed that we witnessed an attempt at subjectification by members of the international community, an attempt which appeared to have been resisted, albeit weakly, by the Yemeni voices represented within the dataset. The legitimisation process in the Yemeni context did not proceed as smoothly. Thirdly, I presented

an illustrative body of evidence from the Syrian case which indicated that both the Syrian government delegation and the Syrian opposition may have engaged in processes of Othering in a bid to legitimise their own movements.

Therefore, in essence, I have taken the first step in building my overall contention that mediation may shape identity. I have shown that mediators and conflict parties, in either partnership or in opposition, can reshape the identities of the conflict parties both within and in reaction to mediation. Mediation can provide the stage on which identities are reshaped while its very occurrence can also spark the reimagination of identities.

In addition to these arguments surrounding mediation, identity construction, and legitimacy, the analysis here also has a number of broader implications. I will outline these here, but will return to these ramifications in greater detail in Chapter Eight. Firstly, I would like to note that it is the Syrian national identity which is characterised, as opposed to any other level of identity: the notion of the Syrian people, as a unified collective, is repeatedly invoked by the voices represented within the dataset. Secondly, it is a new Syrian national identity which is imagined, an identity which deviates from those analysed within existing academic literature on collective identification in Syria both preceding and following the Uprisings of 2011. Thirdly, while it is the Yemeni people, and thus the Yemeni national identity, which is also imagined within the data gathered, this identity is not as convincingly summoned and characterised, and there appear to be two competing versions of this identity developed. These versions, however, also differ from the identities argued to hold relevance within scholarship of group identities in Yemen. Fourthly, within the Syrian peace process, the voices of the mediators represented, and the voices of the Syrian opposition represented, seem to co-construct, in harmony, an image of the Syrian people and of the Syrian opposition. However, in relation to Yemen, there seems to be a divergence between an admittedly limited number of Yemeni voices and the views of the international mediators. Fifthly, the images constructed of the two nations by the mediators are remarkably similar. There are therefore implications for our understanding of the mutation of the Syrian and Yemeni identities within and through the mediation efforts under examination, the nature of the relationships between the mediators and the conflict parties, the perceived impartiality of the mediators, the meaning of power within mediation, and our broader understanding of the practice of third-party peacemaking.

# Chapter 6. Mediation, Identity Construction, and Normative Change

*The new Syria…will be a homeland for all its citizens equally, a democratic civil state based on the rule of law and civil liberties in which our citizenship transcends any social, ethnic, national or sectarian faction. The new Syria will be one to which Syrians will be proud to belong…[679]*

*The upcoming National Dialogue provides an opportunity for Yemenis to build a future that meets the aspirations of all.[680]*

## 6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I explored the burgeoning body of work within mediation studies concerned with the normative power of mediators. I showed that a growing number of scholars have argued that mediation is a practice imbued with norms, and that this form of conflict management can be deployed as a foreign policy tool to promote particular norms. Moreover, it has been recognised that the promotion of particular norms within peacemaking can, in turn, shape the identities of the conflict parties subject to mediation. This final assertion is grounded in the constructivist notion that norms are intrinsically linked with identity; it stems from the proposition that norms can be thought of as the shared expectations regarding the behaviour of actors occupying any given identity. From the literature surveyed in Chapter Three, I derived the following hypothesis for exploration here: *mediators can use mediation to instigate normative change on the part of the conflict parties and this, in turn, can shape the identities of the conflict parties*.

In this chapter, I assess two themes uncovered within the data gathered: Democracy and Reform, and National Ownership. I propose that the international mediators involved in both cases did appear to seek to provoke normative change on the part of the conflict parties. However, I also develop this claim further: I additionally suggest that mediators can attempt to reconstruct conflict parties' identities in a bid to encourage particular norms, thus reversing the

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[679] SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference' (2012)
[680] Benomar in UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

sequencing of events established in the existing literature concerning mediation, normative change and identity. In order to make these arguments, I will begin by returning to the data analysed in Chapter Five which I claimed showed attempts made, by both the international community and members of the Syrian opposition, to argue that the nationally held aspiration of the Syrian people is the creation of a democratic political system within the state. In this chapter, I will show how this vision of the nation aligns with the normative aims of the UN, suggesting that the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process represented a moment at which the mediators sought to subtly encourage democratisation in Syria by presenting democracy as being intrinsic to 'Syrian-ness'. I will also suggest that this attempt appears to have been, to an extent, successful: a similar narrative was also woven by the Syrian opposition, interlinking democracy with the national goals of the Syrian people. However, I will then examine the Yemeni case study. In this instance, members of the international community did, once more, seek to argue that all Yemenis, collectively, desire reform: reform which was, on occasion, defined as the establishment of a democratic political system. A limited number of Yemeni voices within the dataset seem to agree. In this case, we seem to be witnessing a far more tentative effort to inspire a norm of democracy through identity construction, and a far less assertive attempt, both by Yemenis and international mediators, to envision the aspirations of the Yemeni nation.

This chapter will then assess a second norm which I will suggest was promoted during both mediation efforts. This is the norm of 'national ownership', described as a fundamental tenet of mediation by the UN, the mediator in both cases, and a value which emphasises the need for conflict parties to consent and commit to third-party peacemaking and, moreover, for these disputants to shape the design and implementation of the peace process. After making the claim that national ownership was indeed sought after and promoted within the two mediation efforts, I will then assess the apparent effects of the promotion of this norm. I will argue that it is unclear, according to the voices represented within the dataset, as to whether national ownership was indeed achieved; however, there is an indication that the Yemenis involved in the NDC may have experienced greater national ownership than the Syrians involved in the Geneva Peace Process. Nevertheless, I will claim that the promotion of this norm may have served to influence the level of identity in Syria and Yemen which was reimagined within the peace processes. We have seen that it was the Syrian people and the Yemeni people who were summoned, repeatedly, in reflections on the mediation efforts. It was their national identities, their national experiences and national aspirations, which were reimagined, both by the

mediators and by the Syrian and Yemeni conflict parties captured in the dataset. I will suggest that the norm of national ownership, through its emphasis upon the nation, may have partially dictated this focus, both by the mediators and the international community, on moulding fresh versions of the Syrian and Yemeni national identities. It may also explain why other levels of identities in Syria, levels which were explored in Chapter Two and which tend to predominate in academic understandings of identities within the two states, were not conjured up and deployed within the peace process. This is despite their apparent influence, as will be explored in Chapter Seven.

In essence, the analysis here will further my fundamental claim that mediation can prompt the reimagination of the identities of the conflict parties. To conclude this chapter, I will briefly sketch the implications of the findings presented for the two bodies of scholarship to which I intend to make a contribution. I will highlight that the persistent invocations of a national Syrian and Yemeni people challenge the fragmented depictions of identities in these two states which predominate in the academic literature. Nevertheless, the apparent centrality of democracy, and reform, within these reconceived identities supports previous arguments made that the uprisings of 2011, and the violence which followed, triggered a reimagining of identities in the state along civic lines. Secondly, that mediation can be deployed in the manner conceived in this chapter interacts with perceptions of impartiality and power. The apparent exertion of ideational power within the two processes, and the differing extent to which the norm of democracy was promoted and absorbed, can assist in understanding the nature of the relationships implicated in the two processes and the extent to which the mediators felt able to wield power within the peacemaking efforts.

## 6.2 Promoting the norm of democracy in mediation through identity construction

Democracy does not feature within the UN Charter.[681] Nevertheless, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, proclaims in Article 21 that 'everyone has the right to take part in the government of [her or] his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives', that 'the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government', and that 'this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which

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[681] Simon Rushton, 'The UN Secretary-General and Norm Entrepreneurship: Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Democracy Promotion' *Global Governance* 14:1 (2008), pp. 100-1

shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures'.[682] The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1966, includes similar stipulations in Article 25.[683] Moreover, the 'Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy', penned in 2009, states that 'democratic principles are woven throughout the normative fabric of the United Nations';[684] indeed, in this document it is claimed that the 2005 World Summit saw 170 heads of state and government renew their 'commitment to support democracy by strengthening countries' capacities to implement the principles and practices of democracy'.[685] While the Guidance Note recognises that 'there is no one model of democracy', the document nevertheless asserts that 'the UN framework should seek to address both immediate threats to democratic governance as well as the underlying or structural causes of such interruptions'.[686] In 2005, the UN launched its Democracy Fund (UNDEF), a body which 'funds, helps design, manages, mentors, and generates projects…that contribute to strengthening democracy'.[687] Lastly, as the UN has recognised, while the sixteenth Sustainable Development Goal, part of a set of aims set by the UN General Assembly in 2015, does not use the term 'democracy', many of its targets 'are geared towards protecting democratic institutions'.[688] Democracy, then, can be considered to be a norm sought after by the UN, the lead, although not the sole, mediator in the two cases under consideration.

Nevertheless, in the Guidance Note of 2009, the following is also argued:

> Local norms and practices must be taken into consideration and weaved into emerging democratic institutions and processes to the extent possible…UN assistance should also be explicitly requested by local actors and never imposed. The major responsibility for

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[682] Ibid, p. 101; UN, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (1948) [online], available from: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights [last accessed: 8 April 2021]

[683] Rushton, 'The UN Secretary-General and Norm Entrepreneurship: Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Democracy Promotion', p. 101; UN, 'International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' (1966) [online], available from: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx [last accessed: 8 April 2021]

[684] UN, 'Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy' (2009) [online], available from: https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/FINAL%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Democracy.pdf [last accessed: 8 April 2021], p. 2

[685] Ibid

[686] Ibid, pp. 2, 3

[687] UNDEF, 'Democracy As If People Matter' (2015) [online], available from: https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/democracy_as_if_people_matter.pdf [last accessed: 8 April 2021], p. 1

[688] UN, 'COVID-19: A Spotlight on Democracy' (2020) [online], available from: https://www.un.org/en/observances/democracy-day [last accessed: 8 April 2021]

democratic transitions and consolidation lies with forces within the national society and no amount of external assistance will create democracy.[689]

Moreover, UNDEF has argued the following of its work and strategy: 'our work also aims to advance transparency and accountability, promote the rule of law, and encourage responsible and inclusive government – *while always supporting local ownership and domestic engagement* [emphasis added]'.[690] Furthermore, UNDEF states that their 'strategy is to support local civil society and community leaders in addressing locally identified needs and priorities'.[691] Within these quotations, we can perceive an apparent emphasis upon the consent of those on the receiving end of democracy promotion and a rhetorical commitment, at least, to empowering either 'national' or 'local' actors to lead and define democratisation processes.

To summarise thus far, while democracy can be thought of as a norm pursued by the UN, the organisation simultaneously states that democracy should only be encouraged in conjunction with, and with the consent of, the 'local' and 'national' stakeholders of the communities in which the norm of democracy is being encouraged. In Chapter Five, I claimed that in the context of, and within reflections on, the Geneva Peace Process, the Syrian people as a national collective were depicted as seeking a democratic state. I showed that this was emphasised by both members of the opposition and those international actors involved in mediating the war. I also argued that, having built this construction in partnership with the international mediators, the opposition portrayed their own movement as being equally committed to democracy. I then contended that this demonstrated a form of legitimisation: a particular vision of the Syrian nation appeared to have been imagined, a vision which seemed to support the right of one of the conflict parties, the Syrian opposition, to claim to represent, and to seek to govern, the Syrian people.

However, this creation of a new facet of the Syrian identity could also indicate a further interaction between mediation and identity construction. This fresh envisioning of the nation within the mediation attempt could represent an instance of norm promotion and, therefore, an indication that mediators might use third-party peace negotiations to promote a given norm by characterising it as a strand of the national identity of the state undergoing mediation. In turn,

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[689] UN, 'Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Democracy', pp. 3-4
[690] UNDEF, 'Democracy As If People Matter', p. 2
[691] Ibid

this supports my fundamental contention that mediation shapes identity. This tactic of promoting norms through identity construction, by characterising the norm as an intrinsic element of Syria's national identity, may have been adopted due to the purported emphasis of the UN upon encouraging locally and nationally owned versions of democracy: by arguing that democracy constituted the collectively held will of the Syrian people, the UN may have been seeking to remove itself as a norm promoter, appearing to be merely repeating the wishes fundamentally associated with the national identity of Syria. This argument represents a departure from the literature surveyed in Chapter Three; in this scholarship, by promoting norms, mediators can shape the identities of conflict parties. My argument, instead, is that mediators can seek to reshape the identities of the conflict parties in order to encourage the absorption of particular norms.

That the Syrian opposition espoused a similar narrative concerning the intrinsic association between democracy and the Syrian people could suggest that the attempts by the mediators to promote the norm of democracy through identity construction were successful; indeed, the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process may have formed the backdrop to an instance of socialisation or, perhaps, strategic social construction. These concepts were outlined in Chapter Two: socialisation can be thought of as 'the process through which actors adopt the norms and rules of a given community'[692] while strategic social construction denotes the process by which groups strategically reimagine their identities in order to gain a perceived advantage. By probing the assertions of the Syrian opposition and the international community that the Syrians as a whole desire a democratic state, the intention is not to deny the long history of democratic resistance within Syria, and in particular the aims of and sacrifices made by the 2011 protesters, nor to deny the belief in democracy held by the Syrian opposition. Nevertheless, it is worth questioning why it was this aim, to the exclusion of others, which received overwhelming focus, and which was presented as an essential element of the Syrian national identity. There does seem to be evidence that, in the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process, the UN and other members of the international community implicitly, and apparently successfully, encouraged the norm of democracy by depicting it as a nationally-shared aspiration, a strand within the Syrian identity. There seems to be evidence, therefore, that the mediation efforts shaped a facet of the Syrian national identity. However, the picture in relation to the Yemeni case study is more complex.

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[692] Checkel, 'Socialization and Violence: Introduction and Framework', p. 592

**6.21 What do the Yemeni people seek? Reform, and democracy?**

Within the data gathered concerning the Geneva Peace Process, the nationally held aspirations of Syria are firmly proclaimed. However, within the data gathered concerning the GCC Initiative, the Yemeni transition, and the NDC, there are far fewer considerations of the aims shared by the Yemeni people. Nevertheless, within the data gathered representing the international mediators and members of the international community, a Yemeni desire for democracy is mentioned, although not by representatives of the UN; however, more frequent are the ideas of 'transition', 'change' and 'peace': in other words, under-specified reform. Indeed, I should begin by noting that none of the international officials, during our conversations, explored their perspectives on the national ideals of the Yemeni people and this theme is only mentioned once within the press conferences transcribed: in October 2011, Benomar argued that the Yemeni national collective desired 'a quick transition'.[693] However, this topic does receive consideration within the UN resolutions analysed. Within these documents, the wishes of all Yemenis are implied to be 'an inclusive and Yemeni-led political process of transition';[694] 'a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process' together with 'peaceful change and meaningful political, economic and social reform, as set forth in the GCC Initiative and Implementation Mechanism and in Resolution 2014 (2011)';[695] and, once more, 'peaceful change'.[696]

Furthermore, the international voices captured within the transcripts of UNSC meetings often consider the wishes of the Yemeni people, and oscillate between calls for reform and more precise demands for democracy. For instance, in 2012, Benomar made the claim that the steps made by Hadi 'to advance the transition' have 'received the overwhelming support and goodwill of the Yemenis';[697] indeed, later in the year, the Envoy argued that 'the transition enjoys the overwhelming endorsement and support of the population'.[698] Offering further support, within the same meeting, the UK representative to the UNSC claimed that international efforts to sanction those 'intent on disrupting peaceful transition' will be

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[693] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar (Special Adviser on Yemen) – Security Council Media Stakeout' (11 October 2011)
[694] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'
[695] UNSC, 'Resolution 2051'
[696] UNSC, 'Resolution 2140'
[697] UNSC, '6776th Meeting'
[698] UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

implemented, arguing that 'the Yemeni people demand no less',[699] and this sentiment was repeated by many others in this meeting. Within these meetings, the GCC Initiative and the NDC are also argued to be desires of Yemenis. For instance, the representative of Morocco claimed that the GCC Initiative is a 'plan on which Yemenis have agreed' and constitutes 'the determination of its people'.[700]

In a similar vein, in the summer of 2012, Benomar argued that the NDC was demonstrative of 'the Yemeni people's commitment to choosing dialogue over violence and consensus over division', that the people of Yemen were demanding punishment for saboteurs of the transition, and that they were 'counting on the Security Council to continue speaking in one voice in support of the transition'.[701] Following the conclusion of the NDC, in February 2014, this message was communicated once more: the representative of France noted that 'a democratic transition' can be considered to respond 'to the aspirations of the Yemeni people'.[702] This seemingly deeply-held desire of Yemenis for change is also reiterated within UK government statements concerning the FoY. For example, within a speech delivered by Hague at an FoY Ministerial in September 2012, held at the United Nations, he argued the following:

> The Yemeni people have made clear that they want to see change and we have seen progress on reform by the Yemeni government, but there still remains much more to be done if there is to be permanent, lasting change and fulfilment of people's basic rights to freedom and democracy.[703]

Finally, within the text of the GCC Initiative, it is also pledged 'that the Agreement shall fulfil the aspirations of the Yemeni people for change and reform'[704] while, in the Implementation Mechanism for this Initiative which, as I noted in Chapter One, was drafted with considerable input from Benomar, it is acknowledged that 'our people, including youth, have legitimate aspirations for change' and that 'the situation requires that all political leaders should fulfil their responsibilities towards the people by immediately engaging in a clear process for

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[699] Ibid
[700] Ibid
[701] UNSC, '6976th Meeting'. In this meeting, Benomar repeats, twice, the demands of Yemenis for justice while others in this meeting also repeat this sentiment. Moreover, the representative of Luxembourg to the UNSC argues that 'remarkable progress has already been made on the path to this peace political transition, which responds to the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Yemeni people'.
[702] UNSC '7119th Meeting S/PV.7119' (26 February 2014)
[703] UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary at the United Nations General Assembly Friends of Yemen Ministerial'
[704] 'Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative' (22 May 2011)

transition to good democratic governance in Yemen'.[705] Thus, those external actors implicated in the mediation process in Yemen do appear to envision the collective aims of the Yemeni people, although they seem to do so less frequently than those mediators involved in the Syrian case. Moreover, whereas in Syria, the international community communicated very clearly that the Syrian people desired democracy, which I argued was an attempt to promote the norm of democracy, in Yemen, there appears to have been a far more tentative attempt to do this.

To what extent do the Yemeni voices represented within the dataset align with the vision of the nation, and of its aspirations, provided by the international mediators? Within the interviews conducted, the aims of Yemenis were not frequently mentioned. One interlocutor did imply that the Yemeni people sought 'reform' and 'progress'.[706] Furthermore, referring only to Yemeni youth as opposed to the broader population, one participant described similar goals, claiming that the youth had 'something in common – [they] all wanted, had an aspiration to live something different – to change – for a time when their voices are heard'.[707] Moreover, an additional interlocutor, a former Yemeni politician who did not participate in the NDC, spoke broadly of a national desire for 'ideals' and 'of having a less corrupt government'.[708] More clearly, a desire for political reform constituting an aspiration shared by all Yemenis is emphasised to a greater extent within the NDC Final Report. Consider, for instance, the following declaration, included within the Concluding Statements:

> Today, the Conference is a great testament to the capabilities of the Yemeni people in bringing about a peaceful political transition basing it on a proven legacy in the practice of democracy…This would be the transition founded on a deep faith in comprehensive national partnership for building the new Yemen; a Yemen that is built upon the foundations of good governance, the peaceful transfer of power, consolidation of the role of the State and its institutions to foster the needs, interests and aspirations of the Yemeni people, while ensuring that these institutions are accountable to the people.[709]

Lastly, the representative of Yemen to the UNSC remarked in December 2012:

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[705] 'Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'
[706] Anonymous (6)
[707] NDC, D (2)
[708] O, Y (1)
[709] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 225

It is also noteworthy that the President wants to foster the necessary environment for the National Dialogue…so that everyone can contribute with transparency to obtaining tangible and positive results in the form of domestic peace, multilateral democracy, the protection of human rights and good governance – *all of which is in response to the aspirations of Yemenis* [emphasis added].[710]

To summarise: whereas, during the Geneva Peace Process, members of the international community appeared to, plainly and forcefully, reconstruct the Syrian national identity in order to promote democracy, such a direct effort does not seem to have taken place in relation to the Yemeni transition and peace process. If this is an instance of socialisation, or strategic social construction, it is far less apparent, within the dataset, than was the case with Syria. There are implications associated with this: why did members of the international community neglect to promote, as strongly and through identity reconstruction, the norm of democracy in relation to Yemen? What might this finding reveal about the relationship between the Yemeni conflict parties and the UN? What might this finding reveal about the strength and relevance of the Yemeni national identity? I will return to these questions in the conclusion to this chapter.

## 6.3 Promoting the norm of national ownership in mediation

In this section, I will consider a second norm which could be considered to have been promoted within the two mediation efforts: that of national ownership. I will show that, in relation to both cases, the mediators, at least discursively, appear to have attempted to promote national ownership. Nevertheless, within the dataset, the extent to which national ownership was achieved faces deep contestation. My suggestion will be that the focus, by the mediators, on national ownership may have shaped the level of the identities which both the mediators and the conflict parties sought to characterise; thus, once more, I will lend weight to my fundamental claim that mediation may shape identity. However, I will highlight and discuss that, despite the Yemeni case apparently having experienced greater national ownership, the Yemeni national identity developed within the mediation effort is less sharply depicted than the identity developed in relation to Syria.

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[710] UNSC, '6878th Meeting'

Is it accurate to deem national ownership a norm within mediation practice? The UN proclaims national ownership to be a fundamental tenet of mediation.[711] However, as may have been apparent in Chapter Three, the vast majority of scholarship concerning norms and mediation has focused upon the proliferation and effects of the norm of inclusion. The norm of national ownership, while interlinked with inclusion,[712] is distinct but there has been little direct research into its prevalence and effects.[713] Nevertheless, this norm could be seen to be inextricably linked with the substantial body of scholarship concerning the 'local turn' in peacemaking and peacebuilding, and this connection supports my assertion that national ownership should indeed be viewed as a norm. How are the two related? In their *Guidance for Effective Mediation*, the UN claims that national ownership 'implies that conflict parties and the broader society commit to the mediation process' and that 'solutions cannot be imposed'; moreover, the advice offered by the UN is that conflict parties must be closely consulted on the design of the peace process and, indeed, should be engaged 'on procedure and substance'; that 'local' and 'indigenous' forms of conflict management should be drawn upon 'wherever appropriate'; and that the mediation process must be protected 'from the undue influence of other external actors'.[714] The *Guidance* document appears to conflate the local with the national[715] and the inclusion of national ownership as a tenet could be viewed as an acknowledgement of the fierce criticisms of international interventions, and of the so-called 'liberal peace', contained within the local turn.[716] In particular, this tenet may be a response to the arguments that, for example, negotiating peace agreements in 'Western bubbles' in accordance with 'Northern rationalities' is 'increasingly unsustainable',[717] that the liberalism argued to have been promoted by international institutions from the 1990s onwards represents

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[711] UN, *UN Guidance for Effective Mediation*, p. 14

[712] See, for example, Timothy Donais and Erin McCandless, 'International Peace Building and the Emerging Inclusivity Norm' *Third World Quarterly* 38:2 (2017), p. 297

[713] The few examples include: Civil Society Dialogue Network Meeting, 'The UN Guidance for Effective Mediation: Translating the Fundamentals into EU Practice' (2013) [online], available from: http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CSDN_Mediation_Guidance_Report.pdf [last accessed: 8 April 2021] and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 'Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation in the OSCE' *OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre* (n.d.) [online], available from: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/0/126646.pdf [last accessed: 8 April 2021]. In the former, it is claimed that 'the EU is learning that taking on a "backseat role" can be effective', that 'it is necessary for the EU to have a grassroots approach and to keep funding civil society' (p. 8); in the latter, a case study is analysed and purported to show 'the importance of national ownership' (p. 104).

[714] Ibid, pp. 14-5

[715] The tendency of the UN to conflate the two has been observed by Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd, 'The "Local Turn" In Peacebuilding: A Literature Review of Effective and Emancipatory Local Peacebuilding' *Third World Quarterly* 36:5 (2015), p. 830

[716] For a summary of the local turn, see: Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda For Peace' *Third World Quarterly* 34:5 (2013), pp. 763-83

[717] Ibid, pp. 763, 764

an attempt, by 'Western-led' institutions, 'to unite the world under a hegemonic system',[718] and that 'peace-support interventions' must be viewed 'as part of wider historical processes linked to power' and as 'subtle forms of control'.[719] This relationship between the tenet of national ownership and the scholarship of the local turn supports my suggestion that national ownership constitutes a 'process-related' mediation norm, albeit one which may be 'non-definitional' and 'unsettled'.[720]

In Chapter One, I provided an overview of the two mediation processes. There, I highlighted that the period under study in relation to the Syrian crisis was punctuated by two 'events': Geneva I and Geneva II. Geneva I was convened by Annan, and did not feature any Syrian participants. The attendees, who were representatives of the permanent members of the UNSC, a number of Arab states, the Arab League and the EU, produced a roadmap for the future of the peace process, and moreover, the future of Syria: it called for a transitional government. Geneva II was convened by Brahimi and his team, but featured a far greater degree of involvement from Syrian participants. Two delegations attended, one representing the Syrian government and one representing the Syrian opposition and, while it would seem that members of the international community played a strong role in shaping the membership of the Syrian opposition delegation, and while both parties seemed reluctant to commit to attending, Brahimi allowed the delegations to negotiate the agenda for the talks. He did not dictate that which would be discussed although, presumably, it was the UN which decided that the two parties would meet in the Palais, and would sit facing one another, separated by UN staff, for direct talks in January and February of 2014. In that chapter, I also provided an overview of the GCC Initiative, the Yemeni transition and the NDC. The GCC Initiative, and its Implementation Mechanism, were negotiated by a small group of Yemeni political leaders who were overseen by representatives of the GCC, Benomar, and the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UNSC and the EU. However, the NDC was designed by a group of Yemenis: its rules, its structure, its organisation. The participants were decided by Yemenis, with decisive input from Benomar. The day-to-day management of the NDC was executed by a Secretariat,

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[718] Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 1

[719] Oliver Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty, 'Where Now for the Critique of the Liberal Peace?' *Cooperation and Conflict* 50:2 (2015), pp. 174, 177

[720] Terms taken from the taxonomy proposed by Hellmüller et al., 'The Role of Norms in International Mediation', explored in Chapter Three. However, the *Guidance* seems to dilute the term 'ownership', eliding it with mere 'consent' and with the capacity to influence, in circumstances deemed appropriate by the third-party mediator, the shape of the peace process. Therefore, the inclusion of national ownership within the UN's *Guidance* may represent a half-hearted, or simply rhetorical, attempt to comply with the aforementioned imperatives of the local turn.

comprised of Yemenis but, during the discussions of the NDC, Benomar, his staff and members of the international community were present. These international actors contributed to the negotiations, external facilitators were employed, and Benomar, in particular, purportedly intervened to oversee clandestine negotiations. Superficially, the Yemeni mediation effort appears to have enjoyed greater national ownership than the efforts in Syria; nevertheless, this theme received deep consideration by many voices within the dataset, revealing the complexity of this norm and its effects. I will assess these statements next.

## 6.31 Pursuing national ownership in the Syrian and Yemeni mediation attempts

Firstly, I will demonstrate the pervasiveness of the ideal of national ownership, and its apparent status as an influential norm, within the two case studies. I will do this by showing that the third-party mediators and members of the international community represented within the press conferences and official documentation analysed mentioned persistently the need for the peace processes to be Syrian- and Yemeni-led. For example, beginning with the Syrian case, Brahimi, in November 2013, claimed that Geneva II 'is really for the Syrians to come to Geneva to talk to one another and hopefully start a credible, workable, effective peace process for *their country* [emphasis added]'.[721] Indeed, he later claimed that 'we want' Geneva II 'to be a Syrian process, not an international process with Syrian participation'.[722] This idea was repeated days before the beginning of Geneva II: Ban Ki-moon emphasised that 'we believed from the beginning that the negotiations should be led by and owned by the Syrians'. In addition, towards the conclusion of this press conference, in relation to the Syrian opposition, he emphasised that these delegates should 'sit down together with the Syrian government delegation in earnest…with a sense of mission for their own people. After all, Syria is their own country and they should be responsible for the future'.[723] Ban Ki-moon repeated a similar idea at the opening of the talks in Montreux[724] while, at the same conference, the representatives of Russia and China, and the Secretary-General of the Arab League, issued warnings concerning the need for the talks to be Syrian-led.[725] It is possible to observe, then,

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[721] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (25 November 2013)
[722] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (20 December 2013)
[723] UN, 'Secretary-General's Press Briefing' (19 January 2014)
[724] UN Live, 'First Meeting, Geneva Conference on Syria'
[725] Lavrov, UN Live, 'First Meeting, Geneva Conference on Syria'. For further evidence see also: UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (31 January 2014)

an insistence within these press conferences that both power and responsibility should lie with the Syrian delegations.

Within official documentation concerning stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, there is a continued emphasis on the need for the negotiations to be Syrian-led. Resolution 2043, of 2012, describes a 'determination' to facilitate 'a Syrian-led political transition leading to a democratic, plural political system'.[726] This phrase, of course, appears to be contradictory through its dictation of the resulting shape of politics in Syria. A very similar phrase is employed in the Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria: here, the members stress their desire 'to facilitate', once more, 'the launch of a Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and enables them independently and democratically to determine their own future'.[727] The FoS, too, repeat the need for Syrian leadership in the official conclusions to their meetings;[728] a draft resolution from October 2011 calls, three times, for a process which is 'Syrian-led',[729] and this idea is also reiterated in later draft resolutions.[730]

Thirdly, within press conferences and official documents gathered concerning Syria featuring voices of members of the international community, there are insistent references to the need to safeguard Syrian sovereignty. In a press conference delivered at the UN, Ban Ki-moon uttered that which transpired to be a well-worn phrase within the material gathered: 'our actions must continue to be based on our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria'; indeed, he repeated a similar phrase shortly after at the same conference.[731] Two years later, a similar phrase recurs: Ban Ki-moon, on the eve of the direct talks in Geneva, stated: 'this must be a Syrian-led process, Syrian-owned, one that fully respects Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity'.[732] Indeed, even though Kerry

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[726] UNSC, 'Resolution 2043'

[727] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria. This document repeats the need for a 'Syrian-led process' on a further four occasions. It also includes the idea that 'it is for the Syrian people to determine the future of the country', a sentiment which is repeated once more.

[728] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (27 February 2012); see also: UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (1 April 2012); UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary's Remarks at Syria Action Group Meeting (30 June 2012); UK Government, 'UK Hosts Conference on Syrian-led Political Transition (9 January 2013)

[729] UNSC 'Draft Resolution S/2011/612'

[730] This is called for twice within UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/77'; and once within UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/538'

[731] Ban Ki-moon in UN Live, 'Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League, on the Situation in Syria – General Assembly'

[732] UN Live, 'Ban Ki-moon and Lakhdar Brahimi – Joint Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria'

asserted that al-Asad would play no role in the future of Syria in the opening of Geneva II in Montreux,[733] in a separate press conference delivered on the same day, Kerry spoke of Syria as a 'sovereign, independent and democratic state'.[734] Finally, UN Resolutions persistently reaffirm the organisation's 'strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria'.[735] The Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria also features a very similar formulation which is repeated later in the document,[736] as do the London 11 Final Communiqué[737] and the Chair's Conclusions following the FoS meetings in February, April and July of 2012.[738]

Markedly similar statements concerning Yemeni sovereignty abound within numerous official documents and UNSC meetings concerning Yemen[739] while, within the few press conferences delivered at the UN concerning the GCC Initiative, the transition and the NDC, it was declared on a number of occasions that the process would be 'Yemeni-led'.[740] Furthermore, Benomar stressed that the UN and the international community would monitor the implementation of the GCC Initiative only following requests made by Yemenis before arguing for the need to find a 'Yemeni way forward'.[741] Moreover, this notion of Yemeni ownership and leadership is repeated on a number of occasions within official documents: for instance, in Resolution 2014 it is declared that 'the best solution to the current crisis in Yemen is through an inclusive and Yemeni-led political process of transition'.[742] Less directly, in 2012, Benomar argued in a UNSC meeting that, in order for the talks of the NDC to be a success, they 'must be designed

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[733] UN Live, 'First Meeting, Geneva Conference on Syria'
[734] UN Live, 'John Kerry (USA) – Press Conference at Geneva Conference on Syria'
[735] UNSC, 'Resolution 2042'; see also: UNSC, 'Preliminary Understanding: United Nations Supervision Mechanism'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2043'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2118'; UNSC 'Draft Resolution S/2011/612'; UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/77'; and UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/538'.
[736] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria
[737] UK Government, 'London 11 Final Communiqué'
[738] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (27 February 2012); UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (1 April 2012); UK Government, 'Friends of Syrian People: Chairman's Conclusions' (6 July 2012)
[739] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2051'; UNSC, 'Resolution 2140'; UNSC, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2013/3' (15 February 2013); Representative of the UK to the UNSC in UNSC, '6744th Meeting'; Representatives of China, Portugal and India to the UNSC in UNSC '6878th Meeting'; the Representatives of Azerbaijan and China to the UNSC in UNSC, '7037th Meeting'; UK Government, 'The Friends of Yemen Ministerial Meeting Co-Chairs' Statement' (7 March 2013)
[740] This is repeated twice in UN Live, 'Security Council president H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout'; and also in UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar (Special Adviser on Yemen) – Security Council Media Stakeout' (11 October 2011).
[741] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011)
[742] UNSC, 'Resolution 2014'. This is repeated again, later in the resolution and there are very similar phrases in UNSC, 'Resolution 2051'; and UNSC, 'Resolution 2140'

and driven by the Yemenis themselves' and, 'while that will require strong international support, its footprint should be light'. He then continued to outline the support the UN would provide, claiming that this plan had been developed 'based on consultation with Yemeni actors'.[743] The representative of China in the UNSC, in a message similar to the one delivered at Montreux in relation to Syria, warned that 'the Yemeni people should continue to lead' the political process.[744] To summarise thus far, in the data gathered and analysed relating to both cases, the members of the international community captured within the dataset appear to call for Syrian and Yemeni ownership of the two peace processes. This seems to demonstrate a level of influence exerted by the norm of national ownership.

**6.32 Achieving national ownership in the Syrian and Yemeni mediation attempts?**

While I have shown that national ownership seems to have been called for and encouraged by the mediators implicated, to what extent did those voices represented in my dataset feel as though the Syrian and Yemen people, or Syrian and Yemeni representatives, 'owned' the two processes? I have gathered a wealth of data both supporting and contradicting the notion that the mediation efforts were indeed nationally owned. Nevertheless, none of the participants with whom I held interviews concerning the Syrian case directly described the process as having been 'Syrian-led'; aside from three descriptions of the events surrounding the withdrawal of Iran's invitation to Montreux, which was presented as an achievement of the Syrian opposition,[745] and frequent mentions of the individual leadership positions held by the members of the Syrian opposition with whom I conducted interviews,[746] no further sense was provided by either the Syrians or members of the international community consulted that the Geneva Peace Process was indeed a nationally led, Syrian process. A number of Syrian interviewees and SOC press releases depicted the presence and actions of members of the international community in benign terms, using phrases such as 'facilitate', 'help', 'encourage', 'generous' and 'support'; moreover, within press conferences delivered at the UN, and within the official documentation of the UN and the FoS, mediators and diplomats deployed similar language to describe their approach. The term 'help' appears frequently, for example. Nevertheless, a great deal of data seems to strongly support the idea that international organisations and officials

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[743] Benomar in UNSC, '6776th Meeting'
[744] Representative of China to UNSC in UNSC '6878th Meeting'
[745] SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (2); SO, DaGII (6)
[746] SO, DaGII (4); SO (1); SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (2); SO (4); SO (6)

*dictated* the events of the peace process; for instance, a number of Syrian interlocutors expressed their discomfort with the Communiqué produced at Geneva I, noting the lack of Syrian involvement in producing this document.[747] The interference of members of the international community within the workings of SOC was also described with apparent resentment: several spoke of the establishment of SOC as having been driven by the international community; 'we felt compelled', remarked one, to launch a new body.[748] A further Syrian interlocutor recounted the unease of 'international players' regarding 'the first flavour of the revolution and the Islamist flavour to the whole scene', and how 'they kept pushing' SOC;[749] one close observer of the opposition expressed the opinion that al-Jarba was elected simply because 'more countries pushed' for him;[750] while a third wryly remarked: 'really, there is something bad when Qatar is invited for a meeting of al-Etilaf'.[751] Terms such as 'pushed' or 'compelled' recurred within the interviews.

The international officials interviewed, too, conceded the power and control wielded by external states and organisations during the Geneva Peace Process in the operations of the opposition organisations. Indeed, one US official admitted the following during our interview: 'we were entirely too involved in the nitty gritty of opposition politics – it was both unhealthy and unwise'.[752] As has been previously described in this thesis, the process by which SOC agreed to participate in the mediation efforts was tortuous; the decision was taken 'at the last moment',[753] and almost half of the members of SOC resigned, convinced that to negotiate constituted capitulation to the Syrian government. This unwillingness to attend seems to imply a lack of ownership of the process; as one interlocutor phrased it, 'the decision to go to Geneva, it wasn't easy'.[754] A second participant mentioned this dynamic too: 'I need to be frank, from the beginning, for the Coalition and for the National Council…they say there will not be any negotiations…and so, when the Coalition started to go to Geneva, we were divided into two'.[755] A third deployed stronger language, claiming that members of the international community

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[747] SO (2); SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (5)
[748] SO (2); see also: SO, DaGII (3); SO, DaGII (2); SO (4)
[749] SO, DaGII (3)
[750] O, S (1)
[751] SO, DaGII (1). The phrase 'al-Etilaf' can be translated as 'the Coalition' and is a commonly used abbreviation for SOC in Arabic.
[752] M, S, TI (1)
[753] SO, DaGII (4)
[754] Ibid
[755] SO, DaGII (2). This was also mentioned by a second interview participant who described how 44 members suspended their involvement in SOC (SO, DaGII (5))

'forced' SOC to attend Geneva II.[756] This interlocutor also speculated that the regime delegation only attended due to Russia 'push[ing]' them to do so;[757] this idea was supported by a second interlocutor who speculated that the regime delegation attended because 'they had to', expressing the belief that 'they had no choice' due, once more, to the pressure exerted by Russia.[758] Indeed, a UK Foreign Minister remarked to me in our conversation that 'the official opposition, they were told they had to turn up'[759] while a confidential source, close to the negotiations, told me that they (sing.) 'managed to get the opposition on board',[760] implying that their (sing.) efforts had faced resistance.

The international voices represented within the press conferences and official documents reveal the seemingly authoritative role of the mediator in the peace talks: Hilary Clinton, in 2012, declared the Security Council 'prepared…to chart a path forward'; in the same year, Annan expressed his hope that members of the UNSC 'will decide to use their collective influence on the parties to *push* them in the right direction [emphasis added]'; while Brahimi admitted, in 2013, that 'it is the wider international community…that can really create the opening that is necessary to start effectively solving the problem'. We saw the way in which the Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria repeatedly states the need for a 'Syrian-led process'. Nevertheless, in a jarring contradiction, this document also consistently dictates the outcomes of this process. Thus, it is claimed that the process must lead 'to a democratic, plural political system, in which citizens are equal regardless of their affiliations, ethnicities or beliefs', arguing also that the Syrian 'parties *must* be prepared to put forward effective interlocutors [emphasis added]'.[761] The London 11 Final Communiqué is similarly emphatic, claiming that 'when the TGB is established, Assad and his close associates with blood on their hands will have no role in Syria'[762] before going on to stipulate that, while the sovereignty of Syria will be preserved, 'the future of Syria must be democratic, pluralistic, and respectful of human rights and the rule of law. Every citizen must enjoy full equality before the law regardless of [her or] his religious or ethnic background'.[763] One draft resolution also features a similar

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[756] SO (6)

[757] SO, DaGII (4)

[758] SO (2). A third also stated that, 'without the Russians, they [the government delegation] wouldn't be at Geneva and talking' (SO, DaGII (3)). A fourth interview participant, in answer to the question, 'why did the regime delegation attend?' responded: 'Russian pressure, Iranian pressure' (SO (8)).

[759] M, S, TI (5)

[760] Anonymous (1)

[761] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, 'Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria'

[762] UK Government, 'London 11 Final Communiqué'

[763] Ibid

requirement for the future of Syria,[764] as does a statement delivered by Hague in April 2012 at an FoS gathering.[765] That there will be no role for al-Asad is repeated by Hague in the same meeting[766] and, again, at the Action Group for Syria in June 2012[767] while the sense of responsibility seemingly felt by the Action Group for Syria is made clear: in June 2012, Hague argued that 'the world is looking to us for leadership and action to end the bloodshed and horror in Syria'.[768] Moreover, he stated later in the same address that 'it is time for all of us to act with urgency and determination, to create a roadmap to lead Syria back from the brink, and to insist on its full implementation'.[769] Furthermore, international frameworks were clung to, across all the data sources, as the foundation and basis for the negotiations and the future of Syria.

There is far greater evidence in relation to the Yemeni transition that Yemeni actors wielded power or, at least, that this was the narrative which those voices captured within the dataset either believed or sought to promote. Both Yemeni participants and mediators involved in the GCC Initiative, the transition and the NDC depicted the process as having been designed and managed by Yemenis; one high-ranking member of the Secretariat, for instance, emphasised that it was the Preparatory Committee, comprised of Yemenis, which 'drafted all the rules and regulations of the National Dialogue' and 'decided on the topics'.[770] This sentiment was echoed by a member of the NDC Secretariat,[771] and this interviewee also mentioned how Yemeni facilitators, as opposed to those from outside the country, were most well-equipped to guide discussions during the Conference.[772] Indeed, a second member of the Secretariat described how she and her colleagues succeeded in resisting international interference in this matter: 'the Special Envoy – he wanted to bring facilitators from outside – but we were very strongly against that'.[773] She also spoke more broadly of the way in which the Secretariat 'protected the process' from the interventions of members of the international community, thus implying the wresting of control by Yemeni participants:

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[764] UNSC, 'Draft Resolution S/2012/77'
[765] For instance, Hague declared the following: 'a political transition led by Syrians themselves to a plural, democratic government with free and fair elections' (UK Government, '"Our Task is to Pressure the Regime in Damascus into Implementing Kofi Annan's Six-Point Plan in Full and Without Further Delay"')
[766] Ibid
[767] UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary's Remarks at Syria Action Group Meeting'
[768] Ibid
[769] Ibid
[770] NDC, Se (3). A second interlocutor mentioned this too (NDC, D (4))
[771] As this participant phrased it, 'the Preparatory Committee decided the Conference's objectives, it is all in the manual, the decision-making' (NDC, Se (1)).
[772] NDC, Se (1)
[773] NDC, Se (2)

…there was conflict with Jamal Benomar's offices, with the Ambassadors – they assumed that they could come any day, that they could enter any Working Group – but we, in the Secretariat, said no, you have to wait for our approval – and they were shocked, these Ambassadors – but we said, this is a sovereign process. And Jamal Benomar, he thought he could bring an expert at any time – and we would say, we don't need you to bring…The Secretariat protected the process…the Secretariat stood very tall, we were the gatekeepers…[774]

An additional Yemeni interlocutor supported this, arguing that representatives of the international community 'were involved – but the Yemenis directed the process themselves'.[775] Indeed, he narrated a similar story to that recounted by the member of the Secretariat: 'one of the people in Jamal's office, he was trying to dictate what we should and shouldn't do – I said, you recommend and I decide. Your role is to give advice. I am Yemeni and we are Yemenis'.[776] More broadly, a further interviewee, a revolutionary youth, described the NDC as 'chance for people to make the future of Yemen', remarking that the Conference 'was about being empowered in politics, in society and economically'.[777] A second member of the revolutionary youth described, in similar terms, his 'sense of empowerment' and, in perhaps the strongest declaration of the control exerted by Yemenis within the peace process, asserted: 'it was Yemeni-led, a Yemen-led process', repeating the claim twice in quick succession.[778]

In contrast to the interviews conducted concerning Syria, members of the international community with whom I held interviews also expressed their sense of Yemeni power within the context of the peace process. A former Ambassador to Yemen described how, after the election of 2012, he 'tried to lower [his] profile', claiming that, 'at that point, the implementation was in the hands of the Yemenis rather than the foreigners – we were less directly engaged, or at least less engaged in a public way'.[779] One facilitator, employed by the UN, simply stated: 'it was Yemeni-led', later in our conversation arguing that her actions, and

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[774] Ibid. This was also discussed by a second interlocutor, who claimed that the Ambassadors 'would usually arrange with the Secretariat' when to attend (NDC, D (11)). Furthermore, a third interviewee described this dynamic in a similar manner (NDC, D (15))
[775] Anonymous (8)
[776] Ibid
[777] NDC, D (14)
[778] NDC, D (2)
[779] M, Y, TI (4)

those of her colleagues, were 'based on what the Yemenis needed'.[780] An international mediation expert, whose NGO supported the transition process, made clear on a number of occasions that the role played by their (sing.) organisation was controlled by Yemeni stakeholders: 'they wanted us to continue'; 'Hadi – he confirmed our mandate'; 'we had a mandate from the Yemeni President and the Yemeni parties'; 'we worked through the Secretariat'; 'our main reference was the Yemeni structures'.[781] Their (sing.) insistence in this regard proved to be a thread which ran throughout our conversation. Relatedly, frequent, and effusive, statements concerning the leadership of President Hadi are particularly noticeable within the official documents concerning Yemen.[782] Lastly, as with Syria, several Yemenis whom I interviewed stressed their individual power within the mediation attempt.[783] Therefore, the notion of Yemeni leadership appears to be prominent within the interviews conducted, the press conferences transcribed and the official documents analysed.

As was the case with Syria, the notion that the international mediators and members of the international community present 'helped', 'supported', 'assisted' and, even, 'nurtured' the Yemenis and the peace talks was developed by both the Yemenis and international officials interviewed, and within the official documents assessed. Furthermore, while mentions do occur within the dataset of the power of the international community during the Yemeni transition, the extent of this particular body of evidence is far less than that relating to Syria and thus represents a divergence between the two cases. It must be mentioned, nevertheless, that there was disquiet expressed within a number of interviews concerning the allegedly undue influence exerted by Benomar in particular. Within our interview, for instance, a senior member of the Secretariat described how members of the Preparatory Committee grew disgruntled with the actions of Benomar: after he proposed percentages for the different groups of participants in the NDC, two members purportedly asked, 'why does Jamal get to decide this? Why is he the one making proposals?' This interlocutor explained that 'they thought that Jamal was not right to interfere in this process'.[784] Indeed, later in our conversation, while he admitted that those

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[780] M, Y, TI (2)
[781] M, Y, TII (4)
[782] Benomar in UNSC, '6776th Meeting'; Benomar repeated this twice, together with the representatives of the UK, Portugal, India, Germany and Yemen to the UNSC in UNSC '6878th Meeting'. For further evidence, see also: UNSC, '6976th Meeting'; UNSC, '7037th Meeting'; UNSC '7119th Meeting'; UK Government, 'Yemeni President Hadi Visits UK Ahead of Friends of Yemen Meeting in New York'; UK Government, 'Foreign Secretary at the United Nations General Assembly Friends of Yemen Ministerial'; UK Government, 'The Friends of Yemen Ministerial Meeting Co-Chairs' Statement' (7 March 2013)
[783] NDC, Se (3); NDC, D (15); NDC, D (12); NDC, D (14); NDC, D (16)
[784] NDC, Se (3)

members of the international community 'who didn't have any interests, they tried to be helpful', he nevertheless commented that 'those with real interests, they were interfering'.[785] Moreover, a further member of the NDC Secretariat spoke of the manner in which the international community assumed 'that they would lead'. She described this as 'so typical' before detailing the ways in which the Secretariat attempted to resist. This interlocutor also mentioned the ways in which 'international donors, they would decide things without consulting Yemenis'.[786] A member of the Presidium directly claimed that 'there was no ownership by Yemenis of the political process'[787] and one interlocutor, for example, spoke of the Envoy in the following terms: 'he had a bigger role than a mediator, he was like a ruler in Yemen' while a second argued that the close involvement of the Envoy and his staff meant that 'the people didn't feel the outcome [of the NDC] belonged to them'. This interlocutor also described how the Special Envoy was received like a President in Yemen. A second participant used similar language to describe Benomar too: 'he had, maybe, the biggest role of any UN worker in history…all the parties, they entitled him to take decisions he should not take'. He claimed that, 'if there was a crisis, they would think, let Jamal Benomar decide and we will go with his decision'.[788] There were additional remarks made in this vein by other interlocutors.[789]

One participant also described the actions of the UN during the Conference using dictatorial terms:

> …it was really strange to see how much the UN and [its] staff would become involved in every little thing. They kept saying they were impartial. The office of the Special Envoy – he would be with us – they would weigh in on how much had been done – the whole concept of political neutrality. Whether you can be when you dictate…What about the local meaning? That was part and parcel of the failure of the National Dialogue.[790]

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[785] Ibid; see also NDC, D (15)
[786] NDC, Se (2)
[787] NDC, D (8)
[788] NDC, D (13)
[789] For instance, one interlocutor mentioned that Benomar 'had more power than a normal Envoy, and he could influence the turn of events, he had influence on issues that, generally, he wouldn't have had influence on' (NDC, D (15))
[790] Anonymous (6)

Similarly, one revolutionary, who did not participate in the NDC but was, nevertheless, a close observer, described the GCC Initiative as 'separate, not in the Square, excluding people'; she also noted how, when she and others expressed their disquiet to the EU Ambassador with the agreement, 'he was personally offended – this shows how involved he was in writing the agreement'.[791] Finally, in an evocative exchange, one Yemeni consultant, employed by an international NGO, described his interpretation of the power held by international officials:

> The Yemenis were looking at each other through the crosshairs of their rifles and the only way they could talk to each other was through these mediators – they had earned the trust and confidence of the Yemeni actors…*The Ambassadors had the Yemeni political elite in their hands to shape and form in any which way they wanted.* The way the whole National Dialogue was structured and set up was driven by the experiences and tours of duty of those Ambassadors [emphasis added].[792]

However, none of the members of the international community with whom I spoke characterised the transition as having been led by external parties; moreover, within the press conferences and official documents gathered there is just one sentiment which offers support to this interpretation: the US representative to the UNSC, in 2012, argued that the GCC 'laid the groundwork for Yemen's political transition'.[793] Furthermore, we have seen how, in relation to Syria, there was evidence within the dataset of a clinging to international frameworks, together with a sense that the opposition participated in the talks against their will. There is far less evidence in relation to these ideas regarding Yemen. However, a former Ambassador to Yemen described, in our conversation, 'fairly extensive international engagement' to persuade representatives of the southerners to participate in the NDC[794] while the representative of Yemen to the UNSC, in 2013, did stress the importance of international agreements: 'Yemen has come a long way on the path to a political settlement, based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, as well as Resolutions 2014 (2011) and 2051 (2012)'.[795]

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[791] O, Y (4)
[792] M, Y, TII (1)
[793] UNSC '6878th Meeting'
[794] M, Y, TI (4)
[795] Representative of Yemen to the UNSC in UNSC, '6976th Meeting'

These concerns notwithstanding, it would appear that the very different mediation approaches adopted in relation to the two conflicts did also lead to a difference, or at least a perceived difference, in the distribution of power within the two cases. The elite-level, secretive, remote talks of the Geneva Peace Process seem to have been largely viewed as internationally owned whereas the wide-ranging, inclusive and in-country NDC appears to have more frequently been deemed to have been Yemeni-owned. However, the dataset remains ambiguous on this matter. The data gathered may therefore indicate that the pursuit of national ownership represents a norm still battling to take hold.

## 6.33 Connecting the norm of national ownership with the reimagined Syrian and Yemeni identities

Chapter Two highlighted that there are different levels of identity. In that chapter, I noted that, while international relations scholarship tends to focus upon national identity, identities may form around numerous loci: the state, the regime, ethnicity, religion, sect, class, tribe, and so on. These identities may co-exist, but they may also compete, waxing and waning in relevance over time. In Chapter Two, I also explored the academic arguments developed surrounding collective identities in Syria and Yemen, briefly surveying the years preceding the Uprisings but focusing predominantly on academic perspectives on group identification in the states post-2011. To recapitulate, scholars have argued that the protests inspired reconstructions of the two states' national identities, fresh visions which imagined the countries, and the bonds between its people, in civic terms. Nevertheless, far more frequent within this body of scholarship are narratives surrounding the fragmentation of the state and, in particular, its sectarianisation amid violence. Scholars often argue that national ties hold little influence within either Syria and Yemen, dismiss the nationalist rhetoric of the two regimes as manipulative veneers, claim that the states are splintered, and contend that Syrian and Yemeni citizens primarily hold allegiance to sub- and supra-state identities.

It is therefore marked that it is the national identities of Syria and Yemen which are reconceived within the two mediation attempts. In relation to Syria, as we saw in Chapter Five, the 'Syrian people' are invoked, over and over, within the dataset: the voices captured feel confident and comfortable speaking on behalf of all Syrians. They declare their collective, national experience, and their collective, national aspirations. There seems to be a perceived unity of

Syrians; in other words, a belief in the apparent enduring relevance of national attachment in relation to Syria. As we have also seen, the evidence in relation to Yemen is weaker. The voices represented within my dataset did speak of a 'Yemeni people', thus implying the relevance of the nation as a locus of belonging to those in, and from, the state. However, this phrase recurred more frequently in statements delivered by international officials within the arena of the UN. Moreover, while shared attributes of these alleged people appear to have been developed within the context of, and within reflections on, the negotiations, these depictions are far from firm, nor are they deep-rooted. That which appears to have been constructed within, and perhaps in response to, the peace talks is merely a glimpse of a possible reimagination of the Yemeni national character, and stands in contrast to the sharper depictions offered in relation to the Syrian case.

Nevertheless, we could also consider the following evidence. We could consider the names of prominent Syrian opposition organisations during this period: the SNC and SOC both include the terms 'Syrian' and 'National' in their titles while the SRGC and the FSA also emphasise their 'Syrian-ness' within their titles.[796] The importance of emphasising this relationship was also readily apparent to me when I visited the headquarters of SOC in Istanbul in November 2019; imposing flags, modified versions of the 1932 Syrian independence flag adopted by the revolutionaries in 2011, were draped across the walls and stood, sagging, in dark corners, while vast and detailed maps of Syria, bordered by the stripes of the Syrian independence flag, were also prominently on display. The NDC, of course, was a *National* Dialogue. The logo of the Conference drew upon the Yemeni flag, adopted after unification: the flag consists of three horizontal bands, with red at the head, followed by white and then black. The logo of the NDC, an image of which is included in Appendix H, depicts a red 'speech balloon' then, overlapping slightly but positioned underneath, is the outline of the territory of unified Yemen, in white, after which there is a second speech balloon in black. Moreover, the slogan devised for the NDC can be translated as follows: 'through dialogue, we will *create the future* [emphasis added]'.[797] My suggestion is that, while the promotion of national ownership may not have produced truly Syrian- and Yemeni-led mediation attempts, it may have encouraged this rhetorical and symbolic focus upon conjuring up new visions of the Syrian and Yemeni people. My suggestion is slightly weakened, however, due to the manner in which the Yemeni

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[796] This has also been noted by Phillips, 'Sectarianism and Conflict in Syria', p. 359
[797] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 1

mediation attempt appeared to enjoy greater levels of national ownership by comparison with the Syrian efforts. Nevertheless, in turn, this suggestion demonstrates the manner in which a process-related mediation norm can serve to mould identity, offering weight to my overall claim that mediation can shape identity.

## 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored two norms which seem to have been promoted during the two mediation attempts under study. The first is democracy: I have made the claim that, within the initial stages of the Geneva Peace Process, members of the international community and members of the Syrian opposition reimagined the Syrian national identity, arguing that the nationally held aspiration of the Syrian people is for a democratic political system. Within the Yemeni case study, the evidence is less strong but, nevertheless, the international mediators in this case attempted to tentatively suggest that reform, and occasionally democracy, constituted the national desire of the Yemeni people. A limited number of Yemeni voices expressed agreement. I therefore argued that mediators may attempt to reconstruct conflict parties' identities in a bid to foster particular norms, subtly encouraging norms by presenting them as being integral to the nation or nations at war. However, I argued that the data related to the Yemeni case showed that such attempts may not always proceed smoothly. This argument therefore constitutes a further building block, contributing to my overall contention that mediation can shape identity.

I then examined a second norm which I argued was sought after during the two mediation efforts: the norm of national ownership. I analysed the wide range of data gathered which explored this theme, concluding that it appears as though the Yemeni mediation effort enjoyed a greater level of ownership by comparison with the early stages of the Geneva Peace Process; nevertheless, concerns were voiced by a number of Yemenis regarding the undue level of influence exerted by the Special Envoy in particular. However, my suggestion was that the persistent promotion of national ownership, and the pervasiveness of this theme, may have shaped the conflict parties and mediators in a different way. It may have encouraged those involved in the two mediation efforts to focus upon reshaping the national identities of Syria and Yemen, as opposed to reconstructing the experiences and aspirations of any of the many sub- and supra-state identities which have been consistently argued by academics to hold

relevance within the state. The process-related mediation norm of national ownership can thus be said to shape identity. I have therefore proposed in this chapter two original ways in which mediation, identity construction, and norms may interact.

The findings presented in this chapter contribute to debates surrounding collective identification in Syria and Yemen. The insistence that there exist a cohesive Syrian and Yemeni people, claims made by both the members of the Syrian opposition, Yemeni voices and the international peacemakers represented within my dataset, would seem to challenge the fragmented depictions which dominate academic scholarship on collective identification in Syria and Yemen. Nevertheless, there is also the possibility that their adamant refrains represent attempts to mask the reverse: a concern at the perceived disintegration of Syria and Yemen, both in ideational and territorial terms, and are an attempt, therefore, to rhetorically hold the states together. Furthermore, the construction of democracy, and reform, as central aspirations of the Syrian and Yemeni national identities align with the nascent arguments within area studies scholarship which contends that 2011 and its aftermath provoked a reimagining of identities in Syria and Yemen which foregrounded civic values.

Secondly, that mediation can be used in the manner explored in this chapter also contributes to our understanding of mediator impartiality and power mediation, intertwined debates which were outlined in Chapter Three. The mediator appears to have successfully exerted ideational power during the Geneva Peace Process, calling into question its impartiality in relation to the outcome of the mediation efforts. Moreover, that the members of the Syrian opposition aligned so closely with the normative inclinations of the UN, reveals the closeness of this particular conflict party with the mediator. However, the mediator seems to have failed to wield such power in Yemen; moreover, the Yemeni voices could be considered to diverge from the members of the international community on this matter, possibly indicating the nature of their relationship. I will return to these ideas in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

# Chapter 7. Inclusive Mediation: Does it Strengthen or Rupture National Identity?

*If you are in a war or a conflict, and you belong only to an ethnicity or a religion, then the wound will be deeper. You want something together, everyone…*[798]

*…we have been keen that our dialogue [will]…create a common ground…This common ground is 'the nation'…*[799]

## 7.1 Introduction

The series of claims made, and the themes analysed, within Chapters Five and Six have collectively furthered my fundamental argument: mediation can shape identity. I have demonstrated several ways in which mediation may not only bear witness to identity construction but, moreover, may activate identity construction. This final empirical chapter, which will investigate the themes of Inclusion and Discord, will seek to clarify whether, and if so how, the mediation process-related norm of inclusion shapes identity. I will challenge the idea that inclusive mediation shapes identity in the manner in which existing literature suggests; I will propose a further way in which inclusive mediation may shape the identities of the conflict parties; and I will suggest that there is need for additional empirical research to better understand the relationship between inclusive mediation and identity construction. This chapter will therefore serve my overall aspiration, which is to understand how mediation might interact with identity.

In Chapter Three, I explored the contentions of Hirblinger and Landau that the rationales and linguistic framings offered to justify inclusive peacemaking can shape the identities of the conflict parties. I noted that these authors have identified three different rationales for inclusion which tend to be offered within academia and by international peacemakers: the first calls for inclusion on the basis that widening participation will ensure greater representation of the war-wracked society, thus rendering the peace process more legitimate. The second rationale demands inclusion in order to protect particular groups within the state, or states, facing

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[798] SO, DaGII (4)
[799] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 13

conflict. Lastly, the third rationale identified by the authors calls for inclusion in order to transform and rebuild relationships between groups. According to the analysis of Hirblinger and Landau, the first rationale tends to be offered in conjunction with open framings of the included: ambiguous terms to refer to those included, such as 'stakeholders', are employed. However, the second rationale is often accompanied by closed framings, language which clearly defines participants according to a specific trait, such as 'women' or 'youth', and which essentialises such groupings. Lastly, the third rationale is often associated with relational framings, terminology which captures the socio-political context in which the included interact. As an example, the authors mention designations such as 'powerful' or 'marginalised' actors.

As I also explored in Chapter Three, for Hirblinger and Landau, these rationales and framings are connected with the concept of identity: the first rationale lacks precision, is difficult to operationalise and is unlikely to shape the identities of the conflict parties. The second, however, may heighten and entrench sub-state identities, and may lead to 'a competition for inclusion between fragmented interest groups'.[800] On the other hand, the third encourages the development of a new, unified, over-arching identity within the state or states at war, an identity generated through the peace process in which identities operating below the state are either subsumed or antagonistic elements are expunged. From the analysis of Hirblinger and Landau, I therefore extrapolated the following hypothesis: *the rationales used to justify inclusive peacemaking and the framing of those included can transform the identities of the conflict parties.*

To begin, I will briefly define inclusion in the context of peacemaking once more, before concisely outlining the shape of the two mediation attempts and those included. I will then explore the extent to which, according to the evidence captured within the dataset, inclusion appears to have been promoted and achieved within the two mediation efforts. Thirdly, I will consider the language used by those voices within the dataset to describe these attempts at seeking and securing inclusion, arguing the following: a variety of rationales for inclusion, and framings of the included, can be detected in relation to both cases, although the voices represented within the dataset rarely consider *why* inclusion should be sought and its impact upon the mediation efforts. However, concerning Syria, I will claim that the first rationale, surrounding legitimacy, seems to predominate, as do open framings. Nevertheless, these open

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[800] Hirblinger and Landau, 'Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking', p. 315

framings frequently take the form of invocations of the Syrian people and the Syrian nation, and I will suggest, therefore, in a divergence from Hirblinger and Landau, that such framings, and the first rationale, can indeed be linked with identity construction. The idea of the relevance of a Syrian national identity, of the unity of the Syrian people, seems to rise to the fore in discussions of inclusion. I will then argue that the evidence concerning Yemen differs. Rationales for inclusion are difficult to detect; nevertheless, closed framings dominate: voices list clearly defined groups which were invited to participate in the Conference. However, relational framings can also be perceived. In particular, voices speak of newcomers by comparison with members of the political elite, implicitly comparing the deep-rooted power differentials between the two. Concurrently, the idea that the inclusion of the NDC may have transformed Yemen and/or relationships between Yemenis is mentioned, although the notion does not frequently recur.

Due to the muddiness of these findings, I will then explore further data. Hirblinger and Landau suggest that inclusive peacemaking can either entrench sub-state identities, and augment hostilities between these groups, or it can offer the potential to form a reimagined, overarching identity in which antagonistic relations between groups are healed. I will assess which of these two outcomes appears to have been generated through the two peace processes, returning to the data analysed in Chapters Five and Six and highlighting that a freshly imagined, Syrian national identity was constructed with greater clarity than was the case with Yemen. I will argue that this contests, or at the very least complicates, the framework of Hirblinger and Landau. Moreover, I will also introduce further data contained within the theme of Discord, a theme which was explored in depth within the dataset and, in particular, during the interviews conducted. Within this theme are discussions of the relationships between, and the power of, sub-state identity groups in Syria and Yemen. I will explore these data, noting once more that the expected effects upon identity of the inclusion rationales and the framings of the included do not seem to have aligned neatly in the manner expected within the two cases under investigation.

Furthermore, the data contained within the theme of Discord adds complexity to my previous arguments surrounding the transformation, through mediation, of the Syrian and Yemeni identities, creating an elaborate rendering of the processes of identity construction, and de-construction, which may have taken place during the two mediation attempts under study. Therefore, there are two stories at the heart of this chapter. Firstly, it will consider the role of

the norm of inclusion within the two mediation efforts. Secondly, it will consider the character of the interactions between the individuals and groups implicated in the two peace processes. In doing so, it will attempt to interrogate the link between inclusion and mediation. The result is complex and does not provide as straightforward a response as I was able to produce in Chapters Five and Six. Inclusion may well shape identity but perhaps not in the manner expected, and although mediation appears to have brought about the creation of freshly wrought national identities, the strength and durability of these inventions is challenged by the data examined in this chapter. These convolutions and contradictions are a testament to the intricacy of identity and processes of identity construction, and will be reflected upon in the conclusion to this chapter.

## 7.2 Promoting the norm of inclusion in mediation

In Chapter Three, I offered the following, broad definition of inclusion in the context of mediation: an inclusive process will 'give all groups in a society the opportunity to be heard and to have their concerns addressed'.[801] I noted, there, that inclusion contains within it the ideas of both participation and representation, and exemplifies a marked shift in mediation practice which, conventionally, features a select few for furtive discussions, hidden from scrutiny. As I explored in Chapter One, the promotion of the deployment of National Dialogues following violence has been one response to the growing prevalence of the norm of inclusion. I explored National Dialogues in Chapter One, and outlined the membership of the Yemeni National Dialogue and how it was convened. I noted how an array of political movements, together with civil society, women and youth representatives, were invited to participate in the negotiations; however, I additionally commented on the opaque process by which these delegates were selected and the lack of engagement from Hiraak in the Conference. In Chapter One, I also outlined the Geneva Peace Process, noting that representatives of the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition met for the first time in Geneva in 2014 for talks overseen by Brahimi; their delegations were limited, with just fifteen members in each. Three women participated while political movements representative of ethnic minorities in Syria, such as the Kurdish Supreme Committee, and civil society groups and Syrian youth, were not directly incorporated. Despite both being convened by the UN during the same time period and within the same region of the world, the two cases took markedly different approaches to

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[801] Rausch and Luu, 'Inclusive Peace Processes Are Key to Ending Violent Conflict', p. 2

inclusion and, therefore, based upon the arguments of Hirblinger and Landau, we might expect the peace processes to have had equally divergent effects on identities in Yemen and Syria. This chapter will assess this assumption.

## 7.21 Pursuing inclusion in the Syrian and Yemeni mediation attempts

To begin, I will show that there is evidence that the voices within my dataset felt that inclusion was sought in both cases, and that this was promoted and, moreover, *forced* by international officials. By assessing this data, it will be possible for me to claim that inclusion was promoted within the two cases under investigation, and it will also be possible for me to then assess the language used to discuss inclusion through the prism of the framework of Hirblinger and Landau. Before I begin, I should also note that, within my interview guide, I did not plan to ask a question about inclusion. Instead, this theme was consistently and independently raised by participants, and it was often considered in our conversations in great depth. Moreover, this theme overwhelmed many of the official documents analysed. It seemed to be a preoccupation of the voices captured by the dataset and, while it is challenging to reach firm conclusions regarding whether inclusion was achieved and regarding its effect upon identity, it is vitally important this theme is considered in the light of its significance to the interlocutors consulted.

Turning firstly to the Syrian case, a number of the Syrian interviewees expressed their conviction that SOC sought to be inclusive of both the Syrian people and the various movements within the Syrian opposition; indeed, two interlocutors claimed that SOC had been established precisely to create a more representative body. As one phrased it: 'then the opposition started to think about a new body, representing more of the Syrian people and the Syrian opposition – they created the Syrian opposition'.[802] Regarding the influence of the international community in this sphere, three Syrian interview participants felt that the international community had successfully helped them to be inclusive or, at least, to appear to be representative. One interlocutor expressed the following: 'the Syrian Opposition Coalition was given the best possible start. It was given the status of representation…to encourage it, to make it legitimate, viable to negotiate'.[803] A second participant noted this dynamic too: 'the international community, the EU, the UN – and everyone – after the first resolution in the

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[802] SO, DaGII (4); see also: SO (8)
[803] SO, DaGII (3)

General Assembly – you felt that they were giving legitimacy to SOC, legitimacy for us to be the representatives of the Syrian people.'[804]

Three members of the international community who supported the Syrian mediation efforts also discussed this matter in our conversations, commenting on the assistance provided to augment the inclusivity of the opposition. One official described the extensive efforts of the US in this vein, implying that the very creation of SOC derived from the wishes of the US to improve the Syrian opposition's connection with Syria: 'the international community realised that if there were negotiations, the SNC was not going to be the right body, that there was a need for something new. So, we helped provide the financial and physical support for the creation of SOC'. Indeed, this official claimed the following: 'a lot of my time – my own time and that of Ambassador Ford [the US Ambassador to Syria] – was spent trying to help shape these opposition institutions…the idea being that if we were ever going to have a negotiated solution, we needed to address representation, to address what the opposition was.'[805] We can see here that the responsibility for encouraging inclusion is deemed to lie firmly with the international community as opposed to with the Syrians, and that this interviewee believed a great deal of effort had been dedicated to improving the inclusivity of the opposition body. Later in the interview, she also made a more explicit link to that which was happening on the ground in Syria, and how the US was involved in nurturing this specific link:

> …if the opposition was at the table, it needed to be more inclusive and representative or the fighting would never stop. It needed to faithfully represent what the street was looking for, the whole political spectrum…there were individuals and parties who needed to be represented, it needed to be heavily focused on Syrians in Syria…*We had to identify Syrians who were still in Syria*…[emphasis added].[806]

A consultant employed by the UN supported the assertions made above, noting that Brahimi tried 'very hard to bring Syrian women to the negotiating table' and, more broadly, that 'the international community realised they needed to broaden representation and participation'.[807]

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[804] SO (3)
[805] M, S, TI (1)
[806] Ibid
[807] M, S, TI (3)

Indeed, a sentiment which is repeated over and over within the press conferences delivered by the mediators implicated in the Syrian peace talks, and within the statements and documents released by the international officials involved in this peace process, is that the mediation efforts needed to be inclusive. In a verbal briefing delivered by Annan in April 2012, he emphasises this point four times. For instance, at one point he utters the following:

> We must also move quickly to facilitate a peaceful, Syrian-led, inclusive political solution…This should be achieved through a comprehensive political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition. A broad cross-section of Syrian society must be involved…We wish to ensure that the Syrian people's aspirations are realised and that they shape their own future.[808]

Within the official statements of the international community, this message is oft-repeated. For instance, the need to launch 'a comprehensive political dialogue', encompassing 'the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition'[809] is mentioned in Resolution 2042. Furthermore, the Action Group Communiqué argues that 'all groups and segments of society in the Syrian Arab Republic must be enabled to participate in a national dialogue process…The process must be fully inclusive in order to ensure that the views of all segments of Syrian society are heard in shaping the political settlement for the transition'.[810] This is continued into 2013; Resolution 2118 stresses 'that the only solution to the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is through an inclusive' process, later emphasising that the Syrian parties to the forthcoming Geneva Conference must be 'fully representative of the Syrian people'.[811] The FoS too, take care to stress the need for inclusivity, once more linking this to satisfying the will of the people of Syria. For instance, the conclusions of the FoS meeting held in February 2012 then call for 'an inclusive Syrian-led political process…aimed at addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of Syria's people'.[812]

However, a stronger sentiment was also communicated to me by two of the Syrian interviewees, and it was also evident within the comments made by Brahimi in a press

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[808] UN Live, 'Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League, on the Situation in Syria'
[809] UNSC, 'Resolution 2042'
[810] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, 'Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria'
[811] UNSC, 'Resolution 2118'
[812] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (27 February 2012); see also: UK Government, 'International Meeting on Support to the Syrian Opposition' (16 November 2012); UK Government, 'UK Hosts Syria London 11 Senior Officials Meeting' (13 December 2013)

conference: specifically, that the international community was forceful in its insistence that SOC be inclusive. One interlocutor returned to this point on three occasions within our interview: 'I think the international community, they tried to *push* the opposition to have representation from all different Syrians, different backgrounds – they wanted people to represent minorities, women [emphasis added]'.[813] An activist, analyst and close observer of the Syrian opposition similarly commented that one weakness of the SNC had been that 'everyone tried to *make* it bigger [emphasis added]'.[814]

Turning, now, to the Yemeni case, a desire to be inclusive was voiced by the international community in relation to the Yemeni transition and the NDC and, specifically, to the outreach work of the international officials. Benomar told the UN, in December 2011, that he and his team were 'look[ing] forward to strengthening [their] engagement on the ground in the next few critical weeks';[815] moreover, a Yemeni interlocutor described how the revolution in the state was driven by 'a need to make politics more inclusive'.[816] Furthermore, it is worth noting here that it was emphasised by a number of interviewees that the inclusivity of the NDC was novel. For instance, a high-ranking Secretariat member described the 'newcomers' as having been 'empowered'.[817] Another member of the Secretariat told me the following story:

> And some of them [the traditional power-holders], they would come later, and walk to the front row of seats and expect to sit there – but they would find a youth activist already sitting there – I remember, the ex-minister, he came one day, late, and he went to the front and there was a young activist, a woman, sitting there – and she wouldn't move, and she said, this was a new Yemen – and he was very frustrated – this change was happening and he was very frustrated. We told him, there are no reserved seats, we are all equal here – this was one of many signs of change.[818]

Moreover, the aforementioned high-ranking Secretariat official commented that, 'for the first time, we had representatives of the main parties, of GPC, Islah – and civil society, women and

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[813] SO, DaGII (4)

[814] O, S (1)

[815] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011)

[816] NDC, D (15)

[817] NDC, Se (3)

[818] NDC, Se (2)

youth too – it was the first time such a platform had existed in Yemen'.[819] A member of the Secretariat also used the phrase 'the first time', mentioning, too, the disbelief of the traditional power-holders.[820] Inclusivity 'was a new thing', commented one delegate,[821] while another remarked that this characteristic 'was what made the National Dialogue different'.[822] Lastly, a Yemeni consultant to an international NGO which provided support to the NDC branded the participation as 'a huge leap forward'.[823] The NDC Report frames inclusivity as being new too[824] and this novelty was also mentioned within Security Council meetings.[825]

Concerning the specific role of the international community in encouraging this inclusivity, a number of the Yemeni interlocutors mentioned how the international community had assisted the Yemenis in rendering the NDC, and the broader transition, more inclusive. Two discussed the deadlock reached during the preparation phase, when the Yemeni members of the preparatory committee failed to agree on the number of chairs which would be allocated to different groups in the NDC. A Secretariat member commented that 'the Special Envoy played a positive role…he did the numbers and then, a few days later, he came with a proposal'[826] while a second remarked that the Envoy 'influenced for the right things', including 'the inclusion of women and youth'.[827]

Four of the international officials interviewed agreed, expressing their view that the international community had helped with regard to the inclusion of broad swathes of the Yemeni population. One diplomat claimed that the 'collective engagement' of international officials in the country 'aimed at ensuring that all groups and parties effectively joined the NDC'.[828] Benomar also mentioned, within UNSC meetings, how this body had played a 'very important role in Yemen', later commenting that its members had encouraged 'all sides to come to an agreement';[829] in accord, the President of the UNSC in 2012 remarked on the efforts of UN officials in Yemen 'to support Yemeni efforts to organise a National Dialogue process that

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[819] NDC, Se (3)
[820] NDC, Se (1)
[821] NDC, D (13)
[822] NDC, D (2)
[823] M, Y, TII (1)
[824] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 225
[825] UNSC, '7037th Meeting'
[826] NDC, Se (3)
[827] NDC, D (15)
[828] M, Y, TI (3)
[829] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011)

is inclusive, transparent and participatory'.[830] Moreover, Benomar spoke extremely highly of the effect of his own presence in 2013:

> On one of my visits, a woman told me that my presence had broken the wall of fear. In 2011, it would have been unthinkable for a delegation comprised of women and young people to be welcomed at headquarters of an intelligence agency…we are engaged in more than a political transition; we are witnessing a transformation of the political culture.[831]

The implication here is that, without Benomar, Yemeni women and youth would not have been able to have engaged with the community outreach programme in the way in which they did, and that his presence revolutionised the accessibility of Yemeni politics.

Furthermore, in a similar vein to Syria, in meetings of the UNSC, many officials implore the Yemenis to ensure that the transition, and the NDC, are inclusive, or note how their colleagues have urged the need for this. It was commented that 'members of the Security Council also called on all parties to move forward urgently an inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led process of political transition that meets the needs and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change';[832] and Mark Lyall Grant, former representative of the UK to the UNSC, remarks, in 2012, that 'the Security Council emphasises the need for these political processes to be conducted in an inclusive manner involving the full participation of the different segments of Yemeni society, including the regions of the country, the major social groups and the full and effective participation of women'.[833] Until 2013, this is repeated over and over while Security Council press statements on Yemen feature a similar message, and the FoY also make a comparable point: 'the National Dialogue Conference must allow the Yemeni people, through their representatives, to decide for themselves the future of their nation…That dialogue must of course be inclusive, with representatives from the north and south of the country, as well as women and members of civil society.'[834] Lastly, UN Resolutions also frequently make this argument.

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[830] UNSC, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2012/8' (29 March 2012); see also: UNSC, '6878th Meeting'
[831] UNSC, '6976th Meeting'
[832] UN Live, 'Security Council president H.E. Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India) on the Situation in Yemen – Security Council Media Stakeout' (9 August 2011)
[833] UNSC, '6744th Meeting'
[834] UK Government, Hague in 'Foreign Secretary's Opening Remarks – Friends of Yemen'

Just three interlocutors expressed the idea that the international community had to force the Yemeni mediation attempt to be inclusive. A former Ambassador claimed that he 'participated in making sure the delegations met the requirements', commenting, in patronising language, that 'there was a lot of hand-holding'.[835] Moreover, a consultant to an international NGO, who was otherwise broadly critical of both the NDC and the international involvement in the mediation attempt, offered the following appraisal:

> [The ambassadors] managed to convince Islah for example – and the northern elite – to give the southerners fifty percent representation in the National Dialogue Conference. They were able to *make* Islah and the Huthis accept thirty percent women's participation and twenty percent youth participation – these are issues the Yemeni elite had not entertained before – and it was only through the persistence of the foreign diplomats and Jamal [Benomar]…that those acts were seen as necessary – that's what got the political elites to accept them [emphasis added].[836]

Finally, slightly stronger language is also used at one point in the NDC Final Report; it is mentioned in the Southern Issue Working Group section that the GCC Agreements and the UNSC Resolutions 'require[d]' the participation and cooperation of all groups.[837]

This section has therefore demonstrated that inclusion was purportedly sought during the two mediation attempts, and that members of the international community played a role in encouraging and, indeed, dictating this norm. This section has also provided ample illustrative quotations which will allow me to, later in this chapter, analyse the language deployed in a bid to investigate the apparent effects of promoting inclusion upon identity in Syria and Yemen.

## 7.22 Achieving inclusion in the Syrian and Yemeni mediation attempts

Before I consider the claims made that the two peacemaking processes under study were indeed inclusive, I must emphasise that a number of interlocutors felt that both the Syrian and Yemeni mediation attempts failed to be inclusive and, moreover, in relation to the Yemeni case, their

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[835] M, Y, TI (4)
[836] M, Y, TII (1)
[837] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 6

view was that claims of inclusion instead masked *exclusion* and were no more than a façade. I do not have the space to explore their views in depth here but, as an illustration, I would like to note that 12 interviewees who discussed the Syrian case, and 18 interlocutors who spoke with me about the Yemeni transition, directly and at times with vehemence criticised the two peace processes for their lack of inclusion. Nevertheless, I will assess those voices who did claim that the two mediation efforts achieved inclusion in order to later evaluate the language deployed.

Claims of having achieved inclusivity, made by Syrians represented within my dataset, can be divided into three strands: those which argue that either the SNC and/or SOC successfully encompassed the full array of opposition figures; those which contend that the Syrian people were embodied within the opposition; and those which, less explicitly, state that the opposition, and in particular the delegation at Geneva II, were intimately linked with people and events 'on the ground'. To begin with the first assertion, one participant wrote to me, describing the SNC as a political body which reflected 'the aims and aspirations of the Syrian Revolution',[838] a sentiment which was echoed in a speech delivered by Ghalioun in 2012 in which he implored the international community to 'support' the 'efforts' already expended by the SNC 'in coordinating various parties involved in the Revolution within the framework of a national plan to accomplish change'.[839] One interviewee also described how, during the two rounds of talks in Geneva in January and February 2014, the opposition delegation sought to welcome and involve those figures opposed to al-Asad who had not been present at the mediation efforts.[840] On two occasions within the dataset, members of the international community appreciated the efforts made by the SNC and SOC to represent the many figures within the Syrian opposition. For instance, in the Chair's conclusions to the FoS meeting held in April 2012, it was noted that 'the Friends' Group recognised the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of all Syrians and the umbrella organisation under which Syrian opposition groups are gathering'.[841]

In relation to the second claim of inclusion, just three of the Syrian interlocutors made the assertion within our conversations that they believed that SOC, and its delegation at Geneva II,

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[838] SO (5)
[839] SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference'
[840] SO, DaGII (4)
[841] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (1 April 2012); see also: UK Government, 'International Meeting on Support to the Syrian Opposition' (16 November 2012)

were representative of the broader Syrian people. The current president of SOC argued that, 'if you look into our delegation – we had the representation – we had Kurds, Arabs, Christians – even sects like the Druze, Alawite, women, men – our delegation was very much diverse.'[842] A second participant explicitly linked popular appeal with visual displays of diversity, mentioning the manner in which SOC proudly joined together those from religious and secular communities, defectors from the regime, and women: 'it was popular, people thought it was good.'[843] Moreover, claims that both the SNC and SOC were representative recur frequently within these organisations' statements, although such declarations do not continue past 2013. Such claims are linked, by SOC, to the broader notion of 'the people'.[844] Within a press conference in 2013, SOC was keen to note the expansion of the Syrian Revolutionary General Commission[845] and deemed itself 'the official representative of the Syrian people' in a statement published later in the same year.[846] Furthermore, al-Jarba declared the following in a speech to the FoS in September 2013:

> I speak to you in the name of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, which represents the broad spectrum of moderate political movements, all the ethnic and religious groups of Syria, local committees and councils, and the political arm of the Free Syrian Army.[847]

Thirdly, six of the Syrian interlocutors emphasised to me their connection with both the Syrian people 'on the ground', and events within Syria. One described the cultivation of these links as 'one of the advancements we were making – we were making contact with local councils inside Syria – we wanted them to be in our vision'.[848] Another emphasised to me that politicians, like him, were 'not the only people in the opposition. The opposition consists of the youth, of the people on the ground',[849] while several stressed that this link to those in Syria was expressly cultivated during the mediation efforts in Geneva, and that the perspectives gained influenced the negotiating position of SOC. Thus, one interlocutor stated:

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[842] SO, DaGII (3)
[843] SO (8)
[844] See: SNC, 'President of SNC Delivers a Speech at Friends of Syria Conference'; SOC, 'Friends of Syria Meeting in Doha'
[845] SOC, 'The Latest Expansion of the Syrian Coalition' (1 June 2013)
[846] SOC, 'Friends of Syria Meeting in Doha'
[847] SOC, 'Summary of Mr. Al-Jarba Speech Delivered to the Expanded Friends of Syria at the United Nations'
[848] SO (2)
[849] SO, DaGII (6)

I didn't work alone, I contacted all the Syrian organisations, documenting human rights, what was happening on the ground – together, we also contacted many activists who were brilliant – asking all of them – together, we were discussing all the time – what is best, what is most important.[850]

Similarly, another claimed that she 'was always in communication with people in the field',[851] later making an analogous statement which directly connected this act with nurturing ties between all Syrians: 'back then, when we started to convey the voices of the people from the field, in the UN, we feel people were feeling a collective Syrian identity'.[852] A third delegate at Geneva II claimed that the members of SOC 'were always consulting', that they were 'also talking with people on the ground'.[853] Al-Jarba, too, within speeches delivered in January 2014, stressed the ability of SOC to understand and convey the concerns of those Syrians within Syria: just a week before the beginning of Geneva II, he stated, 'we have expressed the truth about what is going, on the ground',[854] and, following the first round of talks, he declared: 'the day we took the historic decision to participate in Geneva II, we were able to…address the concerns of the revolutionaries on the ground.'[855]

Members of the international community represented within my dataset describe the opposition bodies as inclusive far less frequently, with none of my interlocutors making this claim within our conversations; nevertheless, within several press conferences and official documents, the Syrian opposition are described as representative by international officials. For example, Brahimi claimed that Geneva II would be 'different' because 'the Syrians are going to be represented'[856] – an implication that the SOC delegation was therefore representative – while, a month later, in December 2013, Brahimi stated that the Coalition had told the UN team 'that they are reaching out to others, inside and outside of Syria'.[857] The Final Communiqué of the London 11 meeting which took place in October 2013 declares SOC to be 'the legitimate representative of the Syrian people',[858] a sentiment repeated by Hague at an FoS meeting in

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[850] SO, DaGII (4)
[851] SO, DaGII (2)
[852] Ibid
[853] SO, DaGII (5)
[854] SOC, 'President Ahmad Al-Jarba's Speech at the Ministerial Meeting on Syria, Paris' (13 January 2014)
[855] SOC, 'President Ahmad Al-Jarba's Speech at the End of First Round of Negotiations in Geneva'
[856] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (5 November 2013). He makes this claim twice within this press conference.
[857] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Press Conference' (20 December 2013)
[858] UK Government, 'London 11 Final Communiqué'

Tunis in February 2012[859] and included within the Chair's concluding remarks at the same FoS meeting.[860]

In terms of the inclusive nature of the work of the international mediators, two international officials did communicate within our conversations their conviction that they spoke with, and included, a broad range of actors. One US official claimed that it required 'hours of [her] time, talking to every person, every group'[861] while an individual engaged in Track II efforts claimed that her organisation 'gathered people of different political sides…people close to the regime, people clearly opposed, some armed groups, and those in between…representatives of various denominations'.[862] This sentiment appeared more frequently within the press conferences, statements, and official documents of the international community. In May 2012, Mood claimed that UNSMIS 'look[ed] to engage all elements of Syrian society', linking this to the UN's commitment to 'help the Syrian people to move forward on their aspirations'.[863] In addition, the Action Group communiqué pledged to 'consult widely with Syrian society'[864] while Brahimi also stated in a press conference in early 2013 that he would 'continue to engage all Syrian parties'.[865]

However, the members of the international community interviewed do not seem to have believed that either the SNC or SOC was connected to people or events on the ground in Syria; or, if they did, they did not mention this in their interviews. Neither did they seem to feel that they, as mediators, were particularly connected to those on the ground: one US official did claim that she had worked hard to 'identify civil society, local governance, rebel leaders, activists, rebels', that, in 2012, she 'spent [the] entire year on the phone, on Skype, on WhatsApp'. Moreover, this same participant claimed that the US process of narrowing down the opposition was 'driven by what was happening on the ground', thus implying that she and her colleagues had a good grasp of events inside Syria.[866] The Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria also claims that its members could appreciate 'the aspirations of the people of

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[859] UK Government, '"We Must Show That We Will Not Abandon the Syrian People in Their Darkest Hour"'
[860] UK Government, 'Chairman's Conclusions of Friends of Syria Meeting' (27 February 2012)
[861] M, S, TI (1)
[862] M, S, TII (4)
[863] UN Live, 'Statement by Major General Robert Mood Head of Mission and Chief Military Observer' (1 May 2012); see also: UN Live, 'Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, to Brief Press on the Status of Deployment of the UN Observers in Syria'
[864] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, 'Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria'
[865] UN Live, 'Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative for Syria – Media Stakeout' (11 January 2013)
[866] M, S, TI (1)

the Syrian Arab Republic' because they had been 'clearly expressed' to them 'by the wide range of Syrians consulted'.[867] Nevertheless, aside from these instances, within my dataset, there is no further sense that the international community felt connected to Syrians in the country nor that they believed the opposition groups were connected to the ground.

The alleged achievement of inclusivity of the Yemeni transition, and the NDC in particular, was focused upon a great deal by those Yemenis interviewed; 15 interviewees described the peace process in this manner. Inclusion was framed as having been achieved through the representation of the various Yemeni political parties together with the involvement of 'independent' women, youth and civil society delegates and the stipulation that the political parties needed to also nominate women and those from the younger generation. More broadly, one interlocutor remarked, 'really, it was so rich'[868] while another described the inclusivity as leading to the NDC being 'reflective of Yemen as a country'.[869] This inclusivity was argued to have extended to the various committees and sub-committees which contributed to the preparation and management of the NDC: one characterised the Contact Committee and the Preparatory Committee, bodies which oversaw the organisation of the Conference, as not only inclusive in their membership, encompassing senior politicians, representatives from the north and the south, together with 'women activists, youth activists', but as having also been committed to reaching 'out to different people, to al-Hiraak, to the youth'.[870]

Indeed, another participant, a revolutionary youth delegate to the NDC, told me how the youth 'were joining the conference from different geographical areas, different backgrounds, different affiliations', arguing later in our conversation that, 'we should not reject or ignore the outcomes of the National Dialogue. They reflect the diverse voices of the people, of the participants – not only the traditionally represented political powers.'[871] A Working Group Chair described how the members of her section 'came from all the political parties, from all parts of society and classes'[872], while the Vice Chair of another Working Group wrote to me regarding 'the diversity of [her] group in terms of politics, geography, ethnicity, Islamic religious differences'.[873] One interlocutor mentioned how the inclusivity of the NDC motivated

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[867] UN, General Assembly, Security Council, Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria
[868] NDC, Se (1)
[869] NDC, Se (2)
[870] Anonymous (8)
[871] NDC, D (4)
[872] NDC, D (12)
[873] NDC, D (3)

her very desire to join the NDC.[874] Lastly, the Final Report of the NDC also mentions this topic on many occasions. For instance, it is claimed that 'the document, in our hands, represents a summary of the hopes and aspirations of the great Yemeni people',[875] that the vision contained within 'has accommodated the entire country',[876] and that 'all political and social components' and 'all segments and groups of society' within Yemen participated in the NDC.[877]

Attempts were made during the NDC to fund and facilitate a programme of 'community engagement', and a number of my interlocutors discussed this during our interviews. Some portrayed the scheme as having successfully connected the delegates, and the events of the NDC, to the broader Yemeni population. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a senior Secretariat member spoke of this work in a positive light;[878] he was supported in this view by a second member of the NDC Secretariat.[879] Within the NDC Final Report, the field visits which were undertaken are mentioned by two Working Groups in their sections,[880] while the concluding chapter of the report boasts of the '1578 visions, ideas and contributions' which 'were received from various groups and segments from all over the country', arguing that 'the open, multi-dimensional and unique nature of the conference, as well as its seriousness, captured the hearts and minds of people'.[881]

Three international officials who were involved in the Yemeni transition with whom I spoke also mentioned, and on occasion praised, the inclusivity of the NDC. For instance, a Western diplomat commented that they [sing.] didn't think 'it [inclusion] could have been done better.' A high-level diplomat deployed more romanticised language:

> To the international observer, it was precisely the composition of the NDC that inspired hope that we were witnessing a genuine departure from an untenable past. Put differently, the NDC appeared to be so inclusive that it inspired hope…there was immense optimism in the air when the conference finally started on the twentieth March

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[874] Anonymous (6)
[875] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 2
[876] Ibid, p. 13
[877] Ibid, pp. 216, 226
[878] NDC, Se (3)
[879] NDC, Se (1)
[880] NDC, 'Outcomes Document', pp. 24, 164
[881] Ibid, p. 227

2013. Abundant rain fell that day – in one of the driest countries on earth – that in itself seemed to make for an auspicious beginning of the NDC.[882]

On numerous occasions, the inclusivity of the transition and the NDC was noted by members of the international community within UNSC meetings and documents. These ranged from stating how Benomar had been engaged with a number of groups within Yemeni society – 'the Special Adviser has since remained actively engaged with all Yemeni sides'[883] – together with repeated mentions of the inclusivity of Yemeni politics under the watch of the international community.[884] As a Security Council Press statement issued in September 2013 aptly summarised: the NDC 'has generated a peaceful, inclusive and meaningful dialogue about the country's future amongst diverse actors, including youth, women, civil society representatives, the Houthi Movement and the Hiraak Southern Movement.'[885]

In the arena of UNSC meetings, a connection between the negotiations of the NDC with 'the ground' was mentioned twice: firstly, by Benomar in 2011, when he claimed that he 'met with hundreds of Yemenis from all walks of life, and from all political affiliations',[886] and, later, in 2013: the Yemeni Ambassador to the UN spoke of the 'field visits' planned to take place within the capital and '17 governorates all over the country', together with 'meetings with more than 11,000 personalities representing the different strata of society and its components'.[887]

To summarise, while doubt and fierce scepticism are expressed within the dataset concerning the inclusive nature of the two mediation efforts – data which I was unable to explore in depth here – a number of voices did, nevertheless, praise the shape of the peace talks and those who participated. The next section will assess the language used within the dataset to conceptualise inclusion in order to begin to consider the apparent effects of this promotion, and possible achievement, of inclusion upon identities in Syria and Yemen.

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[882] M, Y, TI (3)
[883] UNSC, 'Letter Dated 18 June 2012 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council S/2012/469' (21 June 2012)
[884] Benomar, in UNSC, '6776th Meeting'; Benomar, in UNSC, '6878th Meeting'; Hardeep Singh Puri, in UNSC '6878th Meeting'; Benomar, in UNSC, '6976th Meeting'; Benomar, in UNSC, '7037th Meeting'; Representative of Rwanda to the UNSC, in UNSC '7037th Meeting'
[885] UNSC 'Security Council Press Statement on Yemen' (27 November 2013)
[886] UN Live, 'Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for Yemen – Press Conference' (21 December 2011)
[887] UNSC, '6976th Meeting'

## 7.23 Why was inclusion sought? How were the included framed?

So far in this chapter, I have presented and analysed data gathered which concerns the theme of Inclusion, assessing statements made that inclusion was an aspiration, and that inclusion was achieved within the two cases of mediation under investigation. I will now consider the language deployed: do the voices captured within the dataset wield any of the three rationales identified by Hirblinger and Landau? Do they also deploy the attendant framings uncovered by these authors? By addressing these questions, I will then be able to predict the apparent effect of inclusion upon identities in Syria and Yemen. I will also be able to compare these predictions with the findings already reached in Chapters Five and Six, and with additional data contained within the theme of Discord.

The tables below provide summaries of the extent to which the three different rationales, and three separate framings, recurred within the data I gathered which discussed the theme of Inclusion. I have included a more detailed version of this table in Appendix I which disaggregates the totals by the type of data source. It should be noted that these quantitative summaries include instances of the three rationales and three framings which occur within statements made by those voices which dispute that inclusion had been achieved:

Table k) Rationales and framings present within data concerning inclusion and the Syrian case

| Rationale | Total | Framing | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (legitimacy) | 36 (97%) | 1 (open) | 77 (79%) |
| 2 (protection) | 1 (3%) | 2 (closed) | 20 (20%) |
| 3 (transformation) | 0 (0%) | 3 (relational) | 1 (1%) |

Table l) Rationales and framings present within data concerning inclusion and the Yemeni case

| Rationale | Total | Framing | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (legitimacy) | 10 (17%) | 1 (open) | 70 (34%) |
| 2 (protection) | 5 (8%) | 2 (closed) | 116 (57%) |
| 3 (transformation) | 44 (75%) | 3 (relational) | 18 (9%) |

Beginning, firstly, with Syria, the voices assessed rarely directly consider the purpose of inclusion or its effects upon the mediation process. Nevertheless, I would suggest that inclusion appears to be linked primarily with 'legitimacy', 'credibility' and 'popularity'. This justification aligns with the first rationale isolated by Hirblinger and Landau. However, on one occasion, the second rationale surrounding the protection of groups is hinted at. The predominance of the first rationale would suggest, according to the analysis of Hirblinger and Landau, that those included will be framed in an 'open' manner. Such language does recur, and predominate, within the data gathered concerning inclusion within the Geneva Peace Process: voices speak ambiguously, for instance, of 'all elements of society', 'all levels of society', 'different political sides', 'every person, every group', and 'all different Syrians'. However, I would note that one particular, 'open' framing recurs with frequency: both Syrians and members of the international community represented within the dataset connect inclusion with the idea of encompassing and embodying the nation: the idea of representing 'the Syrian people' or, more simply, 'Syria', is often mentioned while, more subtly, the notion of being intimately tied to 'Syrians on the ground' or those in 'the field' is also raised.

This analysis notwithstanding, it is also possible to perceive 'closed framings', although these occur less frequently. Within the data gathered concerning Syria, groups such as 'women', 'Kurds', 'Arabs', 'Christians', 'sects', 'secular communities' and 'youth' are intermittently described as having been included; however, as opposed to being linked to empowerment, as Hirblinger and Landau predict, these closed framings also tend to be associated with legitimacy. The third rationale, associated with the transformation of relationships, is difficult to detect within the data gathered, and so too are relational framings, appearing to confirm the contention of Hirblinger and Landau that this third rationale, and its attendant relational framings, tend to appear together.

As I explored in Chapter Three and in the introduction to this chapter, Hirblinger and Landau clearly associate the second and third rationales, and their attendant framings, with the concept of identity; their argument is that the second rationale for inclusion, and closed framings of the included, can strengthen and entrench sub-state identities whereas the third rationale, and relational framings, offer the opportunity to not only grapple with 'the intersectional, complex and fluid nature of…identities and interests' but, moreover, to rebuild 'the social spaces that give people a sense of identity'. The first rationale, and open framings, both of which appear most frequently within the data gathered concerning Syria are not, however, deemed by

Hirblinger and Landau to interact with identity. My proposal, however, is that this first rationale surrounding legitimacy, and the open framings deployed, can indeed be connected with identity. In the case of Syria, and within the data I have gathered, a number of the voices analysed seem to connect inclusion with the nation or the national people, and there is even a sense that inclusive peacemaking can *generate* national ties. In previous chapters, I have argued that members of the Syrian opposition, together with representatives of the international community, attempted to reimagine the Syrian national identity before associating their own movement with this reconstruction. I have also claimed that members of the Syrian opposition may have focused upon envisioning the national identity of Syrians, as opposed to other levels of identity relevant within Syria, due to the power of the norm of national ownership. Here, we appear to be seeing a bid to legitimise both the Syrian opposition and the Geneva Peace Process through persistent claims that the Syrian nation is encapsulated within the opposition bodies and, therefore, within the peace process: implicit claims that the peace process and one conflict party in particular possess the capacity to understand, to speak on behalf of, and to reflect the nation and its interests, and that the opposition and stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process are thus legitimate. Syria's national identity seems to have risen to the fore, once more, within the theme of inclusion.

The image in relation to Yemen differs. Open framings are frequently deployed; voices mention ambiguous ideas such as 'all sides', 'all elements', 'civil society' or 'all stakeholders' together with the idea of the reflection of 'Yemen as a country', 'Yemeni society', and the 'diverse voices of the people'. However, there are merely infrequent hints at the first rationale and its attendant idea of legitimacy; for instance, one might recall the manner in which the community engagement programme was described as having 'captured the hearts and minds of people'. Far more frequently than was the case in the data analysed concerning Syria, voices in the dataset which discussed inclusion in relation to the Yemeni case list the groups included, thus deploying closed framings: women, youth, political parties, southerners, Hiraakis and Huthis are mentioned, partitioning Yemenis into these groups. However, these closed framings are not often associated with the idea of protecting the rights of these groups, as Hirblinger and Landau predict. Instead, these closed framings of the included are, albeit infrequently, linked with the need to *empower* those included.

I would argue that the idea of empowerment is more closely associated with the third rationale identified by Hirblinger and Landau, the rationale which calls for inclusion on the basis that it

will transform the relationships between those incorporated within peacemaking. This rationale is associated with relational framings, which are possible to find within the data gathered concerning Yemen (although relational framings are not as numerous as closed framings). For instance, the term 'newcomer' is used frequently and, while it seems to denote the women, youth and civil society representatives, it does also imply the lack of formal political experience of these groups and, therefore, their historic marginalisation and exclusion. These newcomers are also contrasted with members of the political 'elite', or traditional power-holders, supporting my interpretation that this framing is indeed relational and indicating that those interviewed were attuned to the interactions between those included in the mediation effort. Moreover, there are direct mentions of the transformational power of the NDC resulting from its inclusive nature and, thus, hints at the third rationale. For example, we have seen the suggestion that 'the composition of the NDC…inspired hope that we were witnessing a genuine departure from an untenable past'; and that the inclusive nature of the NDC implied reconciliation. However, the language of transformation often precedes or follows the deployment of closed framings and/or open framings. Consider, once more, the following formulation of Benomar: 'The National Dialogue definitely represents the beginning of a new Yemen. It provides an opportunity to broaden the political process, ensuring inclusion by allowing Yemenis, men and women, from north to south, from across the political spectrum, to engage in dialogue and collectively shape the future of their country'. We can perceive the idea of transformation here – through the promise of a new Yemen – but also closed framings – men, women, northerners and southerners – along with open framings: 'across the political spectrum'. The landscape is therefore more muddied: the association between inclusion rationales and inclusion framings do not map neatly onto the framework of Hirblinger and Landau. Furthermore, we see fewer connections made, by the voices analysed, between inclusion and the nation, or the national Yemeni people.

From this analysis of the language deployed, according to the suggestions of Hirblinger and Landau, the predominance of the first rationale and open framings concerning Syria would indicate that the attempts to increase the inclusivity of the peace process, or to discuss the inclusivity of the process, achieved little in terms of operationalising inclusion or, of greater relevance to this thesis, shaping identity in Syria. However, I have also suggested that the discussions of inclusion in relation to Syria appear to have been linked to the idea of the national people and may, even, have strengthened this national people as a concept and, therefore, strengthened the idea of a Syrian national identity. In Yemen, on the other hand, the

dominance of the closed framings, and the fairly frequent use of the third rationale and relational framings, would have served to both reify the sub-state identities of those included yet, also, would have offered an opportunity to create a new, all-encompassing identity through the peace process.

Can we consider these predictions to be accurate? We have seen, so far, that a clear and sharp depiction of a new Syria, defined by victimhood and an aspiration for a democratic political system, was consistently imagined within the dataset, both by members of the Syrian opposition and by members of the international community. We have also seen that national ownership appears to have been promoted, if only rhetorically, within the context of and within reflections on the Geneva Peace Process. Furthermore, we have seen that, while a fresh Yemeni national identity did appear to be constructed during, and within reflections on, the mediation efforts, the images created of the Yemeni people seem to have been constructed with far less confidence and lucidity in comparison with those painted of the Syrian people. This diverges from the assumptions of Hirblinger and Landau: one would assume a new, unifying identity to have been more likely to have been generated through the NDC as opposed to the Geneva Peace Process. Therefore, it is challenging to unearth precisely how inclusion may have served to shape identity in these two peace negotiations.

Moreover, the data already analysed in this thesis must be considered in the light of a further theme of prominence within the dataset: that of Discord. I will consider this theme in the next section, assessing evidence that Syria and Yemen may have splintered and fragmented during, and perhaps even in response to, the peace processes. I will also survey the arguments made by interlocutors that it is sub-state identities, as opposed to national identities, which are of particular relevance within Syria and Yemen. By analysing this data, I will complicate further the apparent relationship between inclusive mediation and identity, thus contributing to my overall aspiration to consider whether, and if so how, mediation can shape identity.

## 7.3 Fragmentation through inclusive peacemaking?

A great deal of the data gathered focused on depicting the Syrian and Yemeni peace processes, the Syrian and Yemeni conflict parties, and the Syrian and Yemeni nations as being marked by

discord. We have already seen, in Chapter Five, the profound divide between the Syrian opposition and the Syrian government delegations during the mediation process: the manner in which their members appeared to define their movements against, and in contrast to, their opponents. More broadly, a pronounced gulf between the two delegations was a topic on which a number of interlocutors, both Syrians and members of the international community, dwelled, and this also featured within the press conferences and official documentation analysed. The evidence already assessed concerning Othering in Chapter Five suggests, I contend, that the attempts made to increase the inclusivity of the Geneva Peace Process failed to contribute to the transformation of the 'web of relationships' within Syria. This finding is in support of the framework of Hirblinger and Landau; the third rationale, and relational framings, were difficult to detect within the data gathered concerning Syria. The evidence also contests the strength and meaning of the Syrian national identity I have argued was constructed during the mediation efforts, and I will return to this point in the conclusion to this chapter and in Chapter Eight.

## 7.31 Traditional power-holders in combat with newcomers?

I have not yet explored any illustrative bodies of evidence concerning discord related to the Yemeni case but will now do so. The manner in which those who were included in the NDC were framed in relational terms, as traditional power-holders or members of the political elite and as, in contrast, newcomers or the marginalised, would suggest, according to the arguments of Hirblinger and Landau, that there was a potential to transform these relationships through the peace process, and to create a new, overarching identity in which these two antagonistic counter-identities would be united. However, a prominent divide which I detected within the data gathered concerning the Yemeni case was between these members of the political elite and the other participants in the NDC. This evidence challenges the notion that inclusive mediation shapes identity in the ways in which the existing literature predicts and, by assessing the theme of Discord, I will contribute to my broader aspiration to assess the relationship between mediation and identity.

Traditional power-holders were faced with particular criticism during the interviews held with Yemeni interlocutors. A revolutionary youth and member of the Transitional Justice Working Group emphasised to me that the Uprisings were 'driven by a need to address the traditional

political actors' before bemoaning that 'the regime did not want to give up what they had'.[888] A second revolutionary youth and member of the Statebuilding Working Group argued that 'they [the Consensus Committee] wanted to keep it [the issue of federalisation] only for the traditional powers to decide'.[889] A third participant, also a youth activist, and a member of the Rights and Freedoms Working Groups, argued that the NDC 'was a real battle…there was a lot of power, and they were against – the conservatives, the previous regime, the radical groups – it was not easy'.[890]

Moreover, it should be noted that these claims did not stem solely from members of the revolutionary youth. For instance, a senior member of the Secretariat claimed that 'the power-holders, the policymakers, they just destroyed everything'.[891] Offering further support, a Working Group Chair expressed her belief that 'there was management from outside' her Working Group, criticising also the interference of the President: 'he went through all the problems and issues and he made a decision by himself…so I quit my role in the Conference.[892] A second interviewee also spoke of 'internal hijacking' by the Consensus Committee, claiming that, 'on major issues, the Presidium wanted to have the last word…they definitely had all these issues managed'.[893] We can see a repetition, here, of the notion that the delegates had been 'managed' and, even, manipulated. Moreover, this participant later elaborated upon this, claiming that 'it appeared to me that the outcomes – that there was a text already agreed, already ready' and that 'they [the traditional power-holders] were opposed to us discussing and took a number of items off our agenda'.[894] Indeed, the Vice Chair of a Working Group lamented to me that 'our politicians and powerful people are looking for their own interests', further commenting that 'all my beliefs that I fought for during the Dialogue turned out not to be achievable – because the powerful people do not want to have a country for all Yemeni people'.[895] Moreover, one interview participant explained his support for federalisation as follows: 'I was not so particular about the number of regions…really, we just needed to break the monopoly of certain people'.[896] Lastly, one international official alluded to this idea within our interview, recalling the following:

[888] NDC, D (15)
[889] NDC, D (4); see also: NDC, Se (1)
[890] NDC, D (14)
[891] NDC, Se (3)
[892] NDC, D (12)
[893] Anonymous (6)
[894] Ibid
[895] NDC, D (3); see also: NDC, Se (2)
[896] NDC, D (11)

> …there was frustration on the part of civil society and youth, as the process went along…a feeling that they were being marginalised and that the more traditional elites were taking the lead…what they saw as a youth revolution had been taken and turned into something different – the political class had divvied up the proceeds.[897]

Therefore, Yemeni voices in particular seem to indicate that the relationship between the traditional power-holders and the 'newcomers' was not healed by the inclusive nature of the peace process, nor by the relational framing deployed by participants in the peace process to conceptualise the rapport between the newly included and traditionally excluded, and members of the political elite. It is difficult to conclude that a freshly imagined, overarching identity, in which antagonistic relations between the powerful and the marginalised were healed, was generated through the inclusion of the NDC. In turn, this evidence challenges the predicted link between inclusive mediation and identity.

## 7.32 Invoking sub-state identities in Syria and Yemen

I will now take a broader view. It will be recalled that Hirblinger and Landau suggest that inclusive peacemaking can either reify sub-state identities, and inflame antagonism between these groups, or it can offer the potential to form a reimagined, overarching identity in which antagonistic relations between groups are healed. In Chapters Five and Six, I argued that fresh, reconstructed visions of the Syrian and Yemeni nations were articulated within, and in response to, the mediation efforts under investigation. While this reworked understanding of the Syrian national identity was built with greater clarity by comparison with the Yemeni version, both, according to my analysis, were suffused with narratives of collective trauma together with aspirations surrounding liberal democracy and reform. Moreover, I contended that these were *national* identities, drawing together Syrian and Yemeni citizens as one. In the light of the framework of Hirblinger and Landau, we could assume that such identities would be provoked through inclusive mediation, providing this inclusivity had been called for in a bid to transform relationships and had been accompanied by relational framings of the included. However, as I demonstrated in Section 7.23, this third rationale, and relational framings, were not prominent within the dataset concerning Syria and, while they could be detected in relation to Yemen,

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[897] M, Y, TI (4)

they were not the predominant prism through which inclusion was viewed by those voices represented within the data gathered. This, in turn, challenges the link which exists in the literature concerning the impact of inclusive mediation upon identity.

Complicating the matter further, in this section I will demonstrate that many of the interlocutors consulted spoke of sub-state identities when prompted to consider the concept of identity: the national identities of Syria and Yemen were not the loci of belonging which rose to the fore. Despite the different rationales for inclusion and framings of the included detected within the dataset, and despite the varying strength of the national identities which appear to have been summoned within and in response to the peace processes, it was sub-state identities which interlocutors believed held relevance for Syria and Yemen. As mentioned in Chapter Four, in almost all interviews conducted, I would directly pose the following question to interlocutors: 'do you think identities were important within the mediation process?' In relation to Syria, the vast majority evoked sub-state affiliations. However, very few interview participants linked their responses to the mediation process; they described sub-state identities in the abstract. Thus, one Syrian interlocutor argued: 'we never had an identity in Syria... What we had...is sub-identities: rural versus city, sect – even the class system. Sect divisions, religion, class, rural versus city. We also tried to have ultra-identities – Arabism, Islamism, pan-Arabism'.[898] A second interlocutor offered support to this idea, claiming that 'identities are very relevant – the lack of a strong, Syrian national identity – it did not help'.[899] A fourth interviewee also made the claim that 'one of the challenges for Syrians – even if the best peace deal is reached – is how to develop a national identity for Syrians'.[900] Indeed, a further participant commented the following: 'now we are facing a long process of rebuilding the Syrian national identity'[901] while a second lamented the following: 'two years ago, the Syrians lost their identity in their fight with each other, in their fight with the regional powers'.[902]

Certain interlocutors, both Syrians and members of the international community, focused in particular on the relevance of identities relating to ethnicity and religion. For instance, one member of the Syrian opposition responded to my enquiry concerning identity with the following: 'Arab – Kurdish identities – sub-national identities. Racial identities...Religion –

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[898] SO (1); see also: SO (3)
[899] SO (2); see also: SO, DaGII (2)
[900] SO (8)
[901] SO, DaGII (2)
[902] SO (4)

of course'.[903] An international official, an employee of a Track II peacebuilding organisation, together with a UN Official, also raised the significance of sub-state religious identities within Syria.[904] Geographic sub-state identities were also mentioned within the conversations held. One interlocutor spoke of the importance of regional identities within Syria, drawing divisions between the population on the basis of geography: 'in Syria, we have another identity…regionalism – for example, people from Aleppo or people from Damascus, they do not see themselves as the same as those from Homs'. He also mentioned a 'deep', and less apparent, identity: 'the difference between the rural and urban'.[905] An international official also commented upon 'rural versus urban' identities, remarking that the 'urban people…they despise the rural people'. Indeed, this interlocutor later commented that she had witnessed a meeting between a 'high-ranking member of the regime, and two or three women from the opposition – from Idlib and rural Damascus', that the 'woman from the regime…she considered herself to be lowering herself by talking to these women'. It was 'not a good meeting', this interlocutor reflected but, nevertheless, in the view of this participant, 'it was a reflection of what Syria is'.[906]

Concerning Yemen, a similar narrative can be perceived. For example, a member of the Secretariat commented that, 'what happened in the Conference, there were struggles based on identities',[907] implying therefore that the powerful identities within Yemen were those operating below the state. A second supported this, remarking that: 'there are multiple identities in Yemen… You have people whose identity is not Yemeni first and foremost – it might be Sadah or Zaydi…it could be that your true identity is that you are from the south…and there are divisions between the Sunnis and Shias.'[908] Indeed, a revolutionary youth, despite arguing that identities were 'not important in the Conference', did admit that 'there were different groups', and that she would not 'dream of having one united identity in the Conference', further commenting 'that Yemeni people don't share one identity is one of the causes of the conflict'.[909]

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[903] SO (8)
[904] M, S, TII (4); M, S, TI (2)
[905] SO, DaGII (3)
[906] M, S, TII (4)
[907] NDC, Se (1)
[908] Anonymous (8)
[909] NDC, D (15)

This sentiment was also bolstered by a member of the Presidium who argued that 'there is not a single identity in Yemen, we have multiple identity disorder', before mentioning the divisions between those of a tribal background, Islah, the Huthis, the GPC, the Nasserites and the southern secessionists.[910] Moreover, one participant commented that 'the Huthi representatives…they had discipline through their identity as Huthis – and that was related to…a particular sect of Islam'.[911] Moreover, a Yemeni politician with whom I spoke, despite claiming that 'the national identity existed in everyone in the National Dialogue', then immediately stated 'but the local or the geographic identities, they stick because of the suffering for a long time'.[912] A former Yemeni politician also felt that the 'highest level of identity in Yemen' is 'along governorate lines, if not lower – tribe, village.'[913]

Members of the international community also invoked the concept of sub-state identities in our conversations concerning the Yemeni mediation effort. A senior diplomat commented on the multi-layered, and seemingly geographical, nature of Yemeni identities: 'identity in Yemen comes in different layers…identity is first linked to locality, cities and regions. The south and north are very different, separated by geography and history'.[914] Very similar ideas were offered by a second G10 diplomat.[915] These ideas of geographic and sectarian identities were repeated by a UN official: 'the south-north divide was particularly important, or the Shafii-Sunni divide on the same afternoon – or, the more youth[ful] and urbanised group against the old structures, they might have united…It changed, rapidly, over time'.[916] Indeed, a second UN official aired a very similar narrative, claiming that identity in Yemen is 'very often a reflection of geographic differences. The struggle – the fight between north and south Yemen a mirror of those geographic differences – feeling that identity is lost in a larger whole'.[917]

Therefore, to summarise, when directly asked about the concept of identity, interview participants, Syrians, Yemenis and international peacemakers, turned almost instinctively to sub-state identities. This complicates, and contests, the proposed link between inclusive

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[910] NDC, D (8)
[911] Anonymous (8)
[912] O, Y (3)
[913] O, Y (1)
[914] M, Y, TI (3)
[915] M, Y, TI (8)
[916] M, Y, TI (5)
[917] M, Y, TI (6)

peacemaking and identity laid out in existing literature, and adds nuance to the findings reached in Chapters Five and Six. I will draw out these complications in the following section.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored two themes detected within the dataset in an attempt to assess the following hypothesis: *the rationales used to justify inclusive peacemaking and the framing of those included can transform the identities of the conflict parties.* The first concerns Inclusion, and the second Discord. I began by re-introducing the contentions of Hirblinger and Landau that inclusion can interact with the identities of the conflict parties. Superficially, if one merely considers the shape of the mediation attempt and the list of participants, it would seem that the Syrian case failed to be inclusive and that, within the Yemeni case, sub-state identity groups in Yemen were thought of in closed terms but were, nevertheless, incorporated within the NDC if not the GCC Initiative. However, this chapter has revealed a more complex landscape.

It would seem that inclusion was encouraged during both the Syrian and Yemeni mediation efforts, constituting a topic concentrated upon a great deal within all data sources analysed. While a substantial number of voices felt that both the Syrian and Yemeni peace talks failed to be inclusive and, moreover, that claims of inclusion concealed exclusion, I focused in this chapter on those voices who stated that the mediation attempts were inclusive. I then appraised the language used to make these claims through the prism of the framework of Hirblinger and Landau. I found that a combination of the three rationales could be detected within the data. Nevertheless, the first rationale, calling for inclusion in a bid to increase the legitimacy of the peace process, was predominant in the Syrian case. This was, as predicted by Hirblinger and Landau, accompanied, most frequently, by open framings. However, I additionally found that many of these open framings invoked the idea of Syria, and the Syrian people, thus linking inclusion with the idea of embodying and speaking on behalf of a national collective. I reached different conclusions in relation to the Yemeni case. In this instance, I found a combination of closed and relational framings, with a far greater number of closed framings, accompanied by a combination of rationales, with the third rationale surrounding transformation dominating. I noted that these findings would suggest, following Hirblinger and Landau, that the attempts seemingly made to broaden the inclusivity of the Geneva Peace Process would not have interacted with identities in Syria; within Yemen, the inclusivity of the NDC may have

crystallised sub-state identities while, simultaneously, provoking the creation of a new, overarching identity.

I then returned to, and introduced, further bodies of data in an attempt to assess the predictions of Hirblinger and Landau. I noted that, in Chapter Five, I explored the deep divide between the two Syrian delegations at Geneva II, enacted through a process of Othering. Secondly, I showed that many interlocutors consulted regarding the Yemeni case perceived there to have been a gulf between members of the Yemeni political elite and the 'newcomers' who participated in the Conference. Thus, despite the relational framing deployed to describe these two groups in considerations of the inclusion of the NDC, a barrier separating the two remained. They were not united within a reshaped vision of the Yemeni national identity through the manner in which they were included. Furthermore, I then demonstrated the extent to which the interlocutors consulted spoke of sub-state identities, and occasionally supra-state identities in relation to Syria, as opposed to national identities, when confronted with a question concerning the concept of identity. Interviewees raised a wide range of such identities, ranging from collective identification based upon religion, sect and ethnicity, to group identity formed around geography and class.

The data analysed within this chapter seem, therefore, to challenge many of the conclusions reached in Chapters Five and Six, but also the expected link between inclusive mediation and identity proposed within existing scholarship. I have questioned the nature of the link between inclusion and identity; according to my interpretation, the data captured within the dataset does not seem to support the connection between particular rationales, framings and resulting identities. A combination of rationales and framings were detected in relation to each case. Even though the third rationale, surrounding transformation, and relational framings were slightly more prominent in the Yemeni case, this does not seem to have provoked the creation of a new, over-arching identity. Furthermore, despite an absence of the third rationale and its attendant framings in relation to the Syrian case, a far stronger national identity, partially infused with civic values, appears to have been constructed through the Geneva Peace Process. I have found that the first rationale can, it would seem, be linked to identity construction. Finally, when confronted with the concept of identity, interlocutors speaking about both cases instinctively prioritised sub-state identities, even though this would be expected to be more likely in relation to Yemen than Syria, according to the inclusion rationales discovered within the data. There appears to be a clear need for further empirical research into the possible impact

of inclusive mediation upon processes of identity construction. The picture I have been able to paint is intricate and any connections remain unclear. Inclusive mediation *may* shape identity, but precisely how and under which conditions remains to be seen.

Turning, more broadly, to the two areas of scholarship to which I intend to make a contribution, my findings, here, concerning discord and the apparent relevance of sub-state identities to my interlocutors, could indicate that the ostensible attempts made to characterise and claim an association with freshly imagined Syrian and Yemeni identities, attempts which I analysed in Chapters Five and Six, merely represent frantic attempts to hold together, at least in speech, the Syrian and Yemeni states. These refrains may have been an effort to conceal a concern at the perceived disintegration of Syria and Yemen, both in ideational and territorial terms. The contentions of Hirblinger and Landau, and the partial support offered to their argument by my analysis of the data gathered, can also be connected to the debates concerning 'power' mediation and impartiality. If inclusion can indeed shape the identities of the conflict parties, transforming relationships between those included, this undoubtedly represents a form of influence within mediation. I will reflect upon this further in Chapter Eight.

# Chapter 8. Conclusion

In March 2021 in Deraa, the cradle of Syria's revolution, demonstrators took to the streets once more.[918] 'We are the children of Syria, we chant for freedom', they cried.[919] In Yemen, in the same month, protesters stormed the presidential palace in Sanaa, enraged by dire living conditions, a lack of services, and the depreciation of the local currency.[920] The rallies which engulfed the Arab world in 2011 have been characterised as a *thawra* for *karāma* and *ḥuqūq*: a revolution for dignity and rights.[921] However, Afrah Nassar, a Yemeni journalist, has also portrayed the demonstrations of 2011 as having represented a chance to 'imagine a different Yemen',[922] to transform the state. This opportunity to reshape the nations through rebellion, in Syria and in Yemen, was frustrated and undermined, although insurrectionist undercurrents persist. My contention is that this process of identity mutation seeped into the mediation efforts under investigation in this thesis.

I have developed a response to the following, over-arching research question: *how does mediation shape the identities of the conflict parties?* I have gathered and thematically analysed a substantial and original qualitative dataset, comprising semi-structured interviews, press conferences and official documentation. This data has revealed the contours of two contemporary instances of mediation: stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process, which sought to promote a peaceful resolution to the Syrian civil war; and the GCC Initiative, the

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[918] Oula A. Alrifai and Aaron Y. Zelin, 'Protests in Daraa, Syria Undermine Assad's Narrative of Victory', *Fikra Forum, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (2021) [online], available from: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/protests-daraa-syria-undermine-assads-narrative-victory [last accessed: 10 June 2021]

[919] No author, 'Daraa al-Balad Celebrates the Tenth Anniversary of the Syrian Revolution 18 March 2021', *Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution* (2021) [online], available from: https://creativememory.org/en/archives/218713/daraa-al-balad-celebrates-the-tenth-anniversary-of-the-syrian-revolution-18-march-2021/ [last accessed: 28 June 2021]

[920] No author, 'Protesters Storm Presidential Palace in Yemen's Aden', *Al Jazeera* (2021) [online], available from: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/16/protesters-storm-presidential-palace-in-yemens-aden [last accessed: 10 June 2021]

[921] Maytha Alhassen, 'Please Reconsider the Term "Arab Spring"', *HuffPost* (2012) [online], available from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/please-reconsider-arab-sp_b_1268971 [last accessed: 10 June 2021]; Isaac Avery, 'Talkin' Bout a Revolution: Four Reasons Why the Term "Arab Spring" is Still Problematic', *Middle East Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science* (2021) [online], available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2021/01/20/talkin-bout-a-revolution-four-reasons-why-the-term-arab-spring-is-still-problematic/ [last accessed: 10 June 2021]

[922] Adam Adada and Ramy Allahoum, 'Yemen: Remembering the Arab Spring', *Al Jazeera* (2021) [online], available from: https://www.aljazeera.com/videos/2021/2/3/yemen-remembering-the-arab-spring [last accessed: 10 June 2021]

Yemeni political transition and the NDC, which attempted to peacefully resolve the crisis in Yemen.

Earlier in this thesis I noted that crises, such as wars or military defeats, are deemed particularly likely to provoke identity shifts. My fundamental assertion is that third-party peace processes can also intervene in the reshaping of identities. The members of the political elite representing the conflict parties, and the members of the political elite implicated in the mediation team, may view mediation as an opportunity to remould the identities of the conflict parties. They may re-sculpt identities in search of legitimacy, and in a bid to promote particular norms. Moreover, the very occurrence of mediation can trigger the reimagination of identities. A perceived need to legitimise the mediation efforts may inspire fresh visions of the conflict parties while the mediation process norms of national ownership and inclusion can also reconstruct identities.

In this final chapter I will consider the broader repercussions of these findings. I will reflect on that which my findings reveal about the transformation of Syrian and Yemeni identities following the outbreak of the protests in 2011. I will also contemplate the implications for our understanding of the roles played by impartiality and power within mediation, together with our broader conception of mediation: its purpose and effects. To conclude, I will outline the limitations of this thesis before sketching avenues for future research.

## 8.1 Connecting the findings of this thesis to scholarship concerning collective identities in Syria and Yemen

In forging my overall claim that mediation can shape identity, the findings of this thesis have contributed to our understanding of how Syrian and Yemeni identities developed, within and through mediation, following the uprisings of 2011. Firstly, my argument has been that, in the context of, and in reflections on, the early stages of the Geneva Peace Process, the Syrian national people were reimagined, by both the mediators and the Syrian opposition, as being bound together by suffering and by their aspiration for a democratic political system. It was the Syrian people – the national collective – which was summoned. Despite the compelling academic arguments pertaining to the power of supra- and sub-state identities within Syria, the

voices within the dataset, within the context of the Geneva Peace Process and within reflections on the peace talks, reconceived the experiences and desires of *the nation*.

Secondly, the Syrian national identity imagined within the mediation effort departs, to an extent, from those threads of the Syrian national identity analysed in Chapter Two.[923] The role of victimhood as the central, unifying experience of Syrians represents a fresh imagining of the national identity. However, the alleged intrinsic nature of democracy to Syrian-ness aligns with those authors who have argued that the 2011 demonstrations provoked a reimagining of the Syrian national identity in civic terms, and also with those scholars who have detected the persistence of this civic form of belonging to the nation even as the state descended into violence. My arguments therefore offer support to these scholars, and this alignment also serves to mitigate against one of the weaknesses of this study: specifically, that my data cannot speak to the identifications of the broader Syrian people, nor of political movements aside from the Syrian opposition. Taken together, our studies could be viewed as individual tiles which coalesce to form a mosaic, creating a multi-faceted image of the Syrian national identity following the outbreak of the crisis. The indication seems to be that, following the eruption of violence, a civic Syrian national identity has been constructed by the Syrian opposition for both domestic and international audiences, that this version of the national identity seems to have also been held and propagated from both below and above, and that the UN and other members of the international community have further contributed to its imagining. This civic national identity marks a stark departure from the national identity encouraged in Syria by the regime prior to the civil war.[924]

However, I must note that, when prompted with the concept of identity, interlocutors focused overwhelmingly on the power of sub- and supra-state identities: it was those identities, as opposed to any version of a national identity, which instinctively came to their minds. A bleak tale can be told of Syria in the years since the collapse of the Geneva II talks; while Syria, now, is almost entirely 'reunited' under al-Asad, this has not been the case for the majority of the years following stages I and II of the Geneva Peace process. The state fractured following the

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[923] It will be recalled that, as I explored in depth in Chapter Two, scholars have argued that the meaning of the Syrian national identity was seized and reinterpreted by protesters and by Syrian opposition figures, and infused with civic values and a rejection of sectarianism, both during and following the demonstrations of 2011.

[924] Before the protests, scholars have claimed that both Bashar al-Asad and his father promoted a version of the Syrian national identity in which Syria's ancient history was glorified, and in which familial bonds between the leader and his people were romanticised and promoted. Academics have also claimed that the al-Asad Presidents turned to Islam in a bid to unify the Syrian people.

uprising: rebels seized territory; the government retaliated, attempting to claw back land; the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took swathes of Syria before its collapse; Kurdish forces began to govern and defend territories with significant Kurdish populations; while the US, Russia, the UK, France, Israel, Iran and a coalition of Arab states deployed troops and launched air strikes within Syria, targeting their adversaries and supporting their allies. As I suggested in the conclusions to Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, it is possible that my interlocutors' frequent invocations of the Syrian people, and the seeming efforts made to reimagine their experiences and aspirations within the mediation efforts, masked a concern that there no longer exists a Syrian people and concealed their alarm at the dissolution of ties between Syrians amid violence and conflict.

With regard to group identities in Yemen, my argument has been that the voices of international officials represented within the dataset attempted to characterise the Yemeni people as being joined together in suffering. However, a limited number of Yemeni voices, instead, depicted the Yemeni national experience as being suffused with revolution and resistance, and with opposition to the autocratic structures of Yemen. Concerning the nationally held aspirations of the Yemeni people, again, this was a topic focused upon more frequently by international officials than the Yemeni participants in the process. Taken together, these voices seemed to agree that the Yemeni people seek reform, change, and a transition; occasionally this was specified more precisely as democracy. However, once more, a relatively narrow group of voices constructed this vision, and this reconstruction was not as sharply depicted as it was in relation to Syria. Nevertheless, it was the national people, as opposed to sub-state groupings, which were imagined, albeit less firmly, in the context of the mediation attempt.

Furthermore, this was a new imagining of the Yemeni nation; the notion that suffering is central to the Yemeni national experience did not arise as a strand within the Yemeni national identities observed within the scholarship on collective identities in Yemen surveyed in Chapter Two.[925] However, the idea that reform, and potentially democracy, constitute the nationally held aspirations of a Yemeni people does seem to align with the limited scholarship which has claimed that the demonstrations of 2011 provoked a reimagining of the ties between Yemenis, a reimagining guided by civic values. As with Syria, my findings join other studies in creating

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[925] In Yemen, following 2011, academics have claimed that 'republican' ideals became connected with 'Yemeni-ness', along with a spirit of resistance and cross-sectarian unity. Prior to 2011, it has been argued that a glorified past, together with commemorative and collective events, drew Yemenis together as a people.

an overall argument that, following 2011, a Yemeni national identity, guided by civic values, appears to have taken hold at the level of the everyday, to have been promoted and developed by Yemeni political and civil society leaders, and to have furthermore been constructed and confirmed by Yemen's 'peers': that is, by international officials. Lastly, by introducing data representing Yemen's peers within the international community, I have also differed from existing scholarship concerning collective identification in Yemen.

However, the Yemeni national identity imagined is weaker – it is constructed with less clarity, and by fewer voices – than that imagined in relation to Syria. Moreover, as was the case with Syria, interlocutors reverted instinctively to sub-state identities when approached with the concept of identity. In this regard, as a possible explanation, we could note the devastation wrought in Yemen following the conclusion of the NDC. The interviews which inform much of the research in this thesis were conducted either five or six years following the mediation attempt and, in this time, Yemen has been torn apart by an internationalised civil war. An ever-fluctuating constellation of powers, both external and indigenous to the country, have snatched at different regions, fostering and exacerbating dividing lines while the country can no longer be considered to constitute one territory. Nevertheless, a similarly grim story can be told, and was told above, in relation to Syria. I suggested, in relation to Syria, that the persistent efforts made to reconstruct a specifically Syrian people within the context of the mediation effort may have represented rhetorical attempts to hold the state together, and to mask unease with its fragmentation. Why were such attempts not made in relation to Yemen? Why did the Yemeni people prove more difficult to summon and to imagine? These questions are provoked by this study.

More broadly, I would like to conclude this section by posing a number of further questions which I believe are prompted by the findings of this thesis. Firstly, why was the focus, in relation to both cases, on reconstructing the *national* identities of the two states? Or, in other words, why were the collective experiences and aspirations of the two states' multiple supra- and sub-state groups *not* imagined within the context of the two mediation attempts? While, as I demonstrated in Chapter Seven, interlocutors invoked sub-state identity groups in response to a direct question concerning identity, the precise meanings of these collectives were not reflected upon by the voices represented within the dataset. Secondly, it is noteworthy that the national identities of Syria and Yemen reimagined within the dataset bear a remarkable similarity to one another: both are reconstructed as being suffused with suffering and

distinguished by an aspiration for democracy and/or reform, although the Yemeni national identity is far less clearly depicted. In Chapter Two, I described the term identity as referring to the 'images of individuality and distinctiveness'[926] constructed and propagated by groups, and ascribed to groups. Nevertheless, the idiosyncrasies of the Syrian and Yemeni identities appear to have been suppressed within the peace processes, and this aligns with the insights of Kappler and Mac Ginty which were explored in Chapters Three and Five. It will be recalled that Kappler has argued, in relation to peacebuilding, that international actors can summon that which she terms 'representations' of societies, representations which obfuscate complexity and render communities and nations more compatible with the 'peace' sought after by international organisations.[927] Mac Ginty, on the other hand, has claimed that subjectification often leads to mono-dimensionality.[928] We also seem to be witnessing such processes and effects, here, within mediation.

What might this reveal about the level and nature of identities which were viewed as being conceivable in the context of these two UN-led mediation efforts? What might this reveal, in turn, about the extent to which the peace processes allowed for frank and truthful considerations of the identities of relevance to Syria and Yemen? This study is unable to decisively answer these questions but it is possible to speculate, from my findings, that the mediators and conflict parties involved in the two cases under investigation, either consciously or unconsciously, preferred to think of the conflict parties at the level of the nation, and viewed Syria and Yemen through the same lens rather than grappling with their many differences.

## 8.2 Connecting the findings of this thesis to scholarship concerning impartiality and power within mediation

The introduction to this chapter provided an overview of the contribution I have made to our understanding of the interrelationship between mediation and socially constructed identity, a small sub-field within mediation scholarship. In essence, I have suggested that mediators and conflict parties, in partnership or in opposition, can reimagine the identities of the conflict parties within and in response to mediation. Mediation can operate as the arena in which

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[926] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 59
[927] Kappler, 'Liberal Peacebuilding's Representation of 'the Local': The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina', p. 263
[928] Mac Ginty, 'Between Resistance and Compliance: Non-Participation and the Liberal Peace', pp. 168-9

identities are reconstructed; the very occurrence of mediation can trigger and fuel processes of identity reconstruction; and the practice of mediation, and in particular the norms promoted through and contained within it, can serve to mould the identities of the conflict parties. The constituent arguments which coalesce to provide substance to this claim all represent original contributions to our understanding of the links between mediation and identity: they refine, develop and challenge the existing literature which considers how mediation may shape identity.

However, more broadly, my suggestion is that the findings of this thesis also demonstrate the need to better incorporate ideational concepts, such as identity, within the traditional debates contained within mediation studies. I propose that, by systematically considering processes such as identity construction, such debates may be enriched. In order to demonstrate this claim, I will discuss in this section how my findings concerning identity connect with two intertwined debates surrounding the roles of impartiality and power within mediation.

My claim is that my research has shown that identity construction processes can contribute to our understanding of whether a mediator may have been viewed as impartial; in turn, this may have influenced both the shape of the mediation attempt and possibly its outcome. In relation to Syria, the mediator, together with the Syrian opposition, constructed a particular vision of the Syrian national identity which framed the second conflict party, the Syrian government delegation, as the antithesis to 'Syrian-ness': they argued that the collective experience of Syrians was cruelty and viciousness at the hands of the al-Asad regime and that the nationally held aspiration was to move away from the rule of al-Asad towards a democratic political system in which al-Asad would play no role. This construction process, which happened in partnership with the Syrian opposition, must have affected the perceived partiality of the mediator: it must have seemed as though the UN and the international officials represented within the dataset were closer, in views, values and aims, to the Syrian opposition than the Syrian government delegation. The talks collapsed, with the two delegations unable to even agree on an agenda.

I do not wish to suggest that there is a causal relationship between the apparent bias of the UN and the failure of the mediation efforts. It may be the case that the depictions of the Syrian people offered by the mediators and an array of international officials, and their alignment with the depictions offered by the Syrian opposition, discouraged the Syrian government delegation

from meaningfully engaging with the peace talks. The identity claims made may have presented the mediator as partisan, as being allied with the Syrian opposition delegation, and this may explain the failure of the negotiations. However, there may also be many more factors which caused and/or contributed to the breakdown of Geneva I and II, factors which may have intersected with one another and with the social dynamics analysed in this thesis. As mere examples, at the time at which Geneva II was initiated, al-Asad was in the ascendancy militarily, which is likely to have reduced the prospect of his delegation making concessions, while the prospect of humanitarian military intervention in support of the opposition seemed improbable. My suggestion, simply, is that identity construction processes may contribute to the perceived partiality and impartiality of mediators.

The Yemeni case is more complex: this instance of mediation did not comprise two opposing disputants attempting to reach a solution. Instead, the NDC brought together hundreds of Yemenis, drawn from across the country, from a variety of political factions, together with representatives of women, youth and civil society, to envision the future of Yemen. These delegates could be considered, therefore, to have constituted multiple, intersecting, 'conflict parties'. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence gathered and my analysis, it could be claimed that the UN and the broader international community demonstrated a bias of outcome, and potentially a bias towards particular groups, in their envisioning of the aspirations of the Yemeni people. In contrast to the Yemeni voices in the dataset, these international voices insisted that the nationally held aspiration of the Yemeni people was reform and, on occasion, this was specified as democracy. Through constructing a particular image of the national people of Yemen, the members of the international community expressed a preference for a particular outcome, potentially narrowing the range of solutions which could be envisioned by delegates to the NDC by presenting this preference as being intrinsic to Yemen and its people. This image also seemed to be closest to those ideals articulated in the demonstrations, protests which were ignited by youth, by women and by civil society (although the demonstrations were later joined by political parties opposed to Saleh and the GPC). By imagining the Yemeni people in this way, the members of the international community may have appeared, to members of the old regime in particular, to have shared greater affinity with all other delegates to the NDC.

Whether this affected the outcome of the mediation attempt is unclear. The NDC concluded with relative success; while the assassination of al-Sharif prevented the delegates from debating and voting upon the Final Report, each Working Group did, eventually, agree upon a set of

recommendations which were approved by President Hadi. However, these recommendations were not implemented. The Huthis took Sanaa less than a year after the Dialogue's conclusion, placing Hadi under arrest before forcing him to flee the country, and triggering a vicious, regionalised civil war which persists to this day. Perhaps the partiality of the mediator contributed to this result by demonstrating its bias of outcome; perhaps groups, such as the Huthis, felt as though they had little stake in that which had been negotiated, viewing the outcomes as having been deeply influenced by the international community's vision of the nation. It is also possible that the apparent bias of the mediator, demonstrated through its construction of a particular national identity for Yemen, prevented the delegates to the NDC from meaningfully grappling with the full array of visions for the future of Yemen, and of Yemenis' varied experiences. This, however, is speculation and it is, of course, possible that there were additional contributing factors to the failure of the peace process. One oft-cited reason, for example, is the manner in which the federal map which arose from the NDC deprived the Huthis of access to Yemen's ports: a firmly 'material' explanation.

In this thesis, I would suggest that I have also shown how identity construction can be considered to be a form of power within mediation. Specifically, I have demonstrated how identity construction can be employed, by mediators, to convince and corral parties, and to guide them towards particular solutions, even if this form of power was not always deployed successfully in the two cases examined in this thesis. This contention also intertwines with partiality by showing a bias of outcome.

Specifically, I have shown that the international officials appeared to encourage democratisation by characterising it as being intrinsic to Syrian-ness and, more tentatively, to Yemeni-ness: identity construction was thus wielded, within mediation, as a form of norm promotion. Identity construction therefore functioned as a form of power within mediation while the mediators simultaneously displayed a preference for a particular outcome: the agreement upon democracy forming the future of the two states ensnared in civil conflict. Secondly, by promoting the norm of national ownership, I have suggested that this encouraged the mediators and the conflict parties to focus overwhelmingly on reshaping, prioritising and conceiving of the disputants' national identities, as opposed to other identities of relevance to the two states, thereby narrowing the possible visions, realities and sentiments which could be confronted, considered and even articulated within the two peace processes. Thirdly, it is possible that the inclusion promoted by members of the international community may have

interacted with the identities of the two states, although it has proved difficult to firmly conclude this. Nevertheless, it is possible that, by promoting this norm, mediators can, intentionally or unintentionally, shape the identities of the conflict parties. Inclusion, according to my analysis, may encourage yet further focus upon the nation, may entrench and reify sub-state identity groupings, or may facilitate the creation of a fresh, over-arching vision of those groups in conflict. Inclusion therefore may also represent a source of power within mediation, and promoting this norm cannot, therefore, be seen as a straightforwardly neutral act. More broadly, I have shown that mediation may induce identity shifts, indicating a profound form of social power contained within mediation.

I have therefore demonstrated that, by considering socially constructed identities, it may prove possible to uncover further sources of impartiality, and further sources of power, contained within mediation, thus enriching our understanding of these two elements and how they may interact with the progress of third-party peace processes. My further suggestion is that identity may also be able to intervene in additional debates central to mediation studies. I will briefly return to this idea in the final section of this chapter.

If mediation and mediators possess, and indeed wield, the power to sculpt the identities of the conflict parties, or to trigger reimaginations of identities by the conflict parties, this necessitates a reconfiguration of our understanding of mediation. Earlier in this thesis, I argued that traditional definitions of mediation proclaim the practice to be defined by an absence of force, and a desire to assist conflict parties and alleviate violence. Mediation is thus presented as benign, as seeking to facilitate peaceful societies. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that Kostić has contended that the *imposition* of a fresh identity is an integral part of the 'liberal peace', and that this practice is frequently concealed beneath a veneer of humanitarian impulses.[929] The crux of the social constructivist focus on identities concerns the assertion that 'identities both generate and shape interests':[930] 'identities condition which actions government leaders can entertain, and that which is considered legitimate by their societies'.[931] At its simplest, to

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[929] Kostić, *Ambivalent Peace: External Peacebuilding: Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 16; Kostić, 'American Nation-Building Abroad: Exceptional Powers, Broken promises and the Making of "Bosnia"', p. 24

[930] Jepperson et al., 'Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security', p. 60; see also: Telhami and Barnett, *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East,* p. 17; and Marc Lynch, 'Jordan's Identity and Interests' in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 28

[931] Telhami and Barnett, 'Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 7. See also Saideman, 'Conclusion: Thinking Theoretically About Identity and Foreign Policy', p. 199

hold an identity is to have 'expectations about self',[932] or 'certain ideas about who one is in a given situation',[933] which, in turn, shape our perceptions of and attitudes towards others. Identities constitute who we are and that which we seek: identities are thus fundamental to individuals, groups, societies, nations and transnational communities. For identities to, potentially, be remoulded within mediation constitutes a significant and far-reaching form of influence, a force with which mediators and conflict parties must reckon.

## 8.3 Limitations

Throughout this thesis, I have transparently highlighted the limitations of this study and, accordingly, have deployed language which could be characterised as tentative or uncertain – using terms such as 'may', 'might', 'can' and 'could' – rather than claiming to have uncovered causal mechanisms or obdurate facts. To summarise again, briefly, crucial limitations of this project include the following: firstly, the decision to focus in depth on two cases means the findings are not generalisable to third-party peacemaking more broadly. Secondly, the voices within the dataset largely represent members of the political elite. A representative sample of the broader Syrian and Yemeni populations, or alternative data, such as popular music or street art, or an ethnographic study of the two states, are not analysed. Focusing on the rhetoric of members of the political elite, and assuming that such discourse can prove valuable in understanding group identity, is an accepted and highly commonplace approach within international relations scholarship. Nevertheless, the data gathered does not speak to the 'everyday', and cannot reveal the extent to which the identities imagined resonate within Syria and Yemen, and within Syrian and Yemeni diaspora communities. This limitation is mitigated against, to an extent, by the manner in which I have been able to show, in the previous section, that my findings align with those of others who have assessed different forms of data.

A third weakness of the research conducted is the partial nature of the sample of voices included in the dataset. For instance, representatives of crucial states and groups involved in the two mediation efforts were not consulted nor represented in great depth in the press conferences and official documentation. Such voices included members of the al-Asad regime, of the Huthi movement, of the Hiraak movement, and of states and international organisations including

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[932] Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make Of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organisation* 46:2 (1992), p. 397
[933] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 170

Russia, China, the Gulf monarchies and the GCC. The failure to incorporate such voices has shaped the nature of the claims I have been able to make; nevertheless, the data has been sufficient to explore the hypotheses developed, and to make constitutive, as opposed to causal, claims in response. A fourth limitation is the manner in which the interviews were conducted five or six years following the conclusion of the mediation efforts under study. Interlocutors were asked to recall events as opposed to offer their immediate responses to an ongoing peace process and, even if their memories remained precise, their perspectives were undoubtedly coloured by the years which had passed since the failure of the peace processes: years in which further peace talks were launched, and during which violence and conflict persisted. Relatedly, while these interviews were complemented by the analysis of press conferences and official documentation in a bid to mitigate against their weaknesses, they were not supplemented by data such as participant observation, and recordings or minutes of the discussions. It was not possible to gather such data but, nevertheless, the limitations of the data which it was possible to analyse must be borne in mind. Finally, one inescapable limitation is my own interaction with the research: my positionality. In Chapter Four, I reflected upon my own personal identity, and how it may have partially guided the research question and methods selected together with its possible impact upon my interactions with research participants and the analyses made.

## 8.4 Avenues for future research

To conclude, I would like to propose that there remains scope for further research regarding the interplay between mediation and identity, both within the context of the two cases analysed in this thesis and more broadly. A number of these possible paths might also serve to address the limitations of this study. Firstly, an analysis of the rhetoric, and identity claims, made by representatives of the al-Asad regime within the context of Stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process would be illuminating. For example, examining the extent to which the regime engaged in identity construction in the peace process, and whether the identities imagined by these individuals aligned with those conjured by the mediators and international officials involved, would offer further weight to my contention that the propagation of identity claims can shape perceptions of mediators' impartiality. It would also reveal whether the Geneva Peace Process contained within it, and even provoked, an identity conflict: competing views regarding the character of the nation. Furthermore, an investigation into the identity claims made during parallel peace processes launched to resolve the Syrian civil war, such as those initiated by

Russia and Saudi Arabia, could also support, or perhaps challenge, my findings. Such an investigation may also reveal whether particular mediators are more likely to engage in processes of identity construction through mediation. In a similar vein, the perspectives of crucial groups which were not consulted over the course of this study concerning the Yemeni mediation could be investigated while, once more, the peacemaking efforts of the UN following 2015 could also be scrutinised.

I have firmly argued that mediation may not only form a backdrop to processes of identity construction but, moreover, can trigger the mutation of the identities of the conflict parties. I have unearthed several aspects of mediation which intervene to remould identity. However, future research could assess whether further elements of mediation, or norms contained within mediation, induce identity transformation. More broadly, arguments surrounding the interplay between mediation and identity could be deployed to intervene in further debates which are central to mediation. For instance, mediation scholars may be able to broaden the notion of 'ripeness', a theory which has stalked discussions of mediation for decades. In brief, ripeness theory concerns the need for mediators to recognise when a dispute is apt for resolution, claimed to be the moment at which the parties perceive themselves to be locked in a 'mutually hurting stalemate'. The idea is that the disputants, having conducted a 'costs-benefits analysis', will realise, perhaps with the help of a mediator, that the most beneficial step is a negotiated settlement.[934] Mediation scholars may be able to broaden this theory, perhaps by enquiring into the extent to which threats to identity exacerbate 'mutually hurting stalemates', or through assessing whether the pressures inflicted by more material costs are sufficient to outweigh contradicting the needs dictated by certain, possibly reshaped, identities. As a second example, could the examination of processes of identity construction intercede in debates surrounding the meaning of 'success' in mediation? Scholars define mediation success in a wide variety of ways: as Vuković questions: 'should the mere fact that mediators managed to move the parties from the battlefield to the negotiating table be considered a success?' If the conflict parties 'reach a formal agreement', does this constitute success? Alternatively, do we need to consider the durability of the peace negotiated?[935] However, if a goal of the mediator or mediators – stated or unstated, known or unknown – is to reshape the identities of the conflict parties, might

[934] I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)
[935] Siniša Vuković, 'Three Degrees of Success in International Mediation', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42:3 (2014), p. 966; see also: Marieke Kleiboer, 'Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40:2 (1996), pp. 360-89; and Savun, 'Information, Bias, and Mediation Success', p. 32

success be measured by shifts in the identities of the conflict parties? These represent two examples of further debates in which the detailed consideration of identity construction within mediation may be able to intervene.

Finally, attention must also be paid to the collective identities of mediators and the extent to which these develop alongside those of disputants as a result of the dynamics of the mediation efforts. The decision within this thesis to explore the impact of the two mediation efforts upon the identities of the conflict parties arose due to the data gathered: within the dataset, according to my interpretation, the voices assessed reimagined the Syrian and Yemeni identities as opposed to those of the mediators. Indeed, at the outset of this study, I was keen to incorporate the possible effect the process of mediation may exert upon the identities of the mediators;[936] as Meera Sabaratnam has aptly noted, peace studies has been marred by 'the study of the effect of the subject (the international interveners) on the object (the parties to conflict and the local recipients of aid), with little regard for the effect on the interveners themselves'.[937] Nevertheless, within the interviews conducted, interlocutors considered, both implicitly and explicitly, the national experiences and aspirations of Syrians and Yemenis and did not consider the identities of the mediators, and this trend was repeated within the press conferences and official documentation. Future studies must interrogate this tendency, and unearth how the identities of the mediators might inevitably be shaped, too, both by third-party peace processes and by conflict parties.

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[936] As noted in Chapter 4, the original research question which guided the study was formulated as follows: *does mediation shape identity?* Whose identity was not specified.

[937] As summarised by John Heathershaw, 'Review Essay: Towards Better Theories of Peacebuilding: Beyond the Liberal Peace Debate', *Peacebuilding* 1:2 (2013), p. 276; see: Meera Sabaratnam, 'The Liberal Peace? An Intellectual History of International Conflict Management' in Susanna Campbell et al. *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (London: Zed Books, 2011), pp. 13-30

# Appendices

## Appendix A. Participant information sheet
**Participant information sheet (English)**



**Participant Information Sheet**

**Project Title:** Negotiating the Impasse: Identity and International Conflict Mediation in Syria and Yemen

**Researcher:** Sarah Clowry
**Department:** School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University
**Contact Details:** sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a study which I am conducting as part of my ESRC-funded PhD at Durham University. This study has received ethical approval from the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University. Before you decide whether or not to agree to take part, it is important for you to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully and do not hesitate to get in contact if there is anything that is not clear and/or if you would like more information.

The aim of this study is to explore the attempts made by the international community to mediate the Syrian and Yemeni civil conflicts in the period 2011 – 2014. The research will focus in particular on the role played by 'identities' in processes of third-party conflict resolution.

Interviewees with knowledge of the attempts made by the international community to mediate the Syrian and Yemeni civil conflicts have been invited to take part. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to agree to take part. If you do agree to take part, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Your rights in relation to withdrawing any data that is identifiable to you are explained in the accompanying Privacy Notice. Your permission will be obtained to use direct quotes or identifiable data and you will be able to request that all information gathered during an interview is kept confidential.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview concerning international third-party conflict mediation of the Syrian and/or Yemeni civil wars in the period 2011 – 2014. Where possible, the interviews will take place in a professional setting, in the country in which you are based. However, the interviews may also take place over the telephone, Skype or email. The interviews will last for approximately one hour and you may be approached for a follow-up interview. During the interviews, you can refuse to answer questions and lines of enquiry with which you feel uncomfortable or do not wish to answer.

The primary research output will be my PhD thesis which will be submitted in March 2021 and made available online at a later date. The findings will also be likely to be shared in academic journals and at conferences. All research data and records needed to validate the research findings will be stored for ten years after the end of the project. During this time, the data may be used for further legitimate research purposes.

Thank you for reading this information and for considering participating in this study.

**صحيفة معلومات المشارك**

**عنوان البحث:** كسر حالة الجمود: الهوية والوساطة الدولية في النزاعات في سوريا واليمن

**الباحث:** سارة كلوري
**القسم:** كلية الشؤون الحكومية والدولية، جامعة دورهام
**البريد الإلكتروني:** sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة أقوم بها كجزء من رسالتي للدكتوراه الممولة من قبل مجلس البحوث الاقتصادية والاجتماعية في جامعة دورهام. و قد حصلت هذه الدراسة على موافقة أخلاقية من كلية الشؤون الحكومية والدولية بجامعة دورهام. قبل أن تقرر ما إذا كنت توافق على المشاركة من عدمها، من المهم بصفتك مشارك أن تفهم الغرض من البحث وماالذي يتضمنه. يرجى قراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية وعدم التردد في التواصل إذا كان هناك أي شيء غير واضح أو إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات.

يهدف هذا البحث الي  دراسة محاولات المجتمع الدولي للتوسط في النزاعات المدنية السورية واليمنية في الفترةالممتدة مابين 2011 - 2014. وسيركز البحث بشكل خاص على الدور الذي تلعبه "الهويات" في حل النزاعات بالوكالة.

تمت دعوة الأشخاص الذي يتمتعون بداية حول محاولات المجتمع الدولي للتوسط في النزاعات الأهلية السورية واليمنية للمشاركة في المقابلة. تعتبر مشاركتك تطوعية وليس عليك الموافقة؛ إذا وافقت على المشاركة، فلك الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون إبداء أي سبب. وفيما يتعلق بحقوقك بسحب أي بيانات شخصية فهي موضحة في المرفق المتعلق بإشعار الخصوصية. سيتم طلب إذنك لتضمين كلامك أو استخدام أي بياناتك الشخصية في البحث، وبإمكانك طلب الحفاظ على سرية المعلومات التي يتم جمعها خلال المقابلة.

إذا وافقت على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ، فسيُطلب منك المشاركة في مقابلة متعلقة بوساطة الطرف الثالث  الدولية في حل نزاعات الحروب الأهلية السورية أو/و اليمنية في فترة مابين 2011 - 2014. حيثما أمكن، ستجرى المقابلات في بيئة مهنية في البلد الذي تقيم فيه، ومع ذلك، قد تتم المقابلات أيضًا عبر الهاتف أو برنامج السكايب أو البريد الإلكتروني. ستستمر المقابلات لمدة ساعة تقريبًا وقد يتم الاتصال بك لإجراء مقابلة استدراكية. أثناء المقابلات، يمكنك رفض الإجابة على أي أسئلة ورفض أي استفسارات تشعرك بعدم الارتياح أو لا ترغب في الإجابة عنها.

ستكون نتائج البحث الأساسية هي أطروحة الدكتوراه الخاصة بي والتي سيتم تقديمها في مارس 2021 وإتاحتها عبر الإنترنت في وقت لاحق. من المحتمل أيضًا مشاركة النتائج في المجلات الأكاديمية وفي المؤتمرات. وسيتم تخزين جميع بيانات البحوث والسجلات اللازمة للتحقق من صحة نتائج البحوث لمدة عشر سنوات بعد انتهاء المشروع؛ أثناء هذا الوقت، فيمكن استخدام البيانات لأغراض بحثية مشروعة أخرى.

شكرا لك على قراءة هذه المعلومات وأخذك بعين الاعتبار المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

**Appendix B. Privacy notice**

**Privacy notice (English)**



**Privacy Notice**

## PART 1 – GENERIC PRIVACY NOTICE

Durham University has a responsibility under data protection legislation to provide individuals with information about how we process their personal data. We do this in a number of ways, one of which is the publication of privacy notices. Organisations variously call them a privacy statement, a fair processing notice or a privacy policy.

To ensure that we process your personal data fairly and lawfully we are required to inform you:

- Why we collect your data
- How it will be used
- Who it will be shared with

We will also explain what rights you have to control how we use your information and how to inform us about your wishes. Durham University will make the Privacy Notice available via the website and at the point we request personal data.

Our privacy notices comprise two parts – a generic part (ie common to all of our privacy notices) and a part tailored to the specific processing activity being undertaken.

### Data Controller
The Data Controller is Durham University. If you would like more information about how the University uses your personal data, please see the University's Information Governance webpages or contact Information Governance Unit:

Telephone: (0191 33) 46246 or 46103

E-mail: information.governance@durham.ac.uk

Information Governance Unit also coordinate response to individuals asserting their rights under the legislation. Please contact the Unit in the first instance.

### Data Protection Officer
The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising the University on compliance with Data Protection legislation and monitoring its performance against it. If you have any concerns regarding the way in which the University is processing your personal data, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Jennifer Sewel
University Secretary
Telephone: (0191 33) 46144
E-mail: jennifer.sewel@durham.ac.uk

**Your rights in relation to your personal data**

**Privacy notices and/or consent**

You have the right to be provided with information about how and why we process your personal data. Where you have the choice to determine how your personal data will be used, we will ask you for consent. Where you do not have a choice (for example, where we have a legal obligation to process the personal data), we will provide you with a privacy notice. A privacy notice is a verbal or written statement that explains how we use personal data.

Whenever you give your consent for the processing of your personal data, you receive the right to withdraw that consent at any time. Where withdrawal of consent will have an impact on the services we are able to provide, this will be explained to you, so that you can determine whether it is the right decision for you.

**Accessing your personal data**

You have the right to be told whether we are processing your personal data and, if so, to be given a copy of it. This is known as the right of subject access. You can find out more about this right on the University's Subject Access Requests webpage.

**Right to rectification**

If you believe that personal data we hold about you is inaccurate, please contact us and we will investigate. You can also request that we complete any incomplete data.

Once we have determined what we are going to do, we will contact you to let you know.

**Right to erasure**

You can ask us to erase your personal data in any of the following circumstances:

- We no longer need the personal data for the purpose it was originally collected
- You withdraw your consent and there is no other legal basis for the processing
- You object to the processing and there are no overriding legitimate grounds for the processing
- The personal data have been unlawfully processed
- The personal data have to be erased for compliance with a legal obligation
- The personal data have been collected in relation to the offer of information society services (information society services are online services such as banking or social media sites).

Once we have determined whether we will erase the personal data, we will contact you to let you know.

**Right to restriction of processing**

You can ask us to restrict the processing of your personal data in the following circumstances:

- You believe that the data is inaccurate and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether it is indeed inaccurate
- The processing is unlawful and you want us to restrict processing rather than erase it
- We no longer need the data for the purpose we originally collected it but you need it in order to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim and
- You have objected to the processing and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether our legitimate interests in processing the data override your objection.

Once we have determined how we propose to restrict processing of the data, we will contact you to discuss and, where possible, agree this with you.

**Retention**

The University keeps personal data for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was originally collected. Most of these time periods are set out in the University Records Retention Schedule.

**Making a complaint**

If you are unsatisfied with the way in which we process your personal data, we ask that you let us know so that we can try and put things right. If we are not able to resolve issues to your satisfaction, you can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: Information Commissioner's Office

## PART 2 – TAILORED PRIVACY NOTICE

This section of the Privacy Notice provides you with the privacy information that you need to know before you provide personal data to the University for the particular purpose(s) stated below.

**Project Title:** Negotiating the Impasse: Identity and International Conflict Mediation in Syria and Yemen[938]

**Type(s) of personal data collected and held by the researcher and method of collection:**
Personal data will be collected through interviews. This may include participants' names, employment/official role(s), their views on the mediation cases under investigation, their views on the broader politics of Syria and Yemen and, potentially, their opinions on identity and the role this dynamic played in the mediation attempts. Through such discussions, it may be the case that the participants reveal sensitive personal information regarding their own political and religious views, or the views of others. The interviews may be audio recorded (in such cases, the participants' permission will be sought).

**Lawful Basis**
Collection and use of personal data are carried out under the University's public task, which includes teaching, learning and research. For further information, please refer to:
*https://durham.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/governance/dp/legalbasis/*

**How personal data is stored:**
- All personal data will be held securely and will be strictly confidential to the researcher.
- If the participant requests that their data be anonymised or pseudonymised, the participant will be allocated an anonymous number for data collection which will not be connected to her/his name or identity.
- All personal data in electronic form will be stored on a Durham University drive and will be encrypted and password protected. Data will not be available to anyone outside the research team.
- Any recorded interviews will be stored on an encrypted device until it has been transcribed by the researcher. No one else will have access to the recording, and it will be erased once the transcript has been completed.

**How personal data is processed:**
- The data is being collected in order to support the researcher's analysis of the international community's attempts to mediate the Syrian and Yemeni civil conflicts in the period 2011 – 2014.
- The interviews may be recorded and transcribed before being analysed thematically. The data will be anonymised if this is requested by the participants.
- All research data and records needed to validate the findings will be stored for ten years after the end of the project. During this time, the data may be used for further legitimate research purposes.

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[938] The title of the thesis later changed to the following: 'Reconciling the Rift: International Mediation and Identity'

**Withdrawal of data:**
- The participant can request withdrawal of her/his data unless it has been fully anonymised. Once this has happened, it may not be possible to identify the participant from any of the data held.

**Who the researcher shares personal data with:**
- The raw data will be accessible to, and only analysed by, the researcher.
- Personal data will only be included in publications, presentations and in the PhD thesis if permission has been obtained.

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**How long personal data is held by the researcher:**
- Identifiable data will be stored for ten years after the end of the project. After this point, the data will be deleted.

**How to object to the processing of your personal data for this project:**
If you have any concerns regarding the processing of your personal data, or you wish to withdraw your data from the project, please contact Sarah Clowry (sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk).

**Further information:**
Researcher: Sarah Clowry
Department: School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University
Contact details: sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor name: Professor Roger Mac Ginty
Supervisor contact details: rogermacginty@durham.ac.uk

**Privacy notice (Arabic)**

**إشعار الخصوصية**

**الجزء 1 - إشعار الخصوصية العام**

تعتبر جامعة دورهام مسؤولةً بموجب تشريعات حماية البيانات عن تزويد المشاركين بمعلومات حول كيفية معالجة بياناتهم الشخصية. ونقوم بذلك بطرق عدّة، من بينها إصدار إشعارات الخصوصية والتي تسمى من قبل بعض المنظمات بشكل مختلف كبيان الخصوصية أو إشعار معالجة عادل أو سياسة الخصوصية.

للتأكد من أننا نقوم بمعالجة بياناتك الشخصية بنزاهة وقانونية، يتعين علينا إبلاغك بما يلي:
- لماذا نجمع البيانات الخاصة بك
- كيف سيتم استخدامها
- مع من سيتم تبادلها

سنشرح لك أيضًا الحقوق الخاصة بك للتحكم في كيفية استخدامنا لمعلوماتك وكيفية إعلامنا برغباتك. ستقوم جامعة دورهام بإتاحة إشعار الخصوصية عبر موقع على الانترنت وفي تلك المرحلة نطلب بيانات شخصية.

تتألف إشعارات الخصوصية الخاصة بنا من جزأين - جزء عام (أي مشترك بين جميع إشعارات الخصوصية الخاصة بنا) وجزء مصمم خصيصًا لنشاط المعالجة المحدد الجاري تنفيذه.

**مراقب البيانات**

جامعة دورهام هي مراقب البيانات. إذا كنت ترغب في مزيد من المعلومات حول كيفية استخدام الجامعة لبياناتك الشخصية، فيرجى الاطلاع على صفحات التحكم بالمعلومات على موقع الجامعة أو الاتصال بوحدة التحكم بالمعلومات على رقم الهاتف التالي: 46103 أو 46246 33 (0191) أو عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني التالي:
information.governance@durham.ac.uk

تنسق وحدة التحكم بالمعلومات أيضًا الرد عن الأفراد الذين يؤكدون على حقوقهم بموجب التشريع. يرجى الاتصال بالوحدة في المقام الأول.

**المسؤول عن حماية البيانات**

يعد المسؤول عن حماية البيانات مسؤولاً عن تقديم المشورة للجامعة بشأن الامتثال لتشريعات حماية البيانات ومراقبة أدائها استناداً إليها. إذا كانت لديك أي مخاوف بشأن الطريقة التي تعالج بها الجامعة بياناتك الشخصية، فيرجى الاتصال بالمسؤول عن حماية البيانات:

جنيفر سويل
سكرتير الجامعة
الهاتف: 46144 33 (0191)
البريد الإلكتروني : jennifer.sewel@durham.ac.uk

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**حقوقك فيما يتعلق ببياناتك الشخصية**

**إشعارات الخصوصية و / أو الموافقة**

يحق لك الحصول على معلومات حول كيفية معالجتنا لبياناتك الشخصية والسبب وراء ذلك. وعندما يكون لديك خيار تحديد كيفية استخدام بياناتك الشخصية، سنطلب منك الموافقة. إذا لم يكن لديك خيار (على سبيل المثال، عندما يكون لدينا التزام قانوني بمعالجة البيانات الشخصية)، فسوف نقدم لك إشعارًا بالخصوصية و هو عبارة شفهية أو مكتوبة تشرح كيفية استخدامنا لبياناتك الشخصية.

عند اعطاء موافقتك لمعالجة بياناتك الشخصية، فلك الحق في سحب هذه الموافقة في أي وقت، وفي حالة امكانية تأثير قرارك بسحب الموافقة على الخدمات التي بأمكاننا تقديمها، سيتم توضيح ذلك لك، بحيث يمكنك مراجعة قرارك و تحديد ما إذا كان هذا القرار الصائب بالنسبة لك.

**الوصول إلى البيانات الشخصية الخاصة بك**

لك الحق في أن يتم إبلاغك بما إذ كنا نقوم بمعالجة بياناتك الشخصية، وإذا كان الأمر كذلك، فيتم منحك نسخة منها و يسمى هذا الأخير بحق الوصول إلى الموضوع. بامكانك الحصول على المزيد من المعلومات حول هذا الأمر مباشرة على صفحة طلبات الوصول إلى الموضوع بموقع الجامعة.

**الحق في تصحيح بيناتك**

إذا كنت تعتقد أن بياناتك الشخصية التي نحتفظ بها غير دقيقة، فيرجى الاتصال بنا وسنحقق في ذلك، و بامكانك أيضًا طلب استكمال أي بيانات غير كاملة.

بمجرد تحديد ما سنفعله، سنتصل بك لإعلامك بذلك.

**الحق في مسح بيناتك**

بإمكانك طلب مسح بياناتك الشخصية في أي من الحالات التالية:

• عند انتهاء الحاجة إلى البيانات الشخصية للهدف الذي جمعناها له في الأصل
• عند سحب موافقتك وبالتالي لا يوجد أي أساس قانوني آخر لمعالجة البيانات
• عند اعتراضك على المعالجة ولا توجد أسباب شرعية مهمة للمعالجة
• تم معالجة البيانات الشخصية بشكل غير قانوني
• يجب مسح البيانات الشخصية للامتثال الى اي التزام قانوني
• تم جمع البيانات الشخصية فيما يتعلق بعرض خدمات مجتمع المعلومات (خدمات عبر الإنترنت مثل المواقع المصرفية أو مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي).

بمجرد تحديد ما إذا كنا سنقوم بمسح البيانات الشخصية، سنتصل بك لإعلامك بذلك.

**حقّ تقييد المعالجة**

بإمكانك طلب تقييد معالجة بياناتك الشخصية في الحالات التالية:

• عند اعتقادك أن البيانات غير دقيقة وتريد منا تقييد المعالجة حتى يتم التأكد أنّ البيانات غير دقيقة فعلاً
• طريقة المعالجة غير قانونية وتريد منا تقييد المعالجة بدلاً من مسحها
• عند انتهاء الحاجة الي البيانات لغرض جمعها في الأصل، لكنك بحاجة إليها من أجل إنشاء أو ممارسة أو الدفاع عن مطلب قانوني
• عند اعتراضك على المعالجة وتريد منا تقييدها حتى يتم التأكد ما إذا كانت مصالحنا المشروعة في معالجة بياناتك تتجاوز اعتراضك.

بمجرد تحديد كيفية اقتراحنا لتقييد معالجة البيانات، سوف نتصل بك لمناقشة ذلك، وعند الإمكان، نتفق معك على ذلك.

**الاحتفاظ**

تحتفظ الجامعة بالبيانات الشخصية طالما كانت هناك حاجة إليها لغرض جمعها في الأصل، و أغلب هذه الفترات الزمنية منصوصٌ عليها في جدول الاحتفاظ بسجلات الجامعة.


**تقديم شكوى**

إذا لم تكن راضيًا عن الطريقة التي نعالج بها بياناتك الشخصية، نطلب منك إعلامنا حتى نتمكن من تصحيح الأمور. وإذا لم نتمكن من ذلك، فيمكنك إحالة الأمر إلى مكتب مفوض المعلومات في العنوان التالي:

مكتب مفوض المعلومات

Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire,   SK9 5AF

هاتف: 0303 123 1113

الموقع الإلكتروني: مكتب مفوض المعلومات

**الجزء 2 - إشعار الخصوصية المُخصّص**

يوفر لك هذا القسم معلومات الخصوصية التي تحتاج إلى معرفتها قبل تقديم البيانات الشخصية إلى الجامعة للأغراض المحددة المذكورة أدناه.

**عنوان المشروع:** كسر حالة الجمود: الهوية والوساطة الدولية في النزاعات في سوريا واليمن

**نوع (أو أنواع) البيانات الشخصية التي تم جمعها وحفظها من قِبل الباحث وكذلك طريقة جمعها:**
سيتم جمع البيانات الشخصية من خلال المقابلات، و قد يشمل ذلك أسماء المشاركين ووظائفهم وكذلك وجهات نظرهم حول قضايا الوساطة قيد التحقيق و حول السياسة الشاملة في سوريا واليمن، ومن المحتمل كذلك آراؤهم حول الهوية والدور الذي لعبته هذه الديناميكية في محاولات الوساطة. ومن خلال مثل هذه المناقشات، قد يكشف المشاركين عن معلومات شخصية حساسة تتعلق بآرائهم السياسية والدينية أو آراء الآخرين. وقد يتم تسجيل المقابلات صوتياً (في مثل هذه الحالات، سيتم طلب إذن المشاركين).

**الأساس القانوني**
يتم جمع واستخدام البيانات الشخصية في إطار المهمة العامة للجامعة، والتي تشمل التدريس والتعلم والبحث. لمزيد من المعلومات، يرجى الرجوع إلي:
https://durham.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/governance/dp/legalbasis/

**كيف يتم تخزين البيانات الشخصية:**
- سيتم الاحتفاظ بجميع البيانات الشخصية بشكل آمن وستكون سرية تمامًا للباحث
- إذا طلب المشارك أن تدرج بياناته على أساس أنها مجهولة المصدر أو تحت اسم مستعار، فسيخصص للمشارك رقم مجهول لجمع البيانات والذي لن يكون متصلاً باسمه أو هويته الرسمية
- سيتم تخزين جميع البيانات الشخصية في شكل إلكتروني على محرك جامعة دورهام وسيتم تشفيرها ووضع كلمة مرور لها، وبذلك لن تتاح البيانات لأي شخص خارج فريق البحث
- سيتم تخزين أي مقابلات مسجلة على جهاز مشفر حتى يتم تدوينها من قبل الباحث و لن يتمكن أي شخص آخر من الوصول إلى التسجيل؛ عند انتهاءالتدوين  سيتم مسح التسجيل نهائياً.

**كيف تتم معالجة البيانات الشخصية:**
- يتم جمع البيانات لدعم تحليل الباحث لمحاولات المجتمع الدولي للتوسط في النزاعات الأهلية السورية واليمنية في الفترة 2011 - 2014.
- يمكن تسجيل المقابلات وتدوينها قبل المباشرة في عملية تحليلها موضوعياً، و سيتم إخفاء البيانات إذا طلب المشاركون ذلك.
- سيتم تخزين جميع البيانات والسجلات البحثية اللازمة للتحقق من صحة النتائج لمدة عشر سنوات بعد انتهاء المشروع؛ خلال هذا الوقت، يمكن استخدام البيانات لأغراض بحثية مشروعة أخرى.

**سحب البيانات:**
- بامكان المشارك أن يطلب سحب بياناته ما لم يتم إخفائها هويتها تماماً. وبمجرد حدوث ذلك، فليس بالامكان تحديد بيانات المشارك من أي من البيانات الموجودة.

**مع من يشارك الباحث البيانات الشخصية:**
- البيانات الأولية ستكون متاحة للباحث وسيتم تحليلها فقط من طرفه.

- سـيتم إدراج البيانات الشـخصية فقط في المنشـورات والعروض التقديمية وفي رسـالة الدكتوراه إذا تم الحصول على إذن المشـارك.

**وقت احتفاظ الباحث بالبيانات الشخصية:**

- سـيتم تخزين البيانات المحددة لمدة عشـر سـنوات بعد نهاية البحث؛ بعد ذلك، سـيتم حذف البيانات.

**كيفية الاعتراض على معالجة بياناتك الشـخصية لهذا المشـروع:**

إذا كانت لديك أي مخاوف بشـأن معالجة بياناتك الشـخصية  أو لديك رغبة في سـحب بياناتك من البحث، فيرجى الاتصال بجامعة دورهام على العنوان التالي:

sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

**مزيد من المعلومات:**
**الباحث:** سارة كلوري
**القسـم:** كلية الشـؤون الحكومية و الدولية، جامعة دورهام
**البريد الالكتروني:** sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk
**اسم المشـرف:** روجر ماك جنتي
**البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالمشـرف:** roger.macginty@durham.ac.uk

## Appendix C. Consent form
## Consent form (English)



**Consent Form**

**Project title**: Negotiating the Impasse: Identity and International Conflict Mediation in Syria and Yemen

**Researcher**: Sarah Clowry
**Department:** School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University
**Contact details**: sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

**Supervisor name**: Professor Roger Mac Ginty
**Supervisor contact details:** roger.macginty@durham.ac.uk

This form is to confirm that you understand the purposes of the project, what is involved, and that you are happy to take part.  Please confirm whether or not you agree with each statement.

| Statement | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and the privacy notice for the above project. | | | |
| I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. | | | |
| I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project. | | | |
| I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs. I agree to my real name being used. | | | |
| If the answer to the above statement is 'No', I agree to my official role/job title being used. | | | |
| I agree to take part in the above project. | | | |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. | | | |

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)_____

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**Consent form (Arabic)**

**استمارة الموافقة**

**عنوان البحث:** كسر حالة الجمود: الهوية والوساطة الدولية في النزاعات في سوريا واليمن

**الباحث:** سارة كلوري
**القسم:** كلية الشؤون الحكومية و الدولية، جامعة دورهام
**البريد الإلكتروني:** sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

**اسم المشرف:** روجر ماك جنتي
**البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالمشرف:** roger.macginty@durham.ac.uk

هذه الاستمارة للتأكد من فهمك لأهداف البحث وما ينطوي عليه، وعلى رغبتك في المشاركة. يرجى تأكيد موافقتك من عدمها بجانب كل تصريح أدناه.

| لا إجابة | لا | نعم | التصريح |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | أؤكد أنني قد قرأت وفهمت ورقة المعلومات وإشعار الخصوصية للمشروع أعلاه. |
| | | | لقد أتيح لي الوقت الكافي للنظر في المعلومات وطرح أي أسئلة تبادرت إلى ذهني عن البحث، وأنا راضٍ عن الإجابات التي قُدمت لي. |
| | | | أدرك من سيكون له حق الوصول إلى البيانات الشخصية المقدمة، وكيف سيتم تخزين البيانات، وماذا سيحدث للبيانات في نهاية البحث. |
| | | | أدرك أن كلماتي قد يتم تضمينها في المنشورات والتقارير وغيرها من نتائج البحث؛ لذلك أوافق على استخدام اسمي الحقيقي. |
| | | | إذا كان الجواب على التصريح أعلاه هو "لا"، فأنا أوافق على استخدام المُسمّى الوظيفي الخاص بي. |
| | | | أوافق على تسجيل المقابلة. |
| | | | أوافق على المشاركة في البحث أعلاه. |
| | | | أدرك أن مشاركتي تطوعية وأنني حر في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون إبداء أي سبب. |

توقيع المشارك_____ التاريخ_____

الأسم _____

## Appendix D. Interview guide

As explored in Chapter Four, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the questions and topics listed below are merely indicative; the interviewees were permitted to dictate the topics covered, and the way in which they flowed, during the conversation.

Dependent on the participant, I began by explaining precisely the case on which we would be focusing (either the Syrian or the Yemeni mediation attempt), clarifying the specific elements of the mediation process and the time period in which I was interested. I then explored the following questions and topics:

### Data Collection Tool

1. Can we begin by discussing your role in the mediation process? How and why did you become involved? In which activities did you take part? How did you find the experience?
2. Can you provide an overview of the mediation process? How was it structured? What was discussed, and in what way? How did the mediation attempt conclude?
3. How did the disputants interact with one another/How did you interact with other members of your team, and with the other disputants?
4. [If appropriate] How would you describe your position towards the other party at the time of the mediation? Have your opinions in relation to the other party changed at all following the mediation attempt?
5. Can you describe the atmosphere over the course of the mediation process? Did this atmosphere change? If so, in what way, and in response to what?
6. What stance(s)/position(s) did you (or your group/party) adopt during the mediation?
7. Why did you (or your group/party) adopt [X stance/position] during the mediation? What factors motivated this commitment and why was it important to you (or your group/party)?
8. Why do you think [X individual/group] adopted [X stance]?
9. Why do you think the mediation process took the course it did? Has your perspective changed regarding this; did you believe, at the time of the mediation attempt, that a different dynamic determined the course of the mediation attempt?
10. How do you understand the term 'identity'? Do you think identities were important within the mediation process? If so, how?
11. Is there anything I haven't asked you about the mediation process, or anything which we haven't discussed which you think we should have? Is there anything you would like to add?
12. Do you have any suggestions for other individuals with whom I should speak over the course of my research? Are you able to share their contact details, or the most efficient way to get in touch with them?

## Appendix E. Template email to interview participants

**Subject**: Request for help with PhD research

**Message**:

Dear [title and surname],

My name is Sarah Clowry and I am a PhD student at Durham University in the UK. I hope you do not mind my getting in touch; I am contacting you in case you might have the time to offer some help with my research.

My research focuses on international mediation, and one of my case studies will be [Stages I and II of the Geneva Peace Process or the Yemeni transition between the years 2011 and 2014]. I understand that you were [role during case study] and were involved in the period of mediation on which I am focusing. I was therefore wondering whether you might be willing to participate in an interview with me concerning your work and experiences during this time. It would be fascinating to hear your perspectives. We could conduct the interview on condition of anonymity, or even 'off the record', if you would feel more comfortable. I believe you are based in [location]; if you would be happy to speak with me, perhaps we could find a suitable time to talk in [location and month or remote means of interviewing and month]. Please do let me know what would be most convenient for you.

I would be very grateful if you were able to help, and please do not hesitate to request any further details about my research or my background.

Thank you very much in advance, and I look forward to hearing from you,
Sarah Clowry

ESRC PhD Student
School of Government and International Affairs
Durham University
[link to institutional page]

## Appendix F. Interpreter confidentiality agreement



## Confidentiality Agreement

**Project Title:** Negotiating the Impasse: Identity and International Conflict Mediation in Syria and Yemen

**Researcher:** Sarah Clowry
**Department:** School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University
**Contact Details:** sarah.a.clowry2@durham.ac.uk

In agreeing to offer consecutive Arabic-English interpretation in the course of the above project, you are obliged to keep confidential anything that is discussed during the interview for which you provide interpretation, including the identity of the interviewee. By signing below, you agree to these terms.

| | |
|---|---|
| NAME (Block capitals): | |
| DATE: | |
| SIGNATURE: | |

## Appendix G. Thematic table with data fragments

Table m) Themes, categories and codes selected for analysis with data fragments

| Theme | Categories | Codes | Data Fragment Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Suffering | Terror | Fear | 'this created fear among the protestors' |
| | | Threat | 'it was very risky for me and my children to stay in Syria…they said they wanted to kill me' |
| | | Flee | 'I had to flee with my two children' |
| | Agony | Hurt | 'our stomachs, our guts, felt like they were shredded and punished' |
| | | Anger | 'I felt angry' |
| | | Injustice | 'this injustice that is inflicted on the Syrian people' |
| | | Neglect | 'the level of deterioration in the everyday lives of Yemeni men and women' |
| | | Poverty | 'the difficult, harsh life of ordinary Yemenis' |
| | Courage | Bravery | 'I know many friends before they went to demonstrate, they would say goodbye to their mothers, their wives, their kids – it was such a brave and honourable and courageous thing for them to do' |
| | | Sacrifice | 'I want to put in your mind how difficult is it to have our role' |
| | Defenceless | Vulnerability | 'an abandoning of the Syrian people' |

| | | Fragility | 'we brought a photo of a new born baby – he was dead because of the famine' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Weakness | 'it became weaker and weaker' |
| | | Innocence | 'the killing of innocent Yemeni people' |
| | Brutality | Destruction | 'the power-holders, the policymakers, they just destroyed everything' |
| | | Force | 'until the war erupted' |
| | | Attack | 'that was the same time as the chemical weapons attack' |
| | | Violence | 'the bloodshed' |
| | | Terrorism | 'we were talking about state-sponsored terrorism' |
| | | Massacre | 'who commits more and more massacres against the Syrian people' |
| | | Humanitarian needs | 'in acute need of humanitarian assistance' |
| | | Victimhood | 'how much they suffered' |
| | Oppression | Repression | 'the response from the government became more bloody and more severe, there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners' |
| | | Regime | 'to put the responsibility and blame on the regime' |
| | | Dictatorship | 'the Syrian government is authoritarian' |
| | | Tyranny | 'tyrannical regime' |
| | | Silenced | 'closed all the forums, all the Damascus Spring forums' |

| | | Detained | 'it was closed and its members detained' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Trapped | 'it was sieged for months by the regime' |
| Democracy and Reform | Liberal democratic governance | Democratic institutions | 'we need to liberalise our society, make it more democratic' |
| | | Elections | 'Elections, the electoral system' |
| | | Representation | 'almost every political representative' |
| | | Accountability | 'where governance is transparent and accountable' |
| | | Long-lasting support for democracy | 'I was always driving for a country that has democracy' |
| | | Justice | 'they wanted to see…justice' |
| | | Law | 'the regime should be in court, tried against the war crimes it is committing' |
| | | Citizenship | 'in which our citizenship transcends any social, ethnic, national or sectarian faction' |
| | Liberal values | Human rights | 'also I was known as an activist, for women's rights, human rights' |
| | | Freedom | 'the dream of freedom' |
| | | Dignity | 'it was about being empowered in politics, in society and economically' |
| | | Civil state | 'a democratic civil state based on the rule of law and civil liberties' |
| | Openness | Voice | 'our way to have a say' |
| | | Transparency | 'we had many discussions with journalists' |

| | | Consultation | 'communicate ideas, listening – continuous interactions' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pluralism | 'we had a pluralistic delegation, with different views combined' |
| | | Diversity | 'every governorate has a different culture, a different dialect' |
| | | Difference | 'the differences were so big!' |
| | Transformation | Transition | 'transitioning to a new system' |
| | | Change | 'they started to develop their ability to negotiate' |
| | | Reform | 'we have seen progress on reform by the Yemeni government' |
| | | Novelty | 'This was the first time we had anything like this' |
| | | Peace | 'Syrians seeking peaceful change' |
| Discord | Brutality | Destruction | 'the power-holders, the policymakers, they just destroyed everything' |
| | | Attack | 'and they would attack the experts' |
| | | Violence | 'the bloodshed' |
| | | Battle | 'a real battle…there was a lot of power, and they were against' |
| | | Injustice | 'this injustice that is inflicted on the Syrian people' |
| | Terror | Fear | 'this created fear among the protestors' |
| | | Threat | 'it was very risky for me and my children to stay in Syria…they said they wanted to kill me' |
| | | Flee | 'I had to flee with my two children' |

| | Oppression | Repression | 'the response from the government became more bloody and more severe, there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners' |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Monopoly of power | 'we just needed to break the monopoly of certain people, their control of politics, government, economics' |
| | | Marginalisation | 'They wanted to keep it only for the traditional powers to decide' |
| | | Silenced | 'closed all the forums, all the Damascus Spring forums' |
| | | Locked up | 'they jailed, detained my brother and tortured him' |
| | | Trapped | 'it was sieged for months by the regime' |
| | | Unwilling to negotiate | 'The regime refused totally – particularly on engaging in the political transition element or anything to do with it' |
| | Rivalry | Competition | 'the others are not like me, so they all push me out' |
| | | Exclusion | 'and the women, the youth, the civil society – they were not a part of these discussions unless they had their own connections' |
| | | Regime | 'One backed a dictatorial regime with one voice' |
| | | Concealment | 'so much happened behind closed doors' |
| | | Manipulation | 'secret agreements were arranged' |

| | | Blame | 'he has blood on his hands' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Divisions | 'we were divided in two' |
| | Accusation | Traitor | 'he was publicly saying in front of the UN that we were traitors' |
| | | Foreign agent | 'the government questioned the opposition's Syrian-ness, considered them to be foreign agents' |
| | | Outsider | 'but it was designed by international actors – they had, not necessarily a lack of sensitivity, but a lack of a reality check' |
| | | Terrorist | 'accusing us of being terrorists' |
| | Sub-state groups | Youth | 'the young people with dreams' |
| | | Women | 'There was fair and strong representation for women' |
| | | Newcomers | 'the newcomers, they had power' |
| | | Political elite | 'only for the traditional powers to decide' |
| | | Minority groups | 'even sects like the Druze, Alawite' |
| | | Religious groups | 'or the Shafii-Sunni divide' |
| | | Ethnic groups | 'we had Kurds' |
| | | Class | 'even the class system' |
| | | Sectarianism | 'And also the sect identities, the Shia-Sunni divide' |
| | | Secularism | 'secular communities' |
| | | Urban and rural divisions | 'urban people…they despise the rural people' |
| | | Geography | 'The south and north are very different, separated by geography' |

| | | Tribe | 'with the tribal leaders' |
|---|---|---|---|
| National Ownership | Authority | Leadership | 'The Transitional Justice Commission asked me to be the head of the Commission' |
| | | Control | 'they pushed the opposition' |
| | | Agency | 'we were entirely too involved' |
| | | Power | 'With the NDC, this process was more led by Yemenis' |
| | | Responsibility | 'our message was that no one was going to save them, that they were going to have to save themselves' |
| | | Independence | 'it was a Yemeni event' |
| | | Sovereignty | 'one that fully respects Syria's sovereignty' |
| | | Strength | 'He had a bigger role than a mediator, he was like a ruler in Yemen' |
| | | Voice | 'our way to have a say' |
| | Intrusion | Interference | 'the major regional countries interfering' |
| | | Dictate | 'they were told they had to turn up' |
| | | Manipulation | 'secret agreements were arranged' |
| | | Blame | 'he has blood on his hands' |
| | | Neo-colonialism | 'This doesn't feel right. Neo-colonial – didn't sit well with me' |
| | | Force | 'I was forced into this group and forced to be a part of this group' |
| | | Outsider | 'but it was designed by international actors – they had, not necessarily a lack of |

| | | | sensitivity, but a lack of a reality check' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Frailty | Futility | 'it was a complete failure. The international community, they tried to make all the members agree on a solution without paying attention to the groups outside who were making a war' |
| | | Weakness | 'We should have had the authority to hold the major stakeholders accountable' |
| | | Failure | 'when you look at the big picture, yes it failed' |
| | Camaraderie | Friendship | 'we became friends, a team' |
| | | Support | 'they wanted to show political support all the time' |
| | | Assistance | 'They would try to help in any way' |
| | | Nurture | 'the international community nurtured the agreement, acted as an incubator' |
| | | Coordination | 'and we were always around each other, and discussing, trying to coordinate' |
| | | Cooperation | 'there was compromise, dialogue between the different factions' |
| | | Competition | 'the others are not like me, so they all push me out' |
| | International frameworks | International documents | 'negotiate based on the Geneva Communiqué' |
| | | UN resolutions | 'they focused on the implementation of…the international resolutions' |

| Inclusion | Embracement | Inclusivity | 'it needed to be inclusive' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Representation | 'it needed to faithfully represent what the street was looking for' |
| | | Participation | 'involving the full participation of the different segments of Yemeni society' |
| | | Voice | 'our way to have a say' |
| | Clarity and Collaboration | Communication | 'sitting and talking about historical grievances' |
| | | Consultation | 'communicate ideas, listening – continuous interactions' |
| | | Transparency | 'we had many discussions with journalists' |
| | | Coordination | 'and we were always around each other, and discussing, trying to coordinate' |
| | | Cooperation | 'there was compromise, dialogue between the different factions' |
| | Obfuscation | Concealment | 'so much happened behind closed doors' |
| | | Exclusion | 'he didn't attend, he was feeling like he was not included' |
| | | Disconnect | 'They were largely Syrian expats and so they didn't have much credibility on the ground' |
| | Sub-state groups | Youth | 'the young people with dreams' |
| | | Syrians inside Syria | 'it needed to be heavily focused on Syrians in Syria' |
| | | On the ground | 'the people on the ground' |
| | | Minority groups | 'even sects like the Druze, Alawite' |
| | | Religious groups | 'or the Shafii-Sunni divide' |

| | | South Yemen and Southerners | 'The southerners, they also came with a very unique identity' |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Women | 'There was fair and strong representation for women' |
| | | Regional or geographic groups | 'but the local, or the geographic identities' |
| | | Newcomers | 'the newcomers, they had power' |
| | | Political elite | 'only for the traditional powers to decide' |
| | | Civil society | 'I was close to civil society' |
| | | Stakeholders | 'a lot of entities and stakeholders trying to push their own agenda' |
| | | Pluralism | 'we had a pluralistic delegation, with different views combined' |
| | | Diversity | 'every governorate has a different culture, a different dialect' |
| | | Comprehensive | 'We must commence a comprehensive political dialogue' |

**Appendix H. Yemeni National Dialogue Conference logo**



Taken from: NDC, 'Outcomes Document', p. 1

The text beneath the logo reads as follows:

> *Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference*
> *Through dialogue, we create the future*

# Appendix I. Disaggregated inclusion rationales and framings tables

Table n) Disaggregated rationales present within data concerning inclusion and the Syrian case

| Rationale | Data Source | Total |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (legitimacy) | Syrian interlocutors | 14 (39%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 6 (17%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 4 (11%) |
| | Official documents authored by Syrians | 2 (6%) |
| | Official documents authored by international mediators | 10 (28%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 36 (97% of all rationales) |
| 2 (protection) | Syrian interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Official documents authored by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Official documents authored by international mediators | 1 (100%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 1 (3% of all rationales) |
| 3 (transformation) | Syrian interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Official documents authored by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Official documents authored by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 0 (0% of all rationales) |

Table o) Disaggregated framings present within data concerning inclusion and the Syrian case

| Framing | Data Source | Total |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (open) | Syrian interlocutors | 22 (29%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 7 (9%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 1 (1%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 24 (31%) |
| | Documents authored by Syrians | 2 (3%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 21 (27%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 77 (79% of all framings) |
| 2 (closed) | Syrian interlocutors | 9 (45%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 3 (15%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 3 (15%) |
| | Documents authored by Syrians | 2 (10%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 3 (15%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 20 (20% of all framings) |
| 3 (relational) | Syrian interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 1 (100%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by Syrians | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 1 (1% of all framings) |

Table p) Disaggregated rationales present within data concerning inclusion and the Yemeni case

| Rationale | Data Source | Total |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (legitimacy) | Yemeni interlocutors | 3 (30%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators[939] | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 1 (10%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 6 (60%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 10 (17% of all rationales) |
| 2 (protection) | Yemeni interlocutors | 2 (40%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 0 (0%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 3 (60%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 5 (8% of all rationales) |
| 3 (transformation) | Yemeni interlocutors | 20 (45%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 3 (7%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 3 (7%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 18 (41%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 44 (75% of all rationales) |

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[939] It should be recalled that no press conferences within the dataset feature Yemeni voices.

Table q) Disaggregated framings present within data concerning inclusion and the Yemeni case

| Framing | Data Source | Total |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (open) | Yemeni interlocutors | 25 (36%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 4 (6%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 9 (13%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 4 (6%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 28 (40%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 70 (34% of all framings) |
| 2 (closed) | Yemeni interlocutors | 49 (42%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 11 (9%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 4 (3%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 12 (10%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 40 (34%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 116 (57% of all framings) |
| 3 (relational) | Yemeni interlocutors | 13 (72%) |
| | International mediator interlocutors | 1 (6%) |
| | Press conferences delivered by international mediators | 0 (0%) |
| | Documents authored by Yemenis | 1 (6%) |
| | Documents authored by international mediators | 3 (17%) |
| | **Overall total:** | 18 (9% of all framings) |

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Amr al-Sarraj, Analyst and Activist. Interviewed in Istanbul in November 2019.

Anas al-Abdeh, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Co-founder of the SNC, Member of SOC, Member of Syrian Opposition Delegation at Geneva II. Interviewed in Istanbul in November 2019.

Anonymous Interviewee (1) ('close to the negotiations'). Interviewed by telephone in September 2019.

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Anonymous Interviewee (4). Date and location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of interviewee. Participant's words not quoted.

Anonymous Interviewee (5). Date and location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of interviewee. Participant's words not quoted.

Beatrice Megevand-Roggo, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Interviewed in Geneva in May 2019.

Dima Shehadeh, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Interviewed by Skype in November 2019. Words not quoted and/or summarised.

Former British Diplomat (a). Interviewed in May 2019 (location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee).

Former British Diplomat (b). Interviewed in May 2019 (location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee).

Haitham al-Maleh, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of the SNC, Member of SOC, Member of Syrian Opposition Delegation at Geneva II. Interviewed in Istanbul in November 2019.

Hugh Robertson, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Interviewed by telephone in September 2019.

Lisa Roman, Outreach Officer, Syria Desk and Senior Advisor to the US Special Envoy for Syria, US Department of State. Interviewed in Washington DC in September 2019.

Mariam Jalabi, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of SOC. Interviewed by Skype in January 2020.

Member of the Syrian Opposition (a). Interviewed in November 2019 (role details, location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee).

Member of the Syrian Opposition (b). Interviewed in November 2019 (role details, location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee).

Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of SOC, Member of Syrian Opposition Delegation at Geneva II. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in December 2019.

Najib Ghadbian, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Founding Member of the SNC, Member of SOC, Special Representative of SOC to the US and the UN. Interviewed by Skype in October 2019.

Oubab Khalil, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of SOC, Chief of Staff of SOC Office in Washington DC. Interviewed in Washington DC in September 2019.

Radwan Ziadeh, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of the Syrian National Council, Founder of the Syria Experts House, Managing Editor of the Transitional Justice Project in the Arab World, Head of the Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice. Interviewed in Washington DC in September 2019.

Randa Kassis, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Member of the SNC, Co-founder and President of the Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians. Interviewed by Telegram in January 2020.

Rim Turkmani, Civil Society Activist and Member of the Women's Advisory Board to the UN Special Envoy to Syria. Interviewed in London in May 2019.

Rima Fleihan, Member of the Syrian Opposition, LCC Leader, Member of SNC, Member of SOC, Member of Opposition Delegation at Geneva II. Interviewed by Skype in October 2019.

Samir Nachar, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Founding member of SNC. Interviewed by email in December 2019.

Suhair al-Atassi, Member of the Syrian Opposition, Vice-President of SOC, Member of the Syrian Opposition Delegation at Geneva II. Interviewed in Istanbul in November 2019.

Track II Mediation Expert. Interviewed in May 2019 (location retracted to protect anonymity of interviewee).

UN Official (a). Interviewed in Geneva in May 2019.

UN Official (b) ('involved in the early stages of the Geneva Peace Process'). Interviewed in Geneva in May 2019.

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Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, Secretary-General of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in March 2020.

Ahmed Bazara, Chair of the Sustainable Development Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed using Zoom in January 2020.

Abdulghani al-Eryani, Consultant employed by Berghof Foundation. Interviewed using Skype in July 2019.

Ali Saif Hassan, Member of the Transitional Justice Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed using Skype in July 2019.

Alma Abdul-hadi Jadallah, Facilitator employed by the UN. Interviewed using Skype in July 2019.

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Baraa Shiban, Member of the Transitional Justice Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed in London in May 2019.

Bilqis al-Lahabi, Vice-Chair of the Southern Issue Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed in Amman in February 2020.

Former British Diplomat (a). Interviewed in May 2019 (location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee).

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International Mediation Expert. Interviewed using Skype in April 2019.

Khaled Noman, Member of the Statebuilding Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by email in February 2020.

Mahmoud Shahrah, Civil Servant, Department of Information, Government of Yemen. Interviewed in Amman in February 2020.

Majed Fadail, Rapporteur of the Rights and Freedoms Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed in Amman in February 2020.

Member of the National Dialogue Conference Secretariat. Location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee.

Member of Sustainable Development Working Group. Interviewed using WhatsApp Messaging in February 2020.

Mutea' Dammaj, Member of the Rights and Freedoms Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in January 2020.

Nadia al-Sakkaf, Member of the Presidium of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed using Skype in March 2019.

Nasser Sharif, Member of the Southern Issue Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by WhatsApp (messages) in March 2020.

Representative of Search for Common Ground. Interviewed using Skype in May 2019.

Saher Ghanem, Member of the Statebuilding Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in February 2020.

Samia al-Aghbari, Members of the Rights and Freedoms Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by email in January 2020.

Senior European Union Diplomat. Interviewed using Skype in July 2019.

Senior Mediation Adviser. Interviewed by telephone in May 2019.

Shatha al-Harazi, Rapporteur of the Transitional Justice Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed using Skype in March 2019, and in Amman in February 2020.

Suad Almarani, Member of the Secretariat of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed in Amman in February 2020.

Sylvia Thompson, Senior Manager, Crisis Management Initiative. Interviewed in Amman in February 2020.

Thuraya Dammaj, Member of the Statebuilding Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by email in January 2020.

UN Official (c). Interviewed using Skype in July 2019.

UN Official (d). Interviewed in May 2019. Location/medium retracted to protect anonymity of the interviewee.

Waleed al-Hariri, Director of the US Office, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in April 2019.

Yahya al-Shu'aibi, Member of the Statebuilding Working Group of the National Dialogue Conference. Interviewed by WhatsApp (voice call) in February 2020.

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