Regime Strategy and Opposition Tactics: Rumour in Syria

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Throughout history rumour has been part of the toolkit used by occupational, mandatory and dictatorial regimes to control the societies they govern. By taking a reading of society's response to a given incident or rumour a regime can implement an approach to control this specific reaction, or otherwise — by mounting intensive rumour and propaganda campaigns — to guide society along a path determined by the authorities. The discourse of rumour deploys a carrot-and-stick technique; it frequently bears an implicit message containing vast quantities of symbolic violence with the aim of frightening society while simultaneously offering the hope of salvation and safety to those who change their ways. This type of rumour has a prolonged shelf-life in dictatorial regimes such as that in Syria, where stories of the regime's violence, barbarism and power, and tales of what takes place inside its prisons (both in secret detention centres and regular prisons), are used to neuter society by invoking fear.

With time, this discourse of fear and intimidation enters popular culture in proverbial form. For instance, 'Even the flies won't know how to find his corpse' is juxtaposed with other proverbs such as, 'A hundred mothers mourn but not one tear in my mother's eye' and 'Stick close to the wall and pray to God to keep you safe'. The first of these sayings is designed to intimidate, whereas the second two point the way to safety and security. Counter to what is commonly believed, the authorities work to orchestrate this balance on a daily basis by means of what political science professor Lisa Wedeen terms 'ambiguities of domination'[1] — this doesn't mean that the violence within prisons and detention centres is just rumour or that it does not take place, for it does take place,

but rather that this violence is deployed within authoritarian discourse and re-transmitted into society in the form of rumour (occasionally exaggerated) on a popular level, filtered through the media, yet subject to outright denial by official sources. Thus, every 'channel' has its own mechanism for disseminating rumours, and although the subject matter might be 'true', that is, based on real events that have happened on the ground, and then magnified to make them utilisable, they might also be entirely fabricated, depending on the mechanism used to disseminate them within society, their date, and the purpose for which they are intended.

Rumour in the shadow of the uprising

The Syrian regime benefitted from the fact that the Arab Spring flared up in five countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain) before its flames reached their doorstep. It spared the regime the element of surprise, which otherwise plays such an important role in such affairs and allowed it to devise an emergency containment strategy. It was fully prepared, something that could be clearly sensed on March 30, 2011 in the dictator's first public speech following the start of the uprising.

Rumour is one of the components of the authorities' strategy to forestall and distort the popular opposition movement. The authorities are experts in deploying rumour in a society whose secrets are in their control, unlike the opposition, which even now remains ignorant of the machinations of power in the society in which it operates, so ignorant in fact that on numerous occasions it has helped the regime further its agenda instead of confronting it

Regime rumours

i) The Alawite sect's partisanship

The very first rumours that the regime released painted the uprising as Sunni/Salafist, and as such were an attempt to win the support of minorities, with a clear focus on the Alawite community. Sayings and slogans attributed to the popular movement did the rounds, such as 'Alawites to Beirut, Christians to coffins' as well as the alleged demands of protestors, including 'the separation of men and women' and 'reopening Islamic schools' — without this meaning that these purported demands were all untrue; indeed, one of the movement's leaders in Baniyas, Sheikh Anas Ayrout, had made a number of religious demands, which gave the authorities the opportunity to exaggerate and shape events as they saw fit. Overnight, claims surfaced that protestors were demanding the establishment of a Salafist emirate and confining women to their houses, all of which were rumours aimed at minorities, secularists and other civilians with a simpler, folk religiosity, and designed to preemptively split them off from the uprising.

In the first months of the uprising, the rumours focused on gaining the Alawite community's total support for the regime by encouraging it to think of the revolution as a Sunni phenomenon, which would target the very existence of the Alawites. To achieve this it first had to cut off the Alawite opposition to the
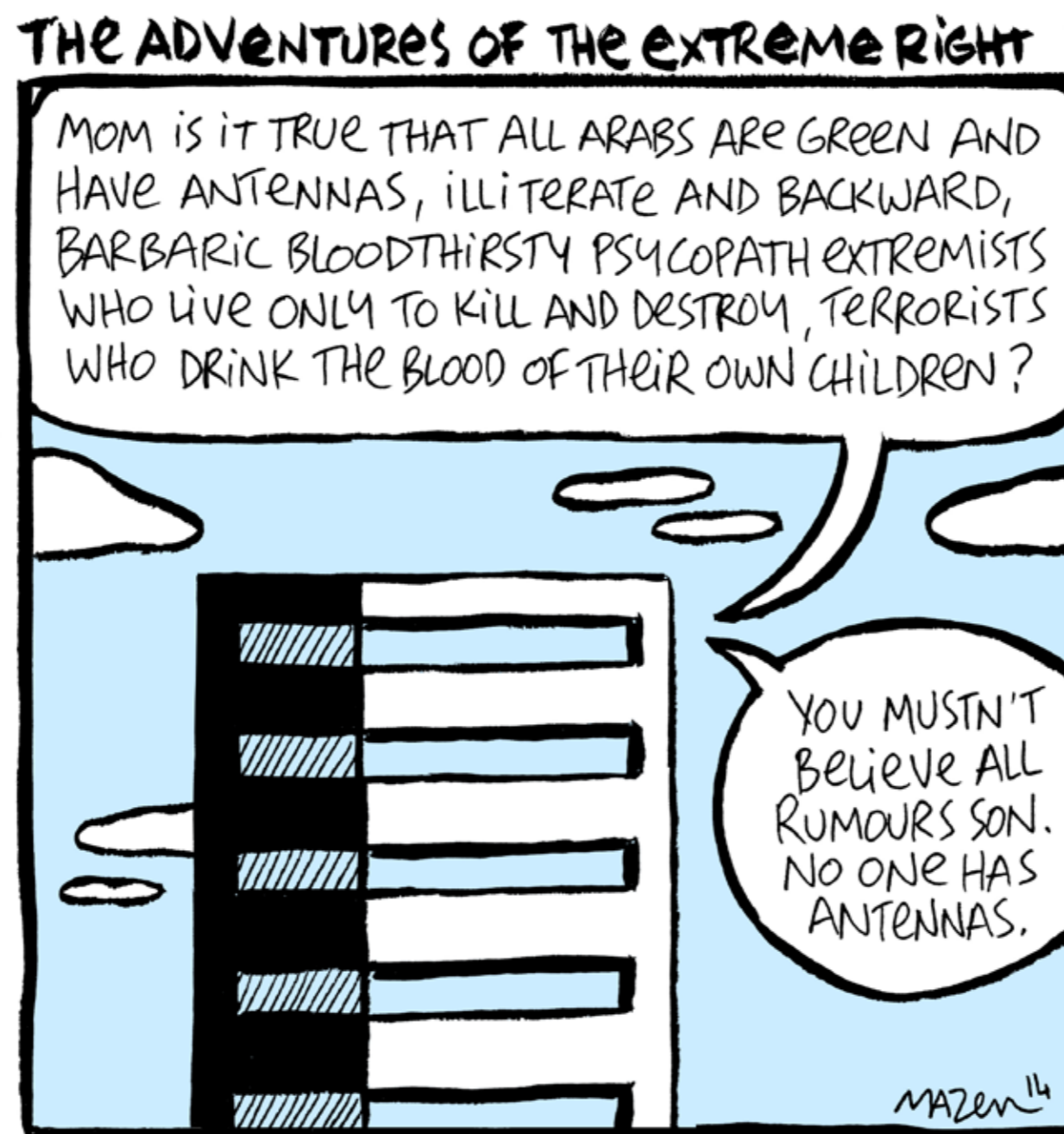
regime from its immediate environment. To this end it launched major rumour campaigns that mentioned individuals by name, describing them as agents of Bandar Bin Sultan (Director General of the Saudi Intelligence Agency from 2012 to 2014) and Hamad Bin Jassem (Prime Minister of Qatar from 2007 to 2013), claiming they took money from foreign embassies. These campaigns were accompanied by announcements on state television that their families and villages had disowned them, thus placing them in immediate danger. For example, an Alawite teacher who participated in the demonstrations in Baniyas was beaten up in his car by his own students; a number of rumours were put into circulation targeting opposition figure Mahmoud Eissa in his village of Al Dardara, and the surrounding area, stating that he worked as an 'observer' from his residence in Homs, and owned a satellite telephone provided to him by international intelligence agencies; at the same time, it was whispered that the activist Marwan Adwan had been detained for transporting weapons into Douma. The majority of opposition figures faced similar allegations.

Through these rumours the authorities were

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seeking to isolate activists and opponents from traditionally Alawite areas and thus prevent them from having any influence over their surrounding communities, which functioned as the regime's reserves of support and manpower. The initial rumours were followed by others which claimed that the authorities had found weapons concealed in cemeteries and the ancient crusader fortress of Qalaat al-Marqab outside Baniyas. These new rumours were designed to give the impression that the Sunnis were arming and therefore the Alawites must protect themselves. The authorities were also looking to create justifications for carrying and using weapons, and it was around this time that the seeds of the pro-regime militias that came to be known as the National Defence Force were first sown. In April/May 2011, the authorities began arming Baathists and setting up checkpoints at entrances and exits to villages, and every day saw new rumours about a 'militant' being arrested or a 'sniper' detained. The situation was exacerbated by the death of

Nidal Junoud, an Alawite who died when the army came under fire at the Baniyas Bridge. This incident inflamed historical fears held by the Alawite community, which began to feel that its existence was under threat. As such, the regime used a combination of rumour and direct action to coax out one element of Alawite identity — a sense of vulnerability — and this process had no connection to appeals to patriotism, 'as [the authorities] knew that people will always cleave most strongly to those aspects of their identity that are most at risk.'[2] These are the words of the renowned writer Amin Maalouf, who offers a powerful explanation of this situation. He explains that, 'In any persecuted group it is only natural to find individuals distinguished by their savagery and opportunism, who promulgate a demagogic discourse to salve the community's wounds. They see no purpose in respecting others, as respect is a right that must be won; rather, they think, respect must be imposed on others. They vow victory or revenge, inflame feelings and sometimes resort to extreme measures, which might fulfill the secret desires of their persecuted brethren. The circle is thus completed and war can now break out. Whatever happens, the "others" deserve their punishment and "we" shall not forget "everything they have made us suffer" since the dawn of history.'[3] He continues, 'What is referred to as "the killing madness" is the hidden propensity of our species to transform into criminals when we feel that "our tribe" is under threat. This is because feelings of fear or insecurity do not always submit to rational considerations, but can be excessive and paranoiac. However, at the moment in which a given people start to become fearful, the reality of their fear should be taken more seriously than the reality of the looming danger.'[4]

ii) Striking at sectarian fault lines, paving the way for civil war, and the introduction of foreign militias

The opposition remained blissfully unaware of all this, taking shelter behind the slogan 'The Syrian people are one', even as the regime set out a clear strategy to push the popular movement towards sectarianism and militarization, and force the Alawite community to turn to it for protection. In this it was assisted by elements within the opposition, and foreign actors who were under the illusion that the regime would collapse overnight, and so used the very same techniques as the regime to gather Sunni support for the revolution. There were numerous rumours to the effect that, 'The shabiha are all Alawites and murderers', and that Sunni villagers would attack Alawite villagers

and vice versa. The writer Fares Saad's report of what one activist said to him is perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon, 'During Ramadan, July 2012, we got word that the Alawites had gathered with staves and knives to attack Baba Amr and were at the bridge. People started assembling, also carrying staves and knives and headed out for the bridge. Half an hour later they returned. Someone asked them what had happened. 'We sent them all home', they said. 'The whole thing was a lie. If they'd said they were attacking with guns we would have believed them, because there are guns in Baba Amr; the militants there killed a security officer a fortnight ago. But to attack with knives? That would mean they were coming to commit suicide, not to fight.' The next day I saw my friend from Al Zahira. An Alawite. 'What's all this?' I jokingly asked him, 'You lot gathering to attack us? You looking to kill us?' He said, 'No, I swear it! We heard that it was you lot gathering at the bridge and looking to kill us!'[5] Here we see rumour and counter-rumour cleverly orchestrated by the regime to strike at sectarian, ethnic and tribal fault lines and thus to prevent these communities from coming together as a single nation capable of mounting a unified revolution. The sub-national (i.e. the sectarian, confessional, tribal, ethnic, etc.) is promoted at the expense of a national identity that expresses itself through slogans of freedom and democracy. As the Syrian author and analyst Salama Keila says, 'The authorities' obsession centered around preventing this by frightening the Alawites with Sunni fundamentalism. Look at their discourse in the first few months and note the symbols they focus on: Salafist emirates; Brotherhood gangs, Al Qaeda, dismemberment, etc. A year into the revolution (from January to April 2012), when they started to sense that they had failed, they unleashed the 'jihadists' to set up the Nusra Front (then ISIS), Ahrar Al Sham, and the Army of Islam.'[6] This would come to play a significant role in the subsequent slide towards hatred and civil war, and pave the way for the incursion of extremism and terrorism into Syrian territory, especially with the evolution and change in the nature of rumours from one period to the next. The rumour that the shrine of Sayyida Zeinab, the daughter of the Shia martyr Ali and granddaughter of the prophet Mohammed, in Damascus was being threatened by Sunnis was a pretext to the incursion of Shiite militias (Hezbollah, Abou al Fadl Al Abbas, etc.) into Syria, while rumours to the effect that, 'Alawites are killing Sunnis', facilitated the introduction of Arab and foreign fighters, turning Syria into the backdrop to a

vicious Sunni-Shia war, waged alongside the conflict between the Syrian Free Army and the regime. Revolution, civil war, extremism and terrorism were jumbled together to form a confusing and complex compound that persists to this day. This shows how, at the end of the day, rumour was a highly effective tool for guiding society into the regime's trap. Rumours paved the way and all possible efforts were made to promulgate them, from dispatching informants and agents to villages and towns, to leaking information on Facebook, where the Syrian intelligence services control a number of pages that, alongside their rumour-mongering, give minute-by-minute updates of events from around the country.

iii) Overwhelming people with day-to-day difficulties as a means of fomenting civil strife

Events during June 2014 in the city of Salamiye provide clear evidence of this approach. The city was without water and electricity for approximately one week, prompting residents to protest against their situation. Rumours claimed that the power would come on the next day, and it would – for an hour. When people began to question what was happening, rumours were circulated that the electricity grids and water supply were being destroyed by refugees from the city of Hama. On June 29, 2014, the Facebook page *salamiehlive* (which many activists believe is run by the security services), posted the following, 'According to the Electricity Board, the reason for the black-outs in #Salamiye is the governorate of #Hama!! Now you can see who wants you to go out and demonstrate!! The folk from Hama have realized that the people of Salamiye have provided 4,000 martyrs and heroes to Syrian Arab Army and have taken in some 250,000 refugees from every governorate in Syria, and many in Hama don't like it… !! Since Salamiye is part of the governorate of Hama, Hama can mess with the daily lives of Salamiyens as they please… How much longer will the people of Hama go on stealing our daily crust and basic services!!!' This was followed by a second post on June 30, 'Young men and boys… Could someone please explain to me why the electricity in Hama is out 3 times in 3 days but 7 times in 1 day in Salamiye!!'[7] Note the incendiary language and the attempts to exacerbate regional tensions between the residents of Salamiye and Hama, using rumour to incite Salamiyens to expel those from Hama and refuse to rent them accommodation, the implicit message being, 'If you want electricity then you have to chuck the residents of Hama out or at least make their lives difficult.' Hama,

Salamiye and the surrounding countryside have been targeted by a high volume of rumours. We were told by one locally-based intellectual that when the Syrian army entered the village of Al Saaen and began looting, rumours went round that it was residents from Al Saboura who were committing the thefts and not the soldiers — all in an effort to preserve the army's reputation!

iv) Isolating minorities

Returning to our earlier theme, once the authorities were certain that the Alawite community had been secured — especially after it had managed to force the majority of Alawite opposition figures to leave their communities — it turned to other minority sects such as the Christians and Druze. At first it pumped out a high volume of rumours to the effect that what was happening in the country was only between the Sunnis and the Alawites, and concerned no one else. These were accompanied by the usual slogans demonizing the popular movement, with a particular focus on rumours about women, the hijab, Islamic clothing and Jihadist Salafism. All this left a mark. Today one still finds people who say, 'This conflict is between the Sunnis and Alawites, and if the Christians and Druze are smart they'll stay out of it!' This is precisely what the authorities want. What these minorities consider 'smart' is nothing less than the result of a strategy perfectly executed by the regime which began with rumours in the provinces claiming that the war was between Sunnis and Alawites. Initially, the regime desired only that these minorities display a bias in its favour, while it completed the business of establishing the Alawite sect in its ranks and demonizing the popular movement. In the next phase minorities were encouraged to lend it their support, though often at a remove. In both cases the regime used religious figures to encourage the different sects to conform. It should be noted that the regime has not been able to sway minority opinion totally in its favour, minority participation in the popular movement is noticeable, though somewhat tokenistic, in Qamishli, Amouda, Salamiye, and certain towns and villages around Suweida.

This approach has been accompanied by a parallel effort to incite members of minority sects against the Sunni majority, particularly within the security services and armed forces. Shortly after the uprising began, a security officer in one military unit assembled minority servicemen and openly incited them against Sunnis in an attempt to entrench the idea that minorities must stick together.[8] At first this went hand-in-hand with preferential treatment for members of minorities within the various branches of the security services, and at checkpoints, though this situation is not stable and changes as the uprising evolves. When the armed opposition attempted to draw the Druze-majority city of Suweida into the war with the regime, observers noted that city residents were being tortured to death while alarmist rumours circulated that the Nusra Front was threatening to shell the city and enslave women—this had certainly not happened at an earlier stage.

v) Rumours after the militarization of the revolution

As the revolution transitioned into an armed movement the rumours changed. The authorities became more certain of their ability to persuade large swathes of the population of their point of view, particularly since they had, at an earlier stage, circulated many rumours about the presence of weapons. The movement's militarization served to convince minorities and regime supporters that these rumours had been true, and paved the way for the spread of even more, while the opposition remained incapable of countering them—or at the very least of proving to those who had joined the movement that they were untrue. During the period of peaceful opposition the situation was exactly the opposite; despite the intensive rumour campaigns mounted by the regime, its tactics backfired and the finger of blame pointed squarely back at it. This was even the case among the 'silent blocs' which then gradually lost faith in the opposition and began to stand behind the regime. The regime knew just how to manage this situation, by keeping these blocs trapped in a web of rumours, which it would add to every few days, tailored for specific regions. In the city of Jaramana in East Ghouta there were daily rumours that 'jihadists' were infiltrating the city to take revenge and enslave women. This situation was exacerbated by the quotidian inconvenience of water and power supplies being disconnected for hours at a time, ensuring that most of the district was turned into a series of enclaves ruled by fear and rumours, which obscured a truth that was at first obvious to the residents but which later became nebulous. We see the same thing with the mortar fire which falls continuously on certain cities and claims the lives of innocent civilians, without any sure way of knowing who is responsible, particularly since the situation can vary from region to region. The issue remains a wedge between Syrians themselves, some of whom blame the regime for manipulating people into clinging to it for protection within the huge prison, that is Syria, and whose gates it controls, and those who accuse the armed opposition.

The impact of these rumours, which manipulate and shape public opinion according to the designs of the authorities, continue to sever the social ties that bind Syrians together, prevent them from uniting, and has left them on the verge of civil war. Rumours have even impacted on the course of actual battles, with daily claims that such-and-such an area had surrendered its weapons or had agreed to a truce, or was about to. This was done with the aim of sowing mutual distrust between the armed groups, and between them and the communities in which they operated. These communities then began to worry that if the militants were making deals without consulting them they would be left at the regime's mercy. Other rumours spoke of the 'supernatural' or 'highly organized' power of Hezbollah units and the pro-regime Aboul Fadl Al Abbas Brigades, and the crimes they committed in areas that they had entered. These rumours aimed at intimidating the other side before the fighting had begun, and convincing them they would lose. The media and state controlled stations such as Al Mayadeen and Al Akhbar also played their part. Ibrahim Amin, editor-in-chief of Al Akhbar admitted in an interview with a Lebanese newspaper (also called Al Akhbar) that, 'There's great progress been made, right up to the recent battle in Yabroud where psychological warfare played a decisive role in achieving a rapid victory and enabled the Syrian army and fighters from the Lebanese resistance to reach their objectives with minimum losses and without exposing their target areas to excessive destruction. The media-psychological battle is a massive security and intelligence operation and makes every fighter on the opposition frontline believe that he is sure to be defeated. The choice they then have is whether to flee, to withdraw, to enter negotiations, or to die!'[9]

For a precise understanding of the mechanism and tools used by the regime and its allies in the creation of rumour, and how they circulate rumours until they become self-fulfilling, we should reexamine the claim that terrorists were going to destroy the Sayyida Zeinab shrine in Damascus. In a jointly-written article, Ibrahim Amin and Hassan Oleik state, 'Along with attempts to pin accusations of murder on Hezbollah and demonize them they [the regime] started looking for some strategic trap into which they could lure them. With this in mind they moved to meddle with Shia holy places, particularly the shrine of Sayyida Zeinab in South Damascus. Hezbollah rushed to ask permission from the Syrian leadership to dispatch groups of its fighters in order to prevent the shrine from falling into the hands of militants. This was the first public indication of Hezbollah's involvement. For a long time the group's fighters mounted no aggressive operations; indeed, they lost many members who were concentrated in positions designed to defend the shrine.'[10] This makes it quite clear that the rumour was nothing but a pretext to facilitate Hezbollah's entry into Syria, a point reinforced by the fact that the group is currently active on all of Syria's front lines, and is not confining itself to protecting sites sacred to the Shia.

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The opposition and revolutionary forces

The use of rumour is not the sole preserve of the regime, but has also been practiced by the opposition and the revolutionary forces on a number of occasions.

i) Opposition rumours

Over the course of the Syrian revolution many rumours have circulated with the aim of impacting the regime, its infrastructure and supporters. Initially, they were of the type, 'The president has fled from his palace', 'There's been a palace coup' or 'Top political and military figures have defected', which were quickly exposed as untrue. These rumours included claims of the defection of President Assad's political and media advisor, Buthaina Shaaban, the defection of the head of the Syrian army's logistics corps, Mohammed Khallouf, and finally that of deputy president Farouq al-Sharaa — a rumour that was confirmed by opposition activist Haitham al-Maleh before being shown to be untrue.

Rumours were also circulated about the imminent collapse of the Syrian economy, the regime's inability to pay the wages of employees in state agencies, the decline in the central bank's currency reserves, inflated figures of the number of security and army defectors. These were in addition to numerous rumours surrounding atrocities and massacres (not so much the massacres themselves, but the figures, precise events and their circulation in

the media). These rumours would start with the number of victims and include the identities of those responsible and descriptions of how the massacre was carried out. They would then accuse the shabiha and security services of responsibility, accompanied by endless hints and suggestions that these operatives were exclusively Alawite, which was by no means correct, but added fuel to the fire and helped to lift the invisible buffers that shielded sectarian communities from one another. Most of these rumours were circulated during the non-violent stage of the uprising.

After weapons became widespread exaggerated claims about the strength of the oppositional armed brigades gained currency as they prepared to attack Damascus, Aleppo and Al Deir, with the aim of intimidating the regime and shaking the confidence of its armed forces. There were further exaggerated claims about the strength of the opposition's defences in Quseir and Qalamoun, the errancy of which became clear when the regime managed to gain control over these areas.

ii) The opposition's circulation of regime rumours

Perhaps the biggest trap into which the opposition and revolutionary forces fell was to turn themselves, on occasion, into unwitting tools of the regime by circulating its rumours. The regime would frequently generate rumours that the opposition would seize on and put back into circulation without checking their accuracy or whether they served the regime's objectives. Back on July 27, 2011, a rumour spread that, 'The governor of Deirezzor, Samir Othman, has been killed and the head of military security Jami Jami Ali wounded by a defected army unit.'[11] The news was confirmed by numerous opposition figures, including Louay Hussein, on their personal Facebook pages, only for it to later become clear that it was just a rumour, with no basis in reality. This happened with many rumours, all of which were subsequently shown to have originated with the regime and been circulated by the opposition. The Zeinab al-Hosni case, which was hugely controversial within revolutionary circles, might be the clearest indication of the extent to which the opposition fell into the regime's trap. Arab and Western media published a huge volume of reports on Zeinab being brutally tortured to death, a story that the opposition adopted wholeheartedly, only for Zeinab to subsequently show up on Syrian television. The true circumstances surrounding this case remain a mystery to this day.[12]

Looking at the above, it seems apparent that the regime was working to smear the opposition's reputation in the eyes of the general public, and strip away its credibility by generating rumours which the opposition would pick up only to have them shown to be lies. This advanced the regime's agenda even further, as to have a rumour of its own adopted by the enemy is a significantly greater coup.

The most obvious demonstration of how the opposition came to inadvertently act as tool of the regime is found in the way the opposition parroted the regime's rumours in the run up to the presidential elections. They repeated claims such as those that the security services would detain any citizen that did not go to vote, that checkpoints around the country would let no one through whose fingers were not marked by voting ink, and that the regime would visit people's homes and force them to go to the voting booths. The regime lent these rumours credibility by mounting a number of genuine operations, such as placing personnel at checkpoints who threatened citizens by saying, 'Anyone who comes through here tomorrow without an ink mark on them either won't get through or will be locked up.' Then a few days before the elections, men in plain-clothes were sent round to people's houses telling them that everyone must vote. No one was able to check their identities and no openly stated threat was made, but the message was clear enough.[13]

In their eagerness to take a stand against these elections, the opposition spread word of the regime's actions and exaggerated them, thus assisting the regime in promulgating an atmosphere of fear. The regime's primary objectives were to use fear to force citizens to go to the voting booths and secondly, and more importantly, to reconstruct the barrier of fear that had once held people in check.
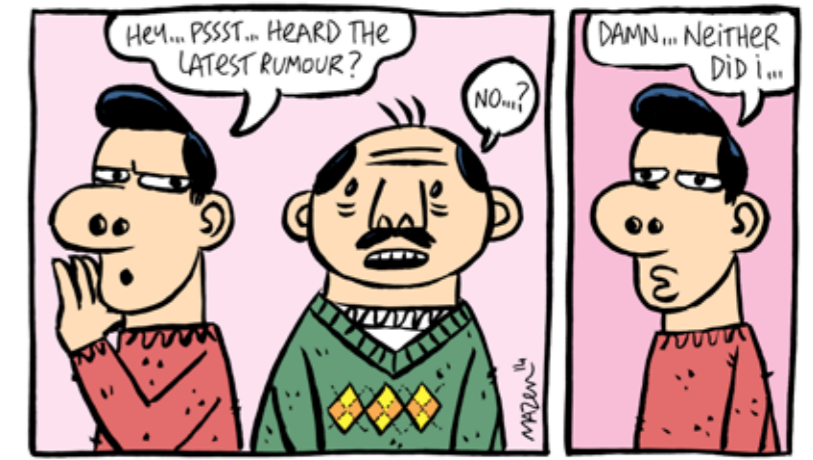
We can be sure of this last point when we realise that on election-day the regime enacted none of the rumoured measures, with the exception of stationing security officers at state buildings to remind people of their presence and encourage them to vote. The fear that the regime had sown with its rumours, and that the opposition had helped to entrench, did the rest.

Conclusion

A close look at the way in which the regime uses rumour shows us that it is a central component in the authorities' strategy to counter any revolutionary activity that it might face — it serves as re-affirmation that the regime holds the keys to political power and social control. For decades it has worked to 'booby-trap' society from within by preventing the various sects and groups that make up

Syria from coming together. It has smothered civil society in the cradle, while protecting and nurturing sectarian sentiments which it can then orchestrate according to its whims. Syria is left with a network of sub-national/state relationships that function as a state within a state, made up of village and urban grandees (landowners, mayors, merchants, sectarian chiefs, tribal elders, religious leaders, etc), the self-same networks that were prevalent during the Ottoman occupation and French mandate. In this way, the regime is able to set down invisible boundaries, or buffers, between sects and Syrian citizens, which it can lift whenever it chooses through the use of rumour, detentions and orchestrated chaos, confident that the collective conscious of Syrians will not reach the level of a national consciousness capable of overcoming sectarian loyalties.

If the authorities are doing this in order to preserve themselves and their privileges, it is equally notable that the opposition, in the way they have acted in taking on the regime, have shown a clear inability to deal with the situation. This raises a serious question-mark over the opposition, which has studied neither the regime nor the power structures it has put in place well enough to critically deconstruct them. The opposition needs to ask questions such as: Why has the regime survived for all these years? What strategy is it using at the moment? What is the role of rumour in its successes? Only in this way can it achieve an understanding of the regime's essential nature and the methods by which society and the opposition can effectively confront it. In this regard, we are confronted by a clear shortcoming on the part of the opposition for which it is paying the price today. If the opposition had any real knowledge of the regime's methods, of the nature of its activities and the tools it uses, it would be able to create an approach to resistance that would neutralise the regime's arsenal, foremost among these being the rumours that have poisoned society and infected the revolution itself. The opposition treats rumour as a short-term tactic and looks no further than the moment in which a rumour is set in motion. It has no conception of a clear strategy in which the use of rumour is part of a set of decisions that aim to achieve one short-term objective after another until the final goal is achieved. Today, it seems obvious that rumour was one component of an integrated system put in place by the regime to achieve its goals, and which, as the opposition stumbles blindly along, continues to do so.

1. See: Lisa Wedeen. 1999. Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
2. Amin Maalouf, Les Identités meurtrières (Arabic: Al Huwiyaat Al Qaatila), Translated by Nahla Beidoun, Dar Al Farab,i 2011 (2nd Ed.), p.41
3. Ibid, p.42
4. Ibid, p.43
5. http://digital.ahram.org.eg/Community.aspx?Serial=1134474
6. http://janoubia.com/184791
7. In the Arabic the author preserved the spelling mistakes and orthography of the original posts, and this has been followed (minus spelling mistakes) by the translator. The author spoke to a number of intellectuals and activists in Salamiye to establish the true facts. The Facebook page can be found at this link: https://www.facebook.com/salamiehlive
8. Conversation between the author and one of the individuals involved.
9. http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/204391
10. http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/204390
11. https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/20651.html
12. For more information, see the following Wikipedia article on Zeinab Al Hosni: http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A8_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B5%D9%86%D9%8A
13. Personally witnessed by the author.

* Translated from the Arabic by Robin Moger