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Causes and Consequences of the Syrian Civil War

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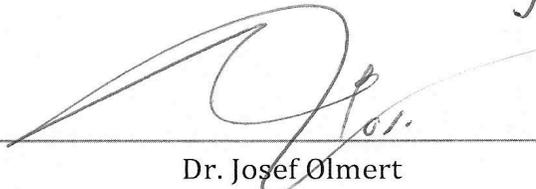Causes and Consequences of the Syrian Civil War

By

Chelsea Marie Baltes

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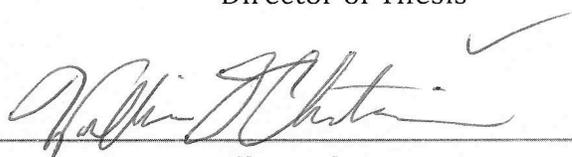Graduation with Honors from the
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Historical Causes & Modern Consequences of the Syrian Civil War

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Abstract

This senior thesis is an in depth analysis of the historical causes of the Syrian civil war. I argue that the main components leading to the civil war under Bashar al-Asad were as follows; Sectarian division, French intervention and mandates, Israeli & Syrian conflict, Egypt & Syrian Union, and Hafiz al-Asad's rise to power. My research and analysis provided demonstrates that these previously mentioned historical stimuli have all amalgamated leading to the instability under Bashar al-Asad and ultimately the modern civil war we see today. The paper will also analyze the consequences of this instability seen in government and society, the source of the brutal civil war. These consequences include a look at Lebanon as a case study, the economy both domestically in Syria and internationally, demographic changes, and a focus on refugee movements seen today. It concludes with the establishment that the civil war is the result of not just one individual event, as is often argued internationally, but rather a conglomerate of deeply intertwined historical moments.

I.   OPENING

The Middle East often brings to one's mind thoughts of turmoil, instability, strife, and overall chaos. A region of the world plagued by civil and international wars, it has experienced increased dissention among citizens, failing governments, and growth in terrorist strongholds. What was once seen as a problem for a few, has grown to be a problem for many. Many outside forces, including the United States, felt intervention could aid and alleviate the situation. Intervention in the Middle East though, has now come at a hefty price. With the United States, and many other effected countries, facing domestic debate concerning the issues at hand in the Middle East and how to proceed, they are too far in to leave but are constantly risking the lives of their own people. Many argue the United States should have never invaded Iraq in 2003, and that this was the start of international players meddling with foreign affairs in this region. While this can be debated for years to come, one thing is much more clear. Not only with the United States, but all international powers who play a prominent role in international relations, the lack of understanding the deeply rooted history of these countries is where they have gone direly wrong. I aim with this paper to prove that international belief in one specified event as the cause of the civil war does not bring us closer to a solution for Syria.

To even begin to make a positive change and democratize a region of the world so different from western culture, one must analyze where it has been and how it got to where it currently is. The Middle East is complexly intertwined, with vehemently devoted persons of both religion and ethnicity. The historical events between these multitudes of various sects, dates significantly farther back than most other countries' existence, especially the United States, the fundamental outside component we see today. While each country has a

different story to tell, it is Syria that has stolen the modern spotlight and debate floor. Syria, a country many felt to be stable and secure under the Asad Regime has come toppling down in the past five years by a raging civil war. This civil war, full of violent acts against humanity and civil rights, has led to a mass exodus of Syrian peoples. Seeking refuge wherever will accept them; the refugee crisis has become a new focal point for political debate concerning the Middle East. Terrorist groups have seen the Syrian civil war and resulting refugee movements as an opportunity to impose harm on their target countries through infiltration into different countries posed as a refugee. Of course there are many terrible side effects of the Syrian civil war, however this paper will focus on the most tragic consequence; refugee movements. To understand how Syria has arrived at this cataclysmic point, one must first analyze and understand the history of the country. The historical events that will be analyzed include the sectarian divides, French imperialism and mandates, the Israeli & Syrian conflict, the union between Egypt & Syria, Hafiz al-Asad's rise to power, and the current rule of Bashar al-Asad. This paper will analyze the history of the Syrian civil war in a way that supports a multifaceted view of its historical causes. It will also examine the modern tragic consequences broadly that we are experiencing today, and then specifically the resulting refugee movement. It concludes with the establishment that the civil war is the result of not just one individual event, as is often argued internationally, but rather a conglomerate of deeply intertwined historical moments.

II. HISTORY

There must be an understanding of the main historical moments that have contributed to the Syrian failure. As Syrian expert Josef Olmert stated, "its fundamental

causes, as well as its course and possible implications are uniquely bound with the political development of the Syrian state from its very inception" (SPME). Understanding Syria begins with an analysis of how The Middle East even came into existence. Before it was, as it is today, modernly known as "The Middle East", it was historically referred to as "the Near East". The extensive historical background of such a region is what plays such a deeply prominent role in where it is at today. No other region or country has the depth of history quite like the Middle East; after all, one author describes it as "the most ancient region of human civilization" (Mansfield). To understand the causes of the modern civil war in Syria, including the French rule and mandate, the war with Israel, the various sects and ethnic groups, the Ba'ath party, and the Assad Regime, one must first understand how they all came about. With that, let us start from the beginning.

Syria today is marked by its diverse ethnic and religious groups. Having such a variety of peoples, with the smallest differences, plays not only into its rich culture, but its undertone for violence. Even from the start Syria was recognized as an eccentric population having a mixture of peoples and culture. One of the first recognized groups to dominate Syria for a thousand years from 3500 B.C. were the non-Semitic and highly civilized Sumerians from Mesopotamia (Mansfield). Then came the Semitic Amorites, nomads from central Arabia, who defeated the Sumerians. After that, the Babylonians in the middle of the third millennium who were followed by the Egyptians. The Egyptians however, were driven out throughout history by different invaders including the Hittites' who completely conquered all of Syria in 1450 B.C. (Mansfield). As these groups began to settle and make Syria and Palestine their home, they became known as a collective whole called the Canaanites in 1600 B.C. This group was unique because although they were

known by one name, they were made up of many different people from many different places. Next, in 1200 B.C. the Armaeans gained control of Damascus. As time passed on, control of Syria changed hands often. Through it all though, the Canaanites avoided violence and battle by getting along with their conquerors and making civilization between the two possible.

As Alexander the Great came to The Middle East and began conquering cities and states, Syria fell into the hands of Seleucus. Seleucus was a Persian ruler and friend of Alexander's, whom eventually founded the capital city of Syria, Antioch. As Rome became a dominant force in the Middle East, Greek rivals Seleucid and Ptolemaic sent Syria into a decline. This decline was played out through the local powers in Syria who saw the battle and weakness as a chance to assert themselves and claim what they wanted. This created more tension and hostile feelings than were already once present. Eventually, from 29 B.C. to A.D. 14 the entire Middle East region was incorporated into the Roman Empire. From this point on for a while, Syria and several other countries experienced peace and order through Roman law. The Romans were a rather fair conqueror with much of Syria, allowing locations to remain autonomous so long as they didn't threaten any sort of instability in the Roman rule. As we will later see amongst the minorities and Sunni in Syria, even historically the urban population was more educated and part of the intellectual elite, while the rural population tended to be those of the lower socioeconomic classes constituting peasants and tribesman.

Later controlled by the Byzantines, a small group of Islamic faith followers set their sites on regaining Syria and Egypt, which they succeeded by unifying through their resentment towards imperial powers. Upon conquering Syria, the death of the prophet, and

the assassination of the Caliph successor, the first cousin of the Prophet was to be the

successor. However, Ali was defeated by the Umayyads, which led to the first and only

great division in Islam: between the Sunnis, or 'people of the sunnah', who are the great

majority, and the Shia or 'partisans' of Ali (Mansfield). This has had a major affect on the

modern region we see today as each country is dominated or has a majority group of

typically either Sunni or Shiite causing great dissention and turmoil.

Syria from the beginning has had a civilization marked by numerous changes of

power. The instant a weakness is shown by the group or person in charge, or the moment

more than one group find synonymous ground to go up against the authority, is when a

change in power and confrontation occurs. As hostile feelings towards imperial outside

forces became a unifying force against the Byzantine people, it would also become a factor

in Syrian interaction with the French. As the collapse of the Ottoman Empire came to the

forefront, Britain and France took it upon themselves to do what they wanted in the Middle

East.

III. SECTARIAN DIVISIONS

Understanding Syrian history should be like building blocks. To begin, there must be

an understanding of the various religious and ethnic groups that have emerged over the

years. This is a key factor to basic understanding because, "despite a great measure of

cultural uniformity, Syria's present population is characterized by strong religious and

ethnic diversity" (Van Dam). Some of this diversity stems from the religious minorities,

which are the Alawis (11.5%), Druzes (3.0%), Isma'ilis (1.5%), and the Greek Orthodox

Christians (4.7%), who constitute the most important community of all Christians in Syria

(14.1%) (Van Dam). The other side of diversity stems from the ethnic branch of minorities. These principle minorities are the Kurds (8.5%), Armenians (4.0%), Turcomans (3.0%), and Circassians (Van Dam). A portion of the minorities belong to the Sunni Muslim population, allowing them to identify to some extent with a majority of the population while others find themselves falling in the minority category in both religion and ethnicity. It is thus evident that Syria is filled with an array of religious and ethnic variations contributing to their diversity, and their turmoil. Author Nikolaos Van Dam, a specialist on Syria, attributes the existence of so many religious and ethnic groups in Syria to seven main factors. The first factor is, "The three major monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all have their origins in the wider region of which Syria is part. The Formation of sects and different schools within these religions led to a great diversity of faiths" (Van Dam). In other words, the Middle East is the source of the three main umbrella religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The smaller branches of each of these religious groups that have formed over the years of history, each have diverted from the main train of thought in their own right. With slight variations in beliefs and worship, the factions have created an assortment of new religious faiths and practices all at play around the world, and more importantly in Syria.

The second influential factor that Van Dam points out is, "The Fertile Crescent, of which Syria is part, has in the past regularly been exposed to conquest by various population groups, such as the Arabs, Kurds, Mongols and Turks, and has always been a centre of tribal and individual movement" (Van Dam). The Fertile Crescent is a name given to a crescent shaped area of the Middle East region that was made up of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and northern Egypt. This same region has also been nicknamed

"The Cradle of Civilization". This region can be deemed an area typical of conquest due to its prime conditions for agricultural prosperity including the fertility of the land. An example of historical evidence proving the attempt to conquer this area by different population groups is seen during the time of the Ottoman rule from 1708-1758, when "the province of Damascus was caught in a vise between displaced Arab, Turkman, and Kurdish tribes as well as the great movement of Arab tribes from the south, all threatening the whole of the Fertile Crescent" (Barbir).

The third factor is that, "At times the Middle East has been a place of refuge for people who were persecuted in surrounding regions on political or religious grounds. Groups of these refugees were able to settle in Syria or its surroundings" (Van Dam). The next factor was, "Tribal and national differences caused by all these developments often took on a religious aspect and contributed to the rise of different religious communities. It is only natural that political and religious diversities developed simultaneously as part of this process" (Van Dam). The rise of different religious communities was the source of the now pluralistic culture and society apparent in Syria. Religious pluralism is often defined as the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society. Religious affiliations are strong in the sense that people choose based on which truths they believe to be correct. In this thought process it leaves no room for acceptance of truly varying opinions. Religious sects offer their own exclusive claims, so to speak. As the Syrian society became a conglomerate of persecuted people from outside their borders, this cultivated the rise of differing opinions, which ultimately crossed over into the political realm. The fifth factor was that, "Religious, tribal and linguistic differences have frequently been preserved and strengthened as a result of localism, an intense local loyalty which in certain regions was

fostered by the geographical structure. This was particularly true of the mountains and valleys of the Latakia region, and of the Jabal al-Duruz, with its difficult access" (Van Dam).

The next factor was the role of deficient communications in areas of difficult access and the lack of a strong central authority which have both helped to preserve the distinctive character and independence of religious and national groups (Van Dam). In other words if a specific group wished to remain out of state and government control they were able to secure seclusion in order to be undisturbed. As a result, the areas that the government did and could extend control over tended to be inhabited by the dominant religious and national groups. In the case of Syria, this was the Sunni Arabs. In their best effort to avoid subjection the minorities, Alawis, Druzes, and Isma'ilis, historic decision to seclude themselves, has since left their population's fate sealed in the less accessible regions. The final factor is that, "religious and ethnic diversities were also encouraged by the toleration shown by Islam towards Christians and Jews as well as the formal equality of national groups inside Islam. Ultimately, far reaching assimilation took place" (Van Dam). In conclusion, not only were differing religious and ethnic minority groups spreading like wildfire in Syria, they were spreading in a society that was doing nothing to stop it at the time. This partial acceptance, or toleration, can be attributed to the lack of emphasis on nationalism at the time, which would later grow exponentially causing great rifts among the growing diversity.

The Alawis, Druzes, and Isma'ilis, which all make up the "compact religious minorities" must be discussed based on their strong political role in Syrian history. As was mentioned previously, many of the minority ethnic and religious groups sought out seclusion to abstain from the rule of law of the government. This caused the Alawis to find

themselves particularly concentrated in the Latakia region where they constitute a local

majority of about 75% of all Syrian Alawis (Van Dam). While making up a majority in

Latakia's rural population they constituted a minority in the urban coastal cities. As a

result, rural-urban and class contrasts more often than not coincided with sectarian

differences (Van Dam). Furthermore the urban population, primarily made up of Sunnis,

became increasingly dominant and controlling over the rural population, primarily made

up of Alawis. Beaten down and poverty-stricken, distrust and anger towards Sunnis by the

Alawis grew strong.

The Alawis are typically subdivided into four main confederations. These

confederations are their tribal affiliations. The four main confederations are: the

Khayyatun, Haddadun, Matawirah and Kalbiya (Van Dam). Perpetuating the deeply diverse

culture of Syria, "of the four Alawi tribal confederations two important religious groups

have split off; the Haydariyun and the Ghasasinah" (Van Dam). The Haydariyun who have

their own religious differentiating unity continued to uphold their tribal ties. The

Ghasasinah came to the forefront following the First World War under the leadership of

Sulayman al-Murhsid. Upon his death, most of his followers re-associated and reconnected

ties to their former tribes. Villages and land in the Middle East, specifically Syria, are split

up and owned amongst the eclectic families of various tribes. These tribes were further

subdivided and each subdivision had its own foreman or "muqaddam" (Van Dam). Alawi

tribes also had their own religious leader who was expected to perform the same duties

with less power. In many cases though, the religious leaders were so influential that they

were able to compete with the tribal leader for power and leadership within a tribe. Due to

the land being split up according to family ties, most often the tribes of these lands were

acquired through inheritance. However, there were select instances where an individual became a tribal leader based not on family connections but by personal qualities or influence in Syrian power institutions at a national level (Van Dam). The latter circumstance of gaining tribal leadership allowed the opportunity for a few poor Alawi families to be placed in powerful positions (Van Dam). One essential example of this is President Hafiz al-Asad. This family ultimately became the powerhouse regime that has led the outbreak of civil war in Syria.

The "Alawi Mountains" as they were called, were so remote and underdeveloped that the low socio-economic status of the Alawis was taken advantage of by the Sunnis through inadequate pay for tobacco sales. Relations between the two groups were sewn with contempt and resentment, especially as poor Alawi families began selling their daughters as house servants for urban Sunnis (Van Dam). However, since the rise to power of the Asad regime and Ba'th party in 1963, circumstances for Alawi peasants have greatly improved. Education was highly sought after for the Alawi people. They were able to attain higher education and more weighty degrees by their now powerful co-religionist Ba'th party. Raising their status as doctors, lawyers, engineers and university professors, "by the 1990s the Alawi people were rivaling and sometimes displacing the Sunni and Christian intelligentsia" (Van Dam). Syria experienced a transfer of power and was now under Alawi dominated Ba'thist rule (Van Dam). Over time many of the previously considered Sunni coastal cities had become majority Alawi through what became known as "Alawisation" (Van Dam). This trend also became apparent in the suburbs of a major city in Syria, Damascus.

The Syrian Druzes, like the Alawis, experienced seclusion and high concentration, but in al-Suwayda. Their percent concentration is far greater in al-Suwayda than the Alawis in the Latakia region. The Druzes in the al-Suwayda region have ancestral roots in Lebanon, Palestine and the Aleppo region. In this region the people are evenly distributed with the urban and rural areas both consisting of primarily Druze peoples. As a result of this, a differing point between the two regions that must be addressed is, unlike in the Latakia region where the traditional elite is a mixture of Alawi, Christians, and Sunni; the traditional elite in al-Suwayda is entirely Druze (Van Dam). These two regions and their populations are a crucial component to understanding internal Syrian relations, something very central to the civil war. The homogeneous population in al-Suwayda contributes to its overall stronger regional identification and therefore social cohesion than is present in Latakia where intra-regional tensions are greater (Van Dam). Therefore, "Religious-tribal-feudal relations, such as those existing within the Alawi community, have not occurred among the Druzes" (Van Dam). When the Druze migrated from Lebanon, Palestine, and Aleppo, they were able to dominate and lead in the al-Suwayda region for one of two reasons; either "they numerically were a majority or because villages were composed almost entirely of members of one extended family" (Van Dam). The Druzes of this region have been marked by their strength to show relatively consistent unity. When the central Ottoman government or the Syrian government in Damascus attempted to extend their authority over the Druze, they resisted and remained undivided. Syria is a country whose history is full of division, division in religion, ethnicity, regional territory, politics, and more. One can begin to see how easily and even likely dissention among the various groups

is, especially in a region of the world that culturally holds so dearly and recognizes so firmly these differences.

The province of Hama is the major center for the minority group Isma'ilis. More specifically they are located primarily in the districts of Masyaf and Salamiyah. In the eleventh century most Isma'ilis fled to the mountains of the Latakia region. At this time they began to settle in the towns of Masyaf and Qadmus. The division of the Latakia region between the Isma'ilis and the Alawis was not with good spirit. The Alawis tended to be hostile towards the Isma'ilis who eventually migrated back to Salamiyah "after the Ottoman Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II granted them part of the Empire's domain there in 1845" (Van Dam). The Isma'ilis located in the Alawi mountains have remained poor over time while those who returned to Salamiyah advanced economically and socially (Van Dam). This contrast can be attributed to the suppression and domination by the majority Alawi population in the Latakia region over the minority group of Isma'ilis. Whereas in Salamiyah the Isma'ilis are more concentrated, constituting a majority, as well as protected by the Ottoman Sultan having formally granted them land there. This allows the Isma'ilis to be their own elite and their own leaders not having to abide by another sect's rules or subjections.

Historians, reporters, politicians, and various citizens of different countries often point to the most obvious cultural differences in the Arab world as the reason for its troubles and downfall. Sectarianism, regionalism, tribalism, and class struggle are so often thrown out but never analyzed. Yes, they play an incredibly imperative role in understanding and studying Syria and their civil war. Yet, it is not as simple as just saying those categories. A further and deeper understanding must be attained to see the

complexities between the categories and the people that fall into them. Often the problems arise when people fall into varying positions amongst more than one of the categories. For example, affiliating with a certain religion that doesn't match up with your specific tribe, class, or sectarian views. This is where conflict arises. There are categories or divisions, then within those there are subcategories and subdivisions, all the way down the pole until there is a plethora of offshoots with which a single individual or group can indentify with. When the categories overlap, it makes it "difficult to determine which play a role in a particular situation. In the event of overlap, there is a danger of interpreting tribal loyalty as regional and/or sectarian loyalties, for instance, or vice versa" (Van Dam). In another instance "sectarian, regional, and tribal groups may in turn partially overlap with socio-economic differences" (Van Dam). This causes issues because for starters a religious community usually is made up of all socio-economic classes. On the flip side, "sectarian loyalties can have a catalyzing influence on the take-off of a class struggle if sectarian contrasts coincide with socio-economic differences" (Van Dam). In countries like the U.S. this is praised to be different. Longed for to be unique and think for yourself, follow what you believe. In the Middle East, in Syria, where ancestral and family views and beliefs are so prided, where the categories you identify with are so highly examined, your differences can be the deciding factor between friends or enemies, peace or violence.

As was seen previously in the analysis of the various groups and sects creating division among Syrians as a whole, there is a strong urban-rural divergence. The religious minorities were compact in the countryside, the most poverty-oriented area in the country while the larger and wealthy cities were composed primarily of Sunnis. This reality makes it nearly unattainable to separate the analysis of urban Sunnis and rural religious

minorities when studying the many groups and differences the Syria is flooded with. Even greater than that, "it is difficult if not impossible to isolate sectarian, regional, tribal or socio-economic categories when they show strong overlap and apparently form an inseparable whole" (Van Dam). This is an important keynote because it is exactly what is at play and has been at play for the struggle for power between the Alawis, Druzes, and Isma'ilis in Syria since 1963.

IV. FRENCH MANDATES

While Britain and France laid claim to different territories across the Middle East, only one country looked to France as a supporting force and that was Lebanon. Syria on the other hand despised the idea of French control or intervention in their country to even the smallest degree. In fact, most Middle Eastern countries wanted to be independent of the rules and laws imposed by the allies. In an attempt to re-establish Arab sentiments throughout, Emir Feisal was sent as a representative to the Paris peace conference where he called for reconsideration of ally presence and intervention in countries like Syria and Palestine. Feisal argued that the decision should be up to the inhabitants themselves on whether they wanted this European imperial help or not and should be determined by sending a "commission of inquiry" (Mansfield). President Wilson of the United States approved of this plan with the suggestion that the commission be made up of French, British, Italian and American representatives. The British and French though, were obviously opposed because it would mean the removal of their strongholds and their power so they withdrew. Ultimately it ended up being solely Americans who carried out the inquiry. Their findings were that the citizens of Syria and Palestine "overwhelmingly

opposed the proposal to place them under great-power mandates" (Mansfield). These countries, aware of their situation and current status, did recognize the need for outside help but had requested it come from the United States or Britain, strictly not France. Despite the findings and the suggestions made by the commission, the allies completely ignored it. Britain and France chose to ignore it, for previously mentioned reasons, and the United States because they were on the verge of isolationism. Though the Allies were known as a unified front in the international arena, they internally began to battle with each other. The British government opened up that it saw the French ambitions in Syria as excessive (Mansfield). When the French proceeded forward with their plans to "garrison Syria with French troops, Britain refused to agree" (Mansfield). On March 8, 1920 the General Syrian Congress in Damascus passed a resolution declaring the independence of Syria and Palestine. In response, the Supreme Council of the League of Nations announced its decision on May 5, 1920 that Syria would be partitioned into the two French Mandates of Lebanon and Syria (Mansfield). Angered by the decisions, the Arab people of Syria begged their leader Feisal to declare war on France. He recognized their ill-equipped military would be no match for the French so instead he gave young, brash officers the clearance to attack French positions. In response the French demanded that they be allowed to occupy Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and the Bekaa plain, which Feisal accepted. This ultimately led to the French completely seizing Syria and exiling Feisal.

Now that the mandates had been approved and solidified, the first thing the French did was to enlarge Lebanon at Syria's expense as to make Lebanon its Middle Eastern headquarters (Mansfield). France enacted policy that placed Francophile Maronite Christian elements on Muslim Arab peoples. France practiced complete control over society

in Syria suppressing any sort of behavior that went against their cultural views they were attempting to implement. Partitioning the Ottoman Empire came with violence and fighting, especially in Syria. It also created five new Middle Eastern states; Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine, all of which were under the control of either Britain or France. The mandates were backed and legitimized by the League of Nations and instilled for the sake of keeping their inhabitants from being returned to their former masters as well as a form of trust where the power was administered to the territory under supervision (Mansfield). Many saw this as a nice way, or politically correct way, of making these territories colonies of the British and French. The result of the French Mandates in Syria was only a beginning glimpse of separation and division. France had split Syria up in an attempt to rule it more easily by creating districts. These districts were as follows; "One in the Alawite mountains in the north-east inhabited mainly by the sub-Shia Alawite sect, one in the Jebal Druze in the south where most of the people were Druze, and one in the rest of Syria with Damascus as the capital" (Mansfield). It is clear in understanding the French impact on Syria why modern day Syria is so deeply divided. The French were the first key component to turmoil and poor feelings amongst various groups. The "process of political radicalization was initiated during the era of the French mandate, the legacy of which was almost a guarantee of Syria's political instability" (Fildis).

Syria having finally won its independence from France was left in disarray. Everything the Syrians earned was not without a fight and battle. This is never a positive way for a nation to be born as it left it on its side and unprepared for challenges that may lay ahead after exhausting itself in determination of independence from France. As author McHugo phrased it, "Syria had no allies and has been aptly described as a political orphan.

In addition, Syrians now had their own state and a democracy, but that democracy was fragile- as were the state and its sense of nationhood" (McHugo).

V. SYRIAN & EGYPTIAN UNION

Another important factor in the history of Syria as an explanation for its modern day struggles that must be looked at is the union that took place between Syria and Egypt. The union came as a result of the "bifurcation of power which led to a stalemate, preventing major reforms, but also to such intense conflict that Syrian politicians sought salvation in union with Egypt" (Hinnebusch). This merger took place officially on February 2, 1958 as a result of the growing tensions between the west, mainly the United States, and Middle Eastern countries like Syria. It was also an outcome of "the inability to maintain a united state" (Olmert). This tension was on the rise and directly correlated with the growing emphasis and relationship between Syria and the Soviet Union. As time continued on and the Soviet Union continued to back Middle Eastern countries, specifically through supplying them with military equipment, the United States saw a dramatic increase in threat from the Soviet camp. In 1957 Syria had accused Turkey of massing troops on its frontier, which Nasser responded to by sending a body of troops to Damascus to express support (Mansfield). Old school politicians typically would have preserved a relationship with the west but unfortunately for Syria and its growing instability, the power lay in the hands of the Ba'ath party.

Although it seemed support of the Soviet Union was becoming more widespread, Syria began to fear a communist takeover and so saw diversion through union with Egypt.

When this merger became complete on February 2, 1958 the presidents of the two countries announced the name of their new territory as the United Arab Republic. King Saud of Syria was forced to resign when it became evident that he had plans to assassinate Egyptian President Nasser to prevent the union of Syria and Egypt (Mansfield). King Saud's brother Feisal took over, as he was known for being more pro-Egyptian. Things quickly spiraled downhill for Syria as pressure from Iraqi leader Karim Kassem was exerted in an effort to destroy the relationship between Syria and Egypt (Mansfield). Kassem and his organization overthrew the regime in Syria, declared a republic, and killed Feisal and his family members. This new republic of Iraq under Kassem declared its support for Egypt and Nasser and Nasserism became the ruling ideology in Syria.

This quickly spreading takeover of a pro-Arab community along with the destruction of pro-western sites in the Middle East gave way to fear and activated a response on the west's part. The United States and Britain intervened with troops to their last few camp locations holding on to their thread of an attachment to the Middle East. While this was happening, Nasser was headed for a downfall in his reign. His goal, hefty and ambitious, would ultimately fail as the vastly different states of the Middle East were too ideologically different and religiously diverse to have pan-Arabism unite them.

Feelings between Syria and Egypt became rocky as the Syrian's realized, though their ideologies were similar, they were still very different. On top of this, the Ba'ath party demanded power to rule in Syria while Nasser would have none of that under the "umbrella rule of his authority and prestige" (Mansfield). The new political structure in Syria was shaped after the Egyptian one and although Nasser appointed two Syrian vice-presidents and many ministers to the government, he never gave them full control as

power always remained in his own hands. The union between the two states rapidly fell apart for a couple of reasons. First, the Syrians began to feel that they were no longer partners with Egypt rather being completely watched over. Second, the Syrians felt the Egyptians didn't hold a high energetic pro-Arab rationale as they did. Third, Syria, which had always been built on a free economy, watched as Nasser's socialist principles were imposed upon them (Mansfield). Next, Syria's agricultural sector suffered three years of consecutive draughts between 1958 and 1960 (Mansfield). Despite his best efforts, Nasser, like many others, failed to stabilize Syria and find a working government for its people. On September 28, 1961 a group of Syrian army officers rebelled (Mansfield). This marked the end of the union between the two in an effort to create a United Arab Republic. Though Nasser let them leave, he also stated that they would always be welcome back should they feel so inclined to rejoin.

The attempted union between two similar states shows the mess and failure that continues to be Syria. It is so structurally and internally damaged and broken that the diverse population and strong-sided views create a hostile environment where turmoil is inevitable. As history continues on it is clear that with each passing event, Syria is nearly a lost cause when even fellow Middle Eastern countries are failing at intervention in last hopes of saving it. Civil war is clearly in the path ahead.

What became known as the Separatist Movement from 1961-1963 proved not only to show a separation of the Sunnis and minorities, but a change of power in major political roles as well. The Military Command was predominantly led, with most authoritative positions being held, by Sunnis. The military had a stronghold in Damascus, which as we know from earlier, was a major Sunni controlled city. The Syrian Army Command was

made up of ten members, five Damascene Sunnis, four of the five others were Sunni, and one was Druze. The Syrian Officers Corps recognized the power being held by Damascene Sunnis, and demanded that a non-Damascene commander-in-chief be appointed. Druze Major-General 'Abd al-Karim Zahr al-Din, then fourth in seniority, accepted this position (Van Dam). However, Sunni Damascene al-Nahlawi occupied the key military position of deputy director of officers' affairs, a position that allowed him to move and control officers he wanted to units he preferred. In other words, he could set himself up to be even more powerful by moving certain officers to positions and units that best supported him. Unfortunately for him, he never could gain solid support amongst the non-Damascenes, which would ultimately play a key role in the downfall of his and his fellow Damascene officers. In a last effort to hold onto his dwindling power, he orchestrated a military coup that failed and resulted in his and five of his greatest Damascene military colleagues expulsion from Syria. There was a clear separation between the Damascene and non-Damascene within the military. The Homs Military Congress was to convene in an attempt to dilute any violent actions from occurring. However, at the congress, Damascene Lieutenant-Colonel Muti al-Samman demanded that six non-Damascene officers be expelled from Syria in equal composition for the removal of al-Nahlawi (Van Dam). Quite the opposite affect ended up taking place. Over the next couple of years Damascene officers and military members were slowly purged from any sort of politically strategic position and were replaced with, as the then Druze General Zahr al-Din put it, "officers who harbored nothing but hatred and aversion towards Damascus and its inhabitants" (Van Dam). The military was dwindling its numbers in Sunni and Damascene representation and

was growing stronger and stronger with minorities, a powerful hand to hold for the minorities, and a politically strategic one at that.

The monopolization of power by the minority groups in Syria did not stop there. It grew even stronger in 1963 when a military coup by Ba'thists succeeded in bringing down this "separatist regime" and instead strengthened its numbers in minorities at the expense of the Sunnis. This was a direct result of the Ba'ath military leaders whom quickly put into positions of power and leadership, family members and friends from their own choosing. Most of these people called up then, were mainly Alawis, Druzes, and Isma'ilis (Van Dam). The minorities were only picking up steam. Though they once had lived lives in the poor countryside of Syria, they were finding themselves growing stronger as a cohesive unit, gaining military power, and therefore political power. A role that required them to tread lightly with their newfound power, so as not to abuse it, and not to lose it.

VI. ISRAELI & SYRIAN CONFLICT

The next important historical focal point in understanding today's civil war in Syria is the debate over Zionism resulting in a Syrian war with Israel. Following the end of World War One, the peace settlement declared Palestine in 1918 a Jewish state for refugees to go and settle. However, Palestine still consisted of strong Arab Nationalists who showed disdain for their new neighbors and frustration and anger over the Jewish population receiving their land. Upon asking for reconsideration or a different area to be the designated place for Jewish refugees following the Holocaust, tensions began to rise as the Allied powers denied their request. Ultimately, it was decided that Palestine would be split into two new states, one that would be known as modern day Israel. Israel was to be the

land for the Jewish population; this allowed them to carry out Zionism. Many international leaders saw this as a resolution to the problem, but instead Palestine Arab's grew in their anger and hate and pulled in their own allies, which consisted of many countries that bordered Israel, including Syria. Violent revolts began to break out and border battles and land/territory ownership became the new topic of debate amongst the Middle East (Oren). This is what eventually led to a battle between Israel and much of the Middle East, though they were backed by Britain and France, and more specifically with Syria. A great portion of discontent between Israel and Syria, which also continues today, is the struggle over the Golan Heights. This piece of land was seen as a prime territorial control of the Syrians but was partitioned off to the Israelis. It has since then been the topic of great discussion and reconsideration and now even battle over with whom it should belong. This unfinished business and inability to come to a fair and satisfying conclusion between the two countries has pitted them against one another historically, and still today.

The Arab revolt of 1936-39 is arguably what pulled in more of the Middle East than just Palestine. It is seen as the spreading the conflict no longer between Jews and Arabs in Palestine rather Zionism and Arabs everywhere (Oren). On May 14 when the British Mandate ended, the regional battle broke out against Israel. Syria and Iraq were the two bordering nations who led the invasion. Egypt eventually joined out of fear of other Middle Eastern states growing their territories in the process (Oren). Egypt had also signed a mutual defense agreement with Syria in 1966. Unfortunately for them, Syria became quickly dissatisfied with the efforts to demolish Israel and Zionism and took it upon themselves to be the leader in doing so.

Syrian tanks rained thirty-one shells on Kibbutz Almagor, killing one and wounding two others by the end of the attack (Oren). This was the start of the Syrian effort to move from the defensive to attack. Though there was no clear understanding in why the Syrians had become so abruptly violent and determined on the matter, it is important to point out that the Ba'ath party of the time had a strong ideological belief in the elimination of Israel, Zionism, and imperialism (Oren). It should also be noted that another factor in Syria's involvement was a direct result of their current conflict with Iraq over the Iraq Petroleum Company. Syria was up in arms over their payment received for allowing Iraqi oil to flow over their land. Much of this newly found resentment on the topic, clearly stemmed from the fact that the IPC was a British owned company and was therefore an imperialist presence in the Middle East that Syria was determined to rid of. Another important catalyst of war between Syria and Israel stemmed from the Soviet Union pressure and misleading information upon Syria. The Soviet Union was publicly announcing that it was avoiding conflict in the Arab Middle East, though it was actually pushing Syria to become more active. The Soviet Union saw this as their chance to attain their longtime goal of owning key waterways in the Middle East and isolating Turkey (Oren).

All of these reasons were key players in Syria's move to attack Israel, but one ever-present issue in Syria was the ultimate catalyst. Syria so internally divided officers against civilian "doctors with President al-Atassi and foreign minister Makhous, Hafez al-Assad with support of the air force, the army pitted against President Jadid, and both generals were opposed by Intelligence Chief Abd' al-Karim al-Jundi (Oren). Explosions, fighting, attempted assassinations, were all becoming part of a typical day in Syria. This internal strife played a direct hand in the internal insecurity of the Syrian Regime leading them to

feel a desperate desire to "out-Nasser-Nasser" (Oren). In an attempt to diffuse the

mounting tension on the borders specifically but between Israel and Syria as a whole, a

meeting or conference was held where they were asked to uphold their previously signed

agreement to refrain from acts of hostility. Both denied the agreement and eventually the

meeting came to a close with feelings more bitter than when they had arrived and less

likely to come to any sort of agreement. Syria and Israel continued attacks on each other,

and they even began to multiply on the border. Syria had begun to back Palestine in their

acts of aggression against Israel as well. It went so far that the United States recognized and

announced that the Syrians were not going to stop until war broke out. For that, the

Americans implored the Israelis to disregard their long-standing opposition to retaliations

(Oren).

War broke out in what became titled the "Six Days War". The shortest war in

history, the Israelis battled against multiple Arab states. Shocking to many, Israel came

through victorious and with overwhelming numbers. Syria was later blamed for having

started a war in which they did not really participate fighting in. Yet, far after the war Syria

continued to denounce Israel and Zionism and yet perpetually battles itself within its own

borders. Syria strongly rejected approval of a peace treaty with Israel and openly shared its

disapproval of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Though Syria had Soviet backing and

other states at war with them, their internal strife and struggle ultimately led to their

defeat against Israel and the Allies. Syria's greatest loss in this battle with Israel however,

rose from the loss of territory: the Golan Heights. The Golan Heights is a plateau that is

bordered by the Sea of Galilee, Hula Valley, Yarmouk River, Mount Hernon, and Wadi

Raqqad. It was originally and area considered part of Syria but was conquered by the

Israelis during the Six Day War. The fallout between Israel and Syria has continued for years as a result of the dispute over this piece of land. Today it has contributed to the Syrian Civil War, as it has become a stronghold for the terrorist organization ISIS to carry out attack across the Middle East, infiltrate refugee movements, and contribute to the overall instability and violence in Syria. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu requested Israel be allowed to impose Israeli law in an attempt to help oust the presence of terrorist activity due to the fact that Syria is incapable because as the Prime Minister put it, "Syria has disintegrated beyond the point of reunification". His requests were denied and ISIS and the struggle for control of the Golan Heights rages on perpetuating the instability, violence, and strife throughout Syria.

VII. HAFIZ AL-ASAD'S RISE TO POWER

Syria's tumultuous political and social history has led up to the point of Hafiz al-Asad taking command. It is clear that with the inability to maintain stability with both internal and external influence, the struggle for power will continue to occur. Under French Mandate and unity with Egypt, Syria still made irrational decisions and fought against help from anyone exactly like themselves. The country burned bridges with not only the Allies of the west but also with fellow Middle Eastern countries as well, leaving them to fend for themselves with bad blood surrounding them. Understanding the sectarian, regional, and tribal divide of the country also demonstrates the lack of one cohesive unit to progress forward in any sort of groundbreaking decision-making. Much of this stems from the ethnic and religious differences that are seen as so great a divide, they are unable to trust their

own fellow Syrians from various groups. These factors are all what have led us to the battle for power between al-Asad and Salah Jadid.

Jadid's power stemmed from his control on a large portion of the armed forces and military through inside connections. However, on the flip side, al-Asad was minister of defense giving him the upper hand along with his role as the Ba'thist Military Committee. Difference of opinion in the country led to the Arab military defeat in 1967 and ultimately to tensions rising. The two sides of the argument consisted of the ideological view of pursuing a society based on socialist ideals or a society based on Arab nationalist policy. Asad and Jadid represented each of these political sides at the Regional and National Ba'th Party Congress. Jadid believed in a "socialist transformation" with greater dependence on the Soviet Union and other Communist countries (Van Dam). This group also rejected anything "reactionary, rightest, or pro-western" (Van Dam). Asad on the otherside believed in an Arab nationalist leaning with focus on the struggle with Israel and defeating them (Van Dam). Jadid dominated Asad at the congress, winning majority of the support, yet Asad was not satisfied with this. Asad used his military connections and titles to gain control, support, and ultimately power of the armed forces. This then forced Jadid to grip tighter onto his civilian party apparatus. This created the biggest divide in Syria we see today; the armed forces and the civilian apparatus of the Ba'th in Syria.

Asad made his move for control by abducting the then chief of the national security and general intelligence services as well as a handful of Jadid's other aides and supporters. The confrontation between the two leaders continued to grow when in 1970 Syrian political leaders made the decision to intervene in the Jordanian civil war, which ultimately failed. The Tenth Extraordinary National Congress of the Ba'th Party was convened in 1970

in an attempted effort at finding a solution to the party struggle. Al-Asad and his supporters strategically prepared themselves for a defense attack should al-Asad be less favored than Jadid in the conference. As was feared, Jadid held overwhelming support from those members of the congress. Asad responded in attacks through the taking of civilian party sections and capturing and arresting prominent leaders like Jadid from the opposite party. Many other high political members fled the country from fear of arrest leaving Asad to monopolize his newfound power marking the start to his new regime in November 1970, and eventually to Asad in 1971 being named Syria's first Alawi president (Van Dam). The period of Sunni rule had come to an end, and the Hafiz al-Asad Regime now raged.

Under Asad's rule, he used his position and power to suppress any sort of uprising that may have been stirred up in anticipation to oust him. One very important example of this was the 1982 Hama Massacre. During this massacre Syrian security forces entered the densely populated old city of Hama in an attempt to seize weapons possibly held by Islamist militants. The situation escalated as attack sirens raged through the night, concerning the local residents and influencing them to attack the troops in the town. As armed militants began to battle with the security forces in a brutal showdown, Hafiz al-Asad's brother "rushed to the area and from the heights of the nearby citadel, rained artillery and tank fire into the town, leveling its major commercial and residential districts" (Lawson). Hama was known for its outbreaks of challenge against the Ba'th Regime. The 1982 uprising changed perspectives as it now became known for "its massive scale, the broad range of social forces that took part, the high degree of organization evidenced by its leaders, and the ruthlessness with which it was crushed" (Lawson). The result was

widespread as even moderate Islamists scaled back their activity drastically. For a decade, the cities ruins were left to "stand as a stark warning to other dissidents" (Lawson).

To understand further Asad's reign and the paradox behind his rise to power, we must next take a look at the Ba'th party in general, further leading to the hate between the Alawites and Sunnis. It became a question of discrepancy as to "how Ba'thist officers from one minority sect, the Alawis, emerged as a seemingly dominant clique, most manifest after 1970 under Hafiz al-Asad, was explained by factors such as their disproportionate recruitment into the army and party before 1963 and class and regional divisions among the majority Sunni actors" (Hinnebusch). The Ba'th party was a political group originally known as "The Party of the Arab Renaissance" (Ben-Tzur). This party was first established in Syria in the forties as a party of the urban petit-bourgeois intelligentsia (Ben-Tzur). The ideology of this Arab party was formulated after a doctrine from the party platform at the first convention in 1947. The doctrine of this convention was "a blend of nationalist pan-Arab radicalism with a moderate social programme-agrarian reform and partial nationalization without infringing individual property rights, and with a neutralist policy towards the global struggle between the communist and western blocs" (Ben-Tzur). This Syrian political party has not consistently been active in Syria however. There was a period in 1958-59 where the party had dissolved in Syria but remained alive in other Middle Eastern countries. After three conferences in Lebanon, the Syrian Ba'th party was re-established.

VIII. BA'TH PARTY

In 1958 Syria and Egypt were to be unified. However, before this plan would be carried out, Egyptian President Nasser demanded all Syrian political parties, including the Ba'ath party, be dissolved prior to unification (Van Dam). It wasn't until May 1962 that the Ba'ath Party's National Command made the decision to rebuild the party bastion that had once existed in Syria. By this time, many of the former members of the Ba'ath party had found new political parties to associate with. On March 8, 1963 a group of Ba'athist officers and others seized power in Syria through a military coup. The Ba'athist military leaders each claimed some level of new government responsibility, but there were not enough Ba'athist civilians to cope with the extent of it all. Though Nasser had demanded the dissolution of all political parties, some Ba'athists in Syria had secretly remained organized. So, following the coup of 1963 these party members played a prominent role in the Syrian civilian party apparatus thanks to their close ties with the leaders of the Ba'athist military party organization which held actual power in Syria now (Van Dam). There had been rules and regulations set in place to limit the party supporters, by the party themselves, or rather a process they had to make it through to become an active member. At this point in time though, they were so low on civilian members, participation, and support that they passed a resolution allowing all supporters to be promoted to active members (Van Dam). However, this was taken advantage of as many leaders of the Ba'ath Party used it to have relatives, friends, and acquaintances added to the party without them meeting any of the previously established restrictions and guidelines, which they might not have otherwise. This in turn created an extensive amount of party blocs whose members were connected not by ideological principles but rather by sectarian, regional, or tribal backgrounds (Van Dam). This drove further division, now amongst the party itself.

What was once division between the party members and those who were non-members had now grown to division among the members. It created a serious power struggle in both the civilian and military party organization because it undermined party discipline (Van Dam). The rival divisions within the party were not even seen as differing for ideological reasons as many would have understood more. Factionalism was another prominent issue amongst the Ba'ath Party, particularly during elections. One author states that, "as a result [of the factionalism] some party members were not always free to choose their leaders, and this in turn caused some of the most capable members to be prevented from attaining commanding positions" (Van Dam). The corruption during elections was far reaching. Sometimes it would be Ba'athist dominated power institutions who interfered in elections to push their own preferred list of people and sometimes it was non-party members who did what they could to sway the voting in the direction they desired. In one case, there were so many irregularities observed that the Syrian Command had to call for new elections (Van Dam).

Who makes up the military of a country, and who has influence over it, are very important. The Syrian armed forces were strongly made up of minorities before the Ba'thist officers took over in 1963. This influence in the army, of minorities, can be attributed to politico-historical and socio-economic factors. One of these factors dates back to when Syria was under French Mandate and they recruited Alawis, Druzes, Isma'ilis, Christians, Kurds, and Circassians, while they discouraged Sunni Arab's (Van Dam). Sunni Arab landowning commercial families were fine with this arrangement, as they felt their sons should not be sent for military training to defend what they saw as "French Imperial Interests" (Van Dam). Furthermore, the majority Sunni Arab's saw the military as a place

for those economically and socially below them. More specifically those who could not excel in society on their own or through education. So, they saw it as an insult to be a part of the military. On the flip side, those minorities who struggled to make ends meet saw joining the military as a way to boost themselves in society and make a decent living.

The Ba'th Party, which came to power in 1963, is the cornerstone of the rise of the Syrian minorities. This political group came about through social channels that define whom its followers are. It was a group seeking out socialist ideals, allowing all individuals to be equal despite religious, tribal, or geographic affiliations. It supported the idea of Arab Nationalism, though the Sunnis felt it was representing everything Arab Nationalism wasn't. The Ba'ath party was founded in Damascus in 1940 by Michel 'Aflaq, a Greek Orthodox Christian, and Salah al-Din Bitar, a Sunni Muslim, both who were teachers and part of the middle class (Van Dam). As a result of their occupations, most of the people they recruited and sought out to join their party were students of higher education that were most often migrants who had come to Damascus for higher education. Though there was not a laid out plan of action the party began to spread amongst the minorities of Syria with no rhyme or reason. The strong showing of Druze amongst the Ba'ath party is often attributed to the leader 'Aflaq'a relationship with many families of the Jabal-al Duruz (Van Dam). Many of the people who constituted the greatest areas of poverty and rural areas, are those who were pulled to the Ba'ath party based on their socialist ideals versus those of the cities, as mentioned before, that were made up of the wealthy or "bourgeoisie". The Ba'ath party took up the ideas of Arab Nationalism as well. While this angered many Sunnis, who had been the group to most closely identify, the Ba'ath party had their own understanding and interpretation of Arab Nationalism. To them, one did not have to full

identify as religiously Islamic. They need only recognize that this is the culture, the background with which they come from; it was their Arab heritage. One of the leaders and founders of the Ba'ath party even said that Christian Arabs for example, should in no way feel restricted from also being an Arab Nationalist (Van Dam). These views economically with socialism being a main tool of the Ba'ath party, religiously with the acceptance of outside religions, and the belief that these minorities could still associate with the sacred Arab Nationalism, created great dissention among the minorities of Syria and they majority Sunni of Syria. Not only the religious differences but also the social, economic, and geographic differences made it incredibly difficult for the party to attract both minorities and Sunnis. This was the start friction.

There were different branches of the Ba'ath party based on the location and city. The Damascus branch was very small. The urban-rural differentiation and Damascene/non-Damascene contrast was strong in this branch. Rightfully so, as Damascus would be made up predominantly of Sunnis, the majority population, and were hesitant to join the Ba'ath Party of predominantly minorities. The Hama Branch had very, very little support. Located in the city of Hama, the Ba'ath party was up against a Sunni stronghold. While the geographic difference is what created friction amongst the Ba'ath Party members and non-members in Damascus, in Hama it was based more on the sectarian differences. In April 1964, the strong opposition of the Ba'ath party was played out when an anti-Ba'thist revolt occurred backed by the Muslim Brotherhood (Van Dam). One could qualify the revolt as a success based on the fact that Ba'ath Party activities came to a standstill.

The Ba'ath party had flaws of its own in its creation and coming to military power. The leaders wanted to organize the party to be larger and a cohesive unit, but like

elsewhere in Syria at the time, it was a battle for power even internally. In an effort to grow the party in size and number, the leaders began recruiting more members. However, the members were granted admission despite not meeting qualifications nor having support for the Party's views. Instead, membership was granted to those whom the organizations leaders felt would keep them most protected in their positions of power. Beyond that, those members eventually came to power and leadership roles within the organization and began transforming it into whatever they wanted it to become, overshadowing and minimizing those members who had risked everything for the party's sake including their lives. Sectarian polarization was at the forefront and paved the way for sectarian discrimination. The sectarian discrimination began to take form on the part, shockingly, of the minorities. The removal and dismissal of Sunni leaders in the armed forces was shameless and brutal. So much so that main branch leaders were being dismissed such as the leader of the National Guard and the leader of the Air Force (Van Dam). Those given preferential treatment for the position openings tended to be Alawis, Druzes, Isma'ilis and Christians, all minorities. The minorities in charge would strategically place those they trusted, fellow minority members, in positions of greater importance, while Sunnis would be placed in positions farthest away from main cities (Van Dam). The entire army command structure and discipline were undermined by the manipulation of sectarian ties and loyalties (Van Dam). To attain a grasp on how hostile the sectarian divisions were, a British Consular report from the 1870's stated, "they hate each other…Sunnis boycott the Shi'ites…both resent the Druze…all despise the Alawites" (Olmert).

The Ba'th party has not existed without struggle, similar to Syria itself. After agreeing to the union with Egypt, many citizens of the state denounced this union. The

people felt so upset at the Egyptian domination over the command of the Ba'th party that a

military coup occurred on 28 September 1961, which led to the secession of Syria from

Egypt. Still unsatisfied with the performance of the Ba'th party, many peasants as well as

intellects considered rejoining Egypt as well as carrying out a series of attempted coups in

1962. The fifth Ba'th conference in Lebanon "advocated an all-embracing Arab union 'on a

new basis but with due regard to the mistakes of the former one'; it was to be a federative

union under collective leadership" (Ben-Tzur). This new Ba'th party was recreated four

years after the dissolution and in less than a year it had regained control of the country

through a military coup and had unidentified itself with the old party who had agreed to

the union with Egypt.

   After years of struggle within the Ba'th party and shifting of power, a new ideology

was formed. The "theoretical confusion and ideological backwardness in the party was felt

even more keenly in view of the ideological developments in the other revolutionary

regimes of the Arab world, which tended to emphasize the social commitments of the

national revolution, and of the developments in the communist world which tended to

emphasize the national character of the tasks along the route to socialism" (Ben-Tzur). The

change in power as well as the structural and ideological framework proposed by the old

party leadership, the military group, the regionalists or the careerists, were never

supported in a unifying manner within the party. What then formed was the neo-Ba'th

party of Syria based on "scientific-socialist ingredients and the militancy of the ideology"

(Ben-Tzur). This ultimately under the influence and creation by Al-Hafiz became known as

"Arab Socialism".

This strong Arab party poses a paradox though, as a poor Alawite man took over control and power. Hafiz al-Assad came from one of the previously mentioned poor Alawi families in the countryside. The paradox that is presented is how a minority group and man could come to power in a majority and Arab political party, vastly different from what each other believed. To understand, it is worth noting and analyzing the Alawi group in detail.

Alawism was made into a separate branch of religion from Shi'i Islam. Whereby Muslims faithful saying is "there is no deity but God and Muhammad is His prophet", Alawis believe "There is not deity by Ali, no veil but Muhammad, and no bab but Salman" (Pipes). The Alawis therefore reject Islam's main tenets, forcing them to be considered non-Muslims (Pipes). The far greatest parallel to the beliefs and traditions of the Alawis is Christianity. For these reasons, "many observers-missionaries especially-have suspected the Alawis of a secret Christian proclivity" (Pipes). Though women in the Alawi religion are treated "abominably" they experience far greater freedom than the veiled Muslim women (Pipes). Alawis do in fact reject Islam's sacred law of Shari'a. The hate of the Sunnis stems from the strong religious diversions, especially in the sense that Sunnis were considered the upper class of Syria and the Alawis considered of the lower minority similar to those of Christianity. Therefore, "Alawis do not act like Sunni Muslims; rather, they resemble Christians and Jews in pursuing a wholly distinct way of life" (Pipes). Given that the Alawites are whom ultimately take control of the government and power through Hafiz al-Asad, it is reasonable to understand that the change in socioeconomic role and religious deviation spur the Sunni hatred towards the minority Alawites. This understanding then begins to explain the paradox between the rise to power of an Alawite through a pan-Arab party.

It should be noted that since the French Mandates, the Alawites and Sunnis have cultivated a deep internal hate for one another. The Alawites benefited from the mandate more than any other minority group. The Alawites "gained political autonomy and escaped Sunni control" (Fildis). The French even created an Alawite state known as the "state of Latakia", as well as were bestowed legal autonomy from the French. The French strongholds and imperial influence in Syria did not stop there in cultivating this deep rift between Sunnis and Alawites. Another "major instrument of the French influence on the Alawites was their recruitment into the Troupes Speciales du Levant, a local military force formed in 1921 and alter developed into the Syrian and Lebanese armed forces" (Fildis). The French control of the army allowed them to divide the troops according to group so as to maintain a low level of each, preventing any one of them from becoming so powerful that they could oust the French administration and presence in Syria. The French hand picked and designed the Syrian Army along strong rural and minority representation. The French considered Alawites a reliable and trustworthy minority and so maintained a branch serving under to local French officers. The purpose of the French army in aiming to pad the military with rural minorities was "because they were far from urban-dominant political ideology, Arab nationalism" (Fildis). They further attempted to weaken the Arab Sunnis, the one group capable of overturning French Syria. It is clear in the understanding of the French influence on the Syrian army that an increased spark of distrust was implemented between the Sunnis and the Alawites. The Alawites, strongly favored by the French, were given far more opportunities and power than were the majority Sunnis. In addition, the French use of mandates and imperial invasion took control over the Syrian army, molding

it to their exact standards and preferences so to appease those they supported and minimize the presence of those groups they disliked.

Pan-Arabism and the fundamental beliefs and values held by the Ba'th party were far from relatable to the Alawites. As was previously mentioned, the pan-Arab view was held by socially, economically, and financially well-established Sunnis in Syria. It is interesting therefore that the people would elect and then support for so long a poor minority Alawite man, religiously believing in everything nearly opposite that of those in support of pan-Arabism. This continued to anger many Sunnis pitting them further against the Alawite peoples, yet the continuity that Asad put in place and the relative stability that he maintained were enough to earn him the backing of even those Ba'th party members who were religiously or culturally different from himself.

Asad was the first leader to hold onto the reins of power in Syria for an extended period of time. It is argued that Asad's regime in Syria acts in a system of three interlocking orbits- Alawi, Syrian and Arab (Zisser). The Alawi orbit would be the internal core; the Syrian orbit would be the outer shell and the Arab orbit would be its soul supporting the authority (Zisser). The Syrian regime, composed of these pertinent levels, had become a personally controlled regime through the succession of roles within the Asad family and Asad's tribal affiliations. Asad mirrored his regime structure and functioning to that of the Soviet Union looking up to communist regime rulers like Nicolae Ceausescu and Kim Il Sung. Syria's regime had now become the product of the Alawi's rise from "humble status of a minority to pre-eminence" (Zisser). Asad's regime depended on the sectarian support of the Alawis. Asad's regime was also deeply rooted in the Syrian component that stemmed from the Ba'ath revolution in 1963 and the neo-Ba'th revolution of 1966, which drove

home the resulting socio-economic and political order of Syria. Alawi dominance and the Asad regime grew in strength and support at the time as the other minority groups including the Christians, Druze, and Ismaili backed it in an effort to preserve their own security. Asad rules as a dictator appointing people closest to him to the highest most powerful and authoritative positions. Like most dictators, he does what needs to be done first and foremost to maintain his leadership role. It can be argued that the two strongholds that not only placed Asad in a position of power but also kept him there are his military connection with the army and the Ba'th party which attracted members of prominent social circles (Zisser). Overall, the large minority number in Syria, as long as they remain in support of Asad and his regime, any sort of uprising like was seen with the Islamic Revolt of 1976-82, will be crushed.

So why then, despite his communist, dictatorial, oppressive ways, was Asad successful? One answer argues that he gave the constituents answers to some degree while giving them a government and society to participate and belong (Zisser). Finally, the Arab orbit. Though Asad was young, inexperienced, and lacked confidence, his strong ideological ties to Arabism is what provided him and his regime legitimacy in not only the eyes of his fellow Syrian people, but the international arena and world as a whole. In regards to his repressive regime success and ability to hold onto power for so long and within his family, Asad had created two armies. Of the two armies, "one was made up of praetorian guard units recruited from his kin and sect that defended the regime, the other the professional army that defended the country's borders" (Hinnebusch). Further more, Hafiz al-Assad's ability to create further legitimacy in his regime stemmed from his ability to identify what one author named Dawish pointed out as party, army, bureaucracy, secret police

(Hinnebusch). These "pillars of power" are what a dominant presidency rested on and allowed the leader's subordination of and balancing above these institutions as a solution to instability (Hinnebusch). What further legitimized the Asad regime was his ability to turn Syria from a losing player to a successful player in the disputes with Israel. This change in growth and power allowed him to "promote a hegemonic nationalist discourse and turn Syria into a key regional power in struggles" (Hinnebusch).

Asad's regime can be viewed as having two main components structurally. First there was the formal system of government. This side included an executive and legislature. The formal structure had roots in the Syrian Constitution and the Ba'th party. Equally as important is the informal system of government that contains "the heads of the security services and senior military commanders" (Zisser). This side of the governmental structure is expected to "ensure stability in the state and protect it" (Zisser). The party and the civilian government constitute the formal structural component though the party takes priority in society and politics. The head of the party is known as the Party's Secretary-General and is held and maintained by Hafiz al-Asad. The Syrian Elite under Asad was made up of people from his own family, the Alawi barons, and member of the Sunni community in support of his future state (Zisser). Although there is a strongly personal and sectarian nature to the Syrian Regime created by Asad, he has gained respect and support within the borders of Syrian and beyond in the Middle East due to his political and social ability to establish a functioning state and then maintain it far longer than any other attempted leader or organization.

Asad's legacy and regime did not come without trials. When the Soviet Union appointed a new General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, Syria saw this as an opportunity to

increase their relations and friendship with the communist country. In the meantime, they had their sites first and foremost on defeating Israel. They were also dedicated to ridding the Middle East of Zionism especially in Lebanon, "an Arab rejectionist front against the Israeli-Egyptian-American axis was now established" (Zisser), and the Islamic Revolt had been squashed. As Syria's confidence and strength grew, they began to invest financially in improving their military and weaponries. The spending however, was not limited. They began to incur large debts as they plunged deeper and deeper into unnecessary security purchases. The focus on security caused neglect in other realms of Syrian society such as health, education, and waters supply, leading to a failing society overall (Zisser). The result of these poor financial expenditures; an economic crisis in 1985 that in turn led to the beginning of anti-regime sentiment and criticism (Zisser). Syria grew more and more erratic leading to further fallout with the west, specifically the United States. So much so that the United States refused to have Asad to Washington for high-level meetings with the President. Syria full of anti-American sentiment paired with the American support of Israel continued to create a rocky path between the two polar opposite countries. Asad also played a direct role in his declining position of power within the regime as corruption became apparent and brought to the forefront. It I argued that while the economy and his people struggled to survive financially he was making decisions and acting in ways to improve the financial positions of those closest to him, and already well-off. This corruption was just another factor inhibiting the growth and progression of Syrian society and government

IX. BASHAR AL-ASAD'S RISE TO POWER

Upon Asad's death, and Basil's, Bashar al-Asad took power at just age 34. He was studying to be an eye doctor in London when he was called home after the death of his brother (McHugo). In his inaugural speech, Bashar not only praised his father for his achievements, but he also criticized failed Syrian institutions and government policy (McHugo). Furthermore he touched on the popular topic of regaining the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Israel. He called for less corruption, more transparency. Surprisingly, and important in later understanding, Bashar discussed democracy. He spoke about it with reverence and respect with the possibility of a similar goal for Syria. Though he acknowledge what a difficult task this would be, using time and talk as a possible excuse should the people not support democratic reforms. The Damascus Spring came out of these discussions but was quickly crushed with great opposition and a fear of the loss of power for Bashar. It did not take long for word to spread that the political freedom of the Damascus Spring was actually just "a public relations exercise by the authorities and little more" (McHugo).

The rise to power by Bashar al-Asad was a succession many Syrians feared could overthrow their newly found stability under Hafiz, once he passed. It was unknown whether "opposition would mobilize once the feared strongman departed or the regime even disintegrate in internecine struggle" (Hinnebusch). However, the transfer of power was rather smooth and successful. This could potentially be attributed to the fact that Bashar represented to the people's desire for both continuity and change through his ability to continue what his father had started and done while still being considered a modernizer, helping him earn support from the younger generations. It may appear to the outside eye that this is a reflection of the successful institutions that had been instilled in

the once unstable country, but according to author Lesch, it shows rather that "the elites came together in a consensus" (Hinnebusch). Within three years of coming to power Bashar had reinvented to political elite, "with a turnover of 60% in top offices, via retirement, thereby transferring power to a new generation" (Hinnebusch). Perhaps part of Bashar al-Asad's crumble from power in the eyes of the people began when he began to move his ideologies and reforms away from Ba'thist views and chose a more liberalizing strategy. However, while he made this risky modification, he had no plan or preparation with where he would go with it and therefore had to make sure his changes were gradual, avoiding any sort of backlash and instability. Politically, Perthes argues that "Bashar's project can be understood as 'modernizing authoritarianism', making the system work better so that it could survive and deliver development" (Hinnebusch). Bashar made the acknowledgement that the Syrian society was not in a place to instill a western democracy. His goals were first and foremost aimed at social and economic modernization and then followed with democratization.

To understand the role that Bashar al-Asad was placed in, one must reflect on the major historical events that have led to this point. The British and French partitioning of Syria, acquisition of complete Syrian independence, unity and fallout with Egypt, constant battle and turmoil with Israel as a result of the partitioning of Palestine, all of these factors on top of his own father's imprint on Syria (both good and bad), are components of the society and culture with which Bashar has authoritatively inherited. What he can do with that will not only be a challenge but a test.

On September 11, 2001 Osama bin Laden's terrorist suicide team crashed airliners into the U.S. World Trade Centers. This marked further Middle Eastern involvement by the

U.S. in a more direct way than ever before as President Bush declared "war on terror". The

terrorist group that had carried out the attacks was known as Islamist militants of al-Qaida.

Syria saw this as an opportunity to amend relations with the western country and so used

their intelligence services to provide information to the American government. However,

Syria could not definitively commit to being "with" the United States in their Middle

Eastern battles (McHugo). Syria opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 because Iraq was

a main source of income for the country. While other countries decreased their trade and

relations with Iraq per support of the U.S. Syria failed to do so (McHugo). As American

troops began to line the borders of Syria, and Damascus became a center for fleeing

citizens, Syria began to question if they were next on the American radar. Syria made the

poor decision of allowing terrorist infiltration across its borders, leading the U.S. to identify

them as terrorist sponsors, and ultimately further damaging what little progress had been

made between the two. In addition, it was as if Syria saw their relations with the west and

the U.S. as irredeemable because they chose to align themselves and ally with the terrorist

group Hezbollah. Hezbollah incessantly attacked Israel further creating a disparity between

the pro-Arab country of Syria and the pro-western country of America. What little glimpse

of possible positive change in Syrian government was felt in Bashar's inaugural speech was

now wiped clean, as it was clear he would follow in his father's footsteps. As he became

more corrupt by power and wealth, though he had many followers and supporters of

various sects throughout the country, Bashar was rapidly increasing the gap between the

wealthy and the poor (McHugo). When Bashar al-Asad's economic reforms began to

dwindle and become less successful, he looked elsewhere to continue the legitimization of

his regime and "adopted a hard line toward Israel amidst the al-Aqsa intifadah and opposed

the U.S. invasion of Iraq; this, in arousing intense American hostility, soured the

international environment for his economic reforms" (Hinnebusch). The Damascus Spring,

a liberalization measure that was seen as positive in regards to Bashar's regime, were then

tarnished when he "reasserted the authority of the old regime, including a crackdown in

2001 on political discussion groups and the imprisonment of prodemocracy militants" (St

John). Bashar al-Asad had quickly begun to lose support and was now spiraling downward.

He continued to nose dive as he opened to Iraq, and supported the Palestinian intifada as

was previously mentioned. Furthermore, his inability to make peace with Israel prevents

Syria from forming a positive relationship between Syria and the United States. In the

process, "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, U.S. occupation of Iraq, and concerns that the war

on terrorism could target Syria all reinforce the intransigence of the old guard in Syrian

politics and become a pretext for obstructing change in both external and internal policies"

(St John). As the citizen's discontent grew over the lack of change, a major movement in the

Middle East sparked the first outcry to be heard and demand change. Bashar al-Asad

believed Syria was too stable to have an uprising under his watch and control, perhaps that

is why he responded with such brutality when the Arab Spring spread to Syria.

X. THE ARAB SPRING

The Arab Spring was a democratic uprising that started in Tunisia and spread

among a group of Middle Eastern countries. The Arab Spring was a result of frustration and

failure throughout the Middle East. The Arab Spring was born out of a "broad set of ideas

and grievances that are motivating" change (Jones). As Jones states, "the Arab world

underperforms all other regions of the world on virtually all social, political, and economic

indices, and has done for many years" (Jones). Jones then identified three important factors that would increase the likelihood of the Arab Spring spreading to specific countries and destabilizing them. Jones identifies these three factors as poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and a repressive and disliked regime. Chillingly, these three things throughout this paper have all been proven to be present in Syria. In addition, the technological and social innovations fo modern times has given the "underemployed, educated, and frustrated urban youth the ability to communicate in real time and to organize themselves via social media, revolutionalizing the collective imagination of what is possible" (Jones). Ultimately, one of the main factors of the Arab Spring and general instability in the Middle East as a whole, and Syria specifically, comes from the inability for leaders and regimes to establish legitimacy.

Author McHugo states that "what they wanted was human rights, democracy and jobs: three demands which they summed up with the one word 'dignity'" (McHugo). The Arab Spring first spread to places like Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen before finally reaching Syria. This outbreak of democratic cries was the event that finally broke Syria into a civil war, something it had been on the verge of for nearly its whole history. Perhaps it can be argued that it was avoidable had violence not been seen as the solution by the regime. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and it was rather inevitable. It all started in Syria in a southern town called Der'a where a group of young school children had begun writing "freedom" and a slogan calling for the fall of the regime, as graffiti on their school walls. This most likely came from influence both within their own households of hearing their parent's voiced opinions as well as in society and the media learning about the other Arab countries who had carried out similar events. The children, ranging in age from 9-15, were

arrested and taken to Damascus for interrogation and torture (McHugo). After pleas for

release by the families were ignored, demonstration broke out calling for the children's

release in Der'a. The security forces showed their insensitivity to brutality when they shot

four people dead at these demonstrations. This only fueled the demonstrators and the

people of Syria, increasing the protestor turnout. Dar'a's involvement quickly became "a

rallying cry across the country for what began as a rural and provincial driven uprising"

(CNN). The protestors began attacking government offices and buildings and the security

forces began attacking hospitals and innocents' as well as local Ba'th party headquarters.

On 23 March, the security forces raided a mosque which had become a temporary hospital

to treat those now being injured in the ongoing disturbances and on this day, 15 people

were reported killed and hundreds injured (McHugo). In an attempt to preserve his

authority and power, Bashar blamed it all on a foreign conspiracy (McHugo). He further

claimed that "stability in Syria depended on its [his regime] staying in power" (Olmert). Yet,

the government brutality against protestors did not let up and the battle between Syrian

citizens and the Syrian government had escalated into all out chaos and civil war. It quickly

spiraled into a more sectarian battle as it became evident that Bashar al-Asad's regime,

Alawite, had committed the atrocious massacres.

XI. ANALYSIS RESULTS

Today it is highly debated what has led to the gruesome outbreak of violence and

civil war in the Middle East as a whole and Syria specifically. One country believes and

argues it is the colonial and imperial mock rule that took place by western states

historically. As a result Syria has never been able to rid itself of hostile feelings from

unwanted intervention. Others argue that it is a result of the bad blood from the Six Days War between Syria and Israel because Israel was ultimately a "friend" of the U.S, increasing anti-western views in an already strongly pro-Arab region and country. The most popularly argued reason for the Syrian struggles and war are the sectarian differences and vast variety of differing groups. The latter is the most common choice of blame from the United States. Yet still the argument stems to socioeconomic divergence.

What these western and European countries on the outside looking in often misunderstand, is that the Syrian Civil War is not the result of one pointed finger. Meaning, the Syria we see and experience today is a Syria shaped and molded by all of these influences and factors deeply rooted in historical significance. The French Mandates, French and British intervention, Israeli-Syrian War, Syrian-Egyptian unity, and sectarian divides all play a role in the instability in both Syrian society and government. They have built on top of each other, one influencing the other, intertwining themselves as intricately as the history they reside in. The inability of a leader or group to maintain power and create an environment suitable for progression has led to short-lived terms of power and extensive handoffs of authority between many different people. These components laid the groundwork for what is more modernly the Asad Regime. A leader who provided some degree of continuity for a period of time could be considered the most successful Syrian ruler, securing the position of power to remain in his family. As successors have risen up, they inevitably follow suit in their ideologies and political policies, leading them to never quite impact Syria positively on a long-term scale, nor make the changes or differences necessary to society and government as a whole.

The Asad Regime was merely a sheet of hope cast over a land of deeply rooted, extensive issues. These issues have never truly been addressed in a legitimate way of finding a solution, rather a façade to alleviate the here and now. Literature emphasizes the goals of most leaders, especially those based on dictatorial ideologies, tend to have one goal on their mind; power. More importantly, their one goal is maintaining that power. The Asad family is no different. They have done what they can and want to insure their roles, finances, and power never escape their grasp. As a result, the underlying historical tensions have always managed to find a way to rise back up, sending Syria spiraling back down into its quick sand of a broken societal system. The civil war, is not only product of these unsolved broken linkages, but is also the current state of failure we are experiencing in modern Syria today.

Syria's strength in ideology contributes to a level of stubbornness in fixing its issues. Unfortunately the image of outside help has been so tainted by past interactions that Syria will not even consider the idea of peaceful intervention by another state. The first topic that should be addressed is Syria and its international relations. Upon improvement in this realm, Syria could potentially be more open to assistance and aid from the countries it so deeply loathes, but could help. For example mending their relationship with the United States would not only help this direct relationship but would also require the coming to a joint agreement on the topic of Israel, thereby finding a solution to two prominent impactful events that had once shaped them in negative ways, potentially paving the way for a now positive outcome. Support from a country like the U.S. would allow Syria to receive foreign aid, but would also improve their overall image internationally. The United States is trusted and well-liked as are their friends and allies. Many countries right now

fear attaching themselves in anyway to Syria so some sort of peaceful negotiations and approvals could immediately improve their situation.

Though history can never be forgotten, and should never be forgotten, Syria's best interests lie in a third-party intervention. Starting there, getting the country on its feet, and mentoring them to a place promoting progression is a strong and aggressive way to "attack" the issues in Syria. As long as they continue to rage on, the problems grow and begin to spread beyond the borders of this Middle Eastern country as was previously mentioned as a consequence in many aspects. Outside assistance may also be able to implement a more successful and flourishing economic program. As another one of the downfalls in Syria, the wealthy to poor economic gap (and growing), stabilizing the economy through means other than a socialist system, as was had in the past, would mean decreasing this disparity. However this tactic presents a challenge of its own. Syria has alluded to "involving Israel in a full-scaled war if attacked either by the United States, NATP, or Turkey" (Olmert). Incapable of attacking Israel in an impactful way, it is more the Syrian ally Hezbollah, and the means to attain chemical warheads, that the U.S. is skeptical about upsetting.

XII. CONSEQUENCES

The impact of the Syrian civil war has been widespread. It has shaken the state of Lebanon, a religiously diverse nation that is on the brink of its own imbalance in its sectarian divisions as well as those who support and oppose President Bashar al-Asad. Much of this stems from the bordering country and Syria and its civil war, offshooting and effecting countries like Lebanon. To many researchers surprise though, the effects it has

had on Lebanon are less negative than other surrounding countries. The merchandise imports and exports as well as service exports had remained rather stable during the civil war. The loss of Syrian goods to compete in the market has opened further avenues for Lebanon to take advantage of and financially boost their own economy.

Stemming from the economic impact is the question of regional resources such as oil. Simply, prices will fluctuate due to uncertainty, but is that all? Regional unrest and major events, such as the Arab Spring, could potentially cause oil prices to skyrocket. While the Gulf States tend to be more stable and can work to stabilize oil prices long term, there is still the possibility of sporadic short term sharp increases in the price of oil as the Middle East is the oil capital of the world.

Another consequence of the Syrian civil war is the economic downturn of Syria. Syria, not the strongest trading nation in the Middle East, has created such bad blood between not only themselves but also fellow Middle Eastern countries and especially western countries. This has caused many nations to restrict trade with Syria or cut trade ties off altogether. In terms of domestic economy the civil war has destroyed infrastructure, prevented children from going to school, closed factories, and deterred overall investments and trade (Cal). Citizens are facing high levels of unemployment at 57 percent, while in 2013 Syria's GDP dropped a staggering 20.6 percent, and in 2014 the economy was so disrupted no formula could even produce accurate statistics (Global Envision). According to the European Council on Foreign Relations, the Syrian HDI has fallen back to where it was 38 years ago, meaning that today the average Syrian has the same life expectancy, education and employment prospects as in 1977 (Global Envision). In a look at the future, if

the war were to end, the United Nations anticipates the damage will be similar to some nations after WWII, taking 40-50 years to fully recover (Global Envision).

Syrian expert Josef Olmert also emphasizes the demographic changes, which are to be expected as a consequence of the Syrian civil war. In Lebanon, "their civil war and aftermath brought about two very distinct changes, the first was the dramatic weakening of the Christian population of the country, mostly the Maronites, but also other Christian sects, and the second, was the brain drain, as many who left belonged to the more educated and skilled elements of the population" (Olmert). He goes on to further claim this can be the demographic outcome we should expect to, sadly, see in Syria. The violence in Syria has also shifted towards an ethno-sectarian battle, which has prompted, the Kurdish community to mobilize to protect itself (Lawson). The "ethno-sectarianization of the civil war, along with the political mobilization of almost all of Syria's minority communities, has prompted members of these ethnic and religious minorities who reside in neighboring countries to intervene directly in the conflict" (Lawson). The greatest of these types of involvement came through the Lebanese Shi'I movement the Party of God, known more typically as Hezbollah. This is where we begin to see the most tragic consequence of the Syrian civil war, refugee movements. Much of the refugee movement has dramatically increased in numbers recently, as the instability that has been further perpetuated by the civil war has opened the door for terrorists to locate and create a stronghold in the country. One of these terrorist organizations whom are active in Syria is ISIS.

One of the most tragic consequences is the refugee movement from Syria to nearby Middle Eastern countries in an effort to attain peace, security, and an overall better quality of life. What was once less than 58,000 "asylum seekers" in April of 2015 has dramatically

risen to close to 89,000 in June (Heisbourg). In June there was nearly 190,000 Syrian refugees. From January to September 2015, 75% of refugees were seeking shelter in Greece from Turkey (Heisbourg) and 70% of these were nearly all Syrian. This mass exodus of people has consequences however, for the countries that are a part of the EU they are arriving in. Not only does it create tensions, overcrowding, loss of jobs for current citizens, and drain finances to sustain the abruptly spiked population numbers etc. But it also brings a security dynamic to play, especially as it becomes more evident that these refugee groups are now being infiltrated by terrorist groups such as ISIS, seeking to use them as a tactic to employ terrorist activity in the open countries. Overall the ability to house and protect the displaced migrants in the new countries is straining these countries because of limited numbers of resources. This displacement is "causing an enormous humanitarian crisis with implications for host countries, international aid agencies, and, of course, for those whose lives have been forever changed" (Kirisci & Ferris). The civil war in Syria has also had the effect of forcing neighboring countries' leaders in the Middle East to either back Bashar al-Asad or the Syrian opposition, what they choose can potentially have to power to create more instability and international hostility in an already fragile region.

The continued violence and civil war in Syria, which appears to have no imminent end, provides "no prospect for their early return home" (Heisbourg). As refugees are increasing, more and more countries are also choosing to close their doors for a multitude of various reasons. It was stated by Slovakian leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski that, "In Slovakia, we don't have mosques, we only want to choose the Christians" (Heisbourg). Many regional concerns have shifted in just a few short years. One main regional concern regarding the Syrian civil war outbreak would be to "avoid large-scale refugee flows" (Heisbourg). A

second important topic worth addressing to many regional countries would be the elimination of ISIS as well as providing the non-Jihadi component of the Syrian rebellion with the ability to resist Russian and Iranian operations in support of Asad while still pursuing his removal through political measures (Heisbourg). Most literature on the topic of refugee movements asserts it as a consequence of civil war. It is interesting to note that it has also been argued to be a possible cause of civil war. One article on international organizations notes, "that international migration in general, and refugee migration in particular, can have important security consequences, which suggests that refugee flows and population movements can spur the spread of conflict both between and within state" (Salehyan & Gleditsch).

XIII. CONCLUSION

It is easy to fall victim to the belief that the solution to the Syrian Civil War is simple and straightforward. It is easy to believe fixing one minor detail will put the country as a whole back on its feet. The Syrian Civil War is a result of more than just corruption and sectarian division as is most regularly depicted in western politics. It is the product of a long line of historical events that started by implanting a seed, and continued to grow on each other, each one stirring up bad feelings. The Syrian Civil War is an outbreak of internal violence based on the historical events of French and British colonial rule, French mandates, Israeli-Syrian war, Egyptian and Syrian unification, sectarian divisions, and the Asad Regime. All of these factors created an environment of political distrust, instability, turmoil, chaos, and ultimately violence as we now see today. More simply put, it is the product of a conglomerate of historical imperfections. Although there are many

consequences of the civil war, some that have yet to even occur, one of the most tragic is the refugee movement the world is experiencing today. Now raised as a moral, ethical, and civil issue, the refugee movement has become a source of great debate and discomfort in the international arena. The question of what is right and what is wrong is at the forefront as many countries intervene to do what they can, but even more stay quiet in avoidance. As the world continues to search for a solution, I believe the answer lies in the understanding that the civil war is the result of not just one individual event, as is often argued internationally, but rather a conglomerate of deeply intertwined historical moments.

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