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Does Revolution Breed Radicalism? An Analysis of the Stalled Revolution in Syria and the Radical Forces Since Unleashed

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Does Revolution Breed Radicalism?

An Analysis of the Stalled Revolution in Syria and the Radical Forces Since Unleashed

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the turn to conflict in Syria during 2011 to see if it is revolutionary in nature and if so, why has it not succeeded? This thesis aims to analyze the anatomy of Syria's "revolution" in order to determine the causes behind the initial popular mobilization and transition to conflict. Then, further analysis of the essential elements of successful revolutionary movements will be undertaken to reveal what conditions remain unmet for Syria to culminate in a full revolutionary transformation. Special attention will be paid to the revolutionary Opposition itself, since, to date, it has proved unable to generate the power necessary to destroy the old order and rebuild a new system. The significant role of external intervention will also be addressed, since these forces have simultaneously helped cause the conflict, prolong the conflict and prop up the regime. Finally, the negative consequences of undertaking a revolutionary process, especially when left only partially complete, will be highlighted throughout the study. Syria's own "rise of the radicals," has manifested itself in the phenomenon of ISIL or ISIS, which has proven the strongest and most violent Opposition group to emerge from Syria's revolutionary environment.

Introduction

Revolutions are romanticized throughout history, yet are among the most chaotic, violent and misunderstood of all social phenomena. Revolutionaries offer a break from the past, and often promise a better, even utopian future. However, the reality of revolutions is far from romantic and they do not always bring the promise of progress. Revolutions indisputably bring change, but not just any change; revolutions bring "rapid, fundamental change in the social structures as well as in a state's personnel, institutions, and foundation of its legitimacy, accomplished from outside the legal channels and accompanied in part by a movement from below (the non-governing classes)." This thorough and precise definition of revolutions is from Mohsen Milani's 1988 book on *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic.* This language applies to developments in Syria between 2011 and 2014, and will be the benchmark by which we judge whether Syria's case better fits a revolution or rebellion.

This study will contend that the events in Syria carried the potential for revolution, and that such a revolutionary process is already partially underway. However, the opportunity for the full destruction of the old regime and a transition to singular sovereignty by a group from outside the ruling polity remains elusive. Therefore, the revolutionary process has stalled and will likely fail. Although events in Syria are unlikely to culminate in a full revolutionary

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transition, the process itself has unleashed radical forces from the ungoverned and violence ridden environment of the Syrian conflict. The rise of the radicals – a key characteristic of revolutionary societies - has manifested itself so powerfully, that Charles Tilly's concept of "multiple sovereignty" now exists and a de-facto independence movement by radicals may have already succeeded. The rise of the radical, Western designated terrorist army, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), also termed Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) in many news outlets, has led to a recreation of what ISIL has branded a new Islamic Caliphate modeled on a medieval Islamic State (Al-Hayat 2014, b). This new "Islamic State," was but one organization in a greater opposition movement, yet now controls vast territory in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq, over which is wields power and control tantamount to a fledgling third world nation. ISIL also proudly proclaims to have destroyed the foundations of the old Sykes-Picot border, which redrew the map of the region following World War I, and claims sovereignty over an area roughly spanning eastern Syria and Western Iraq (Al-Hayat 2014, a).

As Syria's socio-political crisis cultivated conflict, revolutionary conditions created an environment where the most radical opposition group thrived. This phenomenon in part explained in theory by Theda Skocpol (1979), who defined "social revolutions" as emerging through mutually constitutive change in social and political structures. Both changes must occur, and are usually caused by revolts by a class-based movement from below (4-5). Skocpol argues that revolutions aren't necessarily total breakpoints in history, but rather are newly adopted systems based on an adaptation of the previous reality (171). This point is important because in cases where a power vacuum exists, and contentious politics is dominated by war and violence, the prospects for a smooth and orderly transition becomes lower. In such un-governed societies, tackling their problems with a state centric theoretical approach proves

elusive (Clunan 2010). Therefore, reevaluating the cause-of systemic violence and radicalism in such societies is imperative for policy makers and military planners who might be called on to address global threats.

Revolutionary transitions often cause periods of systemic instability, instability and radicalism. Conversely, the existence of structured mechanisms of opposition to fill vacuums of governance can help ease transitions of the socio-political systems. This was the case of Britain's transformation, which was made easier because the dominant class was already organized via the assembly. Therefore, they were able to channel revolutionary change against the monarchy without completely destroying the old system and starting anew (Skocpol 1979, 181). However, in studying revolutionary France, Russia and China, Skocpol (1979) found the more war and violence wracked the transformation process, the higher the likelihood of radicalism. Here, Skocpol rightfully argued that it is often the strongest, most extreme forces within the opposition that come to power since they are formed within the crucible of war. Fear and counterrevolution led to radical republicanism in France, while foreign war in 1789 undermined the liberal phase of the French Revolution. Such events led to terror, oppression and the eventual rise of the Napoleonic dictatorship (185). Wars and pervasive violence also acted as a radicalizing force in Russia and China by which extremists took control and used existential threats to the revolution to justify the centralization of power, the assumption of authoritarian powers and the purge of rivals (195). Syria's broader opposition and their international supporters should have considered this this threat long ago. Meanwhile, ISIL's radicalization and power has increased as their foreign domination of territory in Iraq expands.

Rosemary O'Kane (1995) differs slightly from Skocpol, in that she argues for the primary importance of civil conflict, vice foreign wars, as being responsible for shaping the post-regime

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struggle for power. As such, she claims that these civil conflicts are responsible for the

radicalism that influences the centralization of the new state. She argues that this is because

the revolutionary process is one of establishing civilian control over the revolutionary forces of

internal coercion. In revolutionary societies, the previous regime no longer wields the Weberian

concept of a "monopoly of force." Therefore this primary demonstration of state sovereignty

and power must be reestablished. Only after the civil competition concludes, can state building

actually begin in earnest. This competition, unsurprisingly, is fierce and often marked by

conflict. Civil conflict, more than anything, is likely to be the radicalizing force most threatening

to Syria after the fall of Asad. ISIL has mastered this concept by dominating their enemies, in

the counter-governed space of Eastern Syria and Western Iraq where the monopoly of force

has broken down, and ISIL has filled the vacuum of governance (al-Hayat 2014, a) (Pollack

2012).

Although ISIL has not succeeded in completely destroying the old regime of Asad, they

are one of modern history's most stark examples of the radical forces that can emerge from

revolutionary societies. Their brand of radicalism is includes brutal tactics, oppressive

governance, fundamental Islamic political system and a well-documented record of human

rights abuses (UNHCR 2014). ISIL's style of radicalism will be further detailed in later sections.

The current crisis being precipitated under of their nascent rule has gained global attention and

action. This is because their new "Islamic State" has arguably created conditions for multiple

sovereignties, if not dual sovereignty, across the un-governed spaces in Syria and Iraq. Their

campaign could culminate in successful revolution, unsuccessful rebellion or a partially

successful independence movement. Now that the world sees such a reality as increasingly

evident, their capacity for governance will be tested. As O'Kane and Skocpol predicted, in such

situations, violent revolutionary groups eventually have to govern. ISIL was quick to claim that transition when they declared the establishment of the "Islamic State," modeled on Islamic Caliphates of the past. By creating a model of statehood, ISIL has attempted to develop the civil-military structure that legitimizes itself among the population it now controls, and in many ways, they have succeeded (al-Hayat 2014, b).

Chapter One: A Brief History of the Syrian Conflict

This chapter will define the conflict in Syria as one born of revolutionary potential. The revolutionary phenomenon itself was partially triggered by events of the 2011 Arab Spring, which swept the region as a social force that rejected authoritarian and oppression. However, the forces of the Arab Spring were less unified around what they chose to represent. More freedom and the right to self-determination were perhaps the greatest political demands, while elements of liberalism and a yearning for democratic governance were also strong throughout the movement, given the desire for popular sovereignty. The individuals within the movement also sought greater socio-economic opportunities and less corruption in government.

The forces of the Arab Spring initially stoked unrest in Syria during March of 2011. Nationwide protests against the authoritarian system of government under President Bashar al-Asad eventually elicited violent crackdowns. Similar to Arab Spring movements across the region, such state sponsored violence only served to inflame the public's outrage. After months of growing popular mobilization against the government, the protest movement morphed into armed rebellion. This rebellion has since engulfed the nation, which has become the most violent in the entire world. The nature of this conflict and its revolutionary characteristics will be outlined throughout this study.

Defining the Conflict

Over 191,000 Syrian's have lost their lives since the brutal civil conflict began in 2011, thousands at the hands of chemical weapons (Price 2014) (NYT 2014). Millions of refugees are also externally or internally displaced, and the toll of the conflict has set the country's infrastructure, economy and civil society back decades (Fearon 2013). Syria's conflict is one of great destruction, but is it more aptly defined as a revolution, rebellion, civil war, or something different altogether? While revolution has already been defined, rebellions generally represent a violent uprising and can also retrospectively be identified as a failed attempt at revolution. For this study, rebellions assume the same characteristics of revolutions, but stop short of successfully replacing the old political order with a new one of the opposition. In short, rebellions for the purpose of this paper can be considered failed revolutions. As for the more general definition of "civil war," it has been described by James Fearon (2013) as a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region, or to change government policies." A quantitative measure can also be applied to account for casualties and deaths, both of which Syria has far exceeded (Christia 2013) (Fearon 2013).

Regardless of the ultimate outcome in Syria, the first stages of the Syrian conflict have mirrored that of a revolution in progress. Therefore, this study will adapt theories of revolution to understanding the conflict. If Asad wins, history will likely remember the conflict as a failed rebellion turned civil war; if he should fall, it could be remembered as a classic example of a modern day revolution. This next section will address how such events arose out of the "Arab Spring" movement, the transition from peaceful protest to violent conflict, and why the situation deteriorated to one of self-sustaining violence.

The Transition from Popular Mobilization to Armed Conflict

Before destabilizing unrest even touched Syria, the sweeping Arab Spring phenomenon began in Tunisia on 18 December 2010. The figurative spark of revolution was ignited by the literal self-immolation of a Tunisian who resorted to a horrifying display of political protest against the corruption and repression of his government (Reuters 2010). By the next month, the Tunisian regime of Ben Ali was toppled and the writing was on the wall for Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, whose three decade long rule had been seen as a mainstay of durability and stability in the region. Syria's Arab Spring began much like the others, as a peaceful protest movement demanding major reforms. The protest movements in North Africa and the greater Middle East inspired an incipient protest movement in Syria. In March 2011, protestors in Damascus and the southern city of Deraa demanded the release of political prisoners (YouTube 2011, a). Government forces responded with deadly force, a move that triggered days of violent unrest that steadily spread across the entire country (BBC 2014, b). As organic protests rose up against the Asad regime, local coordination committees began to form pockets of organized dissent. These nascent and localized groups represented the seeds of an impending larger revolutionary mobilization. The groups at first emerged in the cities of Deraa, Homs, Banias, Saraqeb, Idleb, Hasaka, Qamishli, Der Ezzor, the Syrian Coast, Hama, Raqqa, Swayda', the Damascus suburbs and even Damascus proper. And in one of the first displays of organized contentious politics, these groups issued joint demands to the Asad regime (Syrian local coordination committees 2011). By April, protests were being coordinated countrywide while many demanded the resignation of Bashar al-Asad, and the end of Baath party rule. However, protestors were met with the bloodiest day yet when security forces fired on crowds of protestors, killing dozens (Telegraph online video 2011) (BBC 2014, a).

At first, Asad wavered between force and conciliatory gestures; moves that were rooted in pragmatism but ultimately revealed weakness. Following the initial crackdown on protests, he also chose to release political prisoners, reshuffle the cabinet, fire unpopular government officials and even lifted the 48-year-old state of emergency (BBC 2014, a). These were some of the first erratic attempts by Asad to improvise policies to crush the Opposition with one hand and appease them with the other. At times, when Asad sought to punish the Opposition, he ordered uncompromising force to oppress dissent and disperse the growing popular mobilization. At other times Syria's nascent revolutionaries witnessed conciliatory acts by the regime. This strategy was largely meant to appease national groups Asad hoped he could compromise with, but it was also meant to ease international pressure.

The romanticized vision of Arab Spring revolutions led to significant press coverage of the events in Syria, which shone a spotlight on the regime's response to the popular mobilization. Asad's heavy-handed response to the Opposition showed he wanted to crush dissent but his conciliatory acts likely reflected a consideration of his international standing and fear of international intervention (Fearon 2013, 15). Much like other Arab Spring protest movements, Syria's began peacefully but turned violent after government forces exacerbated public outrage by using excessive and indiscriminate force to quell the protestors (Telegraph 2011, a&b). The difference between a just use of force to contain unrest and the use of violence to suppress dissent, is that the latter was practiced by the authoritarian rulers who most fell prey to the Arab Spring phenomenon and succumbed to a violent evolution of their nations' previously peaceful protest movements (Dot-Pouillard 2012).

By May 2011, Army tanks and other forces entered cities seen as hotbeds of the new protest movement (YouTube 2011). Asad sought to crush anti-regime protests but at the same

time offered amnesty for political prisoners. The latter move came even after tightened U.S. and European Union sanctions (NYT 2011). As the size and scope of the conflict grew, the regime increasingly adopted violence, but this only served to harden and radicalize the resolve of the growing opposition (BBC 2014, a). Between July and October of 2011, opposition groups began to coalesce, whereas the previous expressions of collective outrage and unrest had developed from the disparate and disaffected masses loosely organized under the local coordination committees. One of the most prominent groups to form was the Free Syrian Army, an insurgent militia composed of former Army soldiers and deserters who announced their organization and armed opposition to the regime in October 2011 (Landis 2011). By late 2011, opposition activists met in Istanbul in an attempt to agree upon a cohesive organizational structure and mobilize support for a unified front that could topple the regime. These new opposition groups agreed at the Istanbul meetings to announce the formation of an organization, the Syrian National Council (SNC) to confer political legitimacy on the Opposition's efforts to provide strategic direction. The newly formed SNC emerged as the symbolic umbrella group representing the different opposition groups. However, most opposition groups remain independent and without centralized leadership by 2014 (O'Bagy 2013, b, 6, 10, 28).

As the popular mobilization transitioned to violent conflict, the Opposition realized the importance of gaining international backing to strengthen their movement and weaken Asad. While the SNC and other friends of the Syrian Opposition successfully gained some Arab State funding and international backing, the opposition's mostly moral support has been significantly offset by real, tangible Russian and Iranian support to the Asad regime itself (Dickinson 2013). Russia and China also blocked U.N. motions to target the Asad regime and aid the Opposition (UN 2011). The only international organization to seriously support the Opposition and

condemn Asad was the Arab League, which sent observers into the country in late 2011 (BBC

2014, b). Eventually the Arab League went as far as to suspend Syria's membership, which

perpetuated the sentiment that the Syria conflict was becoming an increasingly sectarian one

with Arab Sunni monarchies on one side and Shiite allies of Asad, Lebanese Hizballah and Iran

on the other (Geneive 2011) (BBC 2014, b). As the intensity of the conflict grew during 2012,

insurgent tactics became the Oppositions' most effective strategy to combat the more powerful

conventional Syrian military. Yet neither side proved able to leverage comparative advantage in

the fight, so the conflict itself evolved into civil war (Peterson 2011). By June of 2012, Asad fully

abandoned conciliatory reforms and prepared his government for "real war," thus committing

to overwhelming force and brutal oppression to retain power (BBC 2014, b). Despite the

organization of the SNC and outside assistance, the Opposition has remained fragmented

among a loosely connected network of former army soldiers, militias, terrorist groups

associated with Al-Qaeda and ISIL. The Opposition initially practiced guerrilla tactics, a

trademark of insurgency; however, by early 2012 the conflict had evolved to a conventional civil

war, with fixed positions and front lines to defend territory held by each side. Eventually,

radicals began to emerge as the more powerful among a wider umbrella of disparate groups.

Their motivation and tactics of employing maximum violence on the battlefield made them

more successful in comparison to the "moderate opposition" the international community

hoped would become the legitimate rulers of Syria. As such, ISIL began to make a name for

itself as one of the premier jihadist groups fighting Asad. With well trained, battle hardened

fighters from across the globe, tech and public relations savvy media professionals and strong

willed leadership, their battlefield and recruiting successes surged (al-Hayat 2012) (De Kerchove

2014).

A November 2012 effort in Qatar tried to unify the Opposition forces at a meeting held by the SNC, however the more radical and Islamist forces refused attendance (USA Today 2012). As the civil war raged, into 2013, reports of chemical weapon usage by the regime began to surface. In April 2013, the U.S. and Britain demanded an investigation into chemical weapon attacks but the events did not lead to international military intervention that could've toppled the regime (Farley 2013). In fact, the regime of Bashar al-Asad remains advantaged by its strong conventional military and international backers. As of 2014, neither side has proved capable of gaining the upper hand, and the fighting continued to grind on with indication of abating (BBC 2014, b).

The Vain Hope of Arab Spring Revolutionaries

The case of Syria has followed the similarly inspired revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya but has become one of the most geo-politically important and generally most devastating of the Arab Spring uprisings. These successful Arab Spring revolutions initially inspired the Syrian people themselves to rise up, through minor forms of political protest, which progressively elevated to violence (Wieland 2011). Although each country's fate manifested differently, with varying degrees of violence, the inspirations for revolutionary actions were all strikingly similar and the events that unfolded were mutually constitutive. In nearly all Middle Eastern nations, populations mobilized against the institutionalized oppression of authoritarian regimes, and demanded more freedom and better economic opportunities. The promised benefit of these revolutions, however, has eluded most Arab Spring states, even though many uprisings have left some authoritarian leaders ousted in their wake. Clearly, Egypt and Tunisia experienced relatively less violent revolutionary transitions of power; even though

a deferred counterrevolution seems to have brought Egypt's military back to power, at the

expense of the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike the cases of Egypt and

Tunisia, where violence was relatively minimal for revolutionary societies, Syria has followed

the path of Libya, since its leadership seems willing to use total war, thus far more successfully,

in its bid to retain power. Nevertheless, the progression of social mobilization for revolutionary

goals was similar in each case: popular protests, fueled in large part by social media (Wieland

2011). There is also no doubt the Arab Spring represents a transitive social phenomenon that

has demonstrated the power of social mobilization and collective action in the evolving modern

environment of new technology and communication.

This emergent phenomenon is well captured in Manuel Castells 2012 book, *Networks of*

Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age. In this work, Castells stakes out a

theory of movements, in that they can emerge out of online networks that empower society to

challenge global powers of government, big business and other material forces that have

typically dominated world affairs. By networking the masses through the Internet, he argues

these forces gain bargaining power through mass mobilization of online and real world

activism. This mass subversion and purposeful struggle to affect the norms and values of

society has become exponentially empowered through social media. As his title suggests,

"outrage and hope" become the emotions that are given strength through the medium of the

Internet, by which they are unleashed as powerful societal forces. Castells begins with the

example of Tunisia, by correctly arguing that it was not the initial act of civil disobedience that

gave rise to the successful revolutionary movement; rather, the means of the Internet itself

allowed for the emotions of outrage and hope to network the masses. Castells acknowledges

the "multidimensionality" of these movements, but upholds them as a primary causal

mechanism for these movements as social phenomena (2012). Castells book does a good job of capturing the recent phenomenon whereby against all odds and expectations, mass protests and when necessary, violent opposition movements, were able to overthrow or severely weaken many dictators in a region rife with authoritarian tradition. The importance of social media as a mutually constitutive force is important understanding events in Syria as part of a wider regional phenomenon.

Chapter Two: Toward a Theoretical Understanding of Revolutions

The theories used in the analysis of Syria's turn to conflict draw heavily on pioneers in the study of revolution and social movements. Charles Tilly is one of the leading scholars in the field, and his resource mobilization theory provides a holistic model explaining the necessity of tangible actions revolutionary movements must take in order to succeed. Tilly cast such behavior as a rational pursuit, involving the mobilization of not just resources but people. Crane Brinton's use of analogy to increase understanding of revolutions as a process was integral to understanding the steps at play in Syria's own conflict. Theda Skocpol also contributed greatly to theories of Social Revolutions and this analysis. Her use of structural functionalism to explain the phenomenon of revolutions also provides a very complete understanding of the causes behind revolutions and the process by which they culminate. David Easton's work on Systems Theory helps give a simplified model to understand Syria's domestic sphere as a system whereby inputs and outputs determine the sustainability of the system. The J-Curve theory and explanations of relative deprivation also are drawn on extensively to explain the initial spark behind "why men rebel." Finally, the importance of war and violence is touched upon, and will be addressed frequently throughout this work. Such great thinkers and many others will serve to heavily influence the subsequent analysis.

Resource Mobilization and the Rationalization of Collective Action

Charles Tilly and other pioneers of resource mobilization theory helped advance our theoretical understanding of collective action by casting the phenomenon as rational behavior within society. He also breaks with the frameworks of Ted Gurr and James Davies who promoted aggregate theories of revolutions and singular causal mechanisms; preferring instead to focus on the processes of mobilization structures of power and the links between both (Tilly, 1973, 436). This theoretical framework, and many of Tilly's definitions, will heavily influence this analysis. For Tilly, the rationality behind such collective behavior is rooted in its relative success; that is to say, protest movements and even revolutionary movements do often force change in society. And for Tilly, the success of such movements is directly correlated to resource mobilization, i.e. the ability of the group to acquire and employ resources toward a goal. Simple protests, rioting and mob behavior are unlikely to succeed, or garner the requisite resources to force change on a government. These resources may be materiel, financial or ideological, but the most important element is participation by a critical mass of individuals. The ability to mobilize people for collective action is a powerful force within society. Even oppressed individuals, or the masses without access to the ruling polity or institutionalized influence, find themselves empowered when acting in numbers. Tilly's theory differentiates between simple protest actions or rebellious violence, and the collective action of events like revolution. That is because the latter phenomenon incorporates a synthesis of resource mobilization and social mobilization. The simple voicing of dissent and grievances is common in society, but usually does not result in the direct action necessary to institute change. Tilly would argue that resource mobilization, specifically, is what is necessary to create a formidable socio-political force.

In Charles Tilly's work *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1977), Tilly explains collective action and why it occurs. According to Tilly, collective action is the study of power and politics. His book is an inherently normative study of social forces and is generally hostile to the heavy-handed exercise of power by governments. The work is equally sympathetic to collective action of ordinary citizens. In his literature review, Tilly examined previous explanations of collective action, or theories connected to the concept and for example, Karl Marx's theoretical knowledge was incorporated into Tilly's thinking. Tilly would be remiss otherwise, since Marx's ideas proved powerful in the discipline of studying social movements and revolutions; particularly so, since they had the normative impact of predicting (and likely causing) multiple revolutions and rebellions. Marx, of course, centered his theory of collective action on class conflict where the perpetual struggle between the ruling bourgeoisie and the ruled proletariat class inevitably leads to revolution. Tilly acknowledged the power in class conflict and how opposition emerges to ruling polities, yet he opted for a more multi-dimensional understanding of revolutionary societies (1977, 2-1). By incorporating Emile Durkheim's work, Tilly highlighted how the division of labor in society destroyed social interaction and shared consciousness, which in the end leads to the breakdown of society (1977, 2-7). In looking at John Stuart Mill, Tilly noted that he took a more microeconomic approach to incentives that lead to collective action. Where Mill also rejected assumptions of crowd action as irrational, and instead emphasized the rational pursuit of interests (1977, 2-12). Max Weber's model looked at constitutive authorities that act on behalf of groups, and these groups derive their sources of authority from traditional modes, rational-legal definitions of authority and finally charismatic sources of authority (1977 2-19). Given all these influences, Tilly's analysis is anti-Durkheimian,

and more structured along a Marxist model that also incorporated an emphasis on belief

systems from Weber and a decision-making process formulated by Mills (1977, 1-9 to 1-16).

As stated earlier, Tilly attempted to synthesize causal and purposive models into his theory

in order to develop a more comprehensive explanation of collective action. He generally

defines causal mechanisms as the effect external forces have on the behavior of the group.

Where Marx's influence comes in to play, is where Tilly asserts that social interaction is greatly

impacted by a groups' relationship to the means of production. Tilly's analysis, therefore, takes

a materialistic view of cause and effect. In defining the purposive, Tilly explains that the group

makes decisions based on set of rules and individual rationalization. This incorporates a bit of a

Millinian approach in that collective action is also driven by individual psychological

rationalization. Perhaps Tilly's most important contribution to the theoretical understanding of

revolutions is his *polity model.* Here, Tilly creates definitions and demarcates the collective

forces acting within society. It is a static model of political interaction where a group of

contenders apply pooled resources to each other and to the government. Within this model, a

government is an organization, which controls the principle concentrated means of coercion

within a population. *Contenders* are any group who apply resources to influence the

government. This can be a member within the ruling polity or from the outside. A *member* is

part of a group of contenders who have routine, low-cost access to resources controlled by the

government, whereas, the polity consists of the members of the government. *Challengers* are

groups of contenders who do not have routine, low-cost access to government controlled

resources and a *coalition* is a set of contenders (members or challengers) that may even

cooperate with government elements to coordinate collective action with the goal of capturing

power and authority (1977,Ch 6-7).

Tilly also introduces his *mobilization model* to his theoretical framework so that it includes both organizations and how they interact. This model is mostly specific to contenders, since they are the group applying resource mobilization to their strategy. Within this model you have *interests*, *organizations*, *mobilization*, *collective action* and *opportunity*. Interests represent gains and losses stemming from group interactions, and in the aggregate, they create the goals of the organization. The organization itself depends on the structure of the group and determines the groups' capacity to act on its interests. *Mobilization* is the process by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action. Those resources may be labor-power, goods, weapons, votes and any number of other things, just so long as they have utility to the groups' shared interests. Conversely, a decline in resource aggregation exhibits demobilization. Collective action follows as people work together for a common interest. Collective action is not just passive either; it constitutes an active application of tangible resources toward a goal. Finally, Tilly emphasizes the importance of opportunity, defined as the group's relationship to the world around it. Opportunity can benefit either the contenders within a society or the ruling polity (1977, 8). They serve as events or conditions to advantage either side. This is important because often movements, like the ones in the Middle East, need an opportunity to emerge.

These models help us understand why collective action occurs by highlighting that: 1. Collective action costs something. 2. All contenders count costs. 3. Collective action brings benefits, in the form of collective goods. 4. Contenders continuously weigh expected costs against expected benefits. And 5. Both costs and benefits are uncertain because contenders have imperfect information about the current state of the polity and all parties engage in

strategic interaction. Contention for power thus links the mobilization model to the polity model (1977, 5-1).

There are also different forms of contention: *competitive*, *reactive* and *proactive*. All revolve around competition and the allocation of resources, as well as societal claims on these resources. The *repertoire*, or tactics of collective action is extremely important to understanding revolutionary societies. Repertoires have evolved over time but include: protests, strikes, civil disobedience and violence in its many forms. In fact, Tilly prefers to use a broad definition of violence that includes any use of physical force. Whereby the intent is to act collectively to employ power. Often violence is incidental, occurring as a result of a demonstration. Other times it is a tool, like repression of a government or terrorism against a government. *Contentious gatherings*, such as demonstrations, strikes, protests etc. are not intrinsically violent but they may serve as settings for violence. Violence occurs via the same political processes that produce nonviolent collective action. But it makes it visible and more costly on the object of the violence. Tilly uses definitions from other scholars but prefers a broad definition of *revolution* – "the displacement of one set of power brokers over another." He also argues that a revolutionary outcome can occur without a revolutionary situation, and urges scholars to focus on the process, not only the outcome of revolutions (Tilly 1977, 5-14).

Tilly also emphasizes the importance of historical analysis when studying collective action. That is because collective action has not only evolved and changed with the times, it has shaped the social power structures within societies and the way these power structures relate to the means of production.

The Anatomy of Revolutions

The classical "anatomy of a revolution," as outlined by Crane Brinton in his book *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1938), is fundamentally helpful to understanding the process of revolutions and the revolutionary potential of the Syrian civil war. Should Syria culminate in revolution, Brinton believes history shows that the course of the process may follow a predictable trajectory. According to Brinton, revolutions begin with the decay of the old regime, which ushers in the initial stages of revolution, and then the fall of the old regime. Although this is usually a time of great hope and celebration, the following stages of building anew can actually prove more difficult than even defeating the old regime. After the fall of the old regime usually comes the brief honeymoon period and fleeting rule of the moderates, which eventually gives way to "the accession of the extremists," the rise of the radicals and the "reign of terror and virtue." Only after chaos and violence ensue does convalescence overtake society in what's called a "Thermidorean reaction," a phrase coined by Brinton because of the move away from radicalism that occurred during the month of "Thermidor" under the new French revolutionary calendar. The final stage ushers in an era where society normalizes in accordance with the new social and political order. This sequential explanation outlined a linear course of revolutions as understood by Brinton. His analysis also invoked a metaphor that used the physical science's study of a fever or flu virus to very aptly describe the nature of revolutions. As such, revolutions are like the flu, since they come on like a sickness, and are doomed to get worse before they get better. His entire conceptual scheme, therefore, is a metaphor borrowed from the natural sciences and pathology. This study will adhere to this conceptual understanding of revolutions as a process that follows stages but acknowledges that such a neat linear chronology is not always reflective of reality. As such, the situation unfolding in Syria today would still be

considered in the nascent stages of revolutions, assuming it is in fact undergoing a revolution at all. This is true even though the conflict began in 2011. Nevertheless, the existent rebellion and insurgency still is closely comparable to the definition of a revolutions and Brinton's conceptual understanding of the revolutionary process. Syria has only progressed partially along this revolutionary trajectory but is advanced past the phase where opposition elements have adopted violence as the repertoire of last resort, in order to force the fall of the old regime. It is also true that Syria's "rise of the radicals" has occurred in a stage prior to the successful destruction of the old regime. This has created conditions where such radicals have emerged and culminated prior to an opposition victory, in a way enhancing the state of "multiple sovereignty" Tilly has outlined. Such conditions highlight the diversity and complexity of revolutionary societies.

In his detailed analysis of the stages of revolutions, Brinton reveals important points that apply to the case of the Syrian conflict. Brinton astutely notes that pre-revolutionary societies are usually economically progressive, not retrograde (Brinton, Ch.2 part II). Economic misery exists in many states but doesn't usually result in insurrections. Economic grievances brought on by feelings of resentment towards the government for inhibiting society's actualization are a more likely indicator of revolutions. In most revolutionary societies, the economy was previously prosperous; the citizens only turned against the government when they felt government shortcomings or biased policies were against their economic interests (1932 Ch.2 part II). Brinton also notes the importance of ideology by stating "no ideas, no revolution (1932 Ch.2 part III, 49)." In speaking on the types of revolutionaries, Brinton contends that moderates often are prominent in the early stage of revolutions but radicals usually overtake them during the crisis stage (1932 Ch. 6 part III). These principles help explain

the rise of ISIL, given their skillful use of radical Islam, force and fundamentalism to create a powerful ideology. Although the Asad regime has yet to be deposed, their rise during the height of the crisis stage should have been a predictable outcome of such a society, given the revolutionary preconditions and accelerators that are to be detailed in later sections.

Systems Theory

Crane Brinton was one of the first theorists to liken revolutions to a sickness coming on and overtaking society like a fever, similar to how a doctor studies a patient. However, later theorists refined the understanding of society as a system. Such a framework of analysis makes sickness or mechanical failure an adept analogy to our understanding of society. David Easton's 1957 work *The Analysis of Political Systems* is one of the first attempts to explain society as a self-sustaining system. His real world analogy follows a mechanical understanding of society as a system of *inputs* and *outputs*; and although it is not the most complex or modern work within the systems theory discipline its simplified model is beneficial to this adaptation to revolutionary societies. His theory of society as a system is visionary because it gives boundaries to the system of study and attempts to provide a blueprint for how society operates. It also gives a sequential and cyclical explanation to how a political system functions. Easton's model contends that within any political system exist inputs such as *demands* and *supports*, which the system must meet. This is because scarcity drives political life within the system. Demands, therefore, are the raw input on which finished products, called *decisions*, are made. So it follows that, if healthy, can adequately resolve this inherent dilemma of society by producing outputs that satiate demand. However, demands and decisions could not exist without *support*. Support represents the other input, which acts as legitimacy for the actors

supporting the system. This concept of legitimacy is extremely important for governments to operate, because without it, their support can wane and the whole system breaks down. Support manifests itself overtly, but also passively through social order. The latter support may not be tangible, but it is a valuable input nonetheless. Support is fed into the system related to three objects: the *community,* the *regime* and the *government*. The community represents the players within the game, while the regime makes the "rules of the game" and the government functions as the bureaucracy. No political system can continue to operate unless its members are willing to support the existence of a group that seeks to settle differences of promote decisions through peaceful action in common." This is so important because national unity and the political community keep the political system going and confer the legitimacy essential to a stable political system. The regime regulates the way demands are put into the system and settled, which then leads to output. The government runs on the support and which it receives through persuasion, consent, manipulation and coercion through the threat of force. The government, therefore, processes the demands and negotiates conflict within the system. These demands and supporting groups then stimulate competition within the political system that lead to decisions or outputs. These outputs interact with the environment to produce changes in society that are considered *outcomes*. Depending on this outcome, new demands or supports may be generated within the political system. As such, a feedback loop is created and the process becomes cyclical (1957).

Under this theory the process of inputs and outputs determines to stability of the system. Interestingly, the system can function in a variety of different scenarios so long as the ratio of demands and decisions are processed in an acceptable manner to those participating in the system. For example, a large majority of the population may be unhappy, but if they're

making relatively few demands, and their support to the system is insignificant, then the stability of the system can endure. Conversely, a small subset of the actors in society can destabilize the system if their relative input is substantial. This process of inputs and outputs must be balanced, so that expectations can be met and managed (1957).

Easton's conceptual model of systems theory best describes the domestic sphere of societal action, but the incorporation of international intervening variables even further complicates the tenuous balance of inputs and outputs. Such consideration must be made for the case of Syria. For example, when conflict between domestic law and international law come into play, the illegitimacy of the state in the eyes of the international community can undermine the strength of the regime domestically. Moreover, cases where a regimes activities conflict with international law can sometimes compel international intervention in a state's domestic affairs. This has been the case in Syria, though not to the point where it has threatened the integrity of the regime. Syria's use of chemical weapons in 2013 crossed President Obama's threatened redline (Farley 2013). For a brief period, the world held its breath while it waited for a response, with some anticipating punitive military action led by the United States. Although such military intervention never materialized, a compromise was struck in the United Nations, and Russia and the U.S. both helped broker the disarmament of Syria's chemical weapon stockpiles (OPCW 2013). Although this represented a small loss of brutal military capability, Asad and Russia were able to avoid regime-changing military intervention (Cunningham 2013). This incident was one of the most pivotal in the Syrian conflict and represents both the strength and limitations of international law. On the one hand, Syria's violation of international law, through the use of chemical weapons could have given pretest for military intervention. Military intervention, of course, did not occur and the regime remains

in power. Nevertheless, the international community did compel Syria to destroy its chemical weapon stockpile (Gearan 2013). The importance of international and domestic law will be further expounded upon in later chapters.

The J-Curve – A Collective, Psychological Trigger for Revolt

"Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal (Davies 1962)." This concise revelation by James Davies conveyed to the world a more simplified understanding of what causes revolutions, and it has contributed greatly to the study of collective action. The subtle genius of Davie's theory is that it graphically and conceptually depicts a key variable that reveals causation behind revolutions. But it is a counterintuitive point to understand that revolutions are much more likely to occur after a period of progress rather than perpetual decline or stagnation. People across the globe and across time have endured great hardships, oppression, economic depravity and worse, yet revolutions are a relatively rare social phenomenon. Therefore things being bad, as an isolated variable, cannot be considered causal with regards to collective action or social mobilization. Rather, the threat of losing something perceivably gained, is often much more psychologically devastating; and conversely, the existential hope of forging a better life can even motivate radical behavior. As an early scholar of revolutions, Alex de Tocqueville put it; "evils that are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested (Tocqueville 1858, 214)." This illusion by Tocqueville was the inspiration for Davies' theory of revolutionary mobilization. In short, Davis' perception of quality of life is measured by people's expectations, which in turn affects their likelihood to revolt. The psychological concept of self-determination

means that most people desire to continually improve upon their quality of life. This instinctual

desire for fulfillment is operationalized as "expected need satisfaction." A person's "actual need

satisfaction" in many ways is determined by the environment and society where they live.

Therefore, as the gap between expected needs and actual needs widens, the potential for

unrest becomes greater. According to Davies, revolutions are most likely to occur when the

expectation gap is largest and becomes intolerable (1962, 6).

This course is not inevitable however; therefore, the opportunity must present itself in

the more comprehensive manner Charles Tilly also describes. For Davies, a weakened

government can be evidenced by relaxation of oppressive institutions. This often serves as the

opening needed to inspire revolutionary mobilization.   Davies specifically states that "it is

when the chains have been loosened somewhat, so they can be cast off without a high

probability of losing life, that people are put in a condition of proto-rebelliousness. I use

the term proto-rebelliousness because the mood of discontent may be dissipated

before a violent outbreak occurs. The causes for such dissipation may be natural or

social (including economic and political) (1962, 7)." This statement by Davies

acknowledges that the process of collective action within revolutions is a mutually

constitutive one.

Davies explanation of his J-Curve concept further progresses his theoretical

framework: "Although physical deprivation in some degree may be threatened on the

eve of all revolutions, it need not be the prime factor, as it surely was not in the

American Revolution of 1775 (1962, 6)." "The crucial factor is the vague or specific fear

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that ground gained over a long period of time will be quickly lost. This fear does not

generate if there is continued opportunity to satisfy continually emerging needs; it

generates when the existing government suppresses or is blamed for suppressing such

opportunity (1962, 8)." As we will examine in Syria, the process of reform, economic

prosperity and socio-political modernization created high expectations in Syria that

ultimately went unmet. Some modest, yet uneven gains were made in the first 8 years

after Bashar al-Asad came to power in 2001; however, his return to oppression in 2011

created conditions that threatened the Syrian people and sparked the society's instinct

for revolt.

The Primary Importance of War and Violence

In war torn, conflict-ridden society, one concept often holds true – systemic

violence often begets institutionalized violence. The works of Theda Skocpol and

Rosemary O'Kane, who both argued for the central importance of war and violence in

shaping revolutionary societies, captures this phenomenon. Although these academics

viewed the problem from slightly different vantage points, Both Skocpol and O'Kane

looked to revolutionary France, Russia and China for examples where the phenomenon of

radical rule emerged from revolutionary processes; and their findings are illustrative of similar

problems plaguing Syria. In France, the Jacobin political organization was instrumental in the

revolution and was responsible for the ensuing the reign of terror. They came to power at the

height of crisis and adopted a method of governance and bureaucracy that was more coercive

than administrative. Multiple departments and security organs were devised to defend against

counter-revolutions, enforce new laws and control the flow of resources. Civil conflict raged as challengers to the Jacobins fueled their justification of more radical and extreme methods. The failure of the Jacobins to consolidate power through the reign of terror led to three successive constitutions, which all failed, and eventually led to a coup by Napoleon and the rise of authoritarianism. Whereas the Jacobins failed to retain power, the Bolsheviks succeeded. As in France, civil rebellion led to terror and the establishment of internal security services, radical communist policies and the virtual end to a money currency because inflation was so bad (O'Kane 1995). Skocpol argued that the Jacobin's failures were because of dogmatism and different economic times, whereas the Bolsheviks could fall back on industry. But O'Kane argues it was simply flexibility and the willingness to transition to a more realistic post "war-communism" economy. The Jacobins weren't as organized as the communists and relied solely on coercion while failing at administration. Centralization of government and consolidation of internal security services are important for regime consolidation but so is the development of flexible economic, social and political policies. War and especially civil war during revolutions can become a great mobilizing force, but only if those countries new leaders adequately direct its power toward an efficient centralization of the state, rather than being overcome by it. Where Robespierre failed to centralize, Lenin succeeded. In China, revolutionary leaders also used war as a force to mobilize and centralize the communist state. State instrument of coercion, as in other revolutions, were necessitated by civil conflict and the threat of foreign war, which precipitated the terror. In China, state instruments of coercion expanded beyond security into social and economic life. The Korean War in 1950 further radicalized state policies and centralization. Even though the Chinese case began as an agricultural revolution, rapid centralization fueled industrialization, as it did in Soviet Russia, which gave the state more

economic power to consolidate. As seen in these examples, civil conflict and war act as a

radicalizing force that shapes the system of governance that emerges from the destruction of

the old state and the creation of a new state (O'Kane 1995) (Skocpol 1979).

Chapter Three: Preconditions Fuel Syria's Revolutionary Potential

In searching for a predictive theory of social science, it is tempting to seek a single causal variable to explain the revolutions phenomena. Unlike the laws of nature, however, humans consciously and determinably alter their reality, which means it is very unlikely we will ever be able to point to a single unchangeable law that accurately predicts such a complex social phenomenon as revolutions. Instead we must endeavor to continually reevaluate the causes of collective action and what variables affect the intensity of such movements. Nevertheless, determining what causes revolutions begins not only with the challengers to the regime, but the regime itself. Therefore the following analysis will attempt to breakdown the anatomy of a revolution and its essential elements in the early stages of the revolutionary process. In doing so, we will hopefully shed light on what makes the case study of Syria revolutionary, and eventually assess what characteristics remain absent to prevent a full revolutionary transformation.

Social disorder is a concept best considered on a spectrum or continuum, since some form of unrest is always evident in every society. In the world's most stable governments, expressions of social frustration are common; whereas countries exhibiting high levels of violence, government rejection, social cleavages and economic downturn often trend toward the most extreme end of the spectrum, that of revolution. Such forms of unrest, as discussed earlier, are symptoms of a sickness within society; and such sickness can be readily identifiable in revolutionary preconditions, even if these variables alone are not enough to cause or predict

revolutions. Such preconditions can, however, compound upon each other to intensify the level

of social discord in a nation, and sometimes push social unrest toward extremism and

revolution (Greene 1999, 152). Such preconditions were in the making before Bashar al-Asad's

rise to power, and then became exacerbated during his rule (BTI 2006, 2008, 2010). We also

must understand governments as a system in order to determine what makes them durable or

vulnerable. Preconditions to revolutions are not necessarily easy to identify; nevertheless, there

are certain characteristics of society and governments that make them more prone to

revolutionary mobilization. Recognizing these characteristics can help us better understand

revolutionary situations as they emerge, particularly the case of Syria. Such an endeavor begins

with the study the preconditions known to exist in societies prone to unrest and revolution.

Geographic Diffusion of Instability

Geographic isolation arguably makes countries better immune to revolutionary unrest.

This is because isolation often leaves a country's society to the forces of its own self-

determination, and they are usually less vulnerable to negative externalities. Isolation can also

bring positive social benefits on the domestic front since the military plays less of a role in

internal affairs. Conversely, states that are surrounded by other states and are in close contact

often succumb to the destabilizing forces that affect their neighbors. Such was also Samuel

Huntington's determination in his work *The Third Wave* (1992)*.* When looking at democratic

movements as "waves," the potential for spillover of instability is most impactful in regions

where there is a patchwork of bordering and interconnected states. These geographic

conditions create communication networks that expand across nations and regions, which also

can compound the trans-national effect of revolutionary fervor (Greene 1999, 152).

The geographic factor of isolation, while not the only variable, has contributed to social

stability and the peaceful evolution "toward social democracy without the historical

disjuncture's represented by revolution." Great Britain, Sweden, Ireland, the United States,

Canada, and New Zealand all represent nations where geographic isolation allowed for the

emergence of relatively stable and democratic political system. Conversely, states surrounding

revolutionary France in the 18th and 19th centuries were often vulnerable to the "demonstration

effect" and the spillover of instability, as evidenced by a period of near-continues war with

neighboring Prussia, Spain and Britain (Green 1999, 153). Syria clearly falls in the latter category

of nations vulnerable to externalities. Geographically, it finds itself nearly landlocked except for

a small strip of strategically important coastline on the Mediterranean. It sits adjacent to

Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and of course Israel, borders of nations all arbitrarily drawn by

post-World War Western powers. The result is a smattering of religious, social, ethnic, tribal

and political divisions arrayed across grossly heterogeneous nation states. Looking even

broader, Syria itself sits at the heart of a very troubled region where dysfunction and stark

divisions have been controlled under systems of authoritarianism. Aside from Turkey, Syria and

its neighbors have historically trended toward authoritarian government as the only systems

able to forcefully able to traditionally bring order. Syria itself has had to contend with the

troubles of unifying a heterogeneous nation while surviving the negative externalities of the

dangerous neighborhood. Authoritarianism maintained stability for a while, but created a

system whereby the legitimacy of the state rested on personal dictatorship and instruments of

oppression (CIA Factbook). Syria was not the only dictatorship to emerge; a whole host of

Middle Eastern states fell to authoritarian models in search of stability and security. However,

as we have seen with the Arab Spring, the façade of legitimacy is thin in these societies. The

phenomenon of the Arab Spring did not exhibit raised social consciousness in a vacuum of isolated nation states; it sparked revolutionary fervor that permeated nearly all of the authoritarian nations across the region. In fact, each Arab Spring dictatorship to fall lacked geographic isolation, and succumbed to such impactful externalities. Geographic isolation alone does not make states immune to unrest; but it is clear states that are not isolated tend to become more vulnerable to the flow of ideas, unrest and even violence. This cross-border social interaction can help create preconditions for instability. The geographic diffusion of ideas and instability have likely tested the legitimacy of the Syrian state and made it weaker as the transnational forces of revolution strengthened (Pollack 2012). That is because proximity between nations allows for a more vibrant exchange of ideas, closer communication and even the flow of resources. Such factors contribute to the diffusion of revolutionary fervor across borders, and help explain the Arab Spring as a regional phenomenon (Greene 1999, 152).

Diverse Demographics and Cultural Cleavages

Demography is also perhaps the most commonly cited precondition of Syria's upheaval, but is realistically more of a contributing, vice primary factor. Disproportionate youth ratios, sectarian policies, minority rule, race, ethnicity and religion are all potential drivers of unrest in systemically unstable societies. Population growth on its own is not an indicator of impending social unrest but does create pressure on the government and society to provide enough resources to go around. If societies' resources can keep pace with population growth and perceivably be allocated fairly, then stability is likely to persist. However, a sharp rise in scarcity often portends unrest, especially if the economic inequities within society are exacerbated (Davies 1962, 13). This is true especially when population growth leads to a "youth bulge"

where unemployment and a lack of opportunities in particular affect the younger generation disproportionately. In Syria's case, ethnic and religious demographics have partially helped determined the inequitable allocation of resources, an effect only compounded by population growth and scarcity (Matar 2012). This is because the Asad regime, for decades, allocated resources in a bias manner that caused resentment among large cross sections of society. This sectarian bias by Asad resulted in outrage among the have-nots in Syrian society. The market driven reforms undertaken by Asad were manipulated along political and religious preferences, thus alienating the large majority of potential challengers, who also happened to be Sunnis. Asad promoted private investment vice state-led centralization, liberalized capital, privatized banking and liberalized customs duties, all in effort to make Syria more economically viable and strong; however, the majority of these reforms mostly benefited his crony class of insiders and his Alawite religious minority (BTI 2003). Ultimately, these reforms were unaccompanied by real social reforms that would've helped the majority of Sunni Syrians who sought a more egalitarian economic order, unemployment alleviation, poverty reduction and other social programs (BTI 2006). The result was unmet expectations by a majority of Sunni Syrians and preferential treatment for the crony class and minority Alawites (Matar 2012). Unmet expectations from the economic downturn in 2008, coupled with biased sectarian policies, created fertile ground for a turn to unrest (Davies 1962).

Economic and Social Reform Raises Expectations

As addressed in prior sections, under the rule of Bashar al-Asad, the government began to introduce economic and some political reforms intended to modernize the Syrian socio-political system (BTI 2003, 1). Asad set out to decrease the country's reliance on oil revenue

while transitioning to a more diversified market economy. These reforms were initially met with the hope that they'd bring economic prosperity and a more open market system. However, by 2006 Syria remained an authoritarian regime with a state-dominated economy. Although reformist segments of the Syrian elite embraced new market driven policies and some social reform, the regime was determined not to sacrifice stability, and as such, never fully consolidated the policy changes that would transform Syria's socio-economic system. Some rudimentary introduction of market –oriented economic changes have occurred, as have some commitment to more liberal international trade agreements; however, these changes have proceeded cautiously. More importantly, they have not been met with increased democratization (BTI 2006, 1-5). By 2008, Asad's economic policies allowed for moderate economic growth but failed to result in real market economy reforms or an end to authoritarianism. Instead, crony capitalism reigned and the successful sectors of the private economy continued to be dominated by regime insiders and members of the religious minority. The regime's policies sought to establish a "social market economy" but instead returned to a reliance on hydrocarbon rents, subsidization of public sector companies and the continuance of social benefit schemes vice effectively regulating the market (BTI 2008, 1-3).

This faux transformation and economic mismanagement eventually forced the regime to begin running large budget deficits, whereas the 30-year rule of Hafiz witnessed primarily a commercial surplus (Mahamid 2013). The shift to economic downturn in Syria, in part, began to create the preconditions for the eventual emergence of systemic social unrest. Large amounts of foreign debt, rising rates of inflation, trade imbalances and unemployment all acted as bellwethers to poor economic performance and potential drivers of unrest. When speaking of preconditions, James Davies captures conceptually explains the revolutionary potential in Syria

with his J-Curve model (1962). As he correctly asserts, economic depravity alone is not enough

to fuel unrest, yet downturn after a period of rising expectations threatens the quality of life

society has come to expect. This phenomenon is most potent when fueled with a sharp reversal

of economic fortunes, which threaten societies' way of life and their expectation of continued

gains. Given the regimes public commitment to economic progress inducing reforms, the

political consciousness of its citizens was effectively heightened. In the end, the regime's failure

to meet those expectations created conditions for unrest beyond what would exist under

conditions previously (Greene 1999, 139).

The religious cleavages addressed previously generated resentment, which were

exacerbated by the biased and uneven economic development from the first eight years of

Asad's rule. As addressed by Davies and Toqueville, poverty alone is not enough to inspire

rebellion. That is because contrary to popular beliefs, poverty and economic despair are not

common sources of unrest in the model of sustainable social mobilization that cause revolution.

Such conditions breed a psychological sense of fatalism and hopelessness regarding their plight.

Moreover, these populations have no resources to commit to such collective action. Rather,

economic change that threatens the relative financial gains or their quality of life can often

inspire rebellion. This type of relative deprivation is common among revolutionary societies. In

contrast to perpetually deprived societies, those with rapid economic transformations or

modernization often react radically to unexpected shocks to the economy, especially those that

upset the societal balance of the system or perceivably threaten their gains. A transition to

capitalism, rapid industrialization, urbanization, and even modernization can often render the

old economic and social order anachronistic. Such changes can trigger conflict over resources if

they seem to threaten the livelihood of certain groups; and economic and social shocks often create a recipe for disorder (Greene 1999, 139).

The rapid modernization campaign by the Shah of Iran during the 1960s and 1970s is comparable to Bashar al-Asad's modernization campaign during which both generated untenable expectations and created economic progress that outpaced social and political reforms. The susceptibility of an economic system to disorder is therefore highest where the structural foundations of that economy are most in flux and the political economy is corrupt and biased. Both conditions create a higher likelihood of social frustration and generate fears that manifest as collective action (Greene 1999, 166). Such conditions contributed to Syria's slide to unrest.

Political Adaptation, or Lack Thereof

Revolutionary potential also inversely relates to the political legitimacy of government (Greene 1999, 168). This means that the legitimacy of the state is dependent on the evolving and growing political expectations of its people. A systems theory analysis by inputs and outputs simply states that the quantifiable level of popular support to a regime must be enough to sustain that government's legitimacy. There is no magic formula or political system known to sustain that level of legitimacy, rather, it is a continuing exchange whereby the state and society interact. For example, economic development increases social mobility within a society, thus expanding the social and political consciousness of a population. And these changes can help create a broader, socially mobile class, which in turn heightens the demand of political representation and participation. This is where authoritarian, oligarchical crony class governments like the Syrian regime run into trouble. Their style of rule is often based on a

small, exclusive polity that exercises authority through oppression and control. This leaves a large, albeit suppressed, pool of potential challengers in waiting that can prove extremely problematic if activated. These governments are often unresponsive to the public and forbid participation in active political institutions, thus creating an exclusionary society. However, modernization and industrialization increase the percentage of socially conscious members of society, who in turn demand more political participation; this can ultimately cause such segments of a population to clash with governments whose foundation of legitimacy is small and exclusive. Therefore, governments based on such ruling polities often succumb to waning legitimacy in the face of rising political demands. This can result in a failure of political adaptation, which creates a systemic imbalance where the conditions are ripe for the rise of contentious politics, even revolution (Greene 1999, 168). This turn to systemic imbalance happens most often when economic change, social mobility and the development of new representative institutions evolve rapidly but are unmet with political freedoms. In such societies where the existing political system fails to adapt and accommodate the population, legitimacy suffers. In such societies where political demands are rapidly increasing actions such as: suffrage reform, the legalization of trade-union activities and the states provision of welfare services can accommodate rising demands and demonstrate the political system's ability to adapt. If such a situation unfolds, and the existing political system fails to enact genuine, incremental reforms, then the population may turn to contentious politics and varying degrees of popular mobilization, depending on the severity of the systemic imbalance. In the case of Syria, Bashar's market reforms were neither genuine nor adequate in the eyes of the populace (Matar 2012) (Greene 1999, 167).

The Arab Spring uprisings across the Middle East clearly helped trigger Syria's initial protest movement, but there were many preconditions that allowed societies' social frustrations to explode as such a powerful force. Geography, demography, economic conditions and failed political adaptation all served to create a powder keg for Syrian society. Such preconditions exposed structural weaknesses in the fabric of Syrian society that contributed to the decay of the old regime and helped create an environment ripe for collective action and violent revolutionary mobilization. To a degree, anti-regime collective action is dependent on the severity of this systemic imbalance, which fuels social disorder. Such a conceptual understanding of the Syrian conflict will help us understand the conditions that led to Syria's unrest, and whether they were sufficient enough to thrust Syria into a revolutionary state. More importantly, a detailed study of the revolutionary environment itself will help us understand what the future holds for Syria.

To recap, revolutionary potential is highest in in heterogeneous societies where ethnic, religious and linguistic cleavages are most pronounced. Societies where economic resources consolidate among the elite can also create a resentful, revolutionary population whose political consciousness tend to focus on the illegitimacy of the system that is not benefiting them, creating a state of proto-rebelliousness. Uneven economic and social development often provides social conditions ripe for instability and unrest. Moreover, such economic and social progress often serves as a source of instability if it is perceived as being suppressed by a biased regime or if progress is deemed as threatened (Greene 1999, 178).

The Making of Revolutionary Preconditions Under Hafiz al-Asad

Although the preconditions for revolution have already been identified, the following two sections will provide a detailed narrative of the system created under the Asad's rule and how revolutionary preconditions emerged. Bashar al-Asad's father Hafiz, helped create the modern Syrian state and thus remade the structure of Syrian society in a new social, political and economic order. The emergence of the Baath party in 1963 and the Asad regime's rise to power in 1970 enshrined pan-Arabism, anti-imperialism and socialism into a distinct secular ideology that at first appealed to lower class and marginalized communities. These "isms" provided pillars of stability for the regime since they provided ideological foundations for the system of government, but also social distractions from that government's failures. However, as he consolidated his authoritarian rule, Hafiz built systemic inequities into Syria's political system that favored his family, his sect and inner circle. This created a minoritarian system where the instruments of government were in the hands of a loyal cadre of Hafiz's allies. These policies allowed the regime to prove durable under a quasi police state but created a system where revolutionary preconditions left the potential for unrest dormant (Brisco 2012, 9-10).

Hafiz ruled Syria from 1971-2000 and during his nearly three-decade reign, he consolidated his own brand of an authoritarian political system. The secular Baath party became the leading and only legal party, which filled out the expansive bureaucracy charged to tightly control the emergent faux socialist economy. Under Hafiz, the state's pillars of legitimacy came to rest on populist institution building, nationalism and Arabism, the latter of which was an effective state strategy to deflect attention from state inadequacies and the largely Alawite minority rule over the country. Instead of the population lamenting Hafiz's oppression and minoritarianism, much of the state's problems were projected on Israel.

Despite the grand egalitarian designs of the Arab-Socialist Baathist platform, the nation quickly reverted to an authoritarian security state obsessed with building itself as a military power. These pillars of the state's ideology became useful tools of the dictatorship to manipulate the masses, deflect criticism and tighten the ruling Asad family's grip on power (Brisco 2012, 10). The legitimacy of the state, however, became tied to the party and the cult of personality surrounding Asad. The regime's legitimacy, therefore, was reinforced through oppression and control. Rents from oil revenues allowed the state to centralize control over resources and dramatically expand the public sector, which fueled the faux socialist system and cemented the authoritarian architecture of government. The regime tightly controlled the economy, which the public sector dominated. This allowed Hafiz to create a "durable network of economic and political allegiance." In this manner, the state-centered socialist economy enmeshed with the corrupt cronyism, which favored a very selective cadre of Baath Party associates and a few from the smaller private sector (Brisco 2012, 12).

Under Hafiz, Syria's political economy became a dangerous brand of exclusiveness and sectarianism. Corruption and cronyism are common among Mideast autocracies, but the added element of minority sect rule created a delicate balance to maintain, since the large majority pool of potential challengers already had the foundations for a unifying ideology – their common Sunni religion. This, in turn, necessitated a strict and oppressive system of government. Nevertheless, the authoritarian architecture Hafiz created proved resilient for four decades; which begs the question, why now? For those four decades, Syria functioned as a police state where oppression was the foundation of stability and the cost of rebellion outweighed the perceived benefits. In this type of system, there resides an extremely small polity at the top, so any opening reveals weakness that the masses and a potential pool

challengers-in-waiting can emerge to exploit; a fact Hafiz understood well. Nevertheless, this

fact reveals the tenuous state of legitimacy that the regime had to rely significantly on

oppressive control (CIA Factbook) (BBC 2014, a).

In the 1970's, opposition movements began to rise against the unfair and exclusive

policies created under Hafiz, and against his authoritarian rule. The Muslim Brotherhood

emerged as one of the first Sunni Islamist threats to the secular socialist regime. Other

opposition groups, in the early 1980s, joined under an umbrella group called the Islamic Front

with the goal of overthrowing the regime. They were motivated by the favoritism and

corruption of the regime and emboldened in the wake of a severe economic crisis. These

opposition groups, similar to today, emerged from strongholds in Aleppo, Homs and Hama, and

in 1982 militants took control of parts of Hama. The regime responded with overwhelming and

deadly force, decimating the entire city and killing nearly 10,000 people (BBC 2014, a). This

event showed the regime's reliance on force and loyalty from the military (Kifner 1982).

Unsurprisingly, the demonstration of brutality also led the regime to become more repressive

and authoritarian (Brisco 2012, 13). History in this case can be illustrative. The policies of Hafiz

during the 1980's demonstrated that there would be no room for compromise and the regime

would use extreme measures against any opponents. It also revealed the relative weakness of

the nascent opposition to overwhelming brute force. On one hand, the Muslim Brotherhood

and other opposition movements did not enjoy popular support or the cross-cutting alliances

necessary to challenge the regime successfully. Moreover, events in Syria had unfolded in

isolation to the rest of world affairs. Unlike the movement of 2011, events in Hama did not

benefit from the momentum built by the Arab Spring protests and the successful

empowerment by new technology and social media that current events successfully

demonstrated. The rebelling groups of 1982 also represented a minority within the greater

Sunni majority and were snuffed out before they were able to mobilize a larger following. On

the other hand, the repressive policies of Hafiz prevented opposition movements from

organizing to gain popularity, so they remained small in number, geographically isolated and

unable to recruit more members. This allowed Hafiz to target and eliminate opponents to his

rule and deter future challengers (Kifner 1982).

Such a strategy was similarly pursued by Hafiz's son 30 years later but as we will see

Bashar had to contend with a much larger, broader and stronger popular movement, and in the

face of such opposition he initially wavered between accommodation and the devastating force

necessary to crush the opposition. Moreover, he was more vulnerable to international norms

and pressure in light of the effects social media had in popularizing the next protest movement

witnessed in the anti-authoritarian Arab Spring movement. But before Bashar's rise to power,

his father would have to handedly deal with subsequent more crises.

In the second half of the 1980's a severe drop in oil prices nearly collapsed Syria's state-

centered economy. This brought on a crisis that would reveal the early signs of instability and

inherent weaknesses in the Syrian economic system. The emergent economic crisis exposed

structural problems in the heavily bloated and subsidized public sector, which was dependent

on oil profits. This shock forced Hafez to initiate a limited liberalization campaign, in a process

called *intifah* in Arabic, which translated as an "opening" of the economy. This opening began a

shift to where the private sector would become a more formally institutionalized sector of the

economy and the regime planned to eventually allow both the private and public sector to

become complementary. Nevertheless, it was of course gradual and tightly controlled. This

transition did not benefit all of Syria's population, however, and in many ways maintained the

economic structure, which benefited the crony class of Alawites and business partners, as well as former public servants and other families loyal to Asad. In fact, this new class of business elite controlled the majority of public and private sector contracts, as well as the energy resources. This crony class amounted to a mere one percent of the economy, hardly indicative of a transition to market economy that would bring pluralist liberalization (Matar 2012, 1-6). The crony private sector did, however, become extremely powerful as an extension of the regime, since it served to replace the old socialist structure with a reorganized hybrid public/private system that retained the tight centralization of resources and power (Matar 2012, 1-6).

The reason Hafiz's policies failed to bring broader social and economic reforms to the general populace is because there was a good amount of top-down institutional resistance (including his own) built up to any form of liberalization, so the corrupt and privileged elites made sure the control of resources remained within their grasp. Future periodic attempts at liberalization also mostly failed to lead to any significant reform, especially as Hafiz's reign neared the end. The networks close to the family continued to monopolize large sections of the economy, which cemented their power and perpetuated the cycle of corruption. The centralized control of these resources allowed the system to begin an evolution away from a socialist economy, while continuing to enmesh itself with the institutions of government, the security apparatus' and business elite (Mahamid 2013) (BTI 2008, 19).

Such a "minoritarian" model alienated and excluded the vast Sunni majority of the country and the sectarianism institutionalized in the socio-political and economic system added to society's frustration over the authoritarian model of a centralized and exclusive political economy. Nevertheless, Syria's Sunni majority, and the large pool of potential challengers to

the regime, remained suppressed and largely acquiescent (Brisco 2012, 9). This strategy

increased the Baathist regimes control because access to resources became synonymous with

loyalty to the regime. Controlled corruption also became a hallmark of the regime's political

economy and was actually a self-perpetuating characteristic of its bureaucracy since these

patronage networks were largely dependent on regime loyalty. The process by which Hafiz

intertwined the political elite and business elite created endemic corruption and most Syrians

never benefited from the liberalization policies. In the end, Hafiz's token economic reforms

mostly benefited the already empowered elite. The culmination of his three decades of rule left

his son, Bashar, with a political economy based on favoritism for the minority Alawites and

some closely linked families.

Bashar's Opening Unleashes Revolutionary Potential

Bashar reluctantly ascended to power after his father's death in 2000. His eldest brother

Bassel perished in a car accident six years earlier, which set Bashar up as next in line to inherit

the presidency. Bashar had been working as an Ophthalmologist in England before he was

summoned back to Damascus and groomed for succession (BBC 2014, b). As a reluctant

successor, Bashar's assumption of power came with many challenges. The economic system of

Syria that his father Hafiz al-Asad left him with, had arguably become unsustainable by the time

Bashar took over in 2000. Upon his accession of power, Bashar recognized that demographic

growth, combined with the decline of the oil economy, created a demand for resources that his

socialist economy could not meet. Most sectors of the economy were suffering, and the

system was propped up primarily by oil rents and foreign aid, both of which were in decline (BTI

2012, 18). Faced with these structural economic challenges, Bashar and his inner circle sought

to introduce a new cadre of government technocrats to oversee market reforms. Such an undertaking meant retiring older officials and introducing a new, better-educated and less ideological generation. This reform would greatly outpace the initiatives of his father but were still meant to proceed slowly and carefully enough so as to not threaten vested interests of the ruling class or its grip on power. Like his father, Bashar was cautious, and approached any plans for liberalization with great care. Nevertheless, necessity compelled him to enact unprecedented reforms in order to move toward a more sustainable and diversified market economy. This, he calculated, would help lead his country away from the structural weaknesses of the decaying socialist system (BTI 2012, 18-21).

In the first ten years of his rule, Bashar did make some significant strides toward market transformation, outpacing the halting reforms of his father. Originally, he even looked to the West to open up trade and economic ties. However, the events of September 11th, 2001 meant Syria had to move away from the West and toward Asia, Russia, Latin America and regional neighbors. Some of these nations actually turned out to be better fitting partners, since their political systems and global political alignment was more accepting of authoritarian states deemed pariahs by the U.S. The opening of trade and ties helped usher reforms forward. After four years of rule under Bashar, private banks emerged and stock markets were created. A currency exchange was also legalized. This and other liberalizing measures accelerated the move to a system where the private sector economy became equal to the public sector. But again, just like under his father, the reforms were tightly managed, and only a select group close to the regime benefited, particularly the minority Alawites (Matar 2012, 1-6).

Syria's political economy, therefore, remained tightly centralized and corrupt. Despite the accelerated market reforms it remained a structurally exclusionary and minoritarian model.

Its socio-economic transformation mostly benefited the emergent class of crony capitalists

connected to the regime. The market reforms, however, did bring more openness to the

economy and created a larger politically conscious pool of economic participants, even if the

minority model excluded them still. Such openness likely made many Syrian citizens more

conscious of the changes their economy was undergoing and more sensitive to its failures.

According to The Arab Human Development Report, Syria's income inequality rose faster than

any other Arab state in the few years after Bashar took over the presidency (UNDP 2014) (BTI

2012). This inequality would fuel resentment among a population who perceived corruption,

sectarian bias and regime offenses to be stifling their quality of life. By the year 2010, GDP

growth dropped to 3.2 percent, still positive, but lower than the mean average reflected in the

three prior years at 5.4%. The state also was forced to radically decrease its dependency on oil

revenue, dropping from 70% around the turn of the millennium to just 20% in 2011 (BTI 2012).

Such massive structural changes to any nations' economy help contribute to instability,

especially when such economic inputs are not offset by other sources of revenue. And if such a

nations' political structure destabilizes, the resulting legitimacy deficit can threaten the entire

state system (BTI 2012, 12-14). In Syria's case, market reforms put it on a path to a more open

and sustainable economy; however, such a move also decreased the centralized control of the

regime. This unleashed a number of new demands from contenders on the outside and

potential challengers to the regime that sought to benefit from the opening of the economy.

These demands and expectations, however, went unmet. As we will see, these unmet

expectations and the regime's legitimacy deficit provided a key preconditions for the nation's

revolutionary potential.

Market reforms also led to a decrease in public benefits, which had become pervasive to the point of dependence since the Baath party founded a socialist state. Education, healthcare, retirement, public housing, labor rights, subsidized food and other entitlements saw a significant funding reduction over the last 15 years prior to the 2011 unrest, and such austerity measures were accelerated primarily under Bashar's reign. The erosion of funding to these entitlements, and gradual shift to the marketplace left many regime outsiders worse off while those close to the regime remained affluent. Those unable to pay for the previously subsidized services struggled to get health care and education. Most jobs in the middle class paid only enough for subsistence living, which caused most family members to have to work multiple jobs. Official unemployment statistics amounted to less than 10% but realistically were much higher, possibly nearing 25%. Underemployment was also extremely problematic and hit the youth population hard. Often youths are most restless and prone to unrest in any society; therefore, this problem in particular compounded Syria's dangerous economic conditions (BTI 2012, 15).

Upon Bashar's assumption of power came the ironically named "Damascus spring" where a civil society movement of pro-democracy clubs was allowed to meet and organize. The regime actually wavered between oppression of such groups but also tolerated some clubs and especially organizations that emphasized volunteerism, even those partnering with NGOs. The semi-acceptance of civil society organizations was also considered beneficial since they encouraged non-state groups to assume responsibilities of welfare institutions that were being drawn back. Some of these civil society organizations actually supported pro-democracy debates and were surprisingly tolerated by the regime. Such tolerance allowed for the gradual development of ideas and organizations that would eventually challenge the regime. As

recessionary conditions hit the Syrian state, Bashar attempted a policy of opening in order to appease the populace. These socio-political reforms were meant to assuage frustration with the government but had the dual effect of raising the population's social consciousness thus enabling the expression of political frustrations toward the government. Asad went so far as to relax oppressive policies of the security forces, allowed for some political debate and criticism of the government, so long as these discussions stayed within certain boundaries. Islamic groups and charities were also encouraged, which relieved some of the dependence on state welfare and a spurred a more progressive socialization of Syria's intellectual and middle class. As a result of reforms and the erosion of state dependence, civil society institutions such as the family, wider kin and religious networks became strengthened, while state integration and control decreased (BTI, 2012, 18). The net result was a rising social consciousness within society (BTI 2012, 6) (Wieland 2011).

Given these reforms and the light transformation tolerated by Asad, over the last decade, the Baathist socialist rule moderated somewhat. However, these evolving class lines reorganized based on the same old political and sectarian, affiliations. Social mobility did increase, as did the standard of living; yet, inequality raised dramatically and simply led economic class structures to be reordered based on the individual's access to state resources. The new changes to the political economy only allowed state elite to enrich themselves, while the middle class found itself under attack. The erosion of entitlements and the inequalities inherent in the situation created by the new class of crony capitalists undermined social mobility much of Syrian's expected and stirred resentment among the "have-nots" of society. As of 2008, rent from oil production slumped, as did foreign aid, and the Syrian economy became even more dependent on it's capitalist transformation as the only method to create a

prosperous and sustainable economic system. This spurred liberalization of investment laws and an influx of foreign investment from gulf countries. The foreign investment, however, only partially offset the loss of oil rents and aid (BTI 2012, 17). This consequently brought unintended foreign influences into the economic and civil society. In 2009, Syrian officials even partially opened up to the West, as top U.S. State Department officials visited Damascus and urged liberalization of the state controlled economy. During that time, Bashar enacted even more economic and social reforms by launching the first Syrian state stock market and releasing some pro-democracy advocates from prison (BBC 2014, b). As a result of these dramatic transformations in Syria's economy, the new social and political environment exposed structural vulnerabilities in the authoritarian regime and triggered previously dormant preconditions. Much like the examples of Pahvlavi Iran and early 20th century Russia, failure to adapt to evolving social demands, while offering disingenuous openness can often act as a precondition for revolutionary mobilization, particularly in deeply oppressive societies.

The pace of these reforms, and growing expectations, eventually exceeded Bashar's ability to retain the level of economic and social control enjoyed under the hybrid authoritarian and socialist system. It instead exacerbated and exposed systemic imbalances between the ruling party and a large pool of potential challengers. These challengers, as witnessed in 2011, came to be represented by the majority Sunni community and those left out of system of patronage and cronyism. According to the Netherland's Institute for International Relations, "deep economic deprivation, authoritarian rule and elite capture of public policy, have created a pressure cooker effect (Brisco 2012, 64)." In other words, the systemic imbalance created by the regime provided an important precondition to revolution, and a system ripe for revolution. The corrupt economy, unemployment and unequal distribution of resources provided strong

incentive for social mobilization on a revolutionary scale. It only needed a spark. This spark was

to come in the form of the Arab Spring (Fearon 2013) (Brisco 2012, 15-17).

Chapter Four: Accelerators Fan the Flames of Revolution

Preconditions provide the tinder for rebellion, but accelerators are the intervening variables that fan the flames of revolutionary mobilization. Preconditions and accelerators essentially help us understand what societal and systemic circumstances lead to revolutions. Revealing such causal mechanisms will help us understand under what conditions revolutions are more likely to "come;" whereas, later sections will address in greater detail characteristics of revolutions that give them better probability of success or failure. (Greene 1999, 133). Despite the important role played by accelerators, there can be no single point of causation; instead, we can point to correlative indicators that act as intervening variables in concert with existing environmental preconditions. These accelerators are events that occur at specific points in time and serve a cohesive function to mobilize groups of challengers in a society (Greene 1999, 133). Accelerators bring together groups of people with shared values and lead them to collectively work toward a unified goal. If the government system fails to accommodate this goal or goals, collective action can manifest as protest, rebellion or revolution.

Accelerators, therefore, apply pressure to the state and can act to quickly erode a states' legitimacy. It is this legitimacy upon which all governments are dependent. This is a partially subjective concept, but generally legitimacy correlates to the "attitudes of citizens as they reflect on the personnel, policies, laws, and institutions of government." Legitimacy is high when citizens believe the government has the right to do what it does; whereas legitimacy is

low when citizens believe the government is wrong in what it does. Therefore, deductively, we can assume that in societies where legitimacy is low, there is a higher chance for revolution (Greene 1999, 138). Accelerators act as the force to further erode state legitimacy. The civil war, international isolation, and economic downturn have all drained the legitimacy of Syria's central government, even though it remains powerful and defiant. Such events and others will be addressed more specifically in the following section.

Military Defeat

Military defeat is among the most commonly cited accelerators during revolutions since it demoralizes a countries political leadership and degrades the monopoly of force within a given society. Military defeat represents a failure and a great sacrifice of national resources in blood, money, land, quality of life, prestige and sometimes rights. These things greatly affect the legitimacy of a government, and correlate highly with causes of revolution (Greene 1999, 135). Aside from the revolutionary civil war, Syria had yet to experience outright military defeat. The withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 represented a passive imperial defeat, and an immensely significant one for the countries' regional status, alliances and domestic legitimacy. The domestic and international pressure for Syria to end its 29-year military occupation began after the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, for which Syria was suspected of having been responsible (Glackin 2014). Popular outrage against Syria's suspected culpability led to the "Cedar Revolution" in Lebanon, which acted as a precursor to the revolutionary movement that would come 7 years later. The popular movement sought the withdrawal of Syria troops from the country and eventually brought down the pro-Syrian government in place (Glacking 2014). Syria sought wiggle room in negotiating its status in the country, but eventually

succumbed to external pressure by Arab States, the West and the U.N. to withdraw (Center for Democracy in Lebanon 2005). Even Russia failed to exercise its veto power in the U.N. and acquiesced to international pressure (Zaaroura 2005). The end of a near three-decade occupation of Lebanon represented a defeat for Syria and an end to military domination that greatly served its regional influence and power. But the 2005 withdrawal from Lebanon was more of a non-violent, non-kinetic event, similarly akin to a loss of imperialist holdings. It did not exact the type of hardship that would have resulted from actual conflict and a loss of lives, resources and legitimacy that might precipitate a more accelerated slide to revolution. Nevertheless, it represented a contributing factor to the weakened prestige of the Syria regime in the region and the waning legitimacy of the new regime of Bashar al-Asad.

Economic Crises

Economic crises can also serve as an accelerator because such conditions' lower the government's legitimacy and threaten the livelihood of the people. As discussed in previous sections on preconditions, this is not to say poverty stricken societies are more likely to revolt, in fact often these populations are often least disposed to organized collective action. Instead, revolts are most likely to occur in developing economies where people feel their quality of life or livelihood is threatened. You can't lose what you don't have. Therefore it is this phenomenon of relative deprivation that causes unrest in societies where social mobility is high or has just rapidly increased. Ted Gurr and James Davies, similarly argue for a theoretical foundation for rebellion, whereby frustration over unmet expectations can lead to collective aggression and rebellion (Gurr 1970). As such, sharp economic progress can cause the effect of rapidly raising the level of political consciousness inside a society. Taking away associated benefits of this

economic progress and the newly acquired social status creates strong motivation to rebel and

hold your government responsible (Davies 1962). Of course, not all economic downturns cause

revolutions. The business cycle of industrialized capitalist societies frequently cause stress on

governments, especially in democratic nations. But frequently these political and social systems

are stable enough and adept enough to weather the social upheaval caused by such economic

stressors because these nations have the democratic underpinnings to retain legitimacy and a

relatively successful capitalist history in which to put their faith. Therefore, the perceivably free

and popular means by which democratic societies allocate their scarce resources allows

stability to maintain, even in unsettling times. Rather, undemocratic and exclusive societies

often generate the resentment that leads to illegal and sometimes violent forms of contentious

politics. It is also important to note that global recessions or depressions often affect many

countries, even though only a small minority experience regime threatening political violence or

revolution. Therefore, economic crisis is more of a compounding factor common to most

revolutions and is most potent when the systemic economic preconditions are present and

then compounded by other intervening variables that exacerbate revolutionary fervor and

depreciate a government's legitimacy (Greene 1999, 139). As in the case of Syria, economic

downturns prove most destabilizing in government systems that are already weak and in

unstable societies.

  The hesitant free market reforms that Basher al-Asad pursued under his rule created the

environment for openness and the rise of politically conscious opposition but also created

conditions where his regime was increasingly vulnerable to the shock of economic downturn. In

fact, these macroeconomic policies were partly responsible for the uprising today. After

assuming power in 2000, Asad promised to implement wide ranging economic reforms that

would lead to a more open, privatized and market driven economic system. He supported the

privatization of banks and farms, planned to liberalize the banking system, increase capital

investment and trade, and promoted private sector investment instead of the traditional public

sector dominance favored by the socialist Baathist system. These changes built on the very

limited opening his father Hafiz entertained, but ended up going much farther to create a more

liberal, market friendly system. Such a system, cautiously embracing openness, proved

incompatible with the political system and police state that remained reliant on oppression and

authoritarianism. Although Asad and his advisors intended for the reforms to positively affect

Syrian citizens, the opposite effect led to disillusionment. The cronyism and preferential

structures imbedded in Syria's economic system did not allow for proper implementation of

market reforms and the unbiased distribution of resources (Makovsky 2011). During Asad's

rule, some aesthetic measures of economic performance looked positive – the growth rate of

the economy rose to 5 percent per year under Asad whereas it had been negative 2.5 percent

in 1999 and zero percent in 2000, the year his father Hafiz died. There was also a boom in land

prices and a stark increase in investment, from 17 percent of GDP in 2000 to 23 percent in

2007. This apparent economic upswing, however, was largely driven by Syrian oil exports,

which increased by 18% under Asad's rule before dropping dramatically in 2008. Depleted

reserves and lower production led oil exports to drop by 39%, a devastating loss of income for

an economy reliant on oil rents. Moreover, the "positive" indicators during the boom years of

Asad's rule proved not to reflect the real economy affecting the majority of the Syrian

population. The share of agricultural investment fell from 16% in 2000, to 9% in 2007.

Investment in industry also dwindled. The reversal of these subsidies hit Syria's poverty stricken

population hard, 56% of who worked in agriculture or construction (BTI 2010, 9-15). The illusion

of economic growth during Asad's rule did not create the expected employment opportunities,

nor did it bring the development of diversified sectors within the economy. So by the time oil

revenue ran out, the broad spectrum of the real economy lay in ruins (Matar 2012).

Unemployment rose in 2009 to at least 24.4% as key sectors of the economy, like

manufacturing, contracted. Poverty increased, despite the rise in state revenues. This had the

effect of increasing income inequality as well. Inflation also rose, with nominal wages not

keeping up. From 2006-2008, inflation rose from 10-15%. What's more, is that Asad's market

reforms gradually began to phase out the subsidies citizens had depended on for so many

decades. These ill advised reforms failed to transition the system successfully to a liberal

market driven economy, and instead led to a hollow and illusory period of profligacy that was

eventually met with sharp economic downturn (BTI 2010, 3, 9-15).

Government Violence

One of the most marked accelerators early on in the Syrian conflict was the

government's heavy-handed use of violence against what began as a peaceful protest

movement. Such uncompromising and brutal methods sometimes succeed in suppressing

dissent, but in this case, it elicited violence in return. The use of force by governments is often

hard to measure since the concept of a monopoly of force is a principle pillar that defines state

power. However, it can be qualitatively analyzed within the context of legitimacy, legality and

just war. Such standards are governed by such international standards as the Geneva

conventions, though the enforcement of such laws are often deemed subjectively and

selectively applied. Therefore, the analysis of just or unjust government violence must be

studied under international standards, within the context of domestic norms, and perhaps

within scenarios of non-governed spaces. Such a complex evaluation of government violence is critical to understanding the legitimacy of regimes, the motivation behind rebellion and causes of international intervention.

The state claim of a monopoly of force over the population means that the use of violence by the state is generally deemed legitimate by the whole of society since the population consents to certain rules and laws that govern their interaction and are punishable by governmental use of force. This also extends to punishment and authority to take away rights if individuals violate the laws of the land (Weber 1919). These social boundaries and norms can either be codified or not, but generally are understood and respected by all of society. Such a social contract bases itself solely on the legitimacy of the nation state, which gives it the power to enforce such an arrangement. Should the nation state violate its end of the social contract, the contract could be seen as broken, in which case the state's foundation of legitimacy may erode. If government violence perceivably is arbitrary, indiscriminate and unjustified, then the government's legitimacy wanes and the potential for violent revolt rises. This effect is subjective and variable but is an important component to the progression of revolutionary movements. Our definition of revolution includes the use of violence for political means, and this is because government violence often has a mobilizing effect on cross-sections of the population that would normally be passive or apathetic. Such heavy-handedness by the government can energize people toward contentious politics with the goal of checking government overreach or to remove them from power. In fact, government overreach often correlates with more determined and pervasive outbreaks of contentious politics. Therefore, the degree of contentious politics likely directly relates to the degree and severity of a government's perceived illegitimate use of force. However, neither force is acting solely upon

the other, and can instead act to compound the use of government violence and contentious

politics, resulting in revolt, civil war and revolution. It is important to note, however, that

overbearing government violence, as applied in some cases of counterinsurgency warfare, can

actually suppress revolutionary activity and popular mobilization. Is seems, resolute,

overwhelming brute force can crush such movements, whereas the irresolute, hesitant and

uneven use of force is less effective in crushing rebellions. The latter strategy is sometimes

taken by weak leaders who hesitate to take actions that damage their reputation, threaten

their perceived legitimacy from the people or by those leaders self-conscious of international

criticisms of human rights violations (Greene 1999, 141-143) (Tilly 1977).

Elite Fragmentation

Divisions within the ruling polity often reveal early indicators that revolutionary

movements may succeed. Often these divisions accompany military defeat or disputes over the

domestic use of force, economic crises and other strategic policy blunders that cause leadership

rifts among decision makers. During such trying times, the existence of a strong, resolved and

unchallenged leader is important to maintain the unity of the government. Without one, the

ruling regime can succumb to its own devices and weaken. The death of a leader or emergence

of a weaker leader through succession can also allow for greater degrees of elite fragmentation

during crises. Bashar al-Asad appeared to consolidate power in the wake of his father's 30 year

rule, but the 2011 revolt proved his grip on Syria's authoritarian system was not as strong has

his father's (BTI 2012). Zero-sum power struggles are common in non-democratic and

especially authoritarian systems. Asad, however, has maintained a functioning and loyal inner

cadre for the most part. Aside from a few Sunni defectors, the existential threat to the regime

has left Asad's inner circle – who were largely made up of relatives and members of his Alawite sect minority – desperate to retain power and avoid potential reprisal from the Sunni majority opposition (BBC 2012). The most notable defection among Asad's camp is Manaf Tlas, a former friend of Asad, is a Sunni Muslim who used to be among the minority in the largely Alawite dominated regime (Haaretz 2012). Although the Alawite-Sunni split has not always proved as prominent a dividing line in Syrian society, it has become a sad consequence of civil conflict in divided societies. The sectarian split and the Sunni majority's affiliation has acted as a loosely unifying force among the disparate opposition; however, such a common identity has proved insufficient at creating the strength and unity necessary to overthrow the regime. Conversely, the Alawite unity within Asad's regime has acted as a more powerful unifying force since the minority themselves face dire repercussions should their grip on power give way to an increasingly violent, vindictive and radical Sunni opposition.

Reform and Political Change

Much like the stress of economic downturn, rapid changes to a political and social system often create shocks to society that undermine governmental legitimacy and motivate popular revolt. Such a case is exacerbated when economic reform is not accompanied by social and political change. In short, if political modernization is denied to a population experiencing an economic increase in quality of life then that population will often demand more freedom and less oppression. This is because the advent of economic opportunity and greater wealth often increase a population's social consciousness. With greater economic opportunities comes greater opportunity for education, community participation and public discourse. Therefore, the neglect of rising social needs can lead to unrest, particularly if the regime chooses instead

to implement faux political reforms or disingenuous, half-hearted strategies to address greater social demands. As a society's economic well-being rises and is accompanied by elevated social consciousness, the recognition of past inequities and current regime oppression can erode the legitimacy of their government. Such is the case of the Asad regime.

The Syrian regime has thus endured a harsh period of economic decline, conflict, severe international pressure and declining legitimacy; all, in part, brought on by a biased uneven commitment to reforms that have not benefited the majority. The shift to market reforms, brought about in part by the decline of state-run oil reserves, has failed to generate jobs for the youth. The market reforms have also empowered the business class and given them increased influence, but failed to bestow upon them any political power or bring them into governance in any meaningful way. When the irreversible shift to market reforms began under Asad's regime, he flirted with political liberalization, giving his citizens a taste of the political reforms that should have accompanied his economic overhaul. However, Asad and his inner circle refused to jeopardize the stability of the system by which they dominated absolutely. Therefore, the taste of political reform was just a tease; and his failure to follow through left the majority of Syrians with a bad taste in their mouths. As the effects of economic liberalization benefited some sectors of Syria's elite, inequality increased, as did the corruption. This weakened the regime's traditional support base and led to increased calls for accountability. All these unmet expectations, unfulfilled promises and institutionalized bias culminated in the transition to unrest and eventually violence in 2011 (BTI 2012, 2-4).

As Tocqueville wrote when recording events of the French Revolution, "the regime that is destroyed by a revolution is almost always better than the one preceding it, and experience teaches us that usually the most dangerous time for a bad government is when it attempts to

reform itself (1856, 214)." Even during the 19th century, before the modern understanding of

the revolution phenomenon itself, Tocqueville understood that bad regimes are more likely to

succumb to revolts. This is particularly true when overall quality of life is improved, after

systemic shocks perceivably threaten the livelihood of the masses or provide the opportunity

for average citizens to demand more and better reforms. His assertion aptly describes Syria in

two parts. First, is the hope by citizens that what replaces bad regimes will be better. This is

important because revolutions exact a heavy cost on society. The necessary critical mass of

challengers must envision hope for success and a better future if they are to succumb to the

violence, instability, economic hardship and overall risk that comes from attempting to topple

the existing regime. The second part of Toqueville's quote is equally true – challengers are

more likely to emerge during periods of reform because this provides an impetus or

opportunity for challengers to mobilize. Adopting reforms exposes the regime to vulnerability

because it essentially acknowledges the structural weakness of the status quo system. Such

reform campaigns also come with a transition period, whereby the system itself is partially in-

flux and vulnerable. Finally, such reforms often are undertaken with an expectation of hope and

positive change, which if left unmet and unfulfilled, can lead to greater societal outrage than if

the previous status quo remain unchanged.   Therefore, such crises of reform, often lead the

people into conflict with their government. As we've seen in Syria, the failure of reforms to

benefit the majority, and instead empower the regime minority, accelerated the slide to revolt.

The biased, sectarian and authoritarian system created under Asad's father, Hafiz, created a

system structurally beneficial to a minority of regime members, at the expense of the majority.

Such preconditions left Syria structurally and systemically unsound by the time Asad took over,

and the period of uneven reforms left his regime weakened and vulnerable (Matar 2012).

People inherently strive toward progress and modernization, and are extremely resistant to the threat of reversals along this trajectory; such a situation provided strong incentive for Syria's revolutionary movement (Greene 1999, 145-147).

Demonstration Effect

As Samuel Huntington has noted in *The Third Wave (1992)*, the snowballing or demonstration effect can be very powerful in mobilizing like-minded individuals toward movements of collective action. This term of "snowballing" aptly applies to the study of revolutions. In economics, the demonstration theory shows how consumers change their purchasing habits based on the consumption patters of their neighbors and based on the desire to achieve higher living standards. Such behavior and motivations are similarly applicable to our understanding of what drives revolutionary movements. Most often, a population is motivated by the desire to protect their livelihood or back a group that promises change for the better. This final accelerator is also likely one of the most important for explaining not just the revolutionary mobilization inside Syria, but the greater Arab Spring phenomenon. This is important because the demonstration effect similarly describes other social science phenomena such as "diffusion," "contagion" and the "domino effect." Each of these concepts describes how social phenomena do not necessarily act only inside a vacuum of one country or one societies domestic politics (Hayes 2011). Often, sweeping social trends affect change in the social consciousness of neighboring nations and inspire similar movements among them. Such has clearly proved true with the Arab Spring phenomenon (The Guardian 2012).

The interplay of ideas was enhanced during the Arab Spring by the pervasive use of social media. This is the first time Arabs across the Middle East were able to share ideas, social

mobilization techniques and popular support, all in real time. Twitter especially played a vital role in mobilizing Syria's opposition by networking through the Internet and emotionally energizing supporters by publishing regime atrocities. Social media has become a vital repertoire for today's revolutionary movements (MediaMeasurment.com 2012). #SyrianRevolution has 183 thousand tweets, 23.4 thousand photos and videos posted, and 144 thousand followers. In the Internet realm of social mobilization, Twitter can function in a centralized networking role and a clearinghouse for revolutionary propaganda. Facebook too, serves a similar role. The Syrian Revolution Facebook page serves a similar function, and its propaganda messaging has created a rallying effect for those on the ground supporting the movement (Facebook). The social media presence of these groups writ-large also creates international awareness by politically active cross-sections of the international community. Such support also can spur action by international governments and organizations by compelling them to respond to the situation. This latter point speaks to the immense power social media has to create the type of demonstration and domino effect we've seen at play in the Arab Spring nations. The wide viewership of social media activity, it's real time capabilities and popularity among young people, has made it a potent tool in the repertoire of revolutionary mobilizers.

Throughout history, evidence of the demonstration effect is confirmed by periods of common social change that go beyond random correlation and in fact reveal a noteworthy degree of causation. The American Revolution is often cited as contributing to the French Revolution, which in turn inspired revolutionary mobilization in a number of European countries (Tilly 1977) (Skocpol 1979). France was again an inspiration to liberal revolutionary movements in the 1850s after its 1848 revolution. Liberal revolts against, monarchs or other

authoritarians are not the only type of movements susceptible to the demonstration effect. Nationalist movements of the early 20th century began in Japan and swept numerous other countries including Iran, Turkey and China. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 represented an ideological movement that also gained momentum through the demonstration effect, and inspired similar movements across Europe. Anti-colonial movements also gained significant momentum in the wake of WWII as colonial states from Africa, to the Mideast and Asia rose up against imperial powers in the hope of independence. Analogous types of revolutionary movements, therefore, appear to be subject to social trends, which transcend borders; and there is no better recent example then that of the Arab Spring. Many could argue the repertoire behind the Arab Spring began instead with Persians, during Iran's Green Movement in 2009; or were similarly inspired by the Color Revolutions of Former Soviet States during the early 2000s. Whether connected or not through some collective social consciousness, the post-2011 Arab Spring movements are undeniably related. They all have common motivations, desires and a repertoire of actions that diffused across the region as a contagion; and of course, Tunisia and Egypt were the first two dominoes to fall. Of these movements, all sought more freedom, more political representation and reform of their governments deemed overly oppressive or authoritarian. Most Arab Spring movements adopted mass protest as their repertoire of choice but some resorted to violence when the conditions presented themselves. As an accelerator, the demonstration effect proves important for understanding not just singular cases of revolution, but how such trends are interconnected across societies. Events in another country, therefore, can have a notable affect at sparking or accelerating the revolutionary potential of neighboring states. The potency of this effect is also increased based on the effectiveness of communication networks, the apparent success of neighboring revolts, the cross-national

relevancy of repertoires and ideological foundations for the movements and finally the cross-national comparability of the preconditions for each state (Greene 1999, 149).

The J-Curve and Syria's Breaking Point

The importance of accelerators is perhaps most notably synthesized into the J-Curve theory developed by James Davies in his 1962 work *Toward a Theory of Revolution.* In it, Davies seeks a holistic theory of why populations revolt, and it comes close to identifying singular causal factors to determine the causation behind outbreaks of revolutionary collective action. As we have seen, structural preconditions created a situation in Syria with a high degree of unrest and revolutionary potential. Such conditions can sometimes compound and create a sense of relative deprivation, where a gap in expectations fuels unrest. In his work Davies describes the J-curve as a conceptual device to help identify the cause of revolutions. According to Davies "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal (Davies 1962, 3)." The sociological phenomenon Davies describes all hinges on the concepts of self-determination and relative deprivation. Collectively, both sociological conditions are allowed to act as a revolutionary accelerator inside societies with ripe revolutionary preconditions. Self-determination within a society drives people collectively toward progress and a better quality of life, measured by economic growth, social freedoms and perceptions of equality. Relative deprivation occurs when those things are threatened or a large cross-section of society believes the government cannot meet their expectations. According to Davies when "people then subjectively feel that ground gained with great effort will be lost; their mood becomes revolutionary (1962, 1)." Therefore, when a significant period of progress meets a sharp

reversal of fortunes, this creates an unbearable gap between society's expectations and the

perceived quality of life, hence increasing the motivation to revolt. Also imperative to Davies

concept of the J-curve is a population's perceived ability to affect its plight. Social liberalization

and a relaxation of oppression often provide an opening to empower a population to adopt

collective action, particularly in repressive societies. This sociological phenomenon, whereby

people acquire the hope to implement radical change is necessary to the development of a

society's revolutionary potential. Davies also correctly asserts that such a condition is not

inevitable, this revolutionary potential can be dissipated if the governing regime takes strategic

and calculated action to assuage or oppress such forces, or they can just as easily naturally fade

away (1962). In Syria, this is clearly not the case. The fear of the regime was quickly overcome

and the regime became the primary obstacle to the society's perceived self-determination and

its rising expectations.

In many ways, the J-Curve theory addresses a primary accelerator responsible for

revolutionary movements, but it also conceptualizes the result of dormant preconditions that

had created the conditions for the environment to be vulnerable to revolution. Accelerators

simply create the chain reaction of stored energy that exist as preconditions. In Syria's case,

social, economic and social change created the expectations that acted as preconditions;

whereas, the unmet expectations and reversal of fortunes acted as the accelerator. For

example, Syria's pre-revolutionary state revealed a notable degree of social and economic

liberalization that proved poorly managed by Bashar al-Asad implemented. Such policies of

relaxed authoritarianism, mixed with capitalist and social reforms are similar to the decade

preceding the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the ousting of the Shah. Comparing both cases gives

a better understanding how the right combination of preconditions and accelerators can combine to ignite the spark, which causes revolutionary mobilization.

Iran's Preconditions and Accelerators - Parallels to Syria

Oil revenues in Iran during the late 1960s and 70s soared, which led to a great economic expansion. This unprecedented economic advancement superficially cast Iran as a modernizing example for the region and shining beacon of the developing world. However, beneath the surface, its society experienced a "crisis of wealth" that created high expectations for Iranians, where political reforms were not keeping pace with their advancing economic achievements and rising social consciousness. In fact, the Shah's attempt to keep political representation suppressed generated extreme resentment among a population whose social consciousness had dramatically risen in a short period. These conditions created a yearning for more progress, and higher expectations for political reforms (Milani 59-72).

By 1973, the Arab-Israeli war led many Arab states to use oil as a weapon by putting an embargo on the United States and other nations who backed Israel. Such policies led oil prices to rise dramatically. Though Iran's Shah was a staunch U.S. ally and did not support the embargo, he became a major benefactor nonetheless. Empowered by windfall profits, the Shah began an unprecedented campaign of state building and sought to build Iran as an economic and military regional power. The Shah ordered an ambitious "five year development plan" from 1973-1978 that was actually revised to become even more ambitious given the unexpected influx of wealth. The Shah reinvested much of the funds into the public sector and undertook expansive infrastructure projects and some private sector ventures. During the initial ballooning of the economy, demand for labor skyrocketed and unemployment virtually disappeared. The

period of economic progress expanded and empowered the middle class, especially the urban

landed class, of which many would turn against the state in 1978. The Shah also purchased the

most sophisticated weapons the U.S. would sell, short of nuclear bombs. It quickly became

America's number one purchaser of military equipment and had the world's seventh largest

military budget overall. The profligacy of the state spurred dramatic progress, but was also a

source of resentment from the populace. The growing dependence on the U.S. became a

rallying point for the Shah's opponents who considered his drive to become a superpower as an

unnecessary waste of Iran's resources and confirmation that the state had become a proxy of

the U.S. The distribution or wealth was also uneven and increased the country's socio-

economic inequality. The state became prey to corruption, nepotism and favoritism, which

became endemic in all levels of society and government. The accelerated growth, in short,

outpaced Iran's capacity to absorb such economic and social prosperity, and did so in a biased

way that left many average citizens resentful of the consolidation of wealth among the elite.

Although the Shah, and the world, viewed the nation's newfound wealth as a marked

progression, he was aware that some have-nots were becoming alienated and dangerous

(Milani 93-95).

To address this "crisis of wealth", the Shah wavered between populist reforms and more

state oppression. He haphazardly sought to set a minimum wage and control inflation, moves

which turned the industrial class against him. A war on price gougers also set the merchant

class against him. By 1977, Iran's economic fortunes reversed and energy shortages were

causing extended blackouts in the country's capital. In the year preceding the Islamic

revolution, inflation peaked, deficits rose, and the government's populist reforms proved

inefficient, particularly new state policies to distribute oil wealth. The state's oil exports and

revenues also sharply declined. The period of profligacy gave way to a sharp economic and social decline, which created textbook conditions for Davie's J-Curve (Milani 92-101).

Events in Syria since Bashar al-Asad's ascension to power in 2000 reveal striking parallels to Iran during the 1970s in that a period of prosperity eventually proved unsustainable and drew ire from the public who became frustrated by empty promises. In the latter half of the first decade in the 21stcentury, the Syrian regime weathered ongoing destabilizing pressures. Unlike the case of Iran and the Shah, however, U.S. relations were poor and Syria suffered debilitating U.S. led sanctions. The country was also challenged by a rapid decline in the state-run economy and oil revenues, which led to high unemployment, especially among the youths. The making of such conditions were in large part due to the social and economic "transformation" undertaken by Bashar after taking over for his father. In short, a number of accelerators were present during the transition to conflict in 2011, including: partial military defeat, economic crises, government violence, reform and political change, the demonstration effect, and the J-Curve.

By forcing uneven market reforms, implementing economic liberalization policies, but neglecting political and social change, the majority of Syrian's did not experience the benefits of the economic system's transformation. This created expectations that went unmet, and created an opening where the people felt compelled to demand more. Unlike Iran, the first decade of the 21st century was by no means an economic boom for Syria. However, capitalist reforms and the partial liberalization of some social and political issues created an environment vulnerable to revolution. As we have seen, when a prolonged period of rising expectations follows a short period of sharp reversal, revolutionary potential is increased; and the larger the gap between expectations and gratification the higher the revolutionary potential. In Syria, the inequities

were great, the motivation for change was high and the Arab Spring was the trigger event to light the powder keg.

These accelerators all represent variables that greatly exacerbated revolutionary potential of Syria's challengers. Such accelerators helped push Syria's revolutionary movement toward a rejection of the government and a mobilization toward violence. However, one accelerator, elite fragmentation, has not been sufficiently activated. This unmet condition is an integral source of strength for the ruling polity since the integrity of the regime remains intact. Therefore, the absence of significant elite fragmentation has allowed the Asad regime to weather the rise of such overwhelming opposition and challenging environmental conditions.

Chapter Five: Elements of a Successful Revolutionary Movement

Thomas Greene's comparative analysis of revolutionary movements does a good job of capturing the complex models and common characteristics that help synthesize theories of revolutions (1999). When viewing revolutions as a linear process, as Brinton would have us do, it's important to understand what conditions and events cause each subsequent domino to fall. Brinton, Greene and Tilly all agree that revolutions aren't just a social phenomenon that *comes* like a natural disaster; they have to be *made* through a socially conscious, interactive competition among forces of humanity. And unlike phenomena of the natural sciences, human cognizance allows for variables to be anticipated and acted upon, thus making their outcomes even more unpredictable. Nevertheless, certain predictable characteristics are common to successful revolutions. For example, Tilly has correctly identified the mobilization of resources as integral to making revolutions, and the components of that success will be addressed in this section (1977).

Preconditions create the structural weaknesses in any societal system, while accelerators fan the flames of collective action. But collective action has many forms, and the characteristics the movement assumes will determine to what degree the movement impacts society. This is particularly important if the movement's goal is a destruction of the old regime and its replacement with a new revolutionary government. In the modern case of Syria, mass mobilization evolved to violent opposition and eventually large-scale civil conflict. This section will address why such a transition occurred and what form it took. Most popular movements

remain peaceful or lose momentum, regardless of their impact on society. Therefore,

identifying the characteristics of revolutionary movements will be important to understanding

the nature of Syria's movement, and its prospects for success. The classical model of

revolutionary mobilization previously dominate in academia asserted that such movements

were most effective when one or more leaders organize, motivate and unify the efforts of the

opposition toward revolutionary action. Although this previous point proved part of

conventional wisdom, events such as the Arab Spring have caused us to challenge such

assumptions. Recent new social movements, particularly Syria's sister movements from the

Arab Spring, have challenged the necessity of centralized, hierarchical leadership. Movements

in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria and even Iran, emerged organically,

with no hierarchical leadership. The movements were decentralized and organized through

new technology such as social networks. In fact, their strength lay with their ability to popularly

mobilize mass movements through the Internet, thereby posing less risk to individual leaders

and creating greater strength in numbers (The Guardian 2012). Such new social movements

even gained traction in the West, where the Occupy Wall Street Movement grew popular

support across the U.S., captured headlines and drove the public debate on socio-economic

issues in America. The emergence of new social movements empowered by social media is a

prime area for further research and their potential for social change may only increase.

Manuel Castell's aforementioned work is one of the first to contribute significantly to

the study of these new emerging social movements since he details in depth how they are

being empowered by new technology and online tools like social networks. His work focused in

part on the Arab Spring, of which the inspiration, diffusion of ideas and repertoire were

essential to the emergence of Syria's own movement (2012). Such new social movements have

in fact touched nearly every Arab nation, and even other Middle Eastern nations like Turkey and Iran and their impact on the public debate over ideas has been transformative. In fact, their impact on revolutionary movements may have even caused the traditional model of successful revolutionary movements to evolve. Whereas strong charismatic leadership previously served as a primary motivating and unifying factor of successful revolutions, this center of gravity can effectively be substituted by new technology and mass, horizontal involvement. New technology has proved capable of stimulating mass mobilization, promoting an ideological narrative, and creating the type of unity of effort necessary to pressure regimes like Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen to undergo revolutionary transition.

Tunisia's deposal of Ben Ali was accomplished with by an organic, decentralized, popular mobilization. It played an important role as the first and one of the least violent of all the Arab Spring social movements. Its success proved a harbinger for future movements. Egypt was the second Arab Spring domino to fall and it was also among the most romanticized and celebrated of the Arab Spring revolutions. Egypt demonstrated the power of new social movements and the technology used to mobilize the masses and of international pressure. Twitter was an essential tool of oppositionists to rally support and share information on the opposition and regime oppression. Facebook helped created the social communities for opposition, while facilitating the communication among oppositionists and the world. YouTube became the premier video sharing website where regime atrocities and heavy handed violence was revealed in real time, for the whole world to witness. These and other new technologies were also accessible to a large population, even those with only limited access to technology (Guardian 2012) (CIA Factbook). The combination of new technologies as an emerging repertoire of social movements should be integral to future research on revolutions. The

evolution of revolutions is likely to continue to trend toward the path of new social movements,

seeing as the decentralized, flat model of organization has greater staying power compared to

revolutionary movements that depend on single points of leadership. In such latter movements

in modern society, targeting and removing such leaders is accomplished with ease by regimes

with state resources and power at their disposal. This emerging model is not foolproof,

however, considering not all of the Arab Spring social movements led to revolutionary change.

In Bahrain, the Monarchy retains power. The Gulf States remain relatively stable, despite

contending with their own residual Arab Spring movements. Libya's authoritarian government

fell, but foreign military intervention by the West played an integral role in degrading

Muammar Gaddafi's military regime. However, the importance of leadership has not been

overshadowed completely (Ghali 2012).

As seen with the rise of ISIL, led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, strong leadership can serve as

a potent force to mobilize radical revolutionary movements. Al-Baghdadi emerged from the

Iraq insurgency as a charismatic extremist leader in the model of Max Weber's "charismatic

authority (1919)." As his movement grew, it gained military power, funding and followers.

Eventually Baghdadi's movement evolved to build itself administratively, creating institutions of

government, and eventually claiming statehood. Under this renewed Islamic Caliphate al-

Baghdadi has claimed additional legal power as the chief religious authority and senior

statesmen. ISIL's successful territorial conquest and establishment of governance over

previously un-governed space has allowed Baghdadi to claim such a revolutionary

transformation toward a new state (Caerus 2014). Baghdadi has also successfully staked claims

over traditional centers of authority in the region, such as tribes and local power bases. By

claiming legal and traditional authority over his new caliphate, Baghdadi has transformed his

charismatic authority into a position as the head of a new government (1919). With this new, more powerful claim, Baghdadi hopes to trump the previously existing state authority and traditional authority of tribes (Caris 2014) (al-Hayat 2). Leadership and other characteristics of successful social movements will be expounded upon in this section.

Leadership Lacking Among Moderates, Strong with the Radicals

As discussed previously, revolutionary leadership in the context of new social movements is no longer viewed as essential to mass mobilization. The advent of real-time, new technologies and social media has allowed for decentralized mass movements to succeed with or without charismatic leadership. Historically, it was extremely difficult for the great masses to liberate themselves, without having a little help from charismatic men of action. And despite the emergence of new social movements, the role that leadership has played is still worth consideration and study.

Revolutionary leaders are most successful when they can speak the language of the masses, but also understand how to attack the ruling regime, before ultimately governing themselves. The ideology and system of governments adopted by revolutionary leaders has varied, but in the end, some form of leadership must emerge from revolutionary movements. These leaders, regardless of their background, become the new elites within the next ruling polity. This is the great irony and challenge of revolutionary leaders.

Leaders within revolutionary movements vary significantly; often they fall along the "left-right" political spectrum. "Leftist" leaders tend to promote principles of equality, egalitarianism and social justice, while leaders on the "right" emphasize strength, order, and a resurgence of nationalist power. Within this spectrum, some types of leaders are more likely to

emerge than others, particularly when the environmental conditions for societal instability favor one trend or the other. The potential leadership of the FSA and other Syrian revolutionaries does not fit the typical "right-left" model, nor have they successfully created a highly centralized or hierarchical mode of organization. This fact itself likely partially explains their relative lack of strategy and success. In attempting to develop the centralized mode of leadership, they have failed; moreover, they have failed to improve upon the natural and inherent form of collective leadership that emerged among the incipient opposition movement. Essentially, Syria's disparate leaders tried to create a movement of centralized authority, a strategy which was doomed to fail, when they might have had more success pursuing a more decentralized and collective approach to administration. As we will see, if revolutionary leadership or an effective model of organization does not emerge in Syria, the wider Opposition is likely to continue foundering. Conversely, a single strong member of the Opposition, such as ISIL, could emerge as most powerful.

If ISIL does, gain staying power, such a movement will likely resemble rightist qualities due to its authoritarian leadership style and strong ideological inclinations to religious extremism. This is partially due to the societal instability and violence brought by Syria's revolutionary movement, which has left much of the country vulnerable to radicalism and violence. It is also attributable to the sectarian and exclusive nature of the state's dynamics, and the relative success of radical groups like ISIL that are imposing a form of fundamentalist theocratic rule based on medieval caliphates. Compared to past revolutions, leadership on the right sometimes comes from less privileged backgrounds, as in the case of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Hitler and Mussolini both came from modest backgrounds of working class parents. Revolutionary leaders on the right define their struggle in terms of social order and

often emphasize strong authority over promises of equality. This authority can be drawn from strength, order, or even fundamentalist religious beliefs, as was the case in Iran, and with ISIL, albeit in a very different manifestation. They also can draw their authority from conservative political ideologies and often-extremist nationalist beliefs, again, as in the case of Nazi Germany or the Italian Fascists (Greene 1999, 45-46). Although rightist revolutionaries are less inclined to caste themselves as the saviors of the lower classes, the way many leftist leaders do, their modest backgrounds appeal to both sections of society, even political and military elites.

Unlike ISIL, the moderate leaders have failed to sufficiently emerge in Syria, despite the West and Arab State backers' attempts to encourage or finance them (Dickinson 2013). As a result, the most radical, violent and fundamentalist challenger has moved to the forefront. ISIL's strength is partially attributed to its brutality and strong leadership, yet its success can also be partially attributable to a failure by the wider Opposition to unify.

Within revolutionary leadership, the role of intellectuals is also important. They "manipulate the symbolic rather than the material environment (Greene 1999, 46)." Which means they shape the ideas that are so important for revolutions. As we will explore in later sections, ideas become the hope for a better life and create a focused vision of the future. Charismatic leadership has traditionally served as the source of this abstract element, since the masses typically lack the motivation for revolutionary mobilization (Greene 1999, 46). However, with the emergence of new social movements, connected by technology and social media, such ideologies can thrive and proliferate organically (Castells 2012). Nevertheless, the role of intellectuals remains important since revolutions are not just about war and palace intrigue; they must drive the ideological narrative of the revolution in order to establish a new social order that must be debated and determined through the implementation of ideas.

The role of students is also important. It is rare that students solely lead revolutionary movements, but their organizations and universities often serve as hotbeds for revolutionary activity. Students, being intellectuals in training, are highly motivated to join the debate over ideas and use those ideas to shape the world (Greene 1999, 46). They are often essential participants to any revolutionary movement because they are society's natural opposition, always inclined to challenge authority and, especially recently, empowered to do so. Students often serve as foot soldiers for revolutions, demonstrating and mobilizing for their cause. Early on in Syria, students and universities were a hotbed of political opposition, following their brethren across the region. As the conflict has evolved into a civil war, the role of intellectuals and students has diminished somewhat, which is a partial reason for the fragmentation of the movement and failure to create a unity of effort among revolutionary groups (Fearon 2013).

Mobilization and coordinating cross-cutting alliances is a skill that requires a high degree of charisma, intelligence and even great fortune, which makes the emergence of such individuals extremely rare. Successful revolutionary leaders exercise charismatic authority by simplifying complexities for the average citizen, using persuasive arguments in the war of ideas, and providing decisive action. Essentially a leader serves to proselytize and convert his followers to ensure they radicalize to the point of taking great risk in supporting revolutionary action. Although new social movements have shown that decentralized movements can topple the existing regime, it still remains important for emergent revolutionary leadership to become skilled managers and administrators. For the revolutionary process to establish a revolutionary regime, above all, requires a bureaucratization of the new order if it is to consolidate and not succumb to counterrevolution (Greene 1999, 52-55).

The evolution of new social movements is an important new component to revolutions, and their power for social change may only increase (Castells 2012). Yet the power of new social movements is likely to negatively correlate with regime strength and legitimacy. The new social movement in Tunisia was likely most successful because the regime of Ben Ali was weak and he chose to resign. Mubarak in Egypt was also weak, from old age and ill health; conditions that likely led to early success by Egypt's new social movement (The Guardian 2012). The ability to mass mobilize against ruling regimes has become empowered by new technology, but their success will still be partially dependent on regime durability.

Followers Must Become Challengers

Charles Tilly describes challengers as contenders for power that act without access to the ruling polity. They consequently have fewer resources initially, compared to members, who typically have more connections to the ruling polity. In order to succeed in their revolutionary aspirations, these challengers must acquire more resources and must act under conditions of opportunity and threat (Tilly 1977, 3-4). Although leadership is of vital importance to revolutionary mobilization, there would be no leaders if not for followers. And it's up to the leaders and their cadre of followers to create a movement of challengers capable of transferring power and resources (Tilly 1977, 1, 7-14). Among followers there is also great variance with regard to degrees of activism. Often apathetic, passive individuals are more numerous than the politically conscious and activist cross-section of intellectuals, students and disaffected groups that make up the foot soldiers of the movement. These foot soldiers are the great mobilizers of revolutionary movements. They do not make up the strategic leadership, but are the ideologues that organize the masses at the grass roots level. They are motivated by

the ideas of a better world, but at the same time require reasonable expectations that their general security and material well-being will increase. Therefore, the recurring cost-benefit analysis by followers is often the difference between action and inaction, so it is extremely important for the movement to develop cohesiveness, organization and continual direction. Without this, a revolutionary movement loses momentum and fizzles out (Greene 1999, 64-65).

Regardless of right-left or hybrid models of revolutionary movements, the coalescing of cross-cutting alliances is necessary for any revolutionary movement's success. This is because these movements need to create a strong enough coalition to challenge the existing government, but also become resilient enough so that they cannot be destroyed. Furthermore, Tilly correctly asserts the importance of creating a coalition is primarily because it allows the revolutionary movement to maximize its influence, pool resources and make claim on the existing government (Tilly 1977, 7-38). Cross-cutting alliances, therefore, are what differentiate revolts and rebellions from revolutions. Simple peasant rebellions, workers revolts, union strikes etc., only affect a small minority and usually fail to gain the critical mass of supporters necessary to build the momentum that can bring down entire state systems. To accomplish revolutionary change, whole cross sections of society must be involved in the effort. Especially in rightist revolutionary movements, nationalism and sometimes racism are important mobilizing ideologies. This correlates to the case of Syria as the majority Sunni sect is loosely unified against the Allawite ruling class. This loose sectarian affiliation has played a central unifying role for the opposition; however, has yet to prove the unifying force necessary to consolidate the cross-cutting alliances necessary for revolution.

The Necessity of Cross-Cutting Alliances

Cross-cutting alliances are especially important for the success of revolutionary movements because they transform incipient rebellions into movements by an larger and empowered group of activists. The latter phenomenon can give rise to a critical mass of followers, turned challengers that is much more capable of transforming the structure of power in societies. Of course, determining what this critical mass constitutes can be tricky. It does not necessarily need to be a certain percentage of the population, an outright majority, plurality or even an exact cross-section of demographics. Nevertheless, a critical mass of revolutionaries is not possible without alliances and unity of effort. Such a level of support gives the challengers the ability to mobilize sufficient resources and deny the legitimacy of the government they seek to control. In the end, this critical mass can theoretically succeed at removing the existing polity and replacing it with a new form of governance in a model of their choosing. Reaching such critical mass depends on multiple factors. The first is whether the cross-cutting alliances can recruit what are considered dominant classes of society with the ability to influence the greater system. The strength of the system itself is also a determining factor. If the regime lacks legitimacy among the greater population, as many colonial societies have, then they are weaker and it is easier for the opposition to reach critical mass. Finally, the actual numbers of revolutionaries are perceivably very small. Often it is only thousands or tens of thousands of people needed to secure revolution in countries of millions. That is because they constitute a critical mass of active participants able to overpower the ruling polity, while the silent majority either stands on the sideline or offers passive support. Especially in countries where legitimacy is weak, a small coalition is capable of big things. Such a critical mass can still be reached if the active minority of one social class allies with the active minority of others. Should these cross-

cutting alliances employ effective tactics and communicate an appealing revolutionary ideology, their prospects for success increase, especially as the strength of the existing government decreases (Greene 1999, 73-76).

The threshold for cross-cutting alliances has not been met by Syria's opposition – specifically the Syrian National Council (SNC) - and is unlikely to coalesce among the Western backed "moderate oppositions." Nevertheless, the United States and worldwide coalitions recently renewed a pledge of support for moderate opposition groups. Given the sheer numbers of disparate groups, however, it is unclear if this support will have a sufficient impact to compel unity of effort and tip the balance in the Opposition's favor (PILPG 2012, 1-4) (USIP The Day After Project 2014*)* (Obama 2014)." While multiple anti-Asad groups continue to exist, it is unlikely they will work cooperatively. It is more likely they will instead remain partially in competition with one another, thus undermining their ability to unify and focus on the Asad regime. The same is true of these rebel grouping's patrons. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait the U.A.E, Turkey and other regional nations all have different visions for the opposition and support different factions. This has only served to exacerbate the factionalism and disunity amongst the opposition, while further empowering Asad and the radicals such as ISIL (O'Bagy 2013, b, 13).

Ideology - The Ideas that Bind, Motivate and Justify Revolutions

The concept of ideas was broached in previous sections, but a closer examination of ideology as an essential element of revolutions is warranted because ideas confer legitimacy to revolutionary leadership and serve as the foundation for cross-cutting alliances. A strong revolutionary ideology helps facilitate the coalescing of cross cutting-alliances by promoting a

vision of a better future and the motivation for action toward that goal. Class conflict, nationalism, equality, egalitarianism, anti-colonialism, religion, and other deeply emotional ideas have served revolutionary ideologies well in the past. In Syria's case, this unifying ideology has been elusive. The West, through its moral and reticent engagement, has encouraged the moderate opposition to adopt democracy and liberalism as a unifying ideology (SNC 2012, b) (Obama 2014). In fact, these principles did organically emerge from many Arab Spring "revolutions" and are presently heralded by many opposition groups (SNC 2012, b). However, opposition to Asad is really the only truly unifying theme; thus, Islamists, secularists, moderates, ethnic Kurds and others remain disparate and weakened by their diverse ideological visions. Themes and symbols are integral to the development of such a unifying ideology and often these are defined as catchall, ambiguous terms instead any sort of coherent belief system. A promise of a better world is no guarantee that a new system of complex governance, bureaucracy, economic rules and military tradition will emerge overnight. Rather the opposite is usually true and an organization's strength is necessary for a revolution to cement itself. While the importance of developing a unifying ideology is key, the converse is also true, however, since the lack of a coherent ideology or competing ideologies can undermine the unity of effort needed in an opposition movement, which is usually grounded in cross-cutting alliances (Greene 1999, 80-82).

Ideological justifications for the opposition are so important because they symbolically attack the legitimacy of the regime. An ideology provides a rough blueprint, no matter how abstract, to break from the weak or failing system of government. Moreover, it undermines the current conventional norms, by attacking them as unjust, unfair and unacceptable. Using these ideological justifications are often essential because they also vindicate the use of systematic

violence, which is a typical technique of successful revolutions. Ideas symbolically attack the legitimacy of the regime and provide the justification that power should be transferred from one polity to another (Greene 1999, 80-82).

Among Syria's opposition, the SNC officially casts itself as a revolutionary movement seeking the overthrow of Asad and a transition to free and democratic rule (SNC 2012, b). This ideological statement is carefully crafted for both internal and external consumption in order to gain supporters at home and abroad. Internally, the opposition is divided on what type of system will replace Asad and who takes power; however, many of these same leaders also recognize the importance of presenting a moderate, unified front in order to maintain external assistance to their movement, not just from the West but also from its Arab patrons. The opposition is heavily dependent on funding, weaponry and support from outside sources and promote an ideology and goal palatable to those backers. So far, the Opposition is succeeding in the goal of maintaining its foreign backers, but has proven less successful in gaining direct intervention by more powerful Western states, even in the aftermath of the 2013 chemical weapon attacks by the regime (Farley 2013). Their failure to gain significant Western backing, and military intervention to bring down the regime, is more about overriding geo-political concerns than ideological justifications (Farley 2013). Nevertheless, the opposition is having difficulty casting itself as a democratic movement palatable to the West because hardline and Islamist elements that make up a large part of the Opposition's fighting force (Cunningham 2013). The SNC espouses adherence to human rights and the rules of warfare under the Geneva Conventions but then has its image tarnished by instances of opposition atrocities (SNC 2012, b) (HRW 2013). The existences of radical elements within its ranks, and documented human rights offenses have severely undermined their public relations image and consequently some

international support. For their Arab Sunni backers, who simply want to see Asad gone, radical, terrorists and Islamists are seen as a lesser evil. But in the eyes of the West, finding a reliable partner to back is difficult and the alternative potential for the emergence of a radical revolutionary regime is even less preferable than the existing status quo. Therefore, the battle over the internal ideology of the opposition will continue to be a limiting factor that undermines the movement's prospects for success. One major shortcoming of new social movements is their lack of unifying ideology. The initial mass mobilization was fed by outrage against the regime and manifested as a new social movement within the medium of new technology; however, as the crisis in Syria evolves, the lack of collective leadership, cross-cutting alliances and unifying ideology continues to hamper the movement's power to compel regime change. Such a unifying ideology would partially help reverse this trend. Thus far, democracy and liberalism has failed to sufficiently take root, and on the other hand, violent Islamic fundamentalism has proved divisive yet powerful. Given the sharply drawn ideological lines and the rough parity among competing groups, it seems unlikely any group can gain total control, or otherwise adopt such a unifying ideology.

Conversely, the role of ideology likely remains strong within the regime. The governing Baathist ideology of the Syrian state is based on the principles of, Arab Nationalism, Pan-Arabism and Socialism (CIA Factbook). Although much of these principles have become hollow, the shell of the Baathist ideology remains a strong unifying force for those members who have spent their lives devoted to those ideas. More tangibly, the structure of the Baathist governing system has created institutions by which members lives and livelihood depend on the survival of the system. The Baathist ideology itself may have declining legitimacy, but it provides a stronger unifying force than anything the Opposition has proven able to develop.

Organization and Structure

Organization and structure are typically aspects of revolutionary movements that lag behind the initial outbreak of mass-mobilizations. Sometimes the initial mobilization can be brought on by a trigger event or relatively spontaneous spark to begin the revolutionary process. Mass mobilization often occurs as society becomes outraged at a particularly grievous offense by the regime or the boiling over of accumulated grievances. Traditionally, the spontaneous and mass collective action of disparate groups must eventually be focused with organizational cohesion if it is to cause real change (Greene 1999, 92). This is changing with the emergence of new social movements and the empowerment brought to bear under the proliferation of new technologies. In Syria, mass-mobilization preceded structured organization of the revolutionaries, which as of late 2014 still proves elusive. The decentralized power of the Syria opposition initially met the regime with great success. However, the regime was able to mobilize crushing military force and has proved durable; as such, the Opposition's attempts to unify and create a strong organizational capacity have mostly faltered. This perhaps, has in part explained their lack of success (BBC 2014, b).

Organizational strength is usually demonstrated by an absence of factional conflict and a clearly established hierarchical chain of command. A strong revolutionary organization can survive tactical defeat and the loss of key leadership without being crippled, but rather can prove resilient and durable. However, the Syrian Opposition has not succeeded in this endeavor. Conversely, the existence of decentralized, horizontal and even online communities of organizers has proven less vulnerable for many new social movements. In pursuing the former strategy, the Syrian Opposition has perhaps neglected to hone the latter strength of collective leadership or the type of decentralized organization of new social movements. Either

way, eventually institutionalized and formal mechanisms of power must emerge to replace those of the old regime. The ultimate goal of a successful revolutionary organization is to establish dual sovereignty or a counter government to replace the existing regime. If a counter government can actually create the organizational proficiency to develop institutions that function as government, it will be greatly empowered and a much more of an existential threat to the existing regime (Greene 1999, 98-99).

Regime access by potential challenger organizations can also prove important in this area because it facilitates capture of existing institutions. This was especially the case in the American Revolution where an anti-colonial ideology was strong, and organizations like the Sons of Liberty and the Committees of Correspondence created strong revolutionary organizations which were even further strengthened after the convocation of the first Continental Congress in 1774 and eventually, the Declaration of Independence. Communists in China and Vietnam were also adept at creating strong organizational networks to levy taxes, administer government and expand their power bases. Collecting and efficiently applying fiscal resources are as much a function of an institutionalized opposition, as they are a simple revolutionary movement, and can often prove invaluable to a revolution's success. Nowhere, is the argument for strong organizational networks better exemplified than the soviets (councils) during the Russian February revolution. At a time of weak governance by the state, the Petrograd Soviet and other councils came to be dominated by the Bolsheviks who immediately ran them as a counter government. The National Congress of Soviet and the First Congress coordinated the activities of the soviets, which included taking over the industrialization of the country, among other economic and governmental functions. The success of this initiative allowed the Bolsheviks to establish legitimacy, at the expense of the ruling regime, and

eventually capture political power and establish sovereignty. (Greene 1999, 100-101). As we will see, the initial mass mobilization of the Opposition failed to lead to coherent centralized groups capable of defeating the regime alone, and also failed to adopt more decentralized and durable collective forms of leadership and organization. Consequently, the Opposition groups continually fell prey to fragmentation and competition (O'Bagy 2013, b) (Cunningham 2013).

The Syrian Opposition's Failed Revolutionary Model

Between July and October of 2011, opposition groups began their assault on the Asad regime but were in urgent need political direction, military capacity, and strategic vision. The Free Syrian Army emerged as the premier military organization amongst the opposition but the movement needed political guidance and representation to further its revolutionary aspirations of destroying the old regime and replacing it with a new form of government (Landis 2011) (O'Bagy 2013, b). Therefore, many opposition activists eventually met in Istanbul and created the SNC as the political umbrella for the Opposition. The SNC's motto "freedom, dignity and hope for Syria" epitomized not only themes of the Arab Spring, but also many ideological principles of similar revolutions throughout history. The SNC meant to become the organization that developed a political framework and strategic vision for the Opposition. It also set out to become the premier political institution to represent the various opposition forces, groups, blocs and committees. Its ultimate goal was to create "a democratic, pluralistic, and civil state (SNC 2012, a)," such values that appeal to Western liberalism. However, it has thus far only succeeded in partially breaking down the old regime, and has yet to enter a transition period where they might install a new regime. Toward that goal, the SNC has worked to mobilize cross-cutting alliances and unite the efforts of the disparate opposition groups in order to enhance

communication and coordination among opposition groups and mobilize more of the population. This endeavor has only proved partially successful, but many of these groups continued to mobilize under their own authority, so the organizational cohesion of the SNC remains lacking. The SNC has sought to maintain a flexible outlook regarding disparate groups within the opposition that do not want to fall under SNC authority. But this, in itself, was an admission that its organizational authority had limits and would not succeed in unifying all the opposition under one banner (O'Bagy 2013, b*)*.

The SNC Military Bureau was established in March 2012, to serve as the Ministry of Defense of the civilian organization to coordinate and direct strategy among the numerous armed opposition groups fighting in Syria, most prominently, with the FSA. This second effort was specifically directed at attempting to unify military groups, which had been resistant to the new umbrella political leadership (SNC 2012, a). However, such efforts proved mostly futile, and the SNC and other opposition elements again met for a December 2012 Doha Conference that brought together rebel leaders from across Syria to organize together and announce the formation of a new 30-member unified command structure called the Supreme Joint Military Command Council or Supreme Military Command (SMC). The SMC represented an attempt to streamline the oppositions' organizational hierarchy and legitimize its authority. However, in attempting to bring in all of the oppositions' disparate groups and commanders, it succumbed to a "bottom up" command structure. Such a flat, decentralized structure lacked institutional legitimacy and effective command and control (Institute for the Study of War 2014). Therefore, each group within the opposition continued to act unilaterally, despite loose strategy coordination and a superficial commitment to cooperation. Top-down organizational deficiencies created a big problem for the Opposition, not to mention the difficulties directing

command and control in an environment without modern military and state resources.

Moreover, some of these groups act as localized or regional entities since strategic coordination among them is inherently difficult (O'Bagy 2013, a). In this way, the Opposition attempted but failed to create traditional institutions styled on revolutionary governments of the past.

Such a situation added to the Opposition's failure to produce charismatic central leadership and agree on a real unifying ideology that went beyond pandering to the West. Moreover, the power of new social movements and technology was not sufficiently employed to compel the coalescing of the cross-cutting alliances necessary for revolutionary mobilization. Despite these various initiatives, the SNC failed to adequately connect with forces on the ground and suffered legitimacy problems. (O'Bagy 2013, b). Although the SNC has cast itself as the leading Opposition organization, and espouses the West's preferred secular and democratic leanings, it is not necessarily the representative group that would take power in a revolutionary scenario. Nor do these groups seem capable of forming the cross-sectarian coalitions necessary to fight a unified effort.

The disunity and diversity of the Syrian opposition, in the end, allowed the rise of ISIL as the most radical group that proved able to harness all the essential elements of revolutionary mobilization that the opposition failed to achieve. It's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proved not only to be a charismatic religious source of emulation, but an effective administrator, strategist, mobilizer and military commander. His organization also proved more tech savvy than any other Opposition group. ISIL has used Twitter, online media and professional literature to broadcast their ideology worldwide. Its methods have proved extremely successful at recruiting from Middle East countries, but also the West. Ironically, the movement that wishes to take the region back to a medieval styled Caliphate is the one most successfully harnessing the power of

new social movements (al-Hayat 2012) (al-Hayat 2014) (al-Hayat 2) (De Kerchove 2014).

Secondly, by creating the fiercest and most powerful military organization among the

opposition, al-Baghdadi was also able to forge or compel alliances among fellow opposition

members, even if their leadership and ideological viewpoints were not aligned. Al-Baghdadi was

also able to ideologically claim the mantle of an Islamic Caliphate, a disputed but largely

successful campaign to rally fundamentalist Muslims to his cause. By demonstrating this

authority, al-Baghdadi was able to undermine support for groups like the al-Qaeda affiliated al-

Nusrah front and other oppositions groups – since many of these groups members simply

wanted to align themselves with the strongest of the fighters. This latter point was also well

demonstrated through ISIL's propaganda machine that acted as a strong recruiting base for

youthful fundamentalists seeking to undertake Jihad (Caris 2014).

The Use of Violence

A strong organizational capacity also allows a revolutionary movement to employ more

effective techniques to erode the legitimacy of the government and capture political authority.

Among the most common and effective of revolutionary techniques or actions, is the

employment of violence. The range and intensity of violence varies per revolutionary

movement, and can occur both during and after the revolutionary transformation. It is a

common factor in nearly all revolutionary movements and can be considered a symptom of the

inherent radicalism of the revolutionary process. It is a common thread across almost all

revolutionary movements. This latter point is extremely important for understanding the

necessity of radicalizing revolutionary movements. At its core, revolutions reject and seek to

replace the legitimacy of a regime. Only in governments, does a societal contract confer

monopoly of force – the right to use violence. Therefore it is among the most powerful sources of governmental authority. Often it is the last technique to hold out among dying regimes and the first to be adopted by revolutionaries who want to quell challenges to their authority. As such, revolutionary movements usually must succumb to the use of violence in order to bring down the ruling regimes (Greene 1999, 105). The purpose of terror in a revolutionary movement is to destroy the legitimacy of the government by showing it cannot keep order and security, thereby concurrently increasing feelings of desperation and helplessness among the population. Though this technique often can have the opposite of its intended effect, and cause a population to resent and reject revolutionary uses of indiscriminate violence, it can also cause populations to turn to the opposition for protection or if they are seen as the new power brokers in society. That being said, terror as the sole or primary technique in a revolutionary movement's repertoire rarely leads to success. This is because the principle goal of terror is to provoke a disproportional and heavy-handed response by state security services that cause outrage among the populace. Government atrocities, even in response to terror, can be a powerful recruiting tool for a revolutionary movement. Terror can also disrupt the functioning of government, where a failing or reeling government causes resentment from the population (Greene 1999, 106).

Guerrilla warfare is usually a trademark of revolutionary movements because most often, opposition organizations must resort to irregular and asymmetric warfare to combat more professional and better-equipped conventional forces. Guerrillas also must live among the population and win support from the masses. In China and Vietnam, communist leadership took great care to win over the populations and peasantry, which was key to their success. Mao Zedong actually canonized these tenets of Guerrilla war for his communist red army in China.

Rather than fight a conventional war, Mao's Guerilla tactics called for ambush attacks, short decisive battles, a resilient and flexible organizational hierarchy, the avoidance of pitched battles, or any "banditry" that would turn the peasantry against them. Guerrillas must also be able to establish geographic bases of operation whereby they can plan and support operations, and build the shadow governments to challenge the existing regime (Greene 1999, 108).

As the success of guerrilla warfare grew, modern states began to develop more advanced counter-insurgency techniques. Given that the guerrilla's strength is endurance and attrition, it is generally recognized that a counterinsurgency army needs a strong ratio in its favor. Although overwhelming force is no guarantee of success, it is generally the most successful strategy to pacify a guerrilla army. But of course suppression alone is insufficient to defeat a guerrilla army or insurgency since those tactics can cause the population to turn in favor of the guerrillas, as experienced by America in Vietnam (Greene 1999, 110-111). Terrorists and sometimes urban guerillas use tactics include bombings of symbolic targets, assassinations and kidnappings of state representatives, and violence against state security services or supporters of the regime. These tactics are the hallmark of terrorists because they have virtually no mobility or permissive areas in which to operate, and a limited ability to confront government targets head on (Greene 1999, 116). Of these groups, ISIL's brutality is an effective tool of propaganda and terror, while its ability to inflict maximum violence on the battlefield has proved an effective tactic (Caris 2014) Consequently, ISIL's successful employment of guerrilla and terrorist strategies has allowed it to emerge as the most radical and most powerful opposition group.

The Rise of the Radicals

When "rebels" took over areas of Raqqah province and Raqqah city in Eastern Syria

during the spring of 2013, news of the development noted the surprising success with which

the rebels governed. Power and services continued, the city was not severely looted and food

remained available. However, the makings of the new radical Islamic fundamentalist

government were just being realized (Caris 2014). News from the time identified the "rebels" as

associated with the al-Qaeda affiliated Nusrah Front and other Islamic fundamentalist groups.

However, Raqqah city and province was to become the heart of the emerging Islamic State or

Caliphate established under ISIL (O'Bagy 2013, a, 1, 1-5). There was initially some popular

backlash to the new radical governance, but morality police and brute force eventually allowed

ISIL to keep the peace in its areas of control and ultimately expand into new areas. Their

propaganda machine is so successful that it is recruiting new Jihadists from European nations,

many of whom bring with them skills and levels of education that help advance their media

presence, administrative efficiency and military proficiency (ICG 2012).

In June of 2014, ISIL formally announced the formation of its Caliphate, under the

"Islamic State" which spanned large swathes of terrain in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq. This

announcement was not purely for propaganda purposes, it represented a legitimate claim over

the counter-governed territory it had conquered since 2011 (Al-Hayat 2014, a, b) (Caris 2014).

The world now was forced to come to grips with a terrorist state that functioned as a semi-

conventional military and governed its subjects under a fundamentalist and brutal

interpretation of Islamic Sharia law. Although it lacked international legitimacy, ISIL had come

to command a monopoly of force over its population, had self-sustaining finances, governance

structures and of course an intimidating military force. Through military conquest and political

campaigns, ISIL's holistic form of governance has begun to implement religious, judicial, educational, humanitarian and infrastructure projects. ISIL's service oriented outreach includes providing food to the community in such ways as distributing humanitarian aid or supporting bakeries (Caris 2014). The most sophisticated example of governance under ISIL rule is witnessed in their self-proclaimed temporary capital of Raqqah city, in Raqqah Province, Syria, and more recently in the conquered area of Mosul, Iraq. In such places, ISIL holds religious services and community programs. They also ensure critical infrastructure needs to the best of their ability. They've undertaken genuine attempts at urban management, and have even administered hydroelectric dams, thermal power plants and oil facilities (ICG 2012). However, this perceivably softer side of ISIL's governance comes with strict interpretations of Islamic rule, justice and education. An even more stark juxtaposition is posed by their brutal behavior, which is characterized by beheadings, torture, mass executions, crucifixions, slavery, genocide, forced marriages, rape, kidnapping of men, women and children, as well as the employment of child soldiers (UN 2014). Although spurned by much of the world, ISIL has attracted new recruits in the thousands. Not only has ISIL proven able to recruit local Syrian extremists and Iraqis, but also foreign fighters from across the globe (ICG 2012). By September 2014, the number of European Jihadists joining ISIL surged to surpass 3,000, according to the EU Counter-Terrorism Chief (De Kerchove 2014). Should ISIL be allowed to retain a state-like existence, it's movement will grow and such humanitarian atrocities will continue.

As we have seen, such systemic violence and instability breeds the emergence of similarly radical and brutal movements. In Syria, ISIL has been forged in the crucible of violence, sectarianism, Islamic fundamentalism and hatred. Given such an environment, it is unsurprising that the strongest group to emerge would exhibit all these characteristics combined. The

protracted nature of the conflict has also likely contributed to ISIL's rise. And this lengthy and

systemic conflict can partially be attributable to outside interference, as we will see.

Chapter Six: The Role of External Intervention in Prolonging the Conflict

External intervention can decisively advantage the regime or the opposition, depending

on the circumstances. But when external intervention becomes a competition, and the

revolutionary environment becomes a proxy battleground, the result is simply to prolong the

conflict. Revolutions are much more easily understood as an isolated political phenomenon,

and even then they're quite complex and unpredictable. Yet, they are made significantly more

unpredictable when introducing intervening variables in the form of state resources. Such

international intervention then requires the consideration of overlapping theories of

International Relations. This is because external intervention to support revolutionaries or the

regime can come in many different forms, at many different levels. The introduction of state

resources to a conflict can often tip the balance severely in one sides favor, or greatly

exacerbate and prolong the fighting. This is because revolutionaries get by on limited resources

and often employ guerilla tactics; whereas, governments experiencing revolutions are often in a

weakened state and appreciative having outside state support. The provision of sanctuary can

also be of great importance for revolutionary movements and is one passive and plausibly

deniable form of support, whereas, the provision of materiel or other military support can

conversely serve to turn the tide of revolutionary conflict. For example, French support during

the American Revolution very well may have been integral to its success. External support in

the modern era has proved very important, especially among societies caught in the Cold War

rivalry between the U.S. and Russia, where the provision or withholding of support often determined the fate of the nation in question.

External support affects the distribution or accumulation of resources, but it can also serve to affect organizational dynamics of the movement itself. Moreover, external support actively affects the strategic direction and repertoire of a movement since the provision of the state resources are often given on a quid pro quo basis. Such support often comes with strings attached or significant direction on how such resources will be allocated. State leaders and bureaucrats understand the workings of revolutions and often intervene in ways to ensure or deny their success. To maximize chances of success, external governments will often try to actively support their proxy of choice with arms, money, training or logistical supplies (Greene 1999, 128). This support can apply to the regime or opposition, and can have a great effect depending on the level of support given.

External intervention in the case of Syria is important to understand because it is partially responsible for stalemating and prolonging the conflict. The influx of resources has given the Syrian regime the funding and arms to continue fighting, while the same is true of the Opposition. Russia and Iran are supporting their ally Bashar al-Asad and are likely funneling support to him. Their financial and materiel support has probably been integral to propping up his regime (Nasr 2013). Conversely, foreign backers from Arab states, particularly Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have likely aided the Opposition. The financial and materiel support from these countries is likely helping to fuel the fight on the side of the Opposition (Dickinson 2013). A closer look at this dichotomy will reveal why external support can become such an important development in revolutionary situations and act as the unforeseen and often unpredictable intervening variable to change the whole course of events.

Asad's Camp

Even following the horrific chemical weapons attacks conducted by the Asad regime, its patrons remain firmly supportive. Syria's allies, Russia and Iran continue to act as benefactors. Factoring into their strategic calculations are economic concerns and geo-political fears over the shifting balance of power. For Russia, economics plays a large part since Syria is one of its biggest buyers of Russian arms, likely totaling over four billion in contracts with the Russian defense department (Christia 2013). Syria is also important for Russia's strategic defense posture in the region since the leasing of a naval base on Syria's Tartus port gives Russia its only direct maritime access to the Mediterranean Sea (Christia 2013). Russia's strategy is also rooted in ideological concerns since it doesn't believe a revolutionary situation in Syria will bring a regime any better than the one before, and instead, they correctly assume any replacement regime would not benefit Russia's interests the way Asad has been a friend to Russia. Russia also seeks to oppose the U.S. for ideological reasons, so that American influence doesn't increase, by way of vanquishing a long time U.S. foe and ally of Russia (Christia 2013) (Bitar 2013, 2-5).

As a result, Russia is using all its levers of power to prop up the Asad regime. This includes its veto as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, economic support, as well as the provision of military materials to the regime. By using its veto in the U.N. multiple times during the duration of the Syrian conflict, Russia has been able to bloc multiple measures that would have come down hard on the Syrian regime, including multi-lateral military intervention (Yan 2013).

For Iran's part, Syria's long-term alliance with Iran has been grounded in religion and geo-political strategy. Iran is the world's only theocracy, dominated by the Shiite sect of Islam.

The Alawite's, which include Bashar al-Asad and much of the ruling regime, are an offshoot of Shiism, who's religious practices even include elements of Christianity, Gnosticism and mysticism. Although the Alawites are not fully ideologically aligned with Iran's brand of Shiism, this bond has helped keep both nations close and has become increasingly pronounced as sectarianism across the region has divided Sunni and Shia states geo-politically. But above all, it is common interests that have endured since the times of Iran's eight year war with Iraq, and ultimately strengthened as Syria became an integral link to Iran's most trusted surrogate and proxy in Lebanon, Lebanese Hizballah. Through supporting Lebanese Hizballah, Iran is able to threaten its hated enemy, Israel. Given the key role Syria plays in Iran's regional calculus, it has likely provisioned high levels of support to the Asad regime, including: intelligence, communications, crowd control equipment, and advanced weaponry (Nasr 2013) (Yan 2013). Iran's security and intelligence services are advising and assisting the Syrian military and it has deployed expeditionary forces to Syria in support of the Asad regime (Fulton 2013). It has also supplied the regime with essential military supplies, primarily via air cargo. Iran is also supporting pro-government militias and proxy militias from outside states. The presence of external, Iranian backed militias is an indicator of just how far the conflict and proxy war have expanded (Bitar, 2013, 3-5) (Fulton 2013) (Yan 2013).

The Opposition's Backers

Arab Monarchies have emerged as the regional enemies of Asad and the backers of numerous groups that continue to fuel the ongoing insurgency. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are among the biggest contributors of finances, arms, training and even diplomatic support to the rebel groups. There are over 1,000 rebel brigades fighting Asad, most are likely financed

from abroad (O'Bagy 2013, b). As mentioned in previous chapters, the disparate nature of the

Opposition has prevented the type of unity of effort required to succeed (Dickinson 2013). With

so many groups unable to work together as a unified, coherent actor, their prospects for

building the type of shadow government necessary to replace the regime have diminished.

Instead, the Opposition is composed of numerous, individual parts, all controlled by different

actors with different interests. These groups have very local and regionalized goals, but are

unable to from work toward a national strategy given their repeated failures to establish

umbrella groups and a centralized organizational capacity (O'Bagy 2013, b) (Dickinson 2013).

Moreover, the financing of rebel groups has become a fanciful "game" of sorts, where

the revolutionary movement itself has morphed into a proxy war partly funded by foreign

states. Wealthy Gulf State elites including businessmen, princes, government officials, even

parliamentarians are participating in the financing of insurgent groups (Dickinson2013, 1-5).

The financing of such groups gained momentum during the uprisings in 2011 but gained even

more momentum during the turn to broad civil conflict in 2012. These groups eventually turned

to social media and other Internet forums to popularize their success, gain notoriety and win

more funding, thus creating a cyclical, self-sustaining insurgency. Unlike officials of Western

nations, many of whom also supported arming the rebels, Gulf donors cared less about

ideological persuasions or even extremism within the ranks of their preferred insurgent groups.

Given this fact, extremist groups and Western designated terrorists are likely getting access to

some of the funding, which further complicates any effort to mobilize a unified democratic

front within the opposition. Because of Kuwait's lax fundraising laws, many of these donors

finance these groups independently. Such operations are more difficult in Saudi Arabia and

Qatar because of tighter regulations, yet both nations are bringing state sponsorship to the

effort (Dickinson 2013). Nevertheless, the capitalist enterprise of Kuwaiti proxy groups financing has played a major role in supporting insurgent efforts, and inadvertently keeping them from unifying. In fact, competition for donors has caused infighting among the myriad of insurgent groups (Dickinson 2013) (Christia 2013).

In 2013, donor fatigue began to set in and the financing of insurgent groups declined in popularity somewhat. Many donors are in fact disillusioned with the hardline Islamist, radical and extremist elements who are gaining ground (Dickinson 2013). The decentralization of the Sunni backing will likely contribute to the declining relevance of the wider opposition. The unreliable and decentralized nature of the foreign backing prevents the Opposition from attaining the revolutionary characteristics necessary to succeed in ousting Asad and replacing his authoritarian system. Meanwhile, the rise of ISIL has caused backers of the Opposition to become more wary about whom they support, or indirectly support (Dickinson 2013).

The Role of the West

Despite two years of brutal oppression and atrocities against its own people, only in mid-2013 would the regime be faced with an international legal and existential military threat to its survival. After months of Opposition claims that Asad's forces had used chemical weapons, video proof from the town of Ghouta shone a spotlight on the regime's attack, and ultimately led to a U.N. investigation that confirmed the use of Sarin chemical agents in the regime airstrikes. The regime was subsequently censured by the U.N. (U.N. 2013). Although the international legal ramifications against the regime were costly, the ultimate decision to forgo military intervention called into question international resolve to deter regimes responsible for chemical weapon use, particularly in light of President Obama's avowed commitment to

prevent and punish Asad's from using them (Farley 2013). Nevertheless, it was not immediately

clear the U.S. would not act, so in the face of punitive or regime changings strikes the regime

turned to its ally Russia to diplomatically block a solution (Gearan 2013). Such a compromise

came to deescalate the threat of military intervention as Syria conceded to weapons inspection

and eventual destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles (OPCW 2013). Syria and Russia's

well-orchestrated diplomatic solution prevented a scenario where the West intervened

military, a scenario that easily could have tipped the balance and turned the tide in favor of the

regime. The prospect of overwhelming international intervention could have acted as an

accelerator and catalyst for revolution; however, such hopes by the opposition proved fleeting

and unfulfilled.

Conclusion: Revolutionary conditions unmet, but the radicals are unleashed

This study concludes with three primary judgments. First, the necessary conditions for Syria to undergo a revolution, i.e. the destruction of the Asad regime and replacement by a movement from the opposition, have yet to be activated. Specifically, Syria's opposition lacks the leadership, cross-cutting alliances, cohesion, external support and requisite resource mobilization capacity to force the Asad regime from power. Conversely, the regime is advantaged by the ideological unity under the Baath party, the cohesiveness of its ruling polity, its military power and its strong external backing. In order for the opposition to succeed, it will require a stronger and more focused level of support from its external backers; anything short of direct regime-changing intervention may not be enough. This assessment is not meant as a normative judgment on whether regime-changing intervention is just or necessary; rather, it is simply a judgment on what variable may tip the balance in the Opposition's favor, and against the regime. For the Opposition to succeed, it could also gain advantage by developing more charismatic leaders and an ideology capably of unifying a broad base of challenger groups. Thus far, it has failed to wield revolutionary change through the mass mobilization model of new social movements, or military action alone. Rather, such a radical revolutionary coalition has proved more successful in the form of ISIL and its tacit allies.

This leads to the second judgment. The conditions created by the revolutionaries have shaped an environment where the "rise of the radicals" has occurred despite the fact that Syria's revolutionary trajectory remains incomplete. The protracted conflict and revolutionary

environment in Syria allowed the strongest and most radical groups of all to emerge from the violent, ungoverned space that has expanded since 2011. The lesson from Syria, therefore, is self-evident. Protracted and incomplete revolutionary societies likely create an environment that allows for violence, instability and radicalism to thrive. And perhaps, creating a perpetual conflict, with no real winner, may cause a scenario where the period of radical rule might become more even more difficult to overcome. Although this last statement is not empirically proven by this analysis, it certainly warrants more detailed comparative analysis and should likely serve as a cautionary tale for governments, community leaders and international organizations.

The last key judgment is on the role of external intervention. As an intervening variable, external intervention from all sides has directly altered the course of Syria's revolution. This factor must be accounted for in future study of revolutionary societies. As we have seen, external intervention in Syria has caused three distinct effects. For one, international support to the Opposition helped fuel the violent challenge to the regime. This support in turn, helped sustain the Opposition's military revolt, while attempting to give it the revolutionary capacity to destroy the regime. Separate cases of external intervention helped to counteract the Opposition and its backers by propping up the regime. By supporting the regime and continually reinforcing its pillars of legitimacy, Asad has managed to withstand years of violent civil conflict and a sizable rebellion. Finally, the counteractive forces supporting both the Opposition and the regime have had the net effect of prolonging the conflict. Neither side has yet to suffer the attrition that would lead to defeat, rather, the influx of resources continues to fuel conflict. Moreover, neither side has managed to tip the balance in either camp's favor, so the conflict remains stalemated and extremely violent. Such cause and effects warrant further

study, particularly in the realm of international relations. In an increasingly globalized world, analyzing revolutionary societies in a vacuum will neglect the internationalization of such conflicts.

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