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The Syrian Civil War: Four Concentric Forces of Tensions

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The Syrian Civil War: Four Concentric Forces of Tensions

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved and true love, Valerie

I dedicate this PhD dissertation work to my love, Valerie, who always believed in me and without whose caring, love, affection, kindness, decency, and support it would not have been possible.

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I express my deep gratitude to Professor Earl Conteh-Morgan who provided me with the required knowledge, incredibly informative, and constructive criticism and feedback. I wish to be thankful and express my extreme gratitude to him for giving me invaluable and friendly advices and guiding me throughout the course of my dissertation and the PhD program.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Review of Literature	6
2.1 Intrastate Conflicts and Theories of Domestic Wars	
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	17
3.1 Significance Of the Study	19
3.2 Research Questions	10
3.3 Geopolitical Role of External Factors	22
Chapter Four: Historical Background: Syria and The Rise of al-Assad	24
Chapter Five: Assad's Rule, The Character of The Uprising, Conflict and Militarization	32
5.1 The Factors Behind the Uprising: Assad's Neoliberal Policies and Political Liberalization	39
5.2 Popular Uprising 2011: Character of the Opposition and Social Movement	41
Chapter Six. Four Concentric Circles of Tensions: The First Battle, The Domestic Dimension of The Conflict	47
6.1 Syrian Armed and Rebel Groups	48
6.1.1 The First Battle: Islamist and Jihadist Groups	60
6.1.2 The Second Domestic Battle: Foreign Pro Government and Shiite Rebel Armed Groups	91
6.1.3 The Third Domestic Battle: Moderate, Secular and Socialist Armed Groups	104
6.1.4 The Fourth Domestic Battle: Ethnic Armed Rebel Groups	120
6.1.4.1 Kurdish Armed Groups	123
6.1.4.2 Assyrian and Christian Armed Groups	127

6.1.5 The Fifth Domestic Battle: Other Major Armed and Rebel Coalitions	130
6.1.6 The Sixth Domestic Battle: Independent Armed and Rebel Groups	132
6.1.7 The Seventh Domestic Battle: Conflicts, Tensions, and Alliances Among The Syrian Oppositional Groups	139
6.1.7.1 Ethnic Paradigm and Conflict	139
6.1.7.2 Conflict Among Other Coalitions of Oppositional Groups: Secular, Islamists, Moderate	149
6.1.8 Loyalist and Quasi-Loyalist Oppositional Groups	178
6.1.9 The Eighth Domestic Battle: Syrian Government Armed Forces and paramilitary Organization Fighting the Armed Rebel	184
6.2 The Multi-layered Domestic Dimensions of The Conflict in Syria	193
6.2.1 Secular Armed Groups Versus Moderate Islamist and Salafi Jihadist groups	194
6.2.2 Secular, Socialists, Moderate Islamists, and Salafi Jihadist Versus The Syrian Government	196
6.2.3 Syrian Oppositional Groups Versus the Rebels	197
6.2.4 Syrian Oppositional Groups Versus the Syrian Government	200
6.2.5 Syrian Oppositional Groups Versus Syrian Oppositional Groups	201
Chapter Seven: Regional Dimension, Circle and Forces of Conflict	204
7. 1. The First Regional Battle: The Islamic Republic of Iran	206
7. 2. The Second Layer of the Regional Conflict: Gulf Arab States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, etc)	215
7. 3. The Third Regional Tension: The Neighboring Nation-States (Turkey, Lebanon, The Kingdom of Jordan, and Iraq)	229
Chapter Eight: International Dimension: Global Powers and the United Nations Security Council	267
8.1 Eastern Powers: Russia and China	269
8.2 International Stalemate: Western Powers (The United States, the United Kingdom, France)	281
Chapter Nine: Global Jihad, The Fourth Concentric Circle of Tension: The Emergence of Foreign Non State Actors (Foreign Salafi-Jihadist, Al Qaeda-affiliated and Islamist Groups	310
9.1 Interactions, Contradictions and Excesses: Moderate Islamists vs. Radical Hard-line Islamists, and Salafi-Jihadists Armed Groups	333
9.2 Salafi Jihadist Groups Versus Salafi-Jihadist Groups	335
Chapter Ten: Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	338
References	354

List of Tables

Table 1: Classifications of Syrian Rebel and Armed Groups	49
Table 2: Classifications of Syrian Rebel and Armed Groups	54

List of Figures

Figure 1: Four Concentric Circles of Tensions	14
Figure 2: Interactions, Interplays and Overlaps	15
Figure 3: Contradictions, Excesses, Radicalization, and Militarization: The Vicious Circle	16
Figure 4: Four Concentric Circles of Tensions	339
Figure 5: Interactions, Interplays and Overlaps	340
Figure 6: Contradictions, Excesses, Radicalization, and Militarization: The Vicious Circle	341

Abstract

The ongoing Syrian conflict has been subject to considerable amount of political polemics. Nevertheless, little scholarly work has been conducted in order to comprehend the complexities as well as underlying reasons behind the intensity, scope, and duration of the conflict in Syria. Through qualitative methodology, this research examines the character of the Syrian conflict, by conducting an in-depth and nuanced case study of the Syrian civil war. While some theories of intrastate conflict and civil wars, concentrate on the domestic character of internal conflicts within states, transnational theories focus on external factors in examining intrastate conflicts. Both theoretical framework fail to take into account the broader picture of intrastate conflict and civil war. This study makes a contribution to the intrastate and civil war theories by introducing an expanded model for analyzing intrastate conflicts and civil wars. With respect to the Syrian conflict, utilizing this approach is instrumental in order to more efficiently and thoroughly comprehend the character of the Syrian conflict. Secondly, this study determines that states, which are multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, and geostrategically and geopolitically significant, tend to have protracted civil war and intrastate conflict. This research concludes that the unrecognized character of the Syrian conflict is unique due to the notion that it is operating, and being influenced, by four concentric forces of tensions, which are occurring simultaneously. In addition, it is critical to understand the interactions, contradictions, and excesses created by these

four concentric circles of tensions. These interactions, contradictions and excesses shape the nature, scope, intensity, violence, death toll, and duration of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

Chapter One

Introduction

Some domestic wars remain internal conflicts, while others not only take a regional dimension, but also can be internationalized. In some cases, any change in the political structure of the conflict-affected state will influence the balance of power not only in the region but also in the international arena. If a shift in the political structure of a state influences the balance of power in the region and in the international arena, and if the internal conflict or civil war poses a security dilemma for the regional states as well as global powers, the domestic conflict will evolve into four interrelated concentric circles of tensions, confrontations, and dimensions: Circle 1) the tension is domestic, Circle 2) the tension is regional, Circle 3) it is international, and Circle 4) the conflict generates non-state actors from foreign countries (Global Jihad in case of Syria).

However, the prevailing Western theories of internal conflicts and civil wars have paid little attention to the interstate character of civil wars. The current research on civil wars and internal conflict emphasizes the domestic aspect of a civil war. A civil war is mainly studied through the prism of an intrastate character rather than an interstate

paradigm.¹

This research seeks to conduct a case study regarding the current Syrian crisis and civil war. It attempts to analyze whether the violence in Syria is solely related to the domestic conflict between the Syrian government and different groups of rebels and revolutionaries, or whether it has taken on a regional and international dimension.

The main research questions are: 1) What factors highlight the complexity of the Syrian conflict? Why has the conflict lasted for more than three years without resolution? Can the Syrian civil war be labeled solely as a domestic conflict, or is it part of the four concentric circles of domestic, regional, and international tensions? 2) If the Syrian civil war has domestic, regional and international facets, do the regional and international arenas play a role in resolving or exacerbating the conflict? 3) What role can the regional states and global powers play in the Syrian domestic civil war?

In this research, I would argue that civil war should not be studied only as a domestic conflict between the state and non-state actor. It is crucial to examine the external factors, such as the role that other states *and* non-state actors play regionally and internationally, to shape and influence an internal conflict. This research will suggest that political, ethnic, and religious linkage between states as well as the geostrategic role and importance of the conflict-affected country can be significant attributes in determining the duration, scope, intensity and character of an internal civil war in a particular country.

¹ Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Transnational Dimensions of Civil War, Journal of Peace Research, <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/44/3/293.full.pdf+html>, DOI: 10.1177/0022343307076637 , 2007 44: 293

In addition, the research seeks to fill the gaps in the current literature and intrastate theories of civil war, which mainly focuses on the domestic aspect of internal conflicts and revolutions throughout the Middle East and North Africa, while neglecting the external forces. It attempts to make a contribution to the transnational theories of internal conflicts and civil wars by bringing the regional and international dimensions of these revolts and indigenous uprisings into focus by conducting a case study of the Syrian uprising that erupted in March 2011. In addition, it seeks to fill the gap in the transnational theories of internal conflicts and civil wars by analyzing the role of foreign non-state actors.

Several reasons compel the study of the Syrian civil war; first of all, Syria is a pivotal and complex state and the current civil war has been faced with “much political polemics” ², but “a more limited body of scholarly inquiry”. ³ Second, the failure of the international community after two years, in resolving the internal conflict in Syria necessitates further survey of the Syrian civil war and its various dimensions. The third reason is the inability of scholars to scientifically address the reasons behind the ongoing civil war in Syria, which has led to a death toll of approximately more than 150,000, of which approximately 10 percent, 15000, are children. ^{4 5} Finally, the Syrian

² Raymond Hinnebusch, “Modern Syrian Politics”, History Compass, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages 263–285, January 2008, 28 NOV 2007

³ Raymond Hinnebusch, “Modern Syrian Politics”, History Compass, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages 263–285, January 2008, 28 NOV 2007

⁴ Death toll in Syria's civil war above 150,000: monitor
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/01/us-syria-crisis-toll-idUSBREA300YX20140401> ,
Reuters News Agency , BEIRUT Tue Apr 1, 2014 8:26am EDT

civil war as a case study highlights the climax of interactions, contradictions and overlaps between the domestic, regional and global state actors; and can make a contribution to the current literature on transnational theories of civil war.

This research employs multiple methods for data collection including text analysis and examining the writings of contemporary US foreign policy and Middle Eastern scholars. Because access to the Syrian governments archives and inner policies of the authorities is hard, if not impossible, this research will use qualitative methodology to analyze the documents of international organizations such as United Nations and major academic journals, news research as well as related countries' foreign policies regarding Syria.

This research argues that the Syrian internal war does not only operate on a domestic level. This war has carried a regional and international dimensions because of the role that Syria plays strategically and geopolitically in influencing the balance of power in the region as well as the global powers in the Middle East and on an international arena. In addition, the political deadlocks on the four levels of domestic, regional and international, and non-state actors' tensions, as well as the alliance formation on these three levels, have contributed in increasing the violence by both strengthening the Syrian state's power as well as ratcheting up the rebels capabilities. As a result, these alliances and deadlocks on regional and international levels have

⁵ By Spencer Ackerman , , Data Dive Reveals 15,000 New Victims of Syria War, <http://www.wired.com/2013/01/syria-death-data/> , , | Permalink , 01.02.13 | 12:04 pm

exacerbated the internal conflict, which consequently has intensified and reinforced regional and international tensions, resulting in a vicious circle.

In the following sections of the dissertation, I first review existing work on how intrastate theories of civil war and the transnational linkages have pointed out factors relating to the civil war. Second, I will introduce my methodology and hypotheses in transnational linkages between Syria's civil war and other states. Third, I will try to ascertain and explain why Syria's civil war is characterized not only by the domestic factors, such as the battle between the Free Syrian army and the state, but also by the geopolitical and ethnic influence of regional and international state and non-state actors. Syria has become a venue for regional, international, and ideological proxy wars.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2.1 Intrastate Conflicts and Theories of Domestic Wars

Civil wars have received considerable academic and scholarly interest, studying the character and reasons behind internal conflicts, particularly after the cold war.⁶ International and regional wars are primarily attributed to conflict between two or more states, disregarding the non-state actors and internal factors.⁷

Similarly, most of the current research on civil wars and internal conflict emphasizes the domestic aspect of the civil war. The civil war is mainly studied through the prism of intrastate factors rather than an interstate paradigm. The main factors are analyzed primarily by studying the interactions between the state and non-state actors such as rebels, revolutionaries, militia, or unified oppositional group.⁸

⁶ Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. 2002b. "Expanded Trade and GDP Data, 1946-99." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(5):712-724, see also, Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. 2002a. *All Politics is Local: The Diffusion of Conflict, Integration, and Democratization*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press

⁷ Gartzke, Erik A. and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2006. "Identity and Conflict: Ties that Bind and Differences that Divide." *European Journal of International Relations* 12(1):53-87

⁸ Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan. 2007. *Civil War and Interstate Disputes*. In *Resources, Governance and Civil Conflict*, ed. Kaare Strøm and Magnus Oberg. London: Routledge.

In analyzing internal conflict and civil war from the intrastate perspective, the character and political structure- authoritarianism, dictatorship, constitutional autocracy, etc of the conflict-affected state are primarily examined.⁹ Studies have identified that poorer, politically and economically unstable, totalitarian and non-democratic countries produce the characteristics for promotion of civil war.¹⁰

According to Gurr, the cause and primary source for internal conflict and promoting civil war between state and non-state actors is “relative deprivation” or frustration-aggression. From this perspective, internal discrepancies, expectations and values such as state’s welfare, internal security, and self-actualization play a major role.¹¹

On the other hand, the prospects of internal conflict and the magnitude of the violence have been primarily examined through the balance of power between the state’s capability (military, army, technology, internal support, its loyalties, and the selectorate) vis’ a vis’ the capabilities, organization, management and coordination of the rebels or oppositional groups to conduct military operations and overthrow the regime. If the state is considerably and significantly more superior in terms of capability in comparison to the opposition, the opposition can be defeated and consequently this will put an end to the internal conflict. If the balance of power is equal, the magnitude of the

⁹ Kristian Skrede Gleditsch , Transnational Dimensions of Civil War, *Journal of Peace Research* , <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/44/3/293.full.pdf+html> , DOI: 10.1177/0022343307076637 , 2007 44: 293

¹⁰ Sambanis, Nicholas. 2002. “A Review of Recent Advances and Future Directions in the Quantitative Literature on Civil War.” *Defense Economics* 13(1):215–243.

¹¹ Gurr, Why men rebel, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 113-145

civil war is higher.¹²

Moreover, Fearon and Laitin suggest that weak and decentralized states are particularly vulnerable to conflict and they are civil war prone due to the fact that they do not possess the capabilities of maintaining the state within its borders. As a result, they provide the paradigm for the oppositional groups, rebels, revolutionaries or militia to launch an internal conflict or civil war.¹³

The realistic computational model by Lars-Erik Cederman and Luc Girardin, indicates that two crucial phenomenon significantly determine the outcome of a civil war: First is the relative power of various ethnic groups which are involved in the internal conflict; second is the geographic standing and location of the non-state actors and the state.¹⁴

In addition, while a realist paradigm emphasizes the state as a locus of the study; armed conflicts between states has been the central tenet. The core assumption in the realist school, which is the major mainstream security studies theoretical paradigm, is that the order of states in the international system is characterized by perpetual international “anarchy”.¹⁵

¹² Thies, Cameron G. 2010. “Of Rulers, Rebels and Revenue: State Capacity, Civil War Onset and Primary Commodities.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (3): 321–32.

¹³ Fearon, James D. 2003. Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 8:195-222.

¹⁴ Lars-Erik Cederman and Luc Girardin, A roadmap to realistic computational models of civil wars, *International Conflict Research*, 2010, <http://www.icr.ethz.ch/publications/cederman2006roadmap.pdf>

¹⁵ Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Waveland Pr Inc; 1 edition (February 5, 2010), 79-101

In addition, since states attempt to augment their relative power, in order to achieve security, power struggle between states is inevitable and inexorable. Paradoxically, the struggle for power and achieving security produce a “security dilemma” which will ultimately lead to armed conflict between states. Barry Posen points out that a “security dilemma”, from the realist paradigm of international relations theory, can be utilized to determine factors that change or increase the risk of violence.¹⁶

According to Posen, “This is the security dilemma: What one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure”.¹⁷ Other scholars, such as David Lake and Ronald Rothchild, have extrapolated from the rational choice theory of realism to indicate that violent ethnic and internal conflicts in the post-Soviet Transcaucasus of Europe emerged due to the fact that the majority could not take advantage of the minorities in the newly sovereign and independent states.¹⁸

The theories of intrastate conflict, which concentrate solely on the domestic character of the conflict and civil war, fails to take into account other crucial external factors which shape a particular intrastate conflict and civil war. This issue and the role of external factors is particularly significant when the conflict inflicted state bears strategic and geopolitical significant in the region or on global stage. Without examining the role of the external factors (regional powers, global powers, and foreign non-state

¹⁶ Barry Posen The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict, *Survival*, 35:1 (1993), 28-35

¹⁷ Barry Posen, The security dilemma and ethnic conflict. In: M. E. BROWN. *Ethnic conflict and international security*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993. pp. 104.

¹⁸ David Lake and Donald Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, Princeton University, Press, 1998, PP. 339-351

actors), it is difficult to have a meticulous and nuanced picture of the intrastate conflict and civil war.

The intrastate theories of domestic violence and civil war attempt to explain the scope, intensity, duration and of a civil war through the prism of, and by analyzing the, balance of power between the state and the rebels, the economic growth of the violence-inflicted country, the militaristic superiority and capabilities of the state vis' a vis' the rebels, the authoritarian structure of the state, the demographic shape of the country, territorial controls and the topography of the areas, and the extent to which the state is willing to resort to hard power to crack down and suppress the rebels in order to retain its power.

In addition, according to Gurr, there exist other mediating factors in which augment or ratchet down political violence. Accordingly, these factors can be characterized in three categories: Utilitarian, Coercive and normative justifications. Internal and political violence can emerge due to frustrations of relative deprivation. However, this can only occur if normative and utilitarian justification for the violence and conflict, as well as the oppositions' coercive power and institutional support will be relatively equivalent to the those of the regimes.¹⁹

The level and intensity of a government's reaction and response to any rebellion, challenge, or opposition can be determined by several factors including the pluralistic character of the government, the authoritarian nature of the state, democratic

¹⁹ Gurr, *Why men rebel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 105-167

institutions, the size of the rebellion or oppositional groups, and the government's perception of the threat of the opposition or rebels.

In addition, the strength of the state and its militaristic or hard power, the capabilities of the opposition relative to the state, the balance of power, and the size of the ruling party are critical factors. According to Goemans, other elements which contribute to a more violent response to armed insurrection and insurgency by a smaller ruling government is whether losing power for the regime and its loyalists will bring more catastrophic, severe and tragic consequences.²⁰

As a result, the aforementioned questions linked to a case study of Syria can not only contribute to the intrastate theories of domestic violence and civil war, but also would also examine and explain the ongoing Syrian domestic conflict and civil war by drawing on the intrastate theories of domestic violence.

The research would also examine the shortcomings of both predominant theories of domestic violence where it excludes the significance of external factors and foreign non-state actors in characterizing the longevity, severity, and intensity of violence in a particular violence-inflicted state.

On the other hand, transnational theories and some studies have pointed out that external factors, in addition to the domestic ones, can play significant role in a civil war.²¹ Transnational theories show that the risk and the direction of civil war will be

²⁰ Debs and Goeman, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders and War", *American Political Science Review*, <http://politicalscience.yale.edu/sites/default/files/adebs-2010-regimetype.pdf>, August 2010.

²¹ Beck, Nathaniel L., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Kyle C. Beard

changed when other states, particularly neighboring states, get involved in the civil war.²²

Researchers such as Gartzke and Gleditsch point out that other states might attempt to intervene, influence and change the political process of a civil war for varied motivations and political reasons to obtain their preferred outcome and results.²³ In addition, Austvoll points out that factors such as ethnic and religious ties can increase the likelihood of other states intervening in a civil war of a particular state.²⁴

By concentrating on the internal factors and state-specific character of internal conflict and civil war, the intrastate theories and literature have not addressed the function of regional and neighboring countries, as well as international and global powers in influencing the prospects of civil war.

In addition, the role of neighboring states and global power in ratcheting up or resolving the violence in the war-torn country, have not been scientifically and fully approached. In the predominant research, a states' borders are considered to be the line, which delineates the scope and the study of internal conflicts and civil wars between the state and inner non-state actors.

sley. 2006. "Space is More than Geography: Using Spatial Econometrics in the Study of Political Economy." *International Studies Quarterly* 50(1):27-44

²² Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Michael D. Ward. 2007. "The Diffusion of Democracy and the International Context of Democratization." *International Organization*

²³ Gartzke, Erik A. and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2005. "Balancing, Bandwagoning, Bargaining and War: Signaling and Selection Among Third-Party Joiners." Typescript, Columbia University and the University of Essex

²⁴ Austvoll, Martin. 2005. "Transnational Ethnic Dimensions of Third-Party Interventions in Civil Conflicts." MA Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo

On the other hand, although the transnational theories analyze the role of external factors in directing an internal conflict, the transnational theories of conflict fail to fully grasp and examine the role of foreign non-state actors in this modern era of globalization and advanced technology.

In addition, the transnational theories of domestic conflicts and civil war do not appear to distinguish between the role of countries, which are bordered with conflict-inflict state and other states which intervene in the domestic conflict and civil war. The reaction and involvement of countries which are bordered with the conflict inflict state is somewhat different due to the flow of refugees and the security and economic challenges that they face.

Specifically, this research seeks to fill the gaps in the current literature of intrastate theories, which mainly focus on the domestic aspect of internal conflicts and revolutions throughout the Middle East and North Africa, while neglecting the external forces. In addition, it attempts to make a contribution to the transnational theories of internal conflicts and civil wars by bringing the regional and international dimensions of these revolts and indigenous uprisings into focus by conducting a case study of the Syrian uprising that erupted in March 2011.

Finally this study seeks to fill the gap in the transnational theories of conflict and civil war which fails to fully examine the role of foreign non-state actors in directing a domestic conflict and civil war.

The following expanded model, which I am presenting in graph one, provides a platform to take into account various angles of a domestic conflict. I argue that not only

domestic factors (such as rebel’s military capabilities, state’s capabilities, geographic locations, domestic balance of power, etc) should be examined but also the role of external actors (neighboring states, and other states) as well as the role of non-state actors should be meticulously studied.



Figure 1. Four Concentric Circles of Tensions

In addition, I make the argument that these four layers should be examined separately. Instead, it is the interactions, and overlapping roles among these four layers that define and shape the character of a domestic conflict and civil war. These

interactions and overlapping influences are shown in graph two.

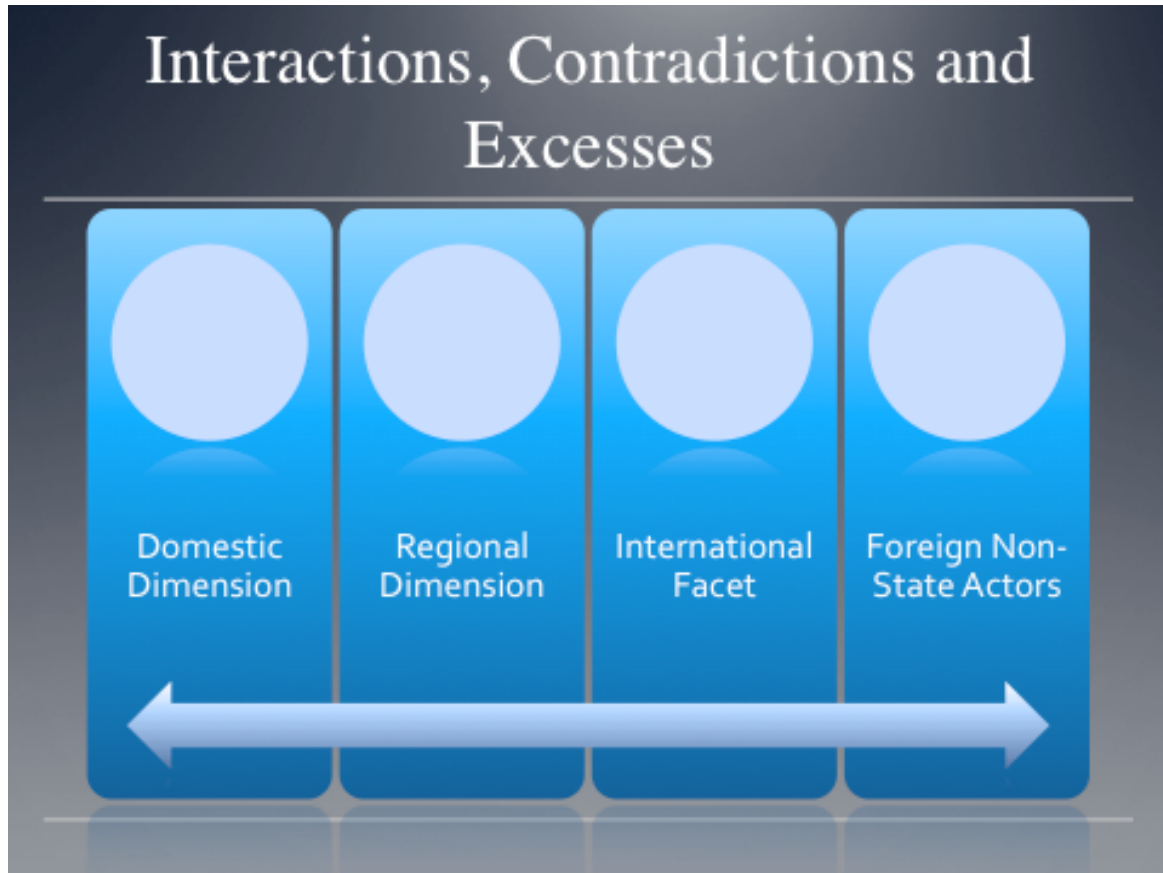


Figure 2. Interactions, Overlaps and Interplays

Finally, with respect to the Syrian internal conflict and civil war, I make the argument that what shape and define the character, scope, intensity and duration of such an internal conflict and civil war is not only the interactions and overlapping landscapes among these four layers, but also the excesses and contradictions which are inevitably produced. These interactions, overlaps, contradictions and excesses have led

to further radicalization, militarization, as well as expansion of the scope, intensity and duration of the Syrian conflict (Shown in Graph three). In other words, what shapes and define the nature of the Syrian internal conflict (its future, direction, scope, violence, duration, intensity, etc) are the interactions, overlaps, contradictions, and excesses among these four layers.



Figure 3. Contradictions, Radicalization, Militarization and Excesses: The Vicious Circle

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

In order to fill the gap in current literature concerning internal conflicts in the Arab world, an in-depth case study will be chosen. A qualitative and in-depth case study of the current crisis and civil war in Syria will be conducted. This qualitative methodology of case study would allow the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis and study the nuances and intricacies of Syria's civil war. This case study will examine the period between the uprising in Syria March, 2011 until present.

In addition, since it is difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to the government's inner circle, concerning the domestic and foreign policies of the Syrian regime, this research employs multiple methods for data collection including text, documents (In Arabic, Persian, English, and French), policy and historical analysis. It examines the writings of contemporary U.S., Russian, Chinese, Saudi, Turkish, and Qataris' foreign policy as well as Western and Middle Eastern scholars.

In addition, this research will use qualitative methodology to analyze the documents of international organizations such as the United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and major academic scholarship and research, news research as well as other related (similar) countries' foreign policy towards Syria.

Through these text analyses, the political alliances at time of war, regional alliances and coalitions, economic and trade ties and partnerships, the balance of power, along with security, as well as the socio-religious and ethnic configuration of the region will be studied. Alliances can be defined as formal associations and cooperation between states, which are linked by the mutual objectives and commitment to take necessary measures to defend the members against an aggressor or military intervention.²⁵

Morgenthau and Thompson argue that the balance of power does contribute in subduing conflict and preventing domination of a single state. According to Morgenthau, balance of power can be characterized as an approximate distribution of power as a policy, which is directed towards a particular state of affairs. ²⁶ The major state actors to be studied are Russia, The United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The significant non-state actors include the Free Syrian Army (FSA), fractured oppositional groups such as Jubhat Alnasra, and Hezbollah.

The main hypotheses is:

What highlights the complexity of the Syrian conflict and the scope, intensity, and duration of Syrian internal violence are the simultaneous four concentric circles of tensions: domestic, regional, international, and global Jihad.

²⁵ Heinz Gaertner, Small States and Alliances, 2011
http://www.bundesheer.info/pdf_pool/publikationen/05_small_states_01.pdf

²⁶ Morgenthau, H..J. & Thompson, K. (1985). Politics Among Nations. 6th ed. N.Y.: Alfred A. Knoph.

The hypothesis is constructed as a directional and positive statement. The causal relationship is between “Syrian internal violence and its scope, intensity, and duration” and the “interplay and interactions of three concentric circles of tensions; domestic, regional and international”. The hypothesis states that due to the four concentric circles of tension: domestic, regional , international, global Jihad and the interplay and interactions among these four landscapes, define the scope, intensity, duration and character of the Syrian internal conflict.

The model which I will utilize in order to analyze the Syrian civil war is the based on the previous expanded graphs: graoh 1: Four Concentric Circles of Tensions. I would also the following two graphs to reveal the direction of the Syrian conflict and civil war in graoh 2, as well as the interactions, interplays, overlaps, contradictions and excesses among these four concentric layers in graph 3.

3.1 Significance Of the Study

An in-depth case study of the current civil war in Syria will be conducted. Several reasons compel the study of Syrian ongoing domestic violence and civil war; first of all, Syria is geostrategically significant, and it is a “pivotal and complex state” ²⁷, and Syrian socio-political, socio-econmic system, and the current civil war has been the object of “much political polemics” ²⁸, but “a more limited body of scholarly inquiry”. ²⁹ Second,

²⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, “Modern Syrian Politics”, History Compass, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages 263–285, January 2008, 28 NOV 2007

²⁸ Raymond Hinnebusch, “Modern Syrian Politics”, History Compass, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages 263–285, January 2008, 28 NOV 2007

the failure of the international community after more than three years, in resolving the internal conflict in Syria necessitates further survey of the Syrian civil war and its various dimensions.

The third reason is the inability of scholars to scientifically address the reasons behind the ongoing civil war in Syria, which has led to a death toll of approximately 150,000 of which approximately 10 percent, or 15,000, are children.³⁰ Finally, the Syrian civil war's case study highlights the climax of interactions, contradictions and overlaps between the domestic, regional and global state actors; and can make a contribution to the current literature of transnational theories of civil war.

3.2 Research Questions

The ongoing violence and civil war in Syria has not only led to the death of more than 150,000 people³¹ (of which approximately 10 percent, 15,000, are children),³² according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates, but it has also entered its third year of conflict, marking the failure of the international community, United Nations, and domestic, regional and global powers and actors such as the United States, Russia, China, Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Saudi Arabia, along with

²⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, "Modern Syrian Politics", History Compass, Volume 6, Issue 1, pages 263–285, January 2008, 28 NOV 2007

³⁰ Death toll in Syria's civil war above 150,000: monitor:
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/01/us-syria-crisis-toll-idUSBREA300YX20140401> ,
Reuters News Agency , BEIRUT Tue Apr 1, 2014 8:26am EDT

³² By Spencer Ackerman, Data Dive Reveals 15,000 New Victims of Syria War
<http://www.wired.com/2013/01/syria-death-data/> | Permalink , 01.02.13 | 12:04 pm

the Syrian government, and rebels in finding a practical resolution for the protracted and ongoing violence in various cities of Syria including Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Hama, and Dar'a.

This phenomenon raises major questions for the intrastate and transnational theories of civil war and domestic conflict. The key question is what factors highlights the complexity of the Syrian conflict? Why has the Syrian conflict, which erupted in March 2011, been going on for almost three years without any positive signs of resolution? The empirical research linked to this question and its response can either contribute to, draw on, and emphasize the shortcomings of the two predominant theories of domestic violence and civil war- the interstate and transnational paradigm of domestic violence and conflict.

In other words, by drawing on the theories of intrastate domestic violence and civil war, this study attempts to explain whether the scope, intensity and duration of the Syrian civil war is related to solely domestic factors or three concentric circles of tensions: domestic, regional and international dimensions. What geopolitical, economic, strategic role do regional or international powers play? Does the reason behind the ongoing violence primarily lay blame on the rebel's and the Assad government's militaristic capabilities? Is the balance between the Syrian state and rebels' weaponries, strategic locations, and territorial gains contributing to the ongoing conflict?

Has the equal balance of power between the state and the rebels led to this ongoing stalemate? Or, By shedding light on the theories of intrastate domestic violence, can it be concluded that the authoritarian structure of the Syrian state and its use of

hard power characterize the main reason behind the protracted violence and civil war? Does the decline in the domestic economic growth, devaluation of the currency, increase in the inflation reinforce the continuation of the conflict?

3.3 Geopolitical Role of External Factors

In addition, by drawing on transnational theory of domestic conflict and violence and by blending it with intrastate theory of domestic conflict and violence, this study would further examine the external factors such as the role of other states and non-state actors in contributing, exacerbating, or compounding the intensity, longevity, and severity of the Syrian domestic conflict and ongoing violence.

In other words, do regional states such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, and Turkey play a significant role in turning the Syrian conflict into a protracted and ongoing violence? Does the so-called "regional cold war" between the Shiite coalition (Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah) on the one hand, and the Sunni coalition of Gulf Arab states (including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirate and Bahrain) exacerbate or help resolve the situation in Syria? What role the are global powers such as United States, Russia, China, France and United Kingdom playing in either aggravating or helping to resolve the ongoing domestic war and violence in Syria?

By blending the intrastate and transnational theories of domestic conflict and violence, these research questions seek to fill the gaps in the current literature and intrastate theories of civil war -which mainly focus on the domestic aspect of internal conflicts and revolutions throughout the Middle East and North Africa while neglecting

the external forces. These research questions would also attempt to make a contribution to the transnational theories of internal conflicts and civil wars by bringing the regional and international dimensions of these revolts and indigenous uprisings into focus by conducting an in depth case study of the Syrian uprising that erupted in March 2011.

This in-depth case study of Syrian internal conflict would not only address these crucial empirical questions, but it would also attempt to contribute to the transnational theory of domestic conflict and violence by addressing the aforementioned questions by shedding light on, and butilizing, transnational theory of domestic conflict and violence.

Chapter Four

Historical Background: Syria and The Rise of al-Assad

At the beginning of twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire was still ruling and dominating most of the Middle East and the eastern part of the Mediterranean region including what are currently known as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, northern Yemen, Jordan, Israel and Palestine.³³ After approximately 500 years of its rule, Ottoman empire began to show signs of institutional weaken and was defeated due to two crucial factors: the internal uprisings, Arab uprisings, and external forces: primarily British Empire and French forces.³⁴

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, the confidential deal, which was signed between the British and French colonial powers during World War I, draw the boundaries and divided the Middle East and greater Syria into several nation-states. The division was mainly anchored in the British and French colonial, strategic, national and geopolitical interests rather than the interests of communities and the population in the Middle

³³ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East, Westview Press; Fifth Edition, Fifth Edition (December 4, 2012)

³⁴ David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922, Henry Holt & Co (July 1989)

East. According to the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France, Syria became a French protectorate, or characterized as a League of Nations mandate.³⁵

Lebanon was created by splitting the Christian coastal areas. Lebanon was also given to France and it became another French protectorate. On the other hand, the British empire obtained Iraq and Palestine, which became British mandated territories. France and Britain installed several people as Emirs or ruler in order to govern these newly created nation-state systems. For example, Faisal, one of Sharif Hussein's sons, was installed as the Emir of Iraq.³⁶

In addition, in Post World War I, Britain conducted a crucial act which was crystallized in the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, pointing out “promised to support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine”.³⁷ Palestine became the British Mandate of Palestine and was split in two parts. The eastern half of Palestine was named the Emirate of Transjordan. The British installed Faisal's brother, Abdullah, as the Emir.³⁸

Another crucial development during this era was the discovery of oil, the most crucial commodity for the industrialized world in the early 20th century, in Persia (1908), Iraq

³⁵ Bernard Lewis, *The End of Modern History in the Middle East*, Hoover Institution Press; 1st edition (May 1, 2011)

³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Faysal I,” 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/202997/Faysal-I>

³⁷ Joel Benin, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict A Primer*, Middle East Research & Information project, 2009

³⁸ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press; Fifth Edition, Fifth Edition (December 4, 2012),

and later Saudi Arabia, Libya and Algeria as well. The flow of oil revenues consolidated and strengthened the states, ruling parties, and monarchs who were either political allies with Britain and France or were instated by the colonial power. This contributed in the centralization of power at state level and it preserved western national interest as well as hegemony over the various countries in the Middle East.³⁹

During the 1920s, Syrians began calling for independence. In addition, the Syrian nationalists argued against the Segmentation of Greater Syria, which had separated Palestine, Lebanon, and Transjordan into three nation-states under the French and British Mandates. Later, the French invaded Damascus in July 1920 and sent Faisal into exile. In 1925, another revolt was carried out by the Druze rebels in the south of Syria.⁴⁰

The revolt continued to develop against the ruling French over a decade, until in 1936, France and Syria reached an agreement which would dictate and spell out the framework for Syria's independence. The Syrian government signed the agreement, however it was not ratified by the French.⁴¹ During the World War II, Germany took control of France and the French government fell in 1941. During the World War II, Syria turned into other focal point for the rivalry as well as struggle of power between the Allied forces and Germany in order to insert influence and gain control of the region.

³⁹ Morton, Michael Quentin (December 2011). "Narrowing the Gulf: Anglo-American Relations and Arabian Oil, 1928-74

⁴⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, "Syria: History: The French Mandate" 2009, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578856/Syria>

⁴¹ John, Grainger, The Battle for Syria, 1918-1920, BOYE6; 1 edition (January 17, 2013), P.35

Before Germany could take action, British, British Commonwealth, and Free French forces invaded Syria. ⁴²

In 1945, the French government bombarded Damascus, and postponed the removal of its forces from Syria. In 1946, the French forces left Syria, and the Evacuation Day, April 17, marked the official day of Syrian independence and end of French occupation.⁴³

After the independence, the required governing institutions were not centralized and robust enough. The newly formed and independent nation-state of Syria was marked as an ethnically and religiously diverse society. The Syrian society was mainly comprised of Sunnis, Alawites, Druze, Christians, and Ismaelites. In order to preserve their socio-economic, socio-political, and legal rights, various sects and ethnic groups began competing with each other. ^{44 45}

Similar to the confessional political system with specified parliamentary representation in Lebanon, the French mandatory administration established another confessional system and representation in Syria. According to the imposed governing system of confessional representation in the Syrian parliament, each ethnic and religious group- including Druzes, Alawites, Sunnis (approximately 75 per cent), Christians, Kurds, Circassians, Turkomans, and Jews- were assigned specific number of

⁴² R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Arab Republic of Syria," in *Politics and Government in the Middle East and North Africa* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1991), 193.

⁴³ ArabicNews.com, "Syria Celebrates Evacuation Day," 17 April 1999, <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/990417/1999041744.html>

⁴⁴ http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=honors_proj

⁴⁵ https://www.academia.edu/1551568/A_Minority_Rule_over_a_Hostile_Majority_The_Case_of_Syria

seats. The total number of parliament seats were 142, in which approximately 25 per cent were allocated to minority groups. Several groups of the minorities viewed the confessional system unrepresentative, which was infringing on their socio-political, socio-economic and legal rights and they protested against it. ⁴⁶

On the other hand, in the 1950s, the Sunni majority attempted to set up a constitution where the religion of Islam was considered to be the official state religion of Syria. Their efforts were scuttled at the beginning. ⁴⁷

In 1953, the confessional political system with specified parliamentary representation, which was established by France, was abolished. In addition, another legislation and bill in 1953 removed the jurisdictional, legal, political, and personal rights in which religious minority groups enjoyed.^{48 49}

The elimination of governmental and legal protection for the Syrian minorities- Druze, Christian, Shias, Jews, Alawites, etc- as well as the short-lived Sunni governments of Pre-Assad era ratcheted up the insecurity and they were more frequently subjected to prosecution. The 1950s and 1960s were marked by several military coup d'etat, internal conflict and instability. For example, approximately twenty

⁴⁶ <http://countrystudies.us/syria/20.htm>

⁴⁷ <http://countrystudies.us/syria/18.htm>

⁴⁸ Nicholas van Dam, *The Struggle For Power in Syrian: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, I. B. Tauris, 1996,

⁴⁹ <http://countrystudies.us/syria/20.htm>

different cabinets were constituted in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, while four different constitutions were written.⁵⁰

This trend continued until Hafiz Al-Assad, a member of the Ba'th party and the Alawite community rose to power, and established an state led by the Alawites. The Alawites are among the largest religious minority in Syria, constituting approximately twelve percent, 2,400,000, of the Syrian population. The Alawite community is mainly concentrated along the coast in Latakia province. In the province of Latakia, the Alawite constitutes roughly 42 per cent of the rural population. Sunni form the majority when it comes to the provincial capital, Latakia.⁵¹⁵²

The artificial borders of Sykes-Picot Agreement formed the Christians and Druze as the second and third largest minority group in Syria respectively. The Christian community constitute approximately ten percent and Druze comprise an estimate of five percent of the Syrian population. Ethnically speaking, aside from the Armenian Christians in Syria, Syrian Christians are Arabs. Christians mostly live in urban areas of Aleppo, Damascus, and Homs, while Druze mainly live in Damascus and Jabal al Arab. Jabal al Arab is a dry, rough and mountainous region, which is located in southwestern part of Syria. Other religious minorities are the Yazidi community which mainly reside

⁵⁰ <https://www.guernicamag.com/features/the-writer-and-the-rebellion/>

⁵¹ https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print/country/countrypdf_sy.pdf

⁵² Nicholas van Dam, *The Struggle For Power in Syrian: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, I. B. Tauris, 1996, pp. 19-35

in the Jazirah and in Aleppo as well as a very small Arabic-speaking Jewish community living in Damascus primarily in Share Al-Iahhod.^{53 54}

The ethnic competition turned into sectarianism which became a crucial pillar of the Syrian socio-political system. Several administrations and governments- such as the governments of, Shokri al-Ghowatli, Shishkali, Amin al-Hafez, etc- have attempted to consolidate the Syrian state. The weak state of Syria, led several Syrian politicians to join Egypt and create a unified state called the United Arab Republic which lasted from 1958 to 1961 under the presidency of Gammal Abdel Al-Nasser. Syria seceded from the United Arab Republic in 1961.^{55 56}

The instability and internal conflict among several political parties, central government and minority groups continued in Syria until President Hafez al-Assad rose to power. Being from the minority group of Alawites, President Hafez al-Assad's rise to power strengthened the legal, social and political rights of minorities, particularly the Alawite.⁵⁷ He focused on the Ba'ath party's (Arab Socialist Resurrection) agenda and ideology of combining Arab nationalism and socialism. Simultaneously, he resisted the

⁵³ <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA16/20130625/101036/HHRG-113-FA16-Wstate-SheaN-20130625.pdf>

⁵⁴ Norine MacDonald QC, Syria, Way Forward, http://www.icosgroup.net/static/reports/ICOS_SYRIA_A_WAY_FORWARD_DEC12.pdf, P.45-63

⁵⁵ <https://history.state.gov/countries/syria>

⁵⁶ <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PB159.pdf>

⁵⁷ <http://esciencecentral.org/journals/the-syrian-jihad-sectarianism-and-al-qaedas-newest-affiliate-2332-0761.1000e105.pdf>

role of religion, particularly Islam, in politics and matters of the state. From the Ba'ath party's perspective, the religion of Islam was solely part of the "national culture".⁵⁸

President Hafez al-Assad's policies created tremendous resistance particularly from the Sunni majority groups and political parties. In the first few years of his rule, Muslim Brotherhood was the dominant resistant movement against President Hafez al-Assad's government. The conflict led to the bloody 1982 massacre in Hama where the government forces surrounded the city of Hama to crack down on the uprising which was led by the Muslim Brotherhood. The siege continued for approximately twenty seven days. The shelling led to approximately between 10,000 and 40,000 people being killed, according to the Syrian Human Rights Committee. Afterwards, Assad was capable of ruling for several decades with the assistance of combination of factors including hard power and socialist policies.^{59 60 61}

⁵⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: After Independence: The Baath Redirections of 1966 and 1970," in Syria: A Country Study, April 1987, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+sy0026\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sy0026))

⁵⁹ Derek Hopwood, "Independence 1945–1970," in Syria: 1945–1986(Oxford: Routledge, 1988)

⁶⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9056350/Syria-opposition-commemorates-Hama-massacre.html>

⁶¹ <http://www.memri.org/report/en/o/o/o/o/o/o/o/590.htm>

Chapter Five

Assad's Rule: The Character of The Uprising, Conflict And Militarization

In order to understand the character of the conflict, popular uprising, social movements and resistance in Syria under the Assad's regime, it is crucial to first analyze the nature of the state ruled by the socialist, secular, Arab nationalistic Ba'ath party and its exercise of power, particularly the employment of several modes of power which are described by Michele Foucault.^{62 63}

The state's policies created a specific and defined social order under Assad, however, the policies also had unintended consequences. The second fundamental element to shed light on and examine is the junior Assad's neoliberal policies which benefited the top deepening the gap between rich and poor. This shift in policies has significantly contributed to the ongoing revolt against the police-state's apparatuses.⁶⁴

In addition, in comparison to Egyptian and Tunisian successful revolutions, Syria did not have a robust middle class as Egypt and Tunisia had. Moreover, while there was

⁶² <http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/>

⁶³ Samuel Tu'itahi, "Foucault and Biopower",
http://www.academia.edu/2491797/Foucault_and_Bio-power

⁶⁴ Raymond Hinnebusch, Syria: from 'authoritarian upgrading' to revolution?, International Affairs 88: 1, 2012

a sense of unified nationalism in Egypt and Tunisia, Syria was divided and more diverse ethnically and religiously.

The Baath party was founded in 1940 in Damascus, Syria by two teachers of Al-Tajhiz secondary school; Michel Aflaq, who was a Christian and Greek Orthodox, as well as Salah Aldin Bitar, a Muslim (Sunni), who were both from the Damascene middle class.⁶⁵

The fundamental theme of the Baath party stated that “The Arab nation constitutes a cultural unity. Any differences existing among its sons are accidental and unimportant. They will disappear with the awakening of the Arab consciousness ... The national bond will be the only bond existing in the Arab state. It ensures harmony among the citizens by melting them in the crucible of a single nation, and combats all other forms of factional solidarity such as religious, sectarian, tribal, racial and regional factionalism.”⁶⁶

Instead of focusing on Sunni Islam, the Baath party focused on Arab nationalism for its core, not religion.^{67 68} For this reason, the ideology of Baath party became appealing to the minorities.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Adam Aljouni, Arab Christian Nationalist Thinkers and Arab Christian Nationalism in the Levant, University of Michigan Press 2011, p.7-21
http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/63948/ajlouni_adam_2009.pdf;jsessionid=CAAF59FDCC383F91ABA6AEE363D13B45?sequence=1

⁶⁶ Ellie Elhadj, The Islamic Shield: Arab Resistance to Democratic and Religious Reforms, , Universal-Publishers, Aug 30, 2006, pp.123

⁶⁷ Nicholas van Dam, The Struggle For Power in Syrian: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba'th Party, I. B. Tauris, 1996, p.79-132

When the Al-Assad family came to power, they included the non-Arabs such as Circassians, Kurds (Arabised) Armenians, in the Baath party in order to broaden its support base and counter -balance the Sunni majority.

Unlike the Islamic Republic of Iran, which viewed Islam and Sharia law as the locus of their political structure, Assad's Baath party took a different stand in its view of Islam. However, it is worth noting that both countries utilized the same modes of power to control the population in various degrees.

The Baath party of Assad enforced the emergency law. The emergency law was discussed with the Syrian People's Assembly or the Legislative Council. Article 1 of chapter one in Emergency Law - Legislative Decree, states that "a. State of Emergency may be declared in wartime or in the event of a war-threatening condition or in the event that security or public order in the territories of the Republic or in part thereof is subjected to danger because of internal riots or public disasters. b. The State of Emergency may cover the overall Syrian territories totally or partially"⁷⁰ and Article 101 of the Syrian constitution states [State of Emergency] "The President of the Republic can declare and terminate a state of emergency in the manner stated in the law."⁷¹

⁶⁸ Hourani, Minorities in the Arab World, AMS Press 1996, pp. 12-29

⁶⁹ Nicholas van Dam, The Struggle For Power in Syrian: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba'th Party, I. B. Tauris, 1996, pp. 25-43

⁷⁰ <http://www.shrc.org/data.aspx/d4/354.aspx>

⁷¹ http://www.law.yale.edu/rcw/rcw/jurisdictions/asw/syrianarabrep/syria_constitution.htm

This article and the emergency law gave the president, the prime minister and his deputy the power to implement, postpone, or abolish any law. These acts could be carried out without approval or consensus from the legislative or judiciary branches. Article 4 of the Emergency Law - Legislative Decree, states that “The Military Governor or his deputy may issue written directives to take all or some of the following actions or measures, and may refer violations to military courts: a. Impose restrictions on the freedom of persons in terms of holding meetings, residence, transport, movements, and detaining suspects or people threatening public security and order on a temporary basis, authorizing the conducting of investigations related to both persons and places at any time, and requesting any person to perform any task. b. Monitor all types of letters, phone calls, newspapers, bulletins, books, drawings, publications, broadcasts, and all forms of expression, propaganda, and advertisements prior to publication. It is required to seize, confiscate, discard, cancel their concession and close their printers’ shops. c. Specify the times during which public places are opened and closed.”⁷²

This law gave the state the absolute power to strip its citizens from freedom of speech, assembly, expression, and other fundamental rights. These fundamental rights were written in the constitution and were guaranteed by international conventions.⁷³

In addition, the Syrian government established a State Security Court which held

⁷² <http://www.shrc.org/data.aspx/d4/354.aspx>

⁷³ 1 Sanawat al-khawf: al-haqiqa wa-l-‘adala fi qadiyat al-mukhtafiyin qasriyan fi Suriya,” report issued by the Program for Transitional Justice in the Arab World, ed. By Radwan Ziyada, June 2010

considerable amount of authority.⁷⁴

One of the prominent instruments which the Syrian state utilized, was deploying and strengthening the Mukhabarat, security or secret police forces.⁷⁵ The ubiquitous mukhabarat infiltrated every section of the society (schools, universities, mosques, streets, markets, families, ...) as an internal surveillance of individuals as well as the general population. Secret police spied and reported on anyone who expressed his opinion, criticized the regime, or engaged in political activities.

This gave the regime a strong instrument to regulate individuals and quell political dissidents. Wearing the plain clothes, the Mukhabarat was unrecognizable in the society; this meant that any citizen was suspected to be working for the secret police. The secret police became responsible for detecting signs of organized resistance or political activity that operated against the interests of the regime or any activities which were connected to foreign countries.^{76 77}

The state made a network with top business class and although some top business people prospered, the main sections of the economy and market was controlled by the state.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Assad knew that he needed more than the support of the Alawite population. Although the regime steadily decreased its reliance on socialist

⁷⁴ Legislative Decree 51, <<http://www.cdf-sy.org/low/tawara.htm>>.

⁷⁵ C.A. Wege, "Assad's Legions: The Syrian Intelligence Services," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 4, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 91-100.

⁷⁶ Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, http://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0007_s3.htm

⁷⁷ <http://www.alarabiya.net/servlet/aa/pdf/a9a59f15-91b2-48fb-8f6a-f6a365044fae>

⁷⁸ https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/book-review_mahayni-on-haddad.pdf

agenda, it continued to partially pursue the Baath party's socialist paradigm to retain the support that it required from the population.

However, one of the main tactics of biopower for the regime was the implementation of torture. Foucault points out that torture is the consequence "of a certain mechanism of power".⁷⁹ Amnesty International published a report which documents more than thirty various kinds of torture being carried out by the Syrian government and authorities against those Syrian who are detained, jailed and arrested. The details of the torture in the 45-page report were based on interviews with hundreds of detainees.⁸⁰

The Bathist regime of al Assad imposed several other laws and decrees in order to strengthen the legal immunity for the state. Legislative Decree 14/1969 which paved the way for founding the General Intelligence Department points out in Article 16 that "no legal action may be taken against any employee of the department for crimes committed while carrying out their designated duties or in the course of performing such duties except by an order issued by the director."⁸¹ In addition, Article 4 of Decree 549/1969 which imposes laws on the actions of the General Intelligence Department points out "No legal action may be taken against any General Intelligence Department employee, those assigned or detailed to the department, or those contracted with it, for crimes

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Abridged, April 25, 1995

⁸⁰ Torture, Global Post, Majid Rafizadeh, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/commentary/syria-assad-tortures-cow-its-people>

⁸¹ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/SYR/INT_CAT_NGO_SYR_48_10106_E.pdf

incurred on the job or in the course of performing the job before referral to a department disciplinary board and before an order is obtained from the director.” Similarly, Article 74 of Legislative Decree 549 states, “No legal action may be taken against any State Security Department employee, those assigned or detailed to the department, or those contracted with it, for crimes incurred on the job or in the course of performing the job before referral to a department disciplinary board and before an order is obtained from the director.” ⁸² Therefore, the state has the power to regulate individuals and the populations, while citizens are not able too bring any case of torture before the judiciary and courts against the security forces, police or officials.

5.1 The Factors Behind the Uprising: Assad’s Neoliberal Policies and Political Liberalization

Muslim Brotherhood in Syria can be characterized as the first organized opposition which emerged after Hafez Assad rose to power. On the one hand, Assad created connections with high Sunni religious clerics for gaining legitimacy but, the constitution of 31st January, 1973 led to resistance from the Sunni religious community against the President. The article of the constitution which stated the President of Syria should be Muslim was removed from the draft. In addition, the article which stated the religion of the state is Islam was removed.⁸³⁸⁴ ⁸⁵

⁸² http://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/28/2825305_syria-break-down-of-emergency-laws-in-syria-.html

⁸³ Patrick Seale, *Assad of Syria: the Struggle for the middle East* (London: I.B, Tauris, 1988)

⁸⁴ Tugrul Keskin, *The Sociology of Islam: Secularism, Economy and Politics*, 2011

In response to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Syrian regime changed the constitution and added “the religion of the President of the Republic is Islam”⁸⁶ but Assad pointed out that the real Islam is “far from the narrow mindedness and awful extremism, as Islam is a religion of love, progression, social justice and equality”^{87 88}

After an attempt to assassinate President Hafez al-Assad, the regime deployed its sovereign power and passed laws designed to crack down on the opposition and legitimize its actions. First, 700 Muslim Brotherhood prisoners were killed in the Tadmor (Palmyra) prison. The killing was conducted by the Military Defense Units, which was led by Rifa’at Al Assad.⁸⁹⁹⁰

The Bathist government of Assad imposed a new Law No. 49 to legitimize and tighten its grip utilizing various modes of power such as surveillance as well as military to crack down on the opposition.^{91 92 93} Many of the people were executed, some disappeared,

⁸⁵ http://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Radwan_Ziadeh_CSID_paper.pdf

⁸⁶ Article 3 from the Syrian constitution of 1973.

⁸⁷ Hanna Batatu, Syria's Peasantry, pp.261.

⁸⁸ http://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Radwan_Ziadeh_CSID_paper.pdf

⁸⁹ Tugrul Keskin, The Sociology of Islam: Secularism, Economy and Politics, 2011

⁹⁰ Patrick Seal, Assad and the Struggle for the Middle East. see also the report prepared by the Syrian Committee for Human Rights in London, 26 June 2001 www.shrc.org

⁹¹ Nikolaos Van Dam, the Struggle for Power in Syria: Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in politics: 1961-1978, London, 1979; Fred H. Lawson, "Social Bases for the Hama Reevaluation," Middle East Research and information Project Reports (November- December 1982) pp.24-28 and Robert Fisk, Times, 19/2/1982. and for the account of the government, see: Islamic Brotherhood in Syria :Black History (Damascus : Baath Party Office ,1985).

⁹² Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and the Concept of “Democracy” http://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Radwan_Ziadeh_CSID_paper.pdf

and the average prison time for others was 10 years -which caused severe over-crowding of jails all over the country.⁹⁴

While the National Democratic Gathering attempted to utilize peaceful approached of demonstrate against the government, the Muslim Brotherhood carried out and claimed responsibility for several attacks. The attacks killed 50 Alawi cadets.⁹⁵

The government used its army and troops in order to surround the city of Hama. The army shelled the city in what was to be called the “Hama Massacre” and it resulted in estimates of 10000-25000 deaths.⁹⁶

The employment of these social and economic policies, as well as various modes of power, particularly the sovereign power, allowed the regime to use the authoritarian structure, the security measures, nationalistic and socialist sentiments, undeveloped civil society, as well as various fractured oppositional groups, in order to fracture any movement or opposition in order to rule for the next three decades, until March 2011.

⁹³ Tugrul Keskin, *The Sociology of Islam: Secularism, Economy and Politics*, 2011

⁹⁴ Radwan Ziaheh, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and the Concept of “Democracy”*, https://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Radwan_Ziadeh_CSID_paper.pdf

⁹⁵ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/hamah.htm>

⁹⁶ Radwan Ziaheh, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and the Concept of “Democracy”*, https://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Radwan_Ziadeh_CSID_paper.pdf

5.2 Popular Uprising 2011: Character of the Opposition and Social Movement

The first event of the uprising was launched when Hasan Ali Akleh from city of Al-Hasakah, on 26 January 2011, poured gasoline on himself. Hasan Ali Akleh set himself on fire following what Mohammad Bouazizi did on December 17th 2010 in Tunisia.⁹⁷ Due to his action which was a protest against the government⁹⁸, a group of activists organized protests and demonstrations in the streets. The modern social media was also utilized: Face book, Twitter, and various websites. On February 3, which was called a "Day of Rage" a few hundred people participated. They were immediately arrested and detained by the Syrian security forces.⁹⁹

However, one month later on 6 March 2011, accordingly 6 schoolboys were arrested and tortured for writing anti-governmental graffiti on a wall in the city of Dar'a along with the slogan, "the people want to overthrow the regime".¹⁰⁰

The Syrian protests appear to hold both the character of organized and hierarchical movements, such as the Free Syrian Army and other spontaneous protests across the

⁹⁷ <http://slashinatorx.wordpress.com/syria/>

⁹⁸ ["Syrian suicider is 'Hasan Ali Akleh'. Damascus has banned a demonstration in support of Egypt"](#), Middle East Transparent, Retrieved 30 January 2011

⁹⁹ [,Demonstration on the day of anger in Hasaka and Syrian authorities arrested dozens"](#) Retrieved 15 February 2011. Free-syria.com

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.cjpme.org/DisplayHTMLDocument.aspx?DO=795&ICID=4&RecID=867&SaveMode=0>

country. The whole protests lacks a unified leadership, but various oppositional groups were formed inside and outside Syria. ¹⁰¹

As Raymond Hinnobusch points out “If the grievances were there, they had previously inspired lethargy, so what had changed? The intimate linkage of the Arab states in a single ‘public space’ magnified the ‘demonstration effect’ of the Arab Spring that had started in Tunisia; similar neo-liberal development strategies and authoritarian upgrading across the region had produced similar sources of grievance, from self-aggrandizing ruling families to the impoverishment of the masses and violations of dignity by security forces unconstrained by law, all resonating regionally, amplified by satellite TV.” ¹⁰²

However, the Syrian regime relied on three main pillars for its survival. First was the army, security and secret police for its sovereign power. The second segment of the society, which the regime relied on, was the minorities, particularly the Alawites and Christians who were in favor of the current dictatorial stability rather than the unknown alternative of the Sunnis and Salafists. The third pillar is the business class and crony capitalists, mainly in large cities of Damascus and Aleppo who benefited from being in the inner circle of Assad’s elitist community, they also believed that Assad is a reformer. In addition, using socio-economic theories, using a cost-benefit analysis they did not see any advantage to their joining the uprising.

¹⁰¹ http://www.academia.edu/2192092/Syria_from_authoritarian_upgradingto_revolution

¹⁰² http://www.academia.edu/2192092/Syria_from_authoritarian_upgradingto_revolution

Moreover, the regime played the fear card, the terrorist card, and tried to exploit the fear of the citizens by establishing as well as promoting the idea and narrative that Syria will turn into Iraq, or degenerate into civil war if the regime collapsed. In order to satisfy the foreign countries, and prevent foreign intervention, the regime claimed that it was being attacked by terrorists, so that it can legitimize its use of brutal force, hard power, and still act within the framework of international law. The regime pointed out that it is engaged in combating extremists, such as Al-Qaeda, and other Sunni radical groups.¹⁰³

Domestically speaking, the Syrian government used three other major strategies. First, It utilized its hard power to crack down, second, made promises for social, political and economic reforms, third, it attempted to co-opt other influential figures and oppositional parties. The reforms appeared to be cosmetic. In addition, the hard-line old guard of the government, which were marginalized by Bashar al Assad came back to power as the protest spread across the country.¹⁰⁴

Some of the hard-lin old Guard who were involved in the Hama massacre, could not succeed in carrying out the same policies mainly due to the social media. Although, domestic, regional and international pressure cornered the regime, though it still enjoyed some outside support from some countries such as Russia, China and Islamic Republic of Iran.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/bashar_al_assad/index.html

¹⁰⁴ http://www.academia.edu/2192092/Syria_from_authoritarian_upgradingto_revolution

¹⁰⁵ Julien Barnes-Dacey, Syria: Towards a Political Solution, , European Council on Foreign Relations, March 2012

The Syrian government utilized a sectarian agenda to define the conflict. But, at the beginning the protesters and indigenous uprising attempted to define the uprising as peaceful in order not to “scare secularists or the West; to mobilize demonstrations on such a broad scale that the army would be exhausted, spread too thin, or split; and to exaggerate or provoke regime violence so as to discredit it and prompt foreign countries to isolate Assad or even intervene in the uprising. It sought also to damage the economy enough to turn the bourgeoisie against the regime.” ¹⁰⁶

The activities and outcome of the indigenous uprising was also impacted by the “pro-western Sunni axis and the Shi’i-leavened ‘Resistance Axis’”. ¹⁰⁷ In other words, the movement is influenced by the regional tension between Iran, which supports the Alawite regime of Assad and is its strongest ally, and other Arab Gulf states, particularly, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar which are supporting the uprising and the revolutionaries to establish a Sunni-dominance state in Syria. At the international level, Russia and China on one side attempt to keep the balance of power and their geostrategic and geopolitical interest by buttressing the Assad regime, while majority of Western countries have taken the side of the oppositional groups as well as the indigenous uprising. However, they have not decided on any intervention yet because of the social, political, and economic complexity that Syria brings. Therefore the uprising and the revolt in Syria is not only influenced by the domestic socio-political sphere, but also it has a regional and international dimension. As the former leader of the

¹⁰⁶ Raymond Hinnebusch, Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?, International Affairs 88: 1, 2012 pp.109

¹⁰⁷ Raymond Hinnebusch, Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?, International Affairs 88: 1, 2012 pp.112

opposition, Burhan Ghalloun pointed out, the government after President Bashar al Assad will not have relationships with the Islamic Republic and Hezbollah.¹⁰⁸

However, the indigenous uprising soon turned into a civil war being impacted by the external and some internal forces which desire to turn the outcome in their geopolitical and economic benefit. As Raymond Hinnebusch concluded, “Many of the classic ingredients of revolution had been building for some time. Over the long term, demographic growth and enhanced social mobilization combined with the stagnation of political development. In the medium term, a chronic fiscal deficit addressed via neo-liberal policies that increased inequality and sapped legitimacy was a specific Syrian reflection of region-wide conditions behind the Arab intifada. Then, the regime’s violent response to protests provided the spark leading to the formation of a revolutionary coalition-in-embryo, a substitute counter-regime of sorts, bridging urban intellectual and rural mass elements. What is new compared to previous revolutions is the role of new media technology in overcoming atomization and evading repression, producing a multi-headed swarm’ that is impossible to decapitate.”¹⁰⁹

The real issue is that even if the oppositional groups and rebel armed militias were capable of overthrowing the Assad’s government, which group would fill the political, social, and economic vacuum? The oppositional groups are not unified and the rebel

¹⁰⁸ Head of Syria’s main opposition says group plans to cut ties with Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/02/180414.html>

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?, *International Affairs* 88: 1, 2012

groups are fractured. As a result, the removal of Assad from power would not lead to a facile transitional period of establishing a democratic system of governance and pursuing the nation state building process.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ http://www.academia.edu/2192092/Syria_from_authoritarian_upgradingto_revolution

Chapter Six

Four Concentric Circles of Tensions; The First Battle, The Domestic Dimension of The Conflict

What highlight the complexity, scope and intensity of the Syrian conflict are the four concentric forces of tensions which operate simultaneously on various levels. More fundamentally, these four concentric forces of tensions interact, contradict, and create excesses. The interactions, contradictions and excesses among these four concentric forces of tensions- domestic, regional, international, and global Jihad's tensions- define the complexity, scope and intensity of the Syrian conflict.

It is crucial to examine each force of tension in detail. The first critical circle or force of conflict is the domestic one. The domestic tension per se is multilayered, intricate, nuanced and multifaceted in itself. The Syrian conflict was started by a few hundred local people in the city of Dar'a, protesting the arrest of a few school boys who wrote graffiti against the government of Bashar al-Assad, and has turned into an ideological, geopolitical, strategic and domestic political conflict with various oppositional movements, armed rebel groups, and the government Armed Forces.

First of all, the research will include the domestic state and non-state actors- most of the rebel and oppositional groups, and the Syrian Armed Forces- categorizing them based on several factors including: ideology, mission, agenda, alliances, and military

power, as well as the interactions, fighting, contradiction, and excesses created by these elements.

Secondly, I classify the oppositional parties involved in the domestic battle into five categories: 1. Armed rebel groups and revolutionaries 2. Oppositional groups 3. Various governmental forces and groups 4. Foreign Salafi-Jihadist groups, Al Qaeda-affiliated groups 5. Pro government foreign armed rebel groups.

Third, I will analyze the activities, scope, power, and legitimacy of these groups. Fourth, the interactions, existing combat, balance of power, competition, and contradictions will be examined.

Fifth, the fighting and balance of power between, on the one hand, armed rebel group and oppositional groups, and on the other hand, the Syrian government of Assad will be studied. After almost four years of conflict in Syria, there is an estimate of more than 1000 armed rebel groups in Syria. Moreover, there are an estimate of 100,000 fighter and revolutionaries combating in these armed rebel groups.¹¹¹

6.1 Syrian Armed and Rebel Groups

6.1.1 The First Battle: Islamist and Jihadist Groups

Al-Nusra Front, Name: Jabhat al-Nusra "The Support Front for the People of Levant":

¹¹¹ Syria crisis, BBC World News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

Table 1. Classifications of Syrian Rebel and Armed Groups

1. Islamist and Jihadist Groups	2. Foreign Pro Government and Shiite Rebel Armed Groups	3. Moderate, Secular and Socialist Armed Groups	4. Ethnic Armed Rebel Groups	5. Independent Armed and Rebel Groups
Al-Nusra Front	Badr Organization	The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command	The East Turkistan Islamic Movements	The Martyrs of Syria Brigades (Shuhada Suriya)
THE ISLAMIC FRONT	The Promised Day Brigades	Fatah al-Intifada	The Kurdish Islamic Front	Suqour al-Sham Brigade (Falcons of the Levant Brigade)

Table 1 (continued)

Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya	Jaysh al- Muwahhideen	Mavros Krinos		The National Unity Brigades (Kata'ib al- Wahda al-Wataniya)
Jaysh al- Islam	Kata'ib Hezbollah	The Arab Nationalist Guard	Kurdish Armed Groups	The Idlib Martyrs' Brigade
Syrian Islamic Front (Al-Jabha Al- Islamiyya Al- Suriyya)	The Ba'ath Brigades	Ghuraba al- Sham	The Popular Protection Units (YPG)	Ahrar al-Jazeera
Liwa al- Tawhid or al- Tawhid Brigade	The Houthis	Jaysh al- Sham	The Asayish	The Raqqa Rebels
Liwa al-Haqq (also known as Liwa Junud Al Haqq)	Liwa Dhu al- Fiqar	Hazzm movement	Jabhat al- Akrad	The Euphrates Islamic Liberation Front

Table 1 (Continued)

The Army of Mujahedeen (Jaish al- Mujahideen in Arabic)	Faylak Wa'ad al- Sadiq	The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria	The Kurdish Union Party	The Syrian Resistance
Muhajirin Wa-Ansar Alliance (Alliance of Emigrants and Helpers)	The National Army	The Union of Free Syrian Students		The Popular Committees
Ajnad al- Sham Islamic Union	Liwa Abu al- Fadhal al-Abbas	The Farouq Brigades	Assyrian Armed Groups	

Table 1 (Continued)

The Authenticity and Development Front	Hezbollah	The Qalamoun Liberation Front.	The Syriac Union Party	
The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq	The Northern Storm Brigade	The Syriac Military Council (MFS)	
Abna Harakat al-Islam (The children of Islamic Movements)		The Ahrar Souriya Brigade	The Sutoro	
Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban		The Sham Legion		

Table 1 (Continued)

Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigades				
Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade (Descendants (or Grandsons) of the Prophet Brigade)				
The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF)				
The Greater Damascus Operations Room				

Table 2. Classifications of Syrian Rebel and Armed Groups

6. Ethnic Groups	7. Coalitions and Oppositional Groups (Foreign, domestic, Secular, Islamist, Moderate)	8. Loyalist and Quasi- Loyalist Oppositional Groups	9. Syrian Government Armed Forces and paramilitary Organization
The Kurdish Supreme Committee	The National Coordination Committee (NCC)	The Syrian Social Nationalist Party	The National Defense Force <i>Quwat ad-Difa al Watani</i>
The Kurdish Democratic Union Party	The Syrian National Council (SNC) , (<i>al-Majlis al-Watani al-Souri</i>)	The People's Will Party	The Syrian Arab Army

Table. 2 (Continued)

The Assyrian Democratic Organization	The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces	The National Development Party	The Military Intelligence Directorate
The Syrian Turkmen Assembly	The National Democratic Rally	Al-Ansar Party	The Syrian Arab Navy
The Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement	The National Salvation Front in Syria		The Syrian Arab Air Force
The Syrian Turkmen National Bloc	Syrian National Democratic Council	The National Democratic Solidarity Party	Jaysh al-Sha'bi (People's Army) <i>Al Jaysh alSha'bi</i>

Table 2 (Continued)

The Syrian Turkmen Brigades	The Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians	The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development, Syrian National Youth Party, The National Development Party (English)	Shabiha Literal translation: Apparitions
The Kurdish National Council	The Damascus Declaration		
	The Movement of the Future		

Table 2 (Continued)

	<p>The Movement for Justice and Development in Syria (MJD)</p> <p>The Syrian Democratic People's Party</p>		
	<p>The Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution (SCLSR)</p>		
	<p>The Local Coordination Committees of Syria</p>		

Table 2 (Continued)

	The Military Council of The Free Syrian Army & Higher: Paramilitary		
	Liwaa al-Umma		
	The Popular Front for Change and Liberation		

Jabhat al-Nusra was created in late January 2012, almost a year after the uprising erupted in Syria, and it has an estimated 6000 to 7000 fighters who are fighting the Assad government in more than 10 provinces of Syria's 13 governorates - mostly in

Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Al-Raqqah, Idlib, Deir ez-Zour, Dar'a, and Latakia. Jabhat Al-Nusra is reputed to be one of the most effective rebel groups operating in Syria.¹¹²¹¹³

In a video, Jabhat Al-Nusra called their mission against the Assad's government a Jihadist war. Jabhat Al-Nusra originated from the jihadist network of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Soon after its emergence, it received the endorsement of Al-Qaeda and was viewed as Al-Qaeda's favorite group in Syria. This rebel and Jihadist group had announced its allegiance to al-Qaeda's top leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The main wing, Majlis Shura al-Mujahedeen (the Consulting Council of the Jihad Fighters) is considered the highest body in Jabhat Al-Nusra. The group has specified members and sections for fundraising, collecting or smuggling weapons to Syria and various territories, carrying out the religious agenda of the group, training and recruiting new members, public relations, gathering information, etc. The group's headquarters is in the city of Deir Al-Zzor, which is located in the eastern part of Syria and it is the 6th largest province in Syria.^{114 115}

¹¹² IHS Aerospace, Defense and Security, Analysis: Syria's Insurgent Landscapes, <http://www.ihs.com/pdfs/Syrias-Insurgent-Landscape-oct-2013.pdf>

¹¹³ TENTATIVE JIHAD: SYRIA'S FUNDAMENTALIST OPPOSITION, Middle East Report N°131 – 12 October 2012
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/131-tentative-jihad-syrias-fundamentalist-opposition.pdf>

¹¹⁴ Jabhat al-Nusra Jabhat al-Nusra li-ahl al-Shammin Mujahedi al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad. A Strategic Briefing
<http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/jabhat-al-nusra-a-strategic-briefing.pdf>

¹¹⁵ *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (at the Israeli *Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center*), Al-Qaeda Entrenchment in Syria, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20573/E_076_13_1861409435.pdf

The leaders of Jabhat Al-Nusra are Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani and Abu Anas al-Sahaba.¹¹⁶

The group has used car bombs, suicide bombings, explosive materials and other violent tactics to attack the government of Bashar Al-Assad.¹¹⁷ Jabhat Al-Nusra was the first rebel and Jihadist group to claim responsibility for suicide bombings on January 6, 2012 in Damascus' al-Midan neighborhood, attacking security forces. It also claimed responsibility for suicide bombings and attacking an intelligence office in the Christian neighborhood of al-Qassa as well as the suicide bombing which occurred on February 10th in a building in Aleppo linked to security forces. The flag of Jabhat Al-Nusra includes the phrase La Ellaha Ella Allah, Muhammad Rasoul Allah (There is not God but Allah, and Muhammad is Messenger of Allah), and the name of the group, Jubhat Al-Nusra, below it. The group is against Western values, the United States and Israel interventions in the Arab world, and they view the United States and Israel as enemies of Islam. The United States has designated Jubhat Al-Nusra as a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda.^{118 119 120}

¹¹⁶ Rania Abouzeid, Interview with Official of Jabhat al-Nusra, Syria's Islamist Militia Group, <http://world.time.com/2012/12/25/interview-with-a-newly-designated-syrias-jabhat-al-nusra/>

¹¹⁷ Ruth, Sherlock. "Inside Jabhat al Nusra - the most extreme wing of Syria's struggle." 2 December 2012. Web. Accessed 7 April 2013.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9716545/Inside-Jabhat-al-Nusra-the-most-extreme-wing-of-Syrias-struggle.html>

¹¹⁸ Ian Black, Syria mired in blame game over Damascus bombs, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/10/syria-blame-game-damascus-bomb>

The mission of Jabhat Al-Nusra is primarily ideological. The group anchors its ideology in Sharia law, Salafism and Islam, and it seeks to create an Islamic state in Syria.¹²¹ The objectives of Jabhat Al-Nusra are the following:

1. The first objective is to create an Islamic Caliphate in Syria
2. The second objective is to establish an Islamic Caliphate in the Levant (Bilad Al-Asham)
3. The third objective is to organize various Jihadist and Islamist rebel groups under one leadership and one organization
4. The fourth objective is to emphasize the Islamist, sectarian and religious nature of the Syrian conflict
5. The fifth objective is to train, and recruit Jihadists, and to increase their military power, collect armaments, and create safe havens through capturing territories.
6. The final main objective is to gain the trust of the Syrian people and fill the gap after collapse of the Syrian government.^{122 123}

¹¹⁹ TENTATIVE JIHAD: SYRIA'S FUNDAMENTALIST OPPOSITION, Middle East Report N°131 – 12 October 2012

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/131-tentative-jihad-syrias-fundamentalist-opposition.pdf>

¹²⁰ Profile: Syria's al-Nusra Front, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18048033> , 10 April 2013 Last updated at 18:26 ET,

¹²¹ Tabler, Andrew J., Jeffrey White, and Simon Henderson. "Field Reports on Syria and the Opposition." 12 March 2013. Web. Accessed 9 April 2013.

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/field-reports-on-syria-and-the-opposition>

The Islamic Front: The Islamic Front is an "independent political, military and social formation" which seeks to create an Islamic state in Syria and topple the government of President Bashar Al-Assad.¹²⁴ The Islamic Front was formed at the end of year 2012 by the merger of seven rebel factions and groups:

1. The Suqour al-Sham Brigades. This Islamist rebel group is influential in city of Idlib as well as in the northwest part of Syria.
2. The Ansar al-Sham Battalions, This rebel group is based in the city of Idlib and in northern Latakia.
3. The Kurdish Islamic Front, a Kurdish rebel group which advocates for Islamist rule.
4. The Haq Brigade, an Islamist rebel group which is believed to be influential in the city of Homs.
5. The Islamic Ahrar al-Sham Movement, which is considered to be a hard-line Islamist group. The Islamic Ahrar al-Sham Movement had military units across the country and operated throughout Syria.

¹²² *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (at the Israeli *Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center*), Al-Qaeda Entrenchment in Syria, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20573/E_076_13_1861409435.pdf

¹²³ Jabhat al-Nusra Jabhat al-Nusra li-ahl al-Shammin Mujahedi al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad. A Strategic Briefing <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/jabhat-al-nusra-a-strategic-briefing.pdf>

¹²⁴ BBC, Leading Syrian rebel groups form new Islamic Front, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25053525>, 22 November 2013

6. The Islam Army, an Islamist rebel group which is active in the eastern part of the capital, Damascus.

7. The Tawhid Brigade, this rebel group is perceived to be the most powerful rebel and armed group in the city of Aleppo.¹²⁵

The Islamic Front is hierarchical in structure with various sections, and the leadership is as follows: the Shura Council Leader is Ahmed Abu Issa, who was formerly from Suqour al-Sham, the General Secretary is Sheikh Abu Rateb who was formerly from Liwa al-Haqq. The Deputy Shura Council Leader is Abu Omar Hreitan who was formerly from Liwa al-Tawhid. The head of Sharia Office is Abul-Abbas al-Shami who was formerly from Ahrar ash-Sham. The head of Political Office is Hassan Abboud who was formerly affiliated with Ahrar ash-Sham, and the head of Military Office is Zahran Alloush who was previously part of the Jaysh al-Islam.¹²⁶

The Islamic Front has rejected governance and political systems which are anchored in secularism, Western democratic values, or a representative system. According to the Islamic Front, the sole authority and sovereign, is an Islamic state, anchored in Sharia and Islamic law. This Islamic state is run by Majlis Al-Shura, meaning an advisory or

¹²⁵ Aron Lund, The Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 1: Structure and Support, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54183>, Tuesday, January 14, 2014

¹²⁶ Aron Lund, "Say Hello to the Islamic Front". <http://carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/index.cfm?fa=53679&lang=en&postCommentStatus=1&reloadFlag=1>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 22 November 2013.

consultative council. The group is seeking revolution in Syria, not any political or diplomatic dialogue with the government of Bashar Al-Assad.^{127 128}

The Islamic Front has published a Revolutionary Covenant, which outlines their guiding principles and objectives. The following is the translation of their covenant.

“In the name of God, The Most Merciful and Most Compassionate

“Revolutionary forces are fully aware of the gravity of the current situation our blessed revolution is going through, and in the pursuit of unifying efforts and joining forces within a common framework that serves the interests of the Syrian people, these forces confirm their commitment to the following:

“1. The controls and limits of revolutionary work are derived from our authentic religion, avoiding fundamentalism and radicalism.

2. The Syrian revolution’s ultimate political goal is to overthrow the current regime with all its symbols and foundations and to bring them to justice in fair trials, without acts of vengeance or retaliation.

3. The regime that commits terrorism against our people through regular and irregular forces, along with all the parties supporting them such as the mercenaries from Iran, Iraq, and Hezbollah, and all those who carry out aggression against our

¹²⁷ AFP news agency, "New rebel alliance wants Syria as 'Islamic State'".
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-rebel-alliance-wants-syria-as-islamic-state.aspx?pageID=449&nID=58597&NewsCatID=352> 26 November 2013.

¹²⁸ ARA News, "Assad destroyed Syria and manipulated the population: Rebel leader".
<http://aranews.net/2014/05/assad-destroyed-syria-and-manipulated-the-international-community-rebel-leader/>, 21 May 2014

people and ex-communicate them (apostasy), such as ISIS, are military targets for the revolution. Military actions will be limited to Syrian territory.

4. Overthrowing the regime is a collaborative enterprise by different revolutionary forces. Based on the awareness of these forces of the regional and international dimensions of the Syria crisis, we welcome the opportunity to communicate and cooperate with regional and international parties to show solidarity with the Syrian people in a way that serves the interests of the revolution.

5. The preservation of Syrian territorial integrity and the prevention, by all attainable means, of any project aimed at dividing these territories is a non-negotiable revolutionary principle.

6. Our revolutionary forces, in their military operations, rely on Syrian elements only and believe that the military and political decisions should be entirely Syrian, rejecting any type of affiliation with foreign entities.

7. The Syrian people aim to establish a state of law, freedom, and justice, without any sort of pressure or dictatorship.

8. The Syrian revolution is a revolution based on morals and values whose objective is to obtain freedom, justice, and security for all sectors of Syrian society, with its diverse multi-ethnic and multi-sect social fabric.

9. The Syrian revolution is committed to the respect of human rights which is also encouraged by our authentic religion.

10. Revolutionary forces strongly condemn the regime's targeting of civilians and recurring use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against the civilian population. Revolutionary forces strive to keep civilians out of the circle of violence

and are firmly committed towards that end. These forces never used such weapons in the past and reiterate at the same time the absence of any WMD in their possession.

11. All that is recovered by the regime is the lawful property of the Syrian people and it will be used and administered by revolutionary forces in order to fulfill the people's demands for bringing down the regime. Verily we call upon all other revolutionary forces on Syrian territory to sign this covenant in order to be one hand in our struggle to topple the regime.”¹²⁹

“Verily we call upon all other revolutionary forces on Syrian territory to sign this covenant in order to be one hand in our struggle to topple the regime.

This covenant signed by:

- Adjnad Al-Sham Islamic Union
- Army of Holy Warriors (Jaysh Al-Mujahadeen)
- Failaq Al-Sham
- Alweiat Al-Furqan
- Islamic Front”¹³⁰

¹²⁹ *Democratic Revolution, Syrian Style* "Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law: The Goals and Guiding Principles of the Islamic Front and Its Allies".. 17 May 2014.

¹³⁰ "Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law: The Goals and Guiding Principles of the Islamic Front and Its Allies". *Democratic Revolution, Syrian Style*. 17 May 2014.

Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya: Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, is one of the most powerful Salafist and Islamist rebel group, which has approximately 10,000-20,000 fighters. The original name of Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, was Ahrar al-Sham (Liberators of the Levant), and their major objective is to topple the Bathist, socialist, and secular government of President Bashar Al-Assad, and create an Islamic state in Syria.¹³¹ Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya was led by Hassan Abboud. This Islamist and Salafist rebel group was formed in the northwestern province of Idlib in late 2011, but it has headquarters in Hama and Aleppo as well.¹³² Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya has had significant influence in the battlefield, and in tipping the balance of power. This Islamist rebel group has gained a reputation of being organized, disciplined, and highly coordinated. Several members of this rebel group were Islamists who were poisoned in the Syrian prison, Sednaya, in Damascus, and they were released in March 2011 as part of a Presidential amnesty by President Bashar Al-Assad.¹³³

In addition, Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya has a section called the "technical division", which is created in order to conduct and carry out cyber-attacks. According to BBC, "They were some of the first to use improvised explosive devices and to target military bases to capture weapons. The group operates a "technical division" that carries

¹³¹ O'Bagy, Elizabeth . *Middle East Security Report: Jihad in Syria*. <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Jihad-In-Syria-17SEPT.pdf>, Washington, DC. p. 27

¹³² Lund, Aron (2012-10-05). "Holy Warriors". http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/15/holy_warriors, Foreign Policy

¹³³ Rania Abouzeid, "TIME Exclusive: Meet the Islamist Militants Fighting Alongside Syria's Rebels", <http://world.time.com/2012/07/26/time-exclusive-meet-the-islamist-militants-fighting-alongside-syrias-rebels/> , *Time*. 2012-07-26

out cyber-attacks and a "relief office" that runs social services and carries out public works.”¹³⁴ In addition, it has been a leading rebel group in several major battles including the capture of Ar-Raqqah in March 2013. Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya has also gained popularity due to their social relief works and aid, which is conducted through its "relief office".¹³⁵ The leadership in Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya are mostly Syrians and the group has emphasized "... that its campaign is for Syria, not for a global jihad". Nevertheless, a crucial figure in Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, Abu Khalid al Suri, is said to be the representative of a Ayman al-Zawahiri in the Levant and a senior member of Al Qaeda. Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya created another Islamist rebel group in December 2012, by merging with other 10 Islamist rebel groups including Al-Haqq Brigade in the city of Homs, Liwa al-Haqq the Al-Fajr Islamic Movement in Aleppo, Jaysh Al-Tawhid in the province of Deir ez-Zor, Ansar al-Sham in Latakia, and the Hamza ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib Brigade in the capital, Damascus^{136137 138 139 140}

¹³⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹³⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹³⁶ BBC, Syrian Rebel and Oppositional Groups, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹³⁷ Rania Abouzeid, "TIME Exclusive: Meet the Islamist Militants Fighting Alongside Syria's Rebels", <http://world.time.com/2012/07/26/time-exclusive-meet-the-islamist-militants-fighting-alongside-syrias-rebels/>, *Time*. 2012-07-26

¹³⁸ *The Economist*, "Competition among Islamists, One Islamist rebel group seems to have overtaken all the others. July 20, 2013

¹³⁹ Thomas Joscelyn, "Syrian rebel leader was bin Laden's courier, now Zawahiri's representative".

Jaysh al-Islam: Jaysh al-Islam operates mainly in and around the capital of Damascus, particularly in areas such as the Eastern and Northern Ghouta agricultural belt around Damascus as well as the district of Douma. This Islamist rebel group is known to be the most powerful group fighting the government of Bashar Al-Assad in and around Damascus. Jaysh al-Islam was formed as part of the merger of approximately 50 factions of Islamist rebel groups. Some of these rebel groups were Liwa al-Islam (which is considered to be the most powerful group among others in this alliance), Liwa Tawhid al-Islam, Liwa al-Ansar, Liwa Fath al-Sham.^{141142 143}

Other Islamist groups which merged with Jaysh Al-Islam are the following:¹⁴⁴

1. Conquest of Sham Brigades
2. Ghouta Shield Brigades
3. Islam Brigades

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/12/aq_courier_rebel_leader_zawahiri.php , The Long War Journal. 17 December 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Memri, "Islamic Forces In Syria Announce Establishment Of Joint Front Aimed At Toppling Assad, Founding Islamic State; Syrian Website Urges Them To Incorporate All Islamic Forces In Country". <http://www.memri.org/report/en/o/o/o/o/o/o/o/6893.htm>, Memri. 2012-12-26.

¹⁴¹ Hassan Hassan, The Army of Islam is Winning In Syria, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/01/the_army_of_islam_is_winning_in_syria, OCTOBER 1, 2013

¹⁴² BBC, Syrian Rebel and Oppositional Groups, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹⁴³ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Insight: Saudi Arabia boosts Salafist rivals to al Qaeda in Syria". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/01/us-syria-crisis-jihadists-insight-idUSBRE9900RO20131001>, Reuters. 1 October 2013.

¹⁴⁴ Eretz Zen, "Total of 43 Islamist Groups Unite under Newly Formed "Army of Islam" in Syria". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIjtc6At-CU> YouTube. 29 September 2013

4. Islamic Army Brigades
5. The Army of Muslims Brigades
6. Siddiq Brigades
7. Tawheed Al-Islam Brigades
8. South of the Capital Brigades
9. Sword of Truth Brigades
10. Sham Falcons Brigades
11. Signs of Victory Brigades
12. Sword of Islam Brigades
13. Omar bin Khattab Brigades
14. Badr Brigades
15. Muath bin Jabal Brigades
16. Zubayir bin Al-Awam Brigades
17. Air Defense Brigades
18. Missile Defense Brigades
19. Omar bin Abdulaziz Brigades
20. Tawheed Soldiers Brigades
21. Tank Brigades
22. Military Direction Brigades

- 23. Dhul Nurayin Brigades
- 24. Ansar Brigades
- 25. Hamzeh Brigades
- 26. Murabiteen Brigades
- 27. Bedouin Brigades
- 28. Dahir Bebers Brigades
- 30. Slaves of the Merciful Brigades
- 31. Sunnah Supporters Brigades
- 32. Ahul ul Bayt Brigades
- 33. Mujahideen Platoons
- 34. Abu Dujana Falcons Platoons
- 35. Martyrs of Atarib Brigades
- 36. Coastal Defense Brigades
- 37. Ain Jalout Brigades
- 38. Tawheed Supporters Platoons
- 39. Bara'a bin Azab Platoons
- 40. Sunnah Platoons
- 41. Ansar Platoons
- 42. Sword of Truth 2 Brigades

43. Gamloon Warriors Brigades¹⁴⁵

The objectives and mission of this Islamist rebel group, according to one of the Salafist leaders of the Liwa al-Islam, Zahran Alloush, who was imprisoned under the government of Bashar Al-Assad, is to "achieve unity among the units of the mujahideen and avoid the effects produced by the divisions within the National Coalition". Zahran Alloush, who was released by a presidential amnesty order in 2011, is a son of Abdullah Mohammed, who is a religious scholar located in Saudi Arabia. Some of these rebels groups had already controlled numerous brigades across Syria. ¹⁴⁶¹⁴⁷

This Islamist rebel group took responsibility for one of the most crucial bombing in Damascus which killed Deputy Defense Minister Asef Shawkat (also a brother-in-law of President Bashar Al-Assad), Defense Minister Dawoud Rajiha, and Assistant Vice President Hassan Turkmani.¹⁴⁸ Saudi Arabia is believed to be the major supporter of this group, assisting financially, and militarily.¹⁴⁹ ¹⁵⁰ ¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ Eretz Zen, "Total of 43 Islamist Groups Unite under Newly Formed "Army of Islam" in Syria". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIjtc6At-CU>YouTube. 29 September 2013

¹⁴⁶ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Insight: Saudi Arabia boosts Salafist rivals to al Qaeda in Syria". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/01/us-syria-crisis-jihadists-insight-idUSBRE9900RO20131001>, Reuters. 1 October 2013.

¹⁴⁷ BBC, Syrian Rebel and Oppositional Groups, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹⁴⁸ O'Bagy, Elizabeth (24 March 2013). "The Free Syrian Army". <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The-Free-Syrian-Army-24MAR.pdf>, Institute for the Study of War

¹⁴⁹ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Insight: Saudi Arabia boosts Salafist rivals to al Qaeda in Syria". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/01/us-syria-crisis-jihadists-insight-idUSBRE9900RO20131001>, Reuters. 1 October 2013.

Syrian Islamic Front (Al-Jabha Al-Islamiyya Al-Suriyya): The Syrian Islamic Front was formed by the merger of several Salafist and Islamist rebel groups on December 21, 2012, and it was dissolved on November 2013. The leading and largest rebel groups among them, was Ahrar Al-sham.^{152 153}

The Syrian Islamic Front was formed by the following eleven battalions or brigades: Liwa al-Haqq, which operates in Homs, Jaish al-Tawhid, which operates in Deir al-Zour, Kataib Ahrar al-Sham, which operates across the country, Harakat al-Fajr al-Islamiyah, which operates inside and in suburbs of city of Aleppo, Katibat Musab bin Umayr, which operates in the rural area of the city Aleppo, Kataib Ansar al-Sham, which operates in and around Latakia, Jamaat al-Taliah al-Islamiyah, which operates in the rural areas of the city Idlib, as well as several Damascus-based rebel groups including, Saraya al-Maham al-Khasa, Katibat al-Hamzah bin Abdul Mutalib, Katibat Suqur al-Islam, and Kataib al-Iman al-Muqatilah.^{154 155}

¹⁵⁰ BBC, Syrian Rebel and Oppositional Groups, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹⁵¹ Ian Black, "Syria crisis: Saudi Arabia to spend millions to train new rebel force", <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/07/syria-crisis-saudi-arabia-spend-millions-new-rebel-force>, The Guardian. 7 November 2013

¹⁵² Aron Lund, Syria's Salafi Insurgents: the Rise of the Syrian Islamic Front, <http://www.ui.se/eng/upl/files/86861.pdf>, Swedish Institute for International Affairs, March 19, 2013

¹⁵³ Ken Sofer, "The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition | Center for American Progress", <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2013/05/14/63221/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/>, Americanprogress.org, 2013-05-14

¹⁵⁴ Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Syrian Islamic Front: A New Extremist Force". <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-syrian-islamic-front-a-new-extremist-force>, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 4, 2013

On their Google plus account, the Syrian Islamic Front made an announcement that they were dissolving the group and forming a new rebel group under the name the Islamic Front which merges various Islamist rebel groups under the Syria Islamic Front and the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front.^{156 157}

The announcement of the formation of the Syrian Islamic Front came through a YouTube video, in which the official spokesperson of the Syrian Islamic Front, Abu 'Abd Al-Rahman Al-Suri, made an approximately four minutes statement. The following is the translation of the announcement, by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI): ¹⁵⁸

"We, the broadest [coalition] of Islamic organizations operating in Syria, hereby announce the establishment of the Islamic Syrian Front... which follows the path of the Sunna according to the correct Salafi understanding, neither exaggerating it nor subtracting from it. [The front] aspires to topple Assad's regime and establish a civilized Islamic society governed by religious Muslim law, in which Muslims and non-Muslims alike will benefit from the justice of Islam."

¹⁵⁵ Memri, "Islamic Forces In Syria Announce Establishment Of Joint Front Aimed At Toppling Assad, Founding Islamic State; Syrian Website Urges Them To Incorporate All Islamic Forces In Country". <http://www.memri.org/report/en/o/o/o/o/o/o/6893.htm> Memri. 2012-12-26

¹⁵⁶ Halab News, <http://halabnews.com/news/43483>, and Siwss Info, http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/news/international/Six_Islamist_factions_unite_in_largest_Syria_rebel_merger.html?cid=37388154

¹⁵⁷ "السورية الإسلامية الجديدة - Google". <https://plus.google.com/110960948173047104747/posts>, Plus.google.com. 2013-11-22

¹⁵⁸ Memri, "Islamic Forces In Syria Announce Establishment Of Joint Front Aimed At Toppling Assad, Founding Islamic State; Syrian Website Urges Them To Incorporate All Islamic Forces In Country". <http://www.memri.org/report/en/o/o/o/o/o/o/6893.htm> Memri. 2012-12-26

"To achieve its objectives, the front will utilize numerous means, including armed activity to topple the Assad regime and bring [the Syrians] security, and [also] every kind of civil activity that is anchored in religious Muslim law: political [activity], *da'wa* [activity], cultural [activity], and humanitarian [activity]..."

"The front strives to preserve the unity of [its] word and [its] ranks, avoiding division and dissent, and aspires to [reach an] understanding with all forces working for the sake of Islam... It includes [the following forces]: the Ahrar Al-Sham Brigades in all the Syrian provinces; the Al-Haqq Brigade in Homs; the Islamic Al-Fajr movement in the Aleppo province; Jama'at Al-Tali'a Al-Islamiyya in the rural areas of Idlib [province]; the Ansar Al-Sham Brigades in the Latakia province; the Mus'ab bin 'Umayr Brigade in the rural areas of Aleppo [province]; Jaysh Al-Tawhid in Deir Al-Zor; the Suqour Al-Islam Brigade; the Al-Iman Fighting Brigades; the Special Operations Brigades; and the Hamza bin 'Abd Al-Mutalib Brigade in the Damascus province."

"The front is deployed throughout Syria to defend its faith and its people and to liberate its land, and its door is open to all Islamic organizations operating in our beloved Syria."¹⁵⁹

The Syrian Islamic Front was considered less extreme in comparison to other Islamist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Jubhat Al-Nasra. The mission and objective of this Islamist rebel group was restricted to establishing an Islamic state in Syria and they opposed any Western, particularly by the United States, intervention

¹⁵⁹ Memri, "Islamic Forces In Syria Announce Establishment Of Joint Front Aimed At Toppling Assad, Founding Islamic State; Syrian Website Urges Them To Incorporate All Islamic Forces In Country". <http://www.memri.org/report/en/o/o/o/o/o/o/o/6893.htm> Memri. 2012-12-26

in Syria, arguing the toppling the Assad regime by the US will not serve US interests. The Washington Post Middle East journalist, Liz Sly, points out in a piece in the New York Times that the Syrian Islamic Front "probably has broader support among ordinary Syrians" in contrast to other hardcore Islamist rebel groups.¹⁶⁰ On 5 September 2013, they issued a statement on their Face book page pointing out that "Western military intervention in Syria and consider it a new aggression against Muslims".¹⁶¹

Liwa al-Tawhid or Al-Tawhid Brigade : Liwa Al-Tawhid was created in mid- 2012 in order to topple the government of Bashar Al-Assad, and it is mainly operating in the city of Aleppo. The literal translation of Liwa al-Tawhis means Unity Brigade in English. This rebel group has several sub-units under its control, operating in different parts of Aleppo.¹⁶² The most powerful sub-faction of Liwa al-Tawhid, the Ahrar al-Shamal Brigade, is based in eastern Aleppo. Another sub faction of Liwa al-Tawhid is the Fursan al-Jabal Brigade, which operates near the border of Idlib. In the western part of Aleppo, Liwa al-Tawhid's subfaction, Daret Izza Brigade, operates. Liwa al-Tawhid has over 25 sub factions and it is supported by the Qatari government. The Tawhid Brigade made

¹⁶⁰ Liz Sly, "Syrian Islamists protest U.S. strikes; Americans exit embassy in Beirut". http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-orders-partial-evacuation-of-embassy-in-beirut-as-tensions-rise-over-syria-strike/2013/09/06/6afo06a8-16f5-11e3-804b-d3a1a3a18f2c_story.html?tid=pm_world_pop, *New York Times*. 6 September 2013

¹⁶¹ The Face book page of The Syrian Islamic Front, "statement by Syrian Islamic Front". https://sphotos-b-ord.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-ash4/q71/s720x720/1236689_463486037092380_255286049_n.jpg, 5 September 2013. Face book.

¹⁶² Jeffrey Bolling, Rebel Groups in Northern Aleppo Province, [http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_RebelGroupsNorthernAleppo.p](http://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Backgrounder_RebelGroupsNorthernAleppo.pdf)df, Institute for the Study of War, p. 2-7

an announcement In January 2013 on its website that it had joined the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front.¹⁶³¹⁶⁴¹⁶⁵

Liwa al-Haqq (also known as Liwa Junud Al Haqq): Liwa al-Haqq, an Islamist rebel group, was formed by an Islamist Brigade in August 2012 in the city of Homs and it operates in Homs, fighting against the Ba’thist government of Bashar Al-Assad. This Islamist rebel group does not identify itself as Salafist, but as Islamist. ¹⁶⁶¹⁶⁷ The most crucial sub-units of Liwa al-Haqq are Katibat al-Furati, Kataeb Atbaa al-Rasoul and Katibat al-Ansar. This Islamist rebel group made significant military advances at the beginning, but was weakened as the Syrian government forces entered Homs.¹⁶⁸

The following rebel groups are part of the Liwa al-Haqq: Katibat al-Naser li-Din Allah, Katibat al-Siddiq, Katibat al-Furati, Katibat al-Huda, Katibat Sebaa al-Birr, Katibat al-Ansar, Kataeb al-Bara, Katibat al-Bara bin Malek, Katibat Shuhada Baba

¹⁶³ Reuters , Syrian air raid kills rebel commander in Aleppo: activists, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/15/us-syria-crisis-aleppo-idUSBRE9AE04320131115>, Reuters, 14 November 2013

¹⁶⁴ Lund, Aron, "The Syria Revolutionaries' Front", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910&reloadFlag=1>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 13 December 2013

¹⁶⁵ "الاسلامية سوريا ترحي ل جبهة التوحيد لواء انضمام". <http://lewaaltawheed.com/?p=2869>, Official Website,

¹⁶⁶ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, Liwa al-Haqq, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/liwa-al-haqq>

¹⁶⁷ Valerie Szybala, "A Power Move by Syria's Rebel Forces", <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-power-move-by-syrias-rebel-forces.html>, Institute for the Study of War. 22 November 2013

¹⁶⁸ Aron Lund, "Syria's Salafi Insurgents: the Rise of the Syrian Islamic Front", <http://www.ui.se/eng/upl/files/86861.pdf>, Swedish Institute for International Affairs. 19 March 2013

Amr, Katibat Seif Alla, and, Kataeb Atbaa al-Rasoul. A few months after its formation, Liwa al-Haqq joined the Syrian Islamic Front in December 2012, and in November 2013, Liwa al-Haqq joined the larger Islamic Front, after the Syrian Islamic Front was dissolved.^{169 170 171}

The Army of Mujahedeen (Jaish al-Mujahideen in Arabic): The Army of Mujahedeen is one of the rebel groups which has been formed most recently. . The group was created January 3, 2014 in the city of Aleppo.¹⁷² The Army of Mujahedeen control some strategically crucial parts of Western Aleppo; a crucial supply rout from Turkey.¹⁷³ This rebel group identifies itself as strict Islamist, and they have geographical reasons as crucial factors for their creation.¹⁷⁴ The Army of Mujahedeen was formed by the merger of eight crucial rebel groups:¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁹ Aron Lund, "Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 6: Stagnation?", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55334>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 14 April 2014.

¹⁷⁰ Aron Y. Zelin, "The Syrian Islamic Front: A New Extremist Force", <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-syrian-islamic-front-a-new-extremist-force>, Washington Institute for Near East Policy. February 4 2013

¹⁷¹ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, Liwa al-Haqq, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/liwa-al-haqq>

¹⁷² Zaman Alawsat, <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/45028.html>, in Arabic language

¹⁷³ Aron Lund, "The Mujahedden Army of Aleppo", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55275>, Carnegie Endowment Institute, Tuesday, April 8, 2014

¹⁷⁴ Aron Lund, "Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 6: Stagnation?", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55334>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 14 April 2014.

¹⁷⁵ Aron Lund, "Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 6: Stagnation?", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55334>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 14 April 2014.

1. The Fastaqim Kama Umirta Gathering
2. The Islamic Freedom Brigade
3. The Noureddin al-Zengi Battalions
4. The Ansar Brigade
5. The Amjad al-Islam Brigade
6. The Islamic Light Movement
7. The Ansar al-Khilafa Brigade
8. The Jund al-Haramain Brigade

According to Aron Lund, The Army of Mujahedeen is in opposition to both the Syrian government and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and one of the top leaders of The Army of Mujahedeen and the leader of the Nouredine al-Zengi Battalions within the Army of Mujahedeen, Sheikh Tawfiq Shahab Alddin, stated in YouTube video, that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant “..has no place in Syria ever again.....They must go out or the combat will go on until the end.”^{176 177 178}

¹⁷⁶ Aron Lund, “ The Mujahedden Army of Aleppo”, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55275>, Carnegie Endowment Institute, Tuesday, April 8, 2014

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Sheikh Tawfiq Shahab Alddin on Aljazeera Arabic, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeOY8z1YFiY>, Mar 14, 2014

¹⁷⁸ Sohaib Anjarini, "Syria: Army of the Mujahideen Challenges ISIS Gains", <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/syria-army-mujahideen-challenges-isis-gains>, Al Akhbar. 6 January 2014

Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union: Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union is an Islamist rebel group which was formed in 2013 by the merger of five rebel factions within the Greater Damascus Operations Room:¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰

1. The al-Habib al-Mustafa Brigades
2. The Shabab al-Houda Battalions
3. The Der al-Asima Brigade
4. The Amjad al-Islam Gathering
5. The Sahaba Brigades and Battalions

There exist approximately 53 sub-factions under the control of the Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union's five groups. Reportedly, this rebel group has endorsed the parameters of Geneva II talks. ¹⁸¹ Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union has an estimate of 15000 fighters.¹⁸² When it comes to ideology, Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union separates itself from the more hard-line Jihadist groups such as Jubhat Al-Nusra, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and Islam Army. This Islamist group is in opposition to the increasing Salafist and Jihadist rebel groups which are funded by the Gulf States. In addition to their

¹⁷⁹ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ajnad-sham-islamic-union>

¹⁸⁰ Aron Lund, "The Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54750>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 4 March 2014

¹⁸¹ Dasha Afanasieva, "Syrian opposition says to attend talks, backed by rebel fighters".
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jan-18/244483-syrian-opposition-meet-over-peace-conference.ashx#axzz2zqDOonDo>, Reuters. 19 January 2014

¹⁸² Aron Lund, "The Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54750>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 4 March 2014

operations in certain cities, Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union has affiliates in Damascus, Idlib, and the countryside of Hama, the Ghouta area, and the Northern part of Damascus. The Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union leader is Abu Mohammed al-Fateh who was born in 1983, and he was elected as leader of the Shabab al-Houda Battalions before he formed Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union. According to Aron Lund's and *Kulluna Shuraka's website, an oppositional website based in the United Arab Emirates*, Abu Mohammed al-Fateh, studied Islamic Studies in Lebanon and al-Azhar University in Cairo, and was an influential and leading commander in the eastern part of Ghouta.¹⁸³¹⁸⁴¹⁸⁵ ¹⁸⁶

The Syria Revolutionaries Front (also known as The Syria Revolutionary Front, The Front of Syrian Revolutionaries, or The Syrian Rebel Front).

The Syria Revolutionaries Front is one of the most recently formed rebel alliances in Syria. This rebel group was formed in December 2013, by the merger of fourteen Syrian rebel factions, some of which are secular Syrian brigades, and this front was created as a reaction to the formation of The Islamic Front, and the rapid rise of Salafist and more radical Islamist groups, as well as the marginalization and declining power of some of

¹⁸³ Interview in Arabic on Al Jazeera Arabic with Muhammad Abu Fattah, the commander of the Islamic Union, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkEynqVbnRI>

¹⁸⁴ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ajnad-sham-islamic-union>

¹⁸⁵ Aron Lund, "The Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54750>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 4 March 2014

¹⁸⁶ <http://all4syria.info/Archive/119817>

the following groups and its fourteen Syrian rebel factions which created the Syria Revolutionaries Front.¹⁸⁷¹⁸⁸¹⁸⁹

The Syria Revolutionaries Front views itself in opposition to Al-Qaeda-linked rebel groups in Syria and beyond. Currently, the leader of the Syrian Revolutionaries Front is Jamal Maarouf, who is the head of the Syria Martyrs Brigade. The Syrian rebel factions which created the Syria Revolutionaries Front are the following:¹⁹⁰ ¹⁹¹ ¹⁹²

1. The Ahrar al-Shamal Brigade: the leader is Bilal Khebeir
2. The Riyadh al-Salehin Battalions of Damascus
3. The Ahrar al-Zawia Brigades: the leader is Ahmed Yahia al-Khatib
4. The Ansar Brigades: the leader is Mithqal al-Abdullah

¹⁸⁷ Ari Scoffer, "Syria: New Rebel Alliance to Rival Islamists". Arutz Sheva.
<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/175251#.U74Pbqhh6fQ>, 17 December 2013.

¹⁸⁸ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
,<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-revolutionary-front>

¹⁸⁹ Lund, Aron, "The Syria Revolutionaries' Front".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910>, *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 13 December 2013

¹⁹⁰ Lund, Aron, "The Syria Revolutionaries' Front".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910>, *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 13 December 2013

¹⁹⁰ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
,<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-revolutionary-front>

¹⁹¹ Dasha Afanasieva, "Syrian rebels try to agree peace talks stance in Turkey",
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jan-18/244483-syrian-opposition-meet-over-peace-conference.ashx#axzz372CGOO46>, Reuters. 18 January 2014.

¹⁹² Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
,<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-revolutionary-front>

5. The Idlib Military Council; the leader is Colonel Afif Suleiman
6. The Syria Martyrs' Brigade: the leader is Jamal Maarouf
7. The Idlib Martyrs' Brigade: the leader is Mohammad Eissa
8. The Farouq Battalions of Hama
9. The Special Assignments Regiment of Damascus: the leader is Abdel-Ilah Othman
10. The Ninth Division of Aleppo: the leader is Murshid al-Khaled Aboul-Moutassem
11. The Farouq al-Shamal Battalions: the leader is Abdullah Awda Abu Zeid.
12. The Coming Victory Brigades: the leader is Rabie Hajjar
13. The Seventh Division: the leader is Colonel Heitham Afisi
14. The Ghab Wolves Brigade: the leader is Mohammed Zaatar ^{193 194}

The Syrian Revolutionaries Front has accepted the guidelines of Geneva II Middle East peace conference, for resolving the conflict and crisis in Syria. ¹⁹⁵

Muhajirin Wa-Ansar Alliance (Alliance of Emigrants and Helpers): The ideology of this rebel group is Salafism. ¹⁹⁶ Several Salafist groups formed this alliance and they are

¹⁹³ Lund, Aron, "The Syria Revolutionaries' Front".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910>, *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 13 December 2013

¹⁹⁴ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-revolutionary-front>

¹⁹⁵ Dasha Afanasieva, "Syrian opposition says to attend talks, backed by rebel fighters".
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jan-18/244483-syrian-opposition-meet-over-peace-conference.ashx#axzz2zqDOonDo>, Reuters. 19 January 2014

mostly active in the governorate of Hama, Latakia and Aleppo. These groups are Kataeb al-Muhajireen (Brigade of Emigrants) under the leadership of Abu Omar al-Chechen , also known as Abu Omar al-Shishani —, Kataeb Khattab (Khattab Brigade) and the Jaish Muhammad (Army of Muhammad). Some other groups which are allied with Muhajirin wa-Ansar Alliance are including the Omar Brigade, the Haq Brigade in Idlib, Jund al-Aqsa, and Liwaa al-Umma. ^{197 198 199}

The Authenticity and Development Front: Authenticity and Development Front was formed in November 2012 and it is still operating in Syria against the government of Bashar Al Assad. The Authenticity and Development Front was created by the merger of several Islamist groups including Ahl al-Athar Brigade as well as Nouredine al-Zengi Battalions which was formerly part of the Army of Mujahideen. The leader current leader of the Authenticity and Development Front is Abd al-Qadir Da`fis and the group operates mainly in opposition to the Syrian armed forces in the province of Aleppo. The Authenticity and Development Front is estimated to have 13,000 fighters. ^{200 201 202}

¹⁹⁶ Aron Lund, "The Other Syrian Peace Process".

<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54320>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 27 January 2014

¹⁹⁷ Rebel Groups in Syria, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

¹⁹⁸ Joasia Paras, Syria Special: "Foreign Jihadists" — Who Are Jaish al-Muhajirin wa Ansar? Checny in Syria, <http://www.chechensinsyria.com/?p=7564>, August 15, 2013

¹⁹⁹ Cedric Labrousse ,
, "The new face of the Syrian rebellion". <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#>, The Arab Chronicle. 5 March 2014.

²⁰⁰ Gihaz Nail , "Jeish al-Mujahideen Charter – Comment and Translation" ,
<http://gohasnail.wordpress.com/2014/05/05/jeish-al-mujahideen-charter-comment-and-translation/>, . Goha's Nail. 4 May 2014

The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade: The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade is a small rebel group which kidnapped 21 Filipino peacekeepers and troops working at the United Nations. This rebel group was formed in the late summer in 2012, and they operate mainly in the village of Sahem, in southwestern Deraa Province. Their location is close to the borders of Syria, the Golan Heights, and Jordan.^{203 204}

Abna Harakat al-Islam (The children of Islamic Movements): Abna Harakat al-Islam is one of the largest Islamist group and Factions in Deir ezzor. In a statement on a video on YouTube, Abna Harakat al-Islam, made an announcement in Arabic that they have joined the Islamist group called Ahrar al-Sham .²⁰⁵

Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban: Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban was formed in Turkey, by an Islamist and Jihadist Kurdish group, comprised exclusively of Turkish Kurds. According to Global Research News, Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban offers approximately 1000 dollars to any young Turk who joined the group. Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban operates near the

²⁰¹ Sinjab, Lina. "Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition".
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>, *BBC World News*, 17 October 2013

²⁰² Aron Lund, "The Non-State Militant Landscape in Syria".
<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-non-state-militant-landscape-in-syria> , Combating Terrorism Center. 27 August 2013

²⁰³ Syria Survey , The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade and The Capture of the UN Troops ,
<http://syriasurvey.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-yarmouk-martyrs-brigade-and-capture.html> ,
Wednesday, March 6, 2013

²⁰⁴ Maya Shwayder , Who Are The Martyrs Of Yarmouk And What Do They Want With 20 Filipino UN Peacekeepers?, <http://www.ibtimes.com/who-are-martyrs-yarmouk-what-do-they-want-20-filipino-un-peacekeepers-1117066> , @MayaErgas , March 08 2013 2:07 PM

²⁰⁵ Official YouTube channel of Ahrar al-Sham , “ One of the Largest Factions in Deir ezzor joins Ahrar al-Sham” , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PplPP4PIUoU> 13-12-2009

border of Syria and Turkey and their fighters have assisted other hard-line Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat Al Nusra, or non-Islamist secular fighters from the Free Syrian Army. The Turkish government has helped in creating the Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban- Turkish Military Intelligence has control over the Kurdish Katibat al-Taliban while this hard-line Islamist rebel group is commanded by both Turkish and Kurdish jihadists.^{206207 208}

Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigades: Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigade was one of the Islamist rebel groups which is a crucial faction of the Army of Mujahedeen, along with Division 19. Fastaqim Kama Umirt. Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigades withdrew from the Army of Mujahedeen. Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigades was also part of the Authenticity and Development Front. Nour al-Din al-Zanki Islamic Brigades's ideology and fighting objectives and missions are in alliance with other radical Islamist groups including Jabhat Al Nusra, Islamic Front, Syria Revolutionaries

²⁰⁶ Yossef Bodansky , "As West blinks on Syria, jihadists begin revenge attacks on civilian population" <http://www.worldtribune.com/2013/09/18/as-west-blinks-on-syria-jihadists-begin-revenge-attacks-on-civilian-population/> , World Tribune , September 18th, 2013

²⁰⁷ Global Research News, "Turkey Establishes Kurdish Jihadist Brigade to Fight Against Syria " <http://www.globalresearch.ca/turkey-establishes-kurdish-jihadist-brigade-to-fight-against-syria/5349815> , Global Research, September 14, 2013

²⁰⁸ Aydinli Ikdaily , Erdo□an's New Terrorists: Kurdish Taliban

<http://www.aydinlikdaily.com/Detail/Erdo%C4%9Fan%E2%80%99s-New-Terrorists-Kurdish-Taliban/686#.U8KoV6hh7R0> , 22-09-2013

Front, Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union, Alweiat Al-Furqan, Sham Legion, etc.^{209 210 211}

Jund Al-Islam: Jund Al Islam (Soldiers of Islam) is an affiliated with Ansar Al Islam, an insurgent group operating in Iraq and Syria. Jund Al Islam has claimed responsibilities for a car bomb attack, which killed and injured several people, in Sinai. The leader of Jund Al Islam was Faisal Dawood Okla, who was killed in the besieged village of al-Zara, in Homs province, by forces supportive of the Syrian government armed forces.^{212 213}

Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade (Descendants (or Grandsons) of the Prophet Brigade): Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade, funded by the Qatari government and formed in 2012, is considered one of the largest Brigade alliances in the Syrian civil war fighting against the Syrian government and President Bashar Al Assad. Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade has approximately

²⁰⁹ Aron Lund, "The Mujahideen Army of Aleppo". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55275> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Tuesday 8 April 2014.

²¹⁰ *Democratic Revolution, Syrian Style* , "Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law: The Goals and Guiding Principles of the Islamic Front and Its Allies". <http://notgeorgesabra.wordpress.com/2014/05/17/freedom-human-rights-rule-of-law-the-goals-and-guiding-principles-of-the-islamic-front-and-its-allies/> , 17 May 2014

²¹¹ Gohas Nail, "Jeish al-Mujahideen Charter – Comment and Translation". <http://gohasnail.wordpress.com/2014/05/05/jeish-al-mujahideen-charter-comment-and-translation/> , Goha's Nail. 4 May 2014

²¹² Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi (11 May 2014). "Key Updates on Iraq's Sunni Insurgent Groups". Brown Moses Blog.

²¹³ MESOP, The military commander of Jund al-Islam, Faisal Dawood Okla killed, <http://www.mesop.de/2014/02/17/43361/>

15,000 fighters and some of its battalions are : Suqour al-Jolan Battalion, the Suqour Jabal al-Zawiya battalion, Al-Haqq battalion, and Shuhada al-Jolan Battalion. Fighters of Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade operate in Syria independently of other groups including the Syrian Liberation Front, the Syrian Islamic Front, the Free Syrian Army, etc. Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade has succeeded in attracting roughly 50 rebel groups. Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade was formerly allied with other hard-line Islamist rebel groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Based on its ideology and combat objectives, Jund Al Aqsa is in alliance with other hardliner Islamist groups including Ahrar ash-Sham and the Kurdish Islamic Front. Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade has been titled under various names including Alwiya Ahfad ar-Rasul, Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade, Descendants of the Prophet Brigade, Brigades of the Descendants of the Prophet, and Grandsons of the Prophet. Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade operates in various cities, but is mainly influential in Raqqa province and city of Idlib. The leader of Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade was Ziad Haj Obaid, a member of the Arms Committee for the Supreme Military Command, when this Sunni Islamist rebel group participated in the bombing of the the Syrian Army General Staff building located in Damascus on September 2 2012.^{214 215 216}

²¹⁴ Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ahfad-al-rasul-brigade> , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium

²¹⁵ Ken Sofer and Juliana Shafroth , "The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition". <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/report/2013/05/14/63221/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/> , Center for American Progress. 14 May 2013

²¹⁶ O'Bagy, Elizabeth "The Free Syrian Army". <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The-Free-Syrian-Army-24MAR.pdf> , Institute for the Study of War. 24 March 2013 .

The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF): The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front was a powerful alliance of several Islamist rebel groups which were geographically located in various and diverse sections of Syria, and it incorporated both Salafist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the powerful factions were Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, which were based in the city of Idlib, and Al-Tawhid Brigade, based in the city of Aleppo, Farouq Brigade, based in the province of Homs, Liwa al-Islam based in the capital Damascus, Tawhid Brigade, based in the city of Aleppo, Liwa Dawud, the Deir ez-Zor Revolutionary Council based in the city of Deir al zor, Amr Ibn al-Aas Brigade based in the city of Aleppo, and al-Naser Salaheddin Brigade based in the Alawite the city of Latakia, and Tajamo Ansar al-Islam, based in the city of Damascus. The Syrian Islamic Liberation Front was formed in September 2012, and received funds from the government of Turkey and Qatar. The ideology of this Islamist coalition was anchored in Islamic identity. The Free Syrian Army was in opposition to this Islamist coalition because of its emphasis on Islam. After some of the powerful factions of the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front withdrew, including Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, and Al-Tawhid, Syrian Islamic Liberation Front made a statement that it had halted all its operations. ^{217 218 219 220 221 222}

²¹⁷ Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, TRAC, www.trackingterrorism.org/group/syrian-islamic-liberation-front-silf

²¹⁸ Ammar Abdulhamid, "Rebels With a Cause, But Not Much Consensus". http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/01/rebels_with_a_cause_but_not_much_consensus?page=full, Foreign Policy. 1 October 2013.

²¹⁹ Karouny, Mariam. "Syria's Islamist rebels join forces against Assad". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/11/us-syria-crisis-rebels-idUSBRE89A0Y920121011>, Reuters, 11 October 2012.

The Greater Damascus Operations Room: The Greater Damascus Operations Room is a military council and cooperative and includes various rebel groups formed in order to boost the effectiveness of the Islamist groups. According to Aron Lund, “The Greater Damascus Operations Room is undoubtedly the biggest collaborative project in the area so far, although only time will tell how well it holds together—it could fall apart tomorrow. As such, it also represents a step away from the FSA/SMC structure of Salim Idriss and a strengthening of the Islamist-led rebellion against the National Coalition and the Geneva talks that took off on September 24.”²²³

Some of the rebel groups involved in The Greater Damascus Operations Room are among the most powerful rebel groups in their area. Some of these rebel groups are :²²⁴

1. Sham al-Rasoul Brigade
2. Tawhid al-Asima Brigade
3. Sahaba Battalions and Brigades
4. Amjad al-Islam Gathering
5. Der’ al-Asima Brigade

²²⁰ Official Website of Syrian Islamic Liberation Front in Arabic, syrialiberationfront.com

²²¹ Lund, Aron (2012-10-05). "Holy Warriors".
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/15/holy_warriors, Foreign Policy

²²² Charles Lister, "Syria's moderate rebels wane as extremist forces dominate".
<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/syrias-moderate-rebels-wane-as-extremist-forces-dominate>, The National. 31 July 2013.

²²³ Aron Lund, “The Greater Damascus Operations Room – Part 1” ,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53566> , Monday, November 18, 2013

²²⁴ Aron Lund, “The Greater Damascus Operations Room – Part 1” ,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53566> , Monday, November 18, 2013

6. Eissa bin Maryam Battalion
7. Islamic Ahrar al-Sham Movement
8. Aknaf Beit al-Maqdes Brigade
9. Single Umma Brigade
10. Fursan al-Sunna Battalion
11. Shabab el-Hoda Battalions
12. al-Habib al-Mustafa Brigades ²²⁵

6.1.2 The Second Domestic Battle: Foreign Pro Government and Shiite Rebel Armed Groups

Badr Organization: The Badr Organization is a Shia political party in Iraq and it is reported that the Badr Organization is the military wing of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition, the Badr Organization is known as the Badr Brigade or Badr Corps. Some of the Syrian oppositional activists pointed out that some of the militants of the Badr Organization have intervened in the Syrian civil war and assisted the government of Bashar Al Assad in recapturing the town of Yabroud. ^{226 227}

²²⁵ Aron Lund, "The Greater Damascus Operations Room – Part 1", <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53566>, Monday, November 18, 2013

²²⁶ Nazeer Rida, "Iraqi fighters lead attack on the town of Yabroud, say Syrian activists", <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/03/article55329651>, Tuesday, 4 Mar, 2014

²²⁷ The Independent, "Iraq's death squads: on the brink of civil war" <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraqs-death-squads-on-the-brink-of-civil-war-467784.html>, Feb. 26, 2006

The Promised Day Brigades (Liwa al-Youm al-Mawud): The Promised Day Brigades were established after Iraq's largest Shia militia group, Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army was dismantled in 2008, and became a successor to Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army which was founded by one of the most influential religious and political figures in Iraq, Muqtada Al sadr. Promised Day Brigades is a Shia insurgent group in Iraq which is reported by the United States military as "Special Groups" in Iraq and is one of the largest, most influential and powerful insurgent groups. The Promised Day Brigades is supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah and has been reported to have been present in the Syrian civil war assisting the government of Bashar Al Assad to crack down on oppositional and rebel groups and recapture territories. Their numbers have increased from 300 to an estimate of 15,000 fighters. ^{228 229 230}

Jaysh al-Muwahhideen (Army of Unitarians): Jaysh al-Muwahhideen , also known as Jaysh Abu Ibrahim, is a militant group established by the Druze community and they operate in several locations including Damascus, The Mountain of the Arabs (Jabal Al druze in Arabic language), Suwayda, Deraa, etc where the Druze community are concentrated. Their mission and objective is to protect the Druze community and their

²²⁸ DeYoung, Karen "U.S. Commanders Are Concerned About New Iraqi Restrictions on American Troops". www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/17/AR2009071703634_2.html , *The Washington Post*. July 18, 2009 .

²²⁹ Mapping Militants Organizations , Stanford University , <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/57?highlight=Mahdi+Army>

²³⁰ Michael Knights , "Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria " , <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-foreign-legion-the-role-of-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-syria>, The Washington Institute for the Middle East , June 27, 2013

lands. According to Aymenn Al-Tamimi , Jaysh al-Muwahhideen and the Druze community at large appear to be still on the side of the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad. Aymenn Al-Tamimi points out “...The Druze community in Syria as a whole remains tied to the regime, whether out of genuine pro-Assad sentiment or belief in the regime as its only viable protector, and there is unlikely to be a profound shift in the orientation of the Syrian Druze community, at least in the near future”. ²³¹

Kata'ib Hezbollah (also known as Hezbollah Brigades): Kata'ib Hezbollah is an Iraqi Shiite insurgent group, which was established before US-led invasion of Iraq. Kata'ib Hezbollah has a close relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the organization and its fighters are trained, funded, and provided logistical materials from Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp's branch : elite section of Quds Forces. Kata'ib Hezbollah is on the list of foreign terrorist organizations of the United States Department of State and a member of “Special Forces”. Approximately 400 fighters of Kata'ib Hezbollah have been active in the Syrian civil war fighting in support of the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad and against oppositional rebel groups. Kata'ib Hezbollah is viewed as Iran's proxy, intervening in Syria to serve Iran's geopolitical, economic, ideological and strategic interests in the region. Kata'ib Hezbollah's fighters are in cooperation with Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp's Quds forces and they report directly to the leadership of IRGC Qods Force. ^{232 233}

²³¹ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , "The Druze Militias of Southern Syria" .
<http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/druze-militias-southern-syria/> , Syria Comment , 13 November 2013 .

²³² Michael Knights , Iran's Foreign Legion: The Role of Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria

The Ba'ath Brigades: The Ba'ath Brigades, were founded in the summer of 2012, is a volunteer militia group, which supports the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad and its Armed Forces. The members of volunteer militia group are part of the Ba'ath party's ideology of secularism, socialism and Arab nationalism. They are mainly a Sunni group. The Ba'ath Brigades was established under the leadership of Hilal Hilal, after rebels took control of the eastern part of Aleppo. In addition, this volunteer militia group began operating in the capital of Damascus as well, reportedly to carry out "light logistical operations".^{234 235 236}

The Houthis: The Houthis is a Yemeni insurgent group with Zaidi Shia ideology, also known as the Fivers, who follow the first five Imams after the death of Muhammad. This insurgent group claims to have more than 100,000 fighters and they are carrying out "holy Jihad" in Syria and Yemen. The Yemeni government has blamed the Islamic Republic of Iran for funding and training this group. Based on its ideology, objectives and mission, this Zaidi Shia insurgent group is in alliance with the Islamic Republic of

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-foreign-legion-the-role-of-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-syria> , The Washington Institute , June 27, 2013

²³³ Bill Roggio, Coalition forces capture Hezbollah Brigades operative in Baghdad, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/07/coalition_forces_cap.php , 31 July 2008

²³⁴ Aron Lund , "The Baath Battalions Move Into Damascus". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54167> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 13 January 2014 .

²³⁵ Edward Dark , "Syrian Baath militia commander goes rags-to-riches". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/baath-party-brigade-syria-war-aleppo.html#> , *Al Monitor*. 20 November 2013 .

²³⁶ Al Akhbar. In Arabic language , <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/197848>, 30 December 2013.

Iran, Hezbollah and they are on the side of the President Bashar Al Assad and the Syrian government.²³⁷²³⁸ ²³⁹

According to the Jerusalem Post, “The Houthis have a relationship with the Assad regime extending back before the Syrian civil war, as they would use the country as “a way-station through which they traveled to Tehran and south Lebanon for combat training,” the official said. They “would use Iranian documents to travel from Damascus so that Yemeni authorities would not know where they had been when they returned home...” “The arrival of Houthi fighters in Syria coincided with the announcement of Hezbollah’s involvement in the fighting alongside the Syrian regime,” the official said.”²⁴⁰

According to the London-based Asharq Al- Awsat, hundreds of Houthis fighters are active in Syria with Hezbollah assisting the government of Bashar Al Assad. Houthis

²³⁷ Hakim Almasmari , "Thousands Expected to die in 2010 in Fight against Al-Qaeda". <http://yemenpost.net/Detail123456789.aspx?ID=3&SubID=1749&MainCat=2> , Yemen post. Last updated: 10:20:51 PM GMT(+03) Saturday, 10, April, 2010

²³⁸ John Pike. "al-Shabab al-Mum?en / Shabab al-Moumineen (Believing Youth)". <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/shabab-al-moumineen.htm> , Global Security. 06-01-2014 19:20:08

²³⁹ Pierre Tristam , “What Is Yemen's Houthi Rebellion” Middle East Issues, <http://middleeast.about.com/od/yemen/f/houthi-rebellion-yemen.htm> , By

²⁴⁰ Ariel Ben Solomon , Report: Yemen Houthis fighting for Assad in Syria

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Report-Yemen-Houthis-fighting-for-Assad-in-Syria-315005> , 05/31/2013 09:54

Zaidi Shia insurgent group is also known as the Believing Youth, – in Arabic الشباب المؤمن *ash-Shabab al-Mu'min*, - as well as the "powerful clan" .^{241 242}

Liwa Dhu al-Fiqar (literal translation: bifurcated Brigade): Liwa Dhu al-Fiqar, a militant and rebel group, obtained its name after the Dhu al Fiqar which is the sword of the Shiite's Imam, Ali Ibn Taleb. Liwa Dhu al-Fiqar is in support of the President Bashar Al Assad and his governmental apparatuses.²⁴³

Faylak Wa'ad al-Sadiq: Faylak Wa'ad al-Sadiq, which is officially known as Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq-Faylaq al-Wa'ad al-Sadiq, or The Islamic Resistance in Iraq- The Truthful Promise Corps (FWS), is an Iraqi Shiite militant groups which operated in Iraq at the beginning of their emergence and currently it views as its mission and objective the defense of the Shiite shrines in Syria. Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq-Faylaq al-Wa'ad al-Sadiq is backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and based on Shiite ideology. This militant group is in alliance with Hezbollah as well. Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq-Faylaq al-Wa'ad al-Sadiq is in support of the President Bashar Al Assad and his governmental apparatuses, and its fighters have battled the Syrian oppositions and rebels groups that attempted to topple the government of Bashar Al

²⁴¹ Muhammad Jumeih, Yemeni official says some Houthis fighting for Assad, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/05/article55303723>, Thursday, 30 May, 2013

²⁴² John Pike. "al-Shabab al-Mu'min / Shabab al-Moumineen (Believing Youth)". <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/shabab-al-moumineen.htm>, Global Security. 06-01-2014 19:20:08

²⁴³ Live Leak, "Basic Guide to Factions in the Syrian Civil War - 2014 - Part I - Syrian Government", http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=315_1388471504

Assad. Their main battles have been in Aleppo and its countryside where there have been a rise in Shia rebel and militant groups.²⁴⁴

The National Army (al-Jihesh tribe militias , the Tayy tribe militias , al-Maamerah , also known as “al-Assad Fighters”): The National Army is made up of several Arab tribes including : al-Jihesh tribe militias , the Tayy tribe militias , al-Maamerah (Also known as “al-Assad Fighters”). Al-Jihesh tribe militias , the Tayy tribe militias , and al-Maamerah are among the Arab tribes which support President Bashar Al Assad and his governmental forces. These tribes attempt to prevent the advancement of oppositional and rebel groups to their territory and they have been mainly operating in the province of Hassakah and the northeast part of Syria.²⁴⁵

Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas: Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas is made up of Shia fighters from Syria and other countries. Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas operates in the southern part of Damascus and the province of Aleppo. Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas’ objective and mission is to protect the Shiite shrines and Shiite communities in areas such as Sayyidah Zaynab Mosque, Hujr ibn Adi Mosque, Umayyad Mosque, Sayyidah Ruqayya Mosque, Al-Nuqtah Mosque, Great Mosque of Aleppo, , Palmyra, Krak des Chevaliers,

²⁴⁴ Phillip Smyth , “Hizballah Cavalcade: Faylak Wa’ad al-Sadiq: The Repackaging of an Iraqi “Special Group” for Syria” ,

, <http://jihadology.net/2014/01/13/hizballah-cavalcade-faylak-waad-al-sadiq-the-repackaging-of-an-iraqi-special-group-for-syria/>, Jihodology . 2014 .

²⁴⁵ Bishwa Muhammad , ARA News , Pro-Assad militants storm houses of Kurdish activists in Hasakah, <http://aranews.net/2013/10/pro-assad-militants-storm-activists-houses-in-hasakah/> , ARA News , Kurdish Region, October 13, 2013

Ancient City of Bosra, Nabi Habeel Mosque, Bab al-Saghir, Uwais al-Qarni Mosque, and the places surrounding this locations.^{246 247 248}

Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas has approximately 10,000 fighters, and based on its ideology and combat objectives, Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas is in alliance with other Shiite and Islamist groups including Hezbollah, the Syrian government, Kauai's Hezbollah Syrian Armed Forces, the National Defense Force, etc. Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas is in opposition with other rebel Sunni Islamist or secularist groups fighting the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad including the Free Syrian Army, the Islamic Front, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Al-Nusra Front, etc. Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas has been involved in several crucial battles in Damascus including the Rif Dimashq (suburbs of Damascus Battle) offensive from March to August 2013, the Rif Dimashq offensive from November 2012 to February 2013, and the Damascus offensive in 2013, etc. The leaders of this Shiite rebel group have been Abu Ajeeb and Abu Hajjar. According to the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-

²⁴⁶ Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ahfad-al-rasul-brigade> , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium

²⁴⁷ Now Lebanon, "NGO: Fierce clashes in Damascus district" <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/nowsyrialatestnews/hezbollah-fighters-battle-rebels-near-syria-capital> , 19/06/2013 04:28 PM

²⁴⁸ Mona Mahmood, and Martin Chulov, "Syrian war widens Sunni-Shia schism as foreign jihadis join fight for shrines". <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/04/syria-islamic-sunni-shia-shrines-volunteers> , Lebanon, Beirut, The Guardian. 4 June 2013

Abbas “utilizes Shia Islamic imagery, slogans, and other symbols to push its case to Shia Muslims” .^{249 250 251}

Hezbollah (The Party of God (Allah)): Hezbollah, which is a combination of a political party in Lebanon, and a paramilitary group, was officially founded in 1985. The religious ideology of Hezbollah is anchored in Shia Islam and they are opposed to radical and fundamentalist Sunni ideology and groups.²⁵² In addition, Hezbollah is also viewed as a proxy for the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region and beyond, and it has received political, advisory, military training, and financial assistance from the Islamic Republic of Iran.²⁵³ Hezbollah has been an ally with the Syrian government and President Bashar Al Assad, and as the civil war erupted in Syria, Hezbollah fighters have assisted the Syrian government and its Armed Forces to fight against the rebel and opposition groups. Some scholars point out that while Hezbollah was viewed as a resistance movement before the Syrian conflict erupted, its involvement in the Syrian civil war

²⁴⁹ Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ahfad-al-rasul-brigade> , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium

²⁵⁰ Mona Mahmood, and Martin Chulov, "Syrian war widens Sunni-Shia schism as foreign jihadis join fight for shrines". <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/04/syria-islamic-sunni-shia-shrines-volunteers> , Lebanon, Beirut, The Guardian. 4 June 2013

²⁵¹ Ya Libnan, “Hezbollah displacing Iraqi Shiite fighters in Syria” , <http://yalibnan.com/2014/06/14/hezbollah-displacing-iraqi-shiite-fighters-syria/> , Saturday, June 14, 2014 4:39 AM

²⁵² Jonathan Masters, Deputy Editor, and Zachary Laub, Associate Writer , “Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu'llah)” <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/hezbollah-k-hizbollah-hizbullah/p9155> , January 3, 2014

²⁵³ US Department of State (October 8, 1999). "Background Information on Foreign Terrorist Organizations" , <http://web.archive.org/web/20070208142756/http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rpt/fto/2801.htm> , on February 8, 2007.

transformed this movement to a Shia paramilitary group and pawn of the Islamic Republic of Iran.²⁵⁴²⁵⁵ ²⁵⁶

At the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Hassan Nasrullah, the leader of Hezbollah, denied that Hezbollah fighters were assisting the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad, but later he publicly announced that Hezbollah fighters are fulfilling their “Jihadist duties” in the Syrian civil war. According to the Lebanese *Daily Star* newspaper, the leader of Hezbollah pointed out in a speech that Hezbollah fighters have assisted the Syrian government of Bashar al- Assad in order to "retain control of some 23 strategically located villages [in Syria] inhabited by Shiites of Lebanese citizenship". ²⁵⁷

Hezbollah fighters have been involved in several domestic battles on the side of the Syrian government Armed Forces, including the Battle of Aleppo and Al-Qusayr conflict against the Free Syrian Army. Hezbollah’s well-trained fighters have been capable of tipping the balance of power in some of the clashes in favor of the Syrian government of Bashar al- Assad and against the rebel groups. Some of the Syrian rebels have declared

²⁵⁴ Abdo, Geneive . "Why Sunni-Shia conflict is worsening".
<http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/07/opinion/abdo-shia-sunni-tension/index.html> , CNN International News , June 7, 2013

²⁵⁵ Jamail, Dahr , "Hezbollah's transformation". Asia Times , July 20, 2006.

²⁵⁶ BBC World News, “Who Are Hezbollah” ,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4314423.stm ,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4314423.stm

²⁵⁷ Hirst, David , "Hezbollah uses its military power in a contradictory manner".
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2012/Oct-23/192380-hezbollah-uses-its-military-power-in-a-contradictory-manner.ashx#axzz2AJrVn2Ik> , *The Daily Star* Beirut, October 23, 2012 .

that they will take revenge against Hezbollah for supporting the Syrian government and they have targeted some areas in Lebanon.^{258 259}

Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous): Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq is a Shiite paramilitary group which was originally formed in Iraq, under the name of Jaysh al Mahdi (The Army of Mahdi). Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq has close relationships with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iran's Quds Force, an elite section of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. According to some reports, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq is directly controlled by the Iranian government and includes a senior cadre of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Quds force, including commander in chief of Quds force, General Qassem Suleimani. The original opponents of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq were the American and Western forces. Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq carried out approximately more than 500 attacks including the attack on the Polish ambassador on October 3, 2007 as well as the downing of a British Lynx helicopter on May 6 2006. The headquarters of this Shiite paramilitary group is in Sadr city in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, and the leadership of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq is comprised of Abd al-Hadi al-Darraji , who was a politician in Muqtada al-Sadr's Sadr Movement, Akram al-Kabi, and Qais Khazali.^{260 261 262 263}

²⁵⁸ Al Arabiya English News , "Hezbollah fighters, Syrian rebels killed in border fighting". <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/17/266843.html> , *Al Arabiya*. February 17, 2013

²⁵⁹ Adam Shatz , "In Search of Hezbollah". The New York Review of Books. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2004/apr/29/in-search-of-hezbollah/> , April 29, 2004 .

²⁶⁰ Martin Chulov , , "Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria", <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria>, The Guardian, Najaf, 12 March 2014 09.15 EDT

Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq established a center in Syria called, Haidar al-Karar Brigades. Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq's military leader, Akram al-Kabi, is leading the Syrian branch of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq in the city of Aleppo. Haidar al-Karar Brigades is on the side of the Syrian government armed forces and its opponents are other Islamist and anti-Assad rebel groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the Islamic Front, the Free Syrian Army, Jund Al Ahrar, Jabhat Al Nusra, Al Nusra Front, and the Multi-National Force of Iraq, etc. Based on its ideology and combat objectives, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Haidar al-Karar Brigades is on the side of pro-Syrian governments rebel or armed groups as well as Shiite paramilitary groups including Hezbollah Brigade, The Islamic Republic of Iran, IRGC, Quds Force, Hezbollah, Syrian government Armed Forces, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas, North Korea, Shabiha, etc. In the Syrian civil war, Haidar al-Karar Brigades has fought in crucial battles including the Damascus offensive, the 4th Rif Dimashq offensive, the 5th Rif Dimashq offensive, the Battle of Aleppo, and the 3rd Rif Dimashq offensive, etc. Haidar al-Karar Brigades have approximately less than 10,000 fighters. According to a report by the Guardian "Hezbollah also claims its widespread intervention in Syria on the side of Assad is in defense of the shrine (referring to Seyedda Zeynab Shrine). So too does Kata'ib

²⁶¹ United States Forces- Iraq, Operation New Dawn, "The Insurgency," Operation New Dawn, Official Website of the United States Force-Iraq", http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=729&Itemid=45

²⁶² Rafid Fadhil Ali, "The People of Righteousness: Iraq's Shi'a Insurgents Issue Demands for Hostages", The James Town Foundation, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36035&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=269888a9c9#.U8MPRahh7Ro](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36035&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=269888a9c9#.U8MPRahh7Ro) , February 12, 2010 01:22 PM

²⁶³ Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, TRAC, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/asaib-ahl-al-haq-aah>

Hezbollah, another Iranian-backed Iraqi proxy, whose members are often buried alongside Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq fighters. Both Iraqi groups fight across Syria under the banner of Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas, which has been at the vanguard of attacks against the almost exclusively Sunni opposition across Syria”.²⁶⁴ ²⁶⁵

“They, along with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, are helping turn the tide in favor of the Assad regime, which in late 2012 was losing control of Damascus to rebel groups who were finding serious cracks in the regime's inner cordon. “Then came a strategic decision by all the Shia groups to defend Assad whatever the cost,” said a regional ambassador previously based in the Syrian capital....”You could see the turnaround in Assad almost immediately. Even in his speeches, it was like 'we can do this’....Estimates of the numbers of Shia fighters in Syria range between 8,000 and 15,000. Whatever the true figure, the involvement of large numbers of Iraqis is not the secret it was in the early months of Syria's civil war, which is now being fought along a sectarian fault line.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Martin Chulov, , “Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria”, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria>, The Guardian, Najaf, 12 March 2014 09.15 EDT

²⁶⁵ Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, TRAC, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/asaib-ahl-al-haq-aah>

²⁶⁶ Martin Chulov, , “Controlled by Iran, the deadly militia recruiting Iraq's men to die in Syria”, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/12/iraq-battle-dead-valley-peace-syria>, The Guardian, Najaf, 12 March 2014 09.15 EDT

6.1.3 The Third Domestic Battle: Moderate, Secular and Socialist Armed Groups

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command: After separating itself from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command, which is a Palestinian, nationalistic, and militant organization, was founded in 1965 in Damascus, Syria under the leadership of Ahmed Jibril. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command has a paramilitary wing with the name of Jihad Jibril Brigades. Nevertheless, after the civil war erupted in Syria, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command, has been active, assisting the Syrian government and its Armed Forces against oppositions and rebel groups, particularly in Damascus and the Yarmouk Palestinian refugees camp.^{267 268 269}

Fatah al-Intifada (literal translation : *Fatah Uprising*): Fatah al-Intifada is a Palestinian militant group that supports President Bashar al- Assad and the current Syrian government, and it operates in Lebanon, the West Bank, Jordan and Syria . The

²⁶⁷ Ma'an News agency , "PFLP-GC: Ceasefire reached in Syria's Yarmouk" , <http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=686171> , Published Monday 31/03/2014 (updated) 02/04/2014 09:51

²⁶⁸ Reuters (Lebanon, beirut) , "Syrian rebels take over Palestinian camp in Damascus" , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE8BG16X20121217?irpc=932> , Mon, Dec 17 17:03 PM EST

²⁶⁹ Mohammed Suliman , "PFLP on Defense in Gaza Over Ties to Assad". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/pflp-on-defense-in-gaza.html#> , Al-Monitor, 27 December 2012.

headquarter of Fatah al-Intifada is in Damascus, Syria, and this militant group was led by Col Said al-Muragha, also known as Abu Musa. ^{270 271}

Mavros Krinos: Mavros Krinos is a hard line National Socialist movement and is also called a Neo- Nazi party, or in Greece it is referred to as the “Black Lily”. The militants of this hard-line National Socialist group are fighting in Syria in support of the Syrian government of Bashar al- Assad. ^{272 273}

The Arab Nationalist Guard: The Arab Nationalist Guard is a militia group made up of nationalists who call for Arab nationalism, socialism and secularism. The members of the Arab Nationalist Guard are from various Arab countries including Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Tunisia, etc. In addition to involvement in Syria, the Arab Nationalist Guard fought in the Libyan conflict and the Iraq war. The Arab Nationalist Guard’s members support President Bashar al- Assad and his government. The estimated number of fighters in the Arab Nationalist Guard is over 1,000 fighters. ^{274 275}

²⁷⁰ Naela Khalil , "Is Fatah's Armed Wing Making Comeback?". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/hebron-israeli-soldiers-killed-fatah-intifada.html> , Al Monitor. 25 September 2013

²⁷¹ Defense Update , Arafat's Dissidents: Challenge to Abu Mazen? , Defense Update , <http://defense-update.com/2005/02/arafats-dissidents-challenge-to-abu.html> , 17 February 2005

²⁷² Brian Whelan , Are Greek Neo-Nazis Fighting for Assad in Syria?, <http://www.vice.com/read/are-greek-neo-nazis-fighting-for-assad-in-syria1> , Oct 1 2013

²⁷³ By Panagiotis Liakos source, translation by glykosymoritis , <http://glykosymoritis.blogspot.com/2013/09/syria-greek-nationalist-socialists-that.html> ,

²⁷⁴ Jawad Al-Tamimi , "The Arab Nationalist Guard: A Pro-Assad Militia". <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14235/arab-nationalist-guard> , Aymennjawad.org , 1 January 2014 .

Ghuraba al-Sham, Translation, "Strangers [or Foreigners] of the region of Syria": A group of Islamists and secularists created the rebel group, Ghuraba al-Sham. Ghuraba al-Sham advocates mainly for toppling the government of Bashar al-Assad and establishing another non-religious government.²⁷⁶ ²⁷⁷A sub-unit of this rebel group is completely made up of women, called the Loyalty battalion. This rebel group has also been accused of collaborating with the government of Bashar al-Assad and looting some areas.²⁷⁸ ²⁷⁹ This rebel group has come in confrontation with more radical Islamist groups including the Islamic State of Iran and the Levant. The leader and commander of this rebel group is Hasan Jazra, who was publicly executed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in the town of Atareb, which is part of the province Aleppo. This rebel group has altered its name on several occasions.²⁸⁰ ²⁸¹ ²⁸²

²⁷⁵ Rana Harbi , "Arab nationalists take up arms in the battle for Syria". <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/arab-nationalists-take-arms-battle-syria> , Al-Akhbar. 5 May 2014 .

²⁷⁶ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium,
,<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ghuraba-al-sham>

²⁷⁷ Oliver Holmes and Alexander Dziadosz "Special Report: Syria's Islamists seize control as moderates dither", <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/19/us-syria-rebels-islamists-specialreport-idUSBRE95IoBC20130619>, Reuters. 19 June 2013

²⁷⁸ Marlin Dick, "Battles rage around Damascus, jihadists slay rival rebel leader". <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Nov-28/239185-battles-rage-around-damascus-jihadists-slay-rival-rebel-leader.ashx#axzz372CGOO46>, *The Daily Star* , Lebanon. 28 November 2013

²⁷⁹ Adam Heffez, "Using Women to Win in Syria". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/09/women-fighters-syria-rebels-regime.html#>, Al Monitor. 29 September 2013

²⁸⁰ Marlin Dick, "Battles rage around Damascus, jihadists slay rival rebel leader". <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Nov-28/239185-battles-rage-around->

This particular group should not be confused with another group also called Ghuraba al-Sham, which is a global Jihadist group.

Jaysh al-Sham ("Army of the Levant"): This rebel group is currently active in the governorate of Idlib. The Army of the Levant was formed recently in February 2014, after the Suqour al-Sham brigade, also known as Suyouf al-Haq, split from its broader organization. Jaysh al Sham disagreed over fighting with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Some defections within Jaysh al Sham have been reported, such as the defection of General Dawoud with thousands of men and many tanks. Jaysh al Sham denied the defection and it announced that the group has expelled those figures. This rebel group is fighting against the Syrian government forces in order to overthrow the government of Bashar al Assad and create an Islamic state.^{283 284 285}

damascus-jihadists-slay-rival-rebel-leader.ashx#axzz372CGOO46, *The Daily Star*, Lebanon. 28 November 2013

²⁸¹ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, RPT-INSIGHT-Beheadings and spies help al Qaeda gain ground in Syria". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/06/syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSL5NoJK4RJ20131206>, Reuters. 6 December 2013

²⁸² "Scores die as rebel factions fight in Aleppo". <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/scores-die-as-rebel-factions-fight-aleppo-2013101321712283178.html>, Al Jazeera English. 13 October 2013.

²⁸³ Mousab Al Hamadee and Roy Gutman
McClatchy Washington Bureau, 1,000 Syrian rebels defect to Islamic State in sign it's still strengthening". <http://www.sacbee.com/2014/07/08/6542074/1000-syrian-rebels-defect-to-islamic.html>, McClatchy News Service. 8 July 2014

²⁸⁴ Aron Lund, "Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 6: Stagnation?". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55334>, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 14 April 2014

²⁸⁵ Cedric Labrousse, "The new face of the Syrian rebellion". <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#>, *The Arab Chronicle*. 5 March 2014.

Hazzm movement (Literal translation: *Movement of Steadfastness*): Hazzm movement is one of the most recently established rebel groups. The movement of Hazzm was founded on January 25, 2014 and their ideology is considered secularist, moderate Islam, and Islamic democracy.²⁸⁶ ²⁸⁷ Hazzm movement has two major divisions in the north and south.²⁸⁸ The crucial figures of Hazzm movement are the following:

Hazzm movement's Secretary General is Bilal Atar who is also known as Abu Abd-al-Sham.

The leaders have been: Mohammed al-Dahik, also known as Abu Hatem as well as Murshid al-Khalid who is known as Abu al-Muatassim.

The head of military operations is Awdu Abu Zaid. The head of political affairs section is Hamza Shamali who is also known as Abu Hashem.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Charles Lister , "Syrian insurgents acquire TOW missiles".
<http://www.janes.com/article/36499/syrian-insurgents-acquire-tow-missiles> , IHS Jane's 360.
7 April 2014

²⁸⁷ Jeffrey White , "Rebels Worth Supporting: Syria's Harakat Hazm".
<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/rebels-worth-supporting-syrias-harakat-hazm> , Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 28 April 2014

²⁸⁸ Charles Lister , "Syrian insurgents acquire TOW missiles".
<http://www.janes.com/article/36499/syrian-insurgents-acquire-tow-missiles> , IHS Jane's 360.
7 April 2014

²⁸⁹ Charles Lister "American Anti-Tank Weapons Appear in Syrian Rebel Hands (Updated)".
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/american-anti-tank-weapon_b_5119255.html ,
Huffington Post. 11 April 2014.

Hazzm movement was capable of obtaining US-made M220-series TOW heavy anti-tank weapon systems. Hazzm movement has been operating in several provinces including Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Idlib. Based on the ideology, objectives and mission of Hazzm movement, this rebel group is in alliance with the Free Syrian Army. Hazzm movement was established with the merger of 12 rebel groups, some of which defected from Farouq Brigade. The 12 units are: ²⁹⁰

1. 60th Brigade
2. Katibat Abu Asad al-Nimr Kataib Farouq al-Shamal
3. 9th Special Forces Brigade
4. 1st Brigade of Madraat
5. Liwa Ayman Bil Allah
6. Katibat Abi Harith - Farouq Hama
7. Katibat Ahrar al-Salmiya - Farouq Hama
8. Liwa Ahbab Allah
9. Katibat Shaheed Abdul Ghaffar Hamish
10. Katibat Shaheed Abdullahi Bukar
11. Saraya Sawt al-Haq ²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Charles Lister "American Anti-Tank Weapons Appear in Syrian Rebel Hands (Updated)". http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/american-anti-tank-weapon_b_5119255.html , Huffington Post. 11 April 2014.

²⁹¹ Charles Lister "American Anti-Tank Weapons Appear in Syrian Rebel Hands (Updated)". http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-lister/american-anti-tank-weapon_b_5119255.html , Huffington Post. 11 April 2014.

The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood one the oldest movements, was formed in 1945, and officially made an announcement in Feb. 3, 1945 by issuing a manifesto related to its mission and ideology,, and through registering with the Syrian Ministry of Interior. Soon after, the Muslim Brother of Syria was capable of expanding its network from Damascus to other cities including Latakia, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, etc. After the coup in 1963 by the secularist, socialist and nationalist pan-Arabism Ba'ath Party , the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria was banned from operation. ²⁹²

²⁹³ ²⁹⁴

However, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood continued their work until 1982. They intensified their opposition towards the government of Hafiz al- Assad and conducted some armed attacks, and used car bombs against military cadets and governmental institutions. Through their insurgency, the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria was capable of taking control of the city of Hama. In 1982, the government dismantled the organization and activities of the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria, when it carried out the Hama massacre by surrounding the city- bombarding and shelling it. Estimates of 10,000 to 30,000 people were killed in Hama.

²⁹² Mohammad Saied Rassas, "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood: Past and present

" <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/01/syria-muslim-brotherhood-past-present.html#> , January 5 2014 . Original article in Arabic language

<http://alhayat.com/Details/586884>

²⁹³ Wright, Robin, "*Dreams and Shadows : the Future of the Middle East*" Penguin Press, ISBN 1594201110, 2008, p.241.

²⁹⁴ Khaled Yacoub Oweis "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood rise from the ashes," , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/06/us-syria-brotherhood-idUSBRE84504R20120506> , Reuters , 6 May 2012.

The return of the Muslim Brotherhood to Syria began after the uprising in Syria in March 2011, as their leaders began to rebuild their base in Syria in various cities. In 2000, when Bashar al- Assad, son of former President Hafez al- Assad, assumed power from his father, he pardoned and released some of the prisoners of the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria, as part of his political liberalization and openness, which was dubbed as the “Damascus Spring”. The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria is believed to be the most organized and coordinated opposition group. They created the Syrian National Council, and their strategy is to reach out to the governments of other countries and various rebel groups, regardless of differences in ideology, to make alliances. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has repeatedly pledged to “ respect individual rights.” ^{295 296 297}

The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria separates its ideology from the Jihadist and radical Islamist groups in Syria, and they have called for democracy and for establishing a democratic system of governance. In addition, the leaders of Muslim Brother of Syria have been promoting the idea that they are not seeking to dominate Syria. ^{298 299}

²⁹⁵ The Muslim Brotherhood's Official English web site , "Syria Muslim Brotherhood Issues Post-Assad State-for-All Commitment Charter," ikhwanweb.com , 7 April 2012.

²⁹⁶ Khaled Yacoub Oweis "Syria's Muslim Brotherhood rise from the ashes," , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/06/us-syria-brotherhood-idUSBRE84504R20120506> , Reuters , 6 May 2012.

²⁹⁷ Wright, Robin, “*Dreams and Shadows : the Future of the Middle East*” Penguin Press, ISBN 1594201110, 2008.

²⁹⁸ Liz Sly , “Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood is gaining influence over anti-Assad revolt” , http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrias-muslim-brotherhood-is-gaining-influence-over-anti-assad-revolt/2012/05/12/gIQAtIoJLU_story.html , Washington Post 12 May 2012

The Muslim Brotherhood of Syria has control over some of the rebel groups in Syria, particularly the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, and they provide funds to these groups. According to the newspaper the Telegraph, the Muslim brotherhood of Syria has created a separate militia group called the "Armed Men of the Muslim Brotherhood", which operates in several cities including the capital, Damascus, Idlib, Hama, Homs, etc. ^{300 301}

The Union of Free Syrian Students: The Union of Free Syrian Students is an umbrella organization, which is comprised, of faculty members and students from universities across Syria. This group advocates civil disobedience and non-violent tactics to protest against the government of Bashar al- Assad. The student union also advocates a democratic and pluralistic system of governance. The Union of Free Syrian Students mobilize demonstrations and calls for “civilized and humanitarian” and unarmed ways of protests. The Spokesperson of the group is Mr. Jawad Al Khatib. The group’s Founding statement is the following : ^{302 303}

²⁹⁹ Raphael Lefevre , “ The Muslim Brotherhood Prepares for a Come Back in Syria” , Carnegie Endowment Institute , http://carnegieendowment.org/files/muslim_bro_comback.pdf , May 2013

³⁰⁰ Ruth Sherlock & Richard Spencer , "Muslim Brotherhood establishes militia inside Syria". <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9450587/Muslim-Brotherhood-establishes-militia-inside-Syria.html> , The Telegraph. 3 August 2013.

³⁰¹ Liz Sly , “Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood is gaining influence over anti-Assad revolt” , http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrias-muslim-brotherhood-is-gaining-influence-over-anti-assad-revolt/2012/05/12/gIQAtIoJLU_story.html , Washington Post 12 May 2012

³⁰² Abeer , Founding statement for the union of Free Syrian Students , Local Coordination Committees , <http://www.lccsyria.org/1958> , September 2011

³⁰³ Revolt of the Students , Adopt the Revolution , <https://www.adoptrevolution.org/en/revolt-of-the-students/>

“Since the beginning of the peaceful popular revolution in Syria in 15 March, students were one of the firsts to participate in demonstrations demanding freedom and dignity in the face of oppression, dictatorship, corruption and a single-party governance system that controls all aspects of the government. All of which have been enforced and practiced by the Syrian regime for decades now.

“This revolution was confronted by the Syrian regime from the first day, using their army and intelligence forces as well as gangs of thugs. This spread the demonstration to larger areas, making the revolutionists more determined to march forward with this revolution until the regime’s downfall, for it lost its legitimacy since the first bullet was fired at peaceful unarmed demonstrators. Since the illegitimate regime continues killing, displacing and detaining people, affecting tens of thousands of victims; and since we were never distant from the nationalist movements throughout modern history, proving to the world that students are the heart of revolutions and its everlasting fuel, we believe that it is time revolution reaches the fences of all our universities.

“In conjunction with the launch of the new academic year, we find it important to have an organization body that groups all revolutionary students. Consequently, we are launching the Union of Free Syrian Students to be the democratic, political and syndicalistic station in the life of the free Syrian students’ movement.

“The main goals of the Union of Free Syrian Students are:

- Combine the energy of the free Syrian students in all the Syrian universities

- Work closely to organize demonstrations and general strikes inside universities and schools, and outside them in civilized and humanitarian ways while being committed to the peacefulness of these activities.
- Work together with the rest of the revolution's groups, unions and committees in order to topple the regime that has already lost its legitimacy, while maintaining national unity in the process.
- Work on building a civil state that has a democratic and pluralistic system to ensure freedom, justice and equality for all citizens

Victory to our revaluation

Shame and disgrace to the killers

Freedom for our detainees” ³⁰⁴

The Farouq Brigades

The Farouq Brigades was founded in the province of Homs and the city of Al Rastan under the banner of the Free Syrian army, and its ideology is based on moderate Islam. The Farouq Brigades has seen the rise and fall of their influence as it expanded quickly in 2012, with its power declining later. The leader of the Farouq Brigades was Lieutenant Abdul Razaq Tlass, who defected from the Syrian Armed Forces. He is a nephew of the former Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlass. ³⁰⁵ ³⁰⁶In October 2012,

³⁰⁴ Abeer , Founding statement for the union of Free Syrian Students , Local Coordination Committees , <http://www.lccsyria.org/1958> , September 2011

³⁰⁵ Abouzeid, Rania , "Syria's Up-and-Coming Rebels: Who Are the Farouq Brigades?". <http://world.time.com/2012/10/05/syrias-up-and-coming-rebels-who-are-the-farouq-brigades-2/print/> , Time Magazine. 5 October 2012 .

Lieutenant Abdul Razaq Tlass was replaced with Abu Sayeh Juneidi, after the sex scandal video case.³⁰⁷

This rebel group claims to have approximately 20,000 fighters. The Farouq Brigade has been known under various other names including Al Farouq Brigade , the Omar Farouq Brigade in Syria, Al-Farouq Brigade , Farouq Battalions , and Omar Farouq Brigade. The Farouq Brigades is reported to be well -funded.^{308 309}

Like many other rebel groups, the Farouq Brigades utilizes social media such as Facebook, YouTube, etc in order to project visibility and raise funds from domestic regional and Western powers. In one video, Abu Sakkar , one of the commanders of a Farouq Brigades' sub-unit called the Independent Omar al-Farouq Brigade, was shown mutilating the body of a of Syrian soldier and taking a bite out off some parts of it.³¹⁰ He encouraged other Syrian rebels to do the same against the Alawites who support the government of Bashar al- Assad.^{311 312}

³⁰⁶ Holliday, Joseph. "Syria's Armed Opposition".
http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrias_Armed_Opposition.pdf , Institute for the Study of War. March 2012

³⁰⁷ Marrouch, Rima , "Syrian Rebel Leader Accuses Regime Of Fabricating Scandalous Video" ,
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/08/20/159375256/syrian-rebel-leader-accuses-regime-of-fabricating-scandalous-video> , NPR , 20 August 2012 .

³⁰⁸ Farouq Brigades, Terrorism and Research Analysis Consortium ,
<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/farouq-brigade>

³⁰⁹ Jonathan Marcus , "Gruesome Syria video pinpoints West's dilemma".
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22521161> , BBC. 14 May 2013

³¹⁰ Edited Version, Youtube , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9IRn5boaik>

³¹¹ Reporting by Oliver Holmes; Editing by Alistair Lyon , "Syrian rebel bites heart of dead soldier: video" , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE94CoEH20130513?irpc=932> , Mon, May 13 08:38 AM EDT

The issue put an international spotlight on this group when Human Rights Watch pointed out that the video was authentic and had been validated. Human Rights Watch pointed out in a statement ""The mutilation of the bodies of enemies is a war crime. But the even more serious issue is the very rapid descent into sectarian rhetoric and violence".³¹³

The Free Syrian Army pointed out that they will put this commander on trial and these kinds of actions in war are not accepted. The Farouq Brigades lost its power during the year 2013, and lost control of the strategic border, which crosses Tal Al Abyad as well as the Raqqa Governorate. Two factors contributed to the decline of power and influence of the Farouq Brigades; this rebel group split into several factions- some Islamist and some secularist- and it lost its battle against the increasing influence and power of the Islamist groups such as The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Ahrar ash-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra, etc. The name of this rebel group is inspired by the name of Prophet's follower and second Caliph of Muslims, Omar Ebn Al Khattab.^{314 315}

³¹² Channel 4 News , Mani, "Battle for Syria: on the ground with the Farouk brigade". <http://www.channel4.com/news/battle-for-syria-on-the-ground-with-the-farouk-brigade> , Channel 4 News . 11 September 2012.

³¹³ Reporting by Oliver Holmes; Editing by Alistair Lyon , "Syrian rebel bites heart of dead soldier: video" , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE94CoEH20130513?irpc=932> , Mon, May 13 08:38 AM EDT

³¹⁴ Malik Al-Abdeh , "Rebels, Inc.". http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/21/rebels_inc , Foreign Policy. 21 November 2013.

³¹⁵ Human Rights Watch , Syria: Brigade Fighting in Homs Implicated in Atrocities" . <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/13/syria-brigade-fighting-homs-implicated-atrocities> , Human Rights Watch. 13 May 2013

The Qalamoun Liberation Front: The Qalamoun Liberation Front is a non-Islamist rebel group fighting against the government of Bashar al-Assad in Damascus. The Qalamoun Liberation Front was involved in the attack against the Christian city of Ma'loula in Damascus, alongside the Free Syrian Army and Jabhat Al Nusra. Nevertheless, the spokesman for the Ahrar al-Sham and the Qalamoun Liberation front, blamed the Islamist group Jabhat Al Nusra, and Amer al-Qalamouni for attacking the Christian-dominated city of Ma'loula. Mr. Amer al-Qalamouni pointed out to BBC World News "The situation was going on for months, but suddenly the al-Nusra Front decided to attack the checkpoint... Members of Ahrar al-Sham and the Qalamoun Liberation Front then participated in the clashes. The aim was never an attack against Christians but to deal with the checkpoint itself". A Nun in Maaloula's St Takla monastery pointed out to BBC World News "I told the rebels: If you go on to every village and there are battles and lives lost, then you are not going to get rid of Bashar al-Assad. You need to sit and talk to find a solution."^{316 317}

The Northern Storm Brigade (Liwa Asifat al-Shamal): The Northern Storm Brigade was formed in the city of Azaz, in the province of Aleppo, primarily by a business and upper class group. Some view it as a secular rebel group affiliated with the Free Syrian Army

³¹⁶ Lina Sinjab , "Christian villagers cast doubt on Syria jihadist 'threat'" <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24148322> , 18 September 2013 Last updated at 13:40 ET

³¹⁷ Scott Lucas , EA WorldView , " Syria 1st-Hand: Seeking Truth About the "Extremist Jihadist Attack" on a Christian City" , http://eaworldview.com/tag_base/tag_name/ahrar-al-sham-and-qalamoun-liberation-front/ , 11:24, 22.Sep 2013

and it seeks to fight against the government of Bashar al- Assad as well as against the radical Islamist rebel groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.³¹⁸ This rebel group was weakened by the increase of fundamentalist Islamist fighters. According to Chris Looney “In many ways, the story of the NSB parallels the story of the revolution. Originally formed to combat the regime, internal funding interests impeded the group from actively coordinating with others, hurting the cohesiveness of the rebellion.” ³¹⁹ Northern Storm Brigade is led by former Syrian colonel, Abdul Jabbar Ogaidi. ³²⁰

The Ahrar Souriya Brigade (Brigade of Free Men of Syria): The Ahrar Souriya Brigade is considered a moderate Islamist rebel group which is in alliance with the Free Syrian Army and under the control of the *Supreme Military Council* (SMC) of the Free Syrian Army . Col Qassem Saad al-Din, who was an air force pilot from the city of Rastan in the North, established Ahrar Souriya Brigade . ^{321 322}

³¹⁸ Chris Lonney, “The Northern Storm Brigade: It’s History, Current Status, and Why It Matters” , Informed Comments, Thoughts on The Middle East, History and Religion , <http://www.juancole.com/news/2014/03/northern-brigade-matters> , Mar. 19, 2014

³¹⁹ Chris Lonney, “The Northern Storm Brigade: It’s History, Current Status, and Why It Matters” , Informed Comments, Thoughts on The Middle East, History and Religion , <http://www.juancole.com/news/2014/03/northern-brigade-matters> , Mar. 19, 2014

³²⁰ Azhar Vadi , Understanding Syria’s rebel groups – Who’s who? , <http://www.ciibroadcasting.com/2013/10/25/26586/> , Cii News , Cii Analysis , 25 October 2013

³²¹ Profile Syrian rebel group, BBC World News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

³²² Azhar Vadi , Understanding Syria’s rebel groups – Who’s who? , <http://www.ciibroadcasting.com/2013/10/25/26586/> , Cii News , Cii Analysis , 25 October 2013

The Sham Legion (*Faylaq Al-Sham*): The Sham Legion, a recently formed alliance from March 10, 2014, is considered a moderate Islamic rebel group which split from the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria. The leader of Sham Legion is Mondher Saras, and this moderate Islamist rebel group is made up of nineteen various factions, some of which were linked to the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria. The Sham Legion's fighters operate in various Syrian cities including Homs, Hama, Idlib, etc. ^{323 324 325}

The Sham Legion has been involved in several important domestic battles against the Syrian government's armed forces including the Battle of Idlib, the Battle of Mork, etc. . The Sham Legion was capable of attracting funding from Saudi Arabia after their split from the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria. According to Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir "In recent months, Syria's military opposition has witnessed the emergence of many large rebel alliances. Some of the brigades have unified to fight the regime and Islamic extremists by coordinating effectively while others were seeking visibility to showcase their relevance and get foreign funding. Other rebels have united because of all of the above and, in addition, the ambition to spread a certain kind of ideology to the rest of

³²³ Alexandra Valiente, , "Nineteen Syrian Opposition Groups Unite under 'Al-Sham Legion'". <http://syria360.wordpress.com/2014/03/11/nineteen-syrian-opposition-groups-unite-under-al-sham-legion/> , Syria 360°. 11 March 2014

³²⁴ *Democratic Revolution, Syrian Style* "Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law: The Goals and Guiding Principles of the Islamic Front and Its Allies".. 17 May 2014.

³²⁵ Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir , "The Sham Legion: Syria's Moderate Islamists". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55344> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 15 April 2014. Retrieved 19 May 2014.

the country. The Sham Legion, or *Faylaq al-Sham* in Arabic, belongs to that last category.”³²⁶

In addition, Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir point out that “aims to “unify the ranks” of Syria’s moderate Islamists.... While that umbrella group has openly called to transform Syria into a Sunni theocracy, leaders of the Sham Legion that we have interviewed insist on “ending injustices by extremist groups,” “promoting democracy,” and “defending religion.””³²⁷ Opponents of the Sham Legion are the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad and other radical, hardline and Jihadist groups including Jabhat Al Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.³²⁸

6.1.4 The Fourth Domestic Battle: Ethnic Armed Rebel Groups

The East Turkistan Islamic Movements: The East Turkistan Islamic Movement is a Sunni Islamist and a foreign militant group operating in Syria. Its ideology is anchored in Uyghur nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. The East Turkistan Islamic Party

³²⁶ Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir , "The Sham Legion: Syria’s Moderate Islamists". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55344> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 15 April 2014. Retrieved 19 May 2014.

³²⁷ Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir , "The Sham Legion: Syria’s Moderate Islamists". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55344> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 15 April 2014. Retrieved 19 May 2014.

³²⁸ Raphaël Lefèvre and Ali El Yassir , "The Sham Legion: Syria’s Moderate Islamists". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55344> , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 15 April 2014. Retrieved 19 May 2014.

is also known as the Turkistan Islamic Movement or The Turkestan Islamic Party, and this rebel group was formed originally in Western China by Uyghur militants. ³²⁹ ³³⁰ ³³¹

Their first mission an objective was to make East Turkestan an independent state and create an Islamic state in Xinjiang, in China. The East Turkistan Islamic Movement is listed as terrorist organization by the Chinese government, the European Union, the United Nations, the governments of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan , and Kyrgyzstan , and listed on the United States Department of State's Terrorist Exclusion List . ³³² They operate in Afghanistan, the Pakistan in area of Northern Waziristan, Syria and Central Asia. The East Turkistan Islamic Movement has had several leaders including Abdul Shakoor al-Turkistani , Hasan Mahsum, Abdul Haq , and Abdullah Mansour. The East Turkistan Islamic Movement has recruited also women for the cause of Jihad and has released videos showing the women firing weapons. The East Turkistan Islamic Movement released a video announcing the establishment of a Syria division and calling for the toppling the government of Bashar al- Assad. According to the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , TRAC, this is a translation of one of their videos which identifies their mission:

³²⁹ MacLean, William , "Islamist group calls Tiananmen attack 'jihadi operation': SITE" . <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/23/us-china-attack-claim-idUSBRE9AMoB520131123> , *Reuters* , 2013-11-23

³³⁰ East Turkistan Islamic Movement, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , TRAC , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/turkistan-islamic-party-tip>

³³¹ Bashir, Shaykh , "[Why Are We Fighting China?](#)". NEFA Foundation . 2008-07-01.

³³² United States Department of State , "U.S. Department of State Terrorist Exclusion List" , <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123086.htm> , Updated on December 29, 2004

“Oh! Turkey Republic of Muslim people, we are a country connected by the Islamic solidarity. The words solidarity with us means “non-master of all things”, except only for Allah, [PBUH, Muhammad is his Messenger... We invite you to get to Paradise Road, you set fire to our children. We ask you to join Islam, and you refuse to give us peace.

“Name of God, we will take good care of you - in fact, killing and slaughtering you are a good thing. We are Muslims, and you are the enemy, Oh!... We're killing and slaughter you with a vengeance. We are going to cut you, piece by piece. You are liars, Oh! Eating apes and pigs, Oh! Eating worms and whales, Oh! Eating worms and snakes. May God curse you and all like you. We are people who love death as you love wine and woman of the country. AnLaruo (?), we will come. We want to kill the Buddhists of the East and the West. Killing and slaughtering you are a good thing. On the orders of Allah, purify your filth off the floor is a good thing. You will soon see. We pray God bring you tortured, with his ability, through the Mujahideen and to destroy you.”^{333 334 335}

The Kurdish Islamic Front: The Kurdish Islamic Front is a small Islamist armed rebel group with less than 1,000 fighters, fighting against the Syrian government and its armed Forces. Based on its ideology of Islamic Salafism and its combat objectives of creating an Islamist state, the Kurdish Islamic Front is in alliance with other hard-line

³³³ East Turkistan Islamic Movement, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , TRAC , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/turkistan-islamic-party-tip>

³³⁴ Jihadist News, “TIP Division in Syria Releases Video Promoting Cause, Inciting for Jihad” , <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/tip-division-in-syria-releases-video-promoting-cause-inciting-for-jihad.html> , June 6, 2014

³³⁵ MacLean, William , "Islamist group calls Tiananmen attack 'jihadi operation': SITE" . <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/23/us-china-attack-claim-idUSBRE9AMoB520131123> , *Reuters* , 2013-11-23

Islamist groups including Jabhat Al Nusra, Sham Legion, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant , Liwaa al-Umma, Liwa al-Haqq, Ahrar ash-Sham, Al Nusra Front, the Army of Mujahedeen , Ajnad Al Sham Islamic Union, Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade , etc. The leader of the Kurdish Islamic Front is Abu Abdullah al-Kurdi, and the spokesperson is Salaheddin al-Kurdi. In a statement issued by seven Islamist groups, it declared that the Kurdish Islamic Front joined other Islamist groups including Liwa al-Tawhid, Liwa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Sham, and Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham to create a more powerful and new Islamic Front. ^{336 337 338 339 340}

6.1.4.1 Kurdish Armed Groups

The Popular Protection Units (YPG), (In Kurdish: *Heineken Parisian*): The Popular Protection Units is Kurdish armed militia group which was established after the conflict erupted in Syria. Their mission and objective is to protect the Kurdish areas from the advancement of any rebel groups. The Popular Protection Units' fighters have clashed

³³⁶ BBC World News, "Leading Syrian rebel groups form new Islamic Front ", <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25053525> , 22 November 2013 Last updated at 13:57 ET

³³⁷ Aron Lund, "The Politics of the Islamic Front, Part 5: The Kurds". <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54367> , *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Thursday, 30 January 2014

³³⁸ Sinjab, Lina , "Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003> , *BBC*. 17 October 2013

³³⁹ Valerie Syzbala, "A Power Move by Syria's Rebel Forces". <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-power-move-by-syrias-rebel-forces.html> , Institute for the Study of War. 22 November 2013

³⁴⁰ "Freedom, Human Rights, Rule of Law: The Goals and Guiding Principles of the Islamic Front and Its Allies". *Democratic Revolution, Syrian Style*. 17 May 2014.

with the Free Syrian Army and have been capable of repelling the Free Syrian Army in some of the conflicts. The general commander of the Popular Protection Units is Sipan Hemo and the spokespersons are Khebat Ibrahim and Rêdûr Xelîl. The size of the Popular Protection Units are between the range of 45,000 to 50,000 fighters and staff. In addition, the Popular Protection Units are the Kurdish Supreme Committee's official armed wing.^{341 342 343 344}

The Asayish: The Asayish, which literally means security in the Kurdish language is a Kurdish security organization established in the Kurdistan area of Syria, after the conflict erupted in Syria. The security forces of the Asayish are estimated to be 4,000.³⁴⁵ Jabhat al-Akrad (the Kurdish Front Brigade): Jabhat al Akrad was formed in February 20th, 2013 under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army in the Kurdish areas outside of the province Aleppo. According to the commander of Jabhat al Akrad, this armed group is comprised of both Kurd and non-Kurd fighters and it operates across the country unlike the People's Defense Units. Jabhat Al Akrad has been fighting alongside the Free

³⁴¹ Hawar News in Arabic, <http://hawarnews.com/index.php/2013-02-14-17-56-33/2093-2013-05-08-07-16-14Hawarnews.com>. 08/12/2013

³⁴² Gold, Danny , "Meet the YPG, the Kurdish Militia That Doesn't Want Help from Anyone". <http://www.vice.com/read/meet-the-ypg> , Vice.com , 31 October 2010

³⁴³ Independent European Daily Express, "Kurds Build Bridges At Last" , http://www.iede.co.uk/news/2013_3209/kurds-build-bridges-last , Sunday, October 13, 2013 - 10:24Inter Press Service

³⁴⁴ Marine Olivesi , "In Syria, Kurds are fighting their own war against Islamists, and winning" , <http://www.pri.org/stories/2013-11-26/syria-kurds-are-fighting-their-own-war-against-islamists-and-winning> , Public Radio International, 26 November 2013

³⁴⁵ Independent European Daily Express, "Kurds Build Bridges At Last" , http://www.iede.co.uk/news/2013_3209/kurds-build-bridges-last , Sunday, October 13, 2013 - 10:24Inter Press Service

Syrian Army against radical Islamist rebel groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Jabhat Al Akrad has approximately 7,000 fighters and they were successful in pushing the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant out of the town of Azaz in the province of Aleppo, as well as capturing the head of Jabhatt Al Nusra, Abu Musab.

346 347 348

In an interview with ANF/AZAZ, the commander of the Jabhat Al Akrad, Heci Ehmet El Kurdi , pointed out to the objectives of this armed group “We are not like the YPG (People’s Defense Units) which is the national defense force of the Rojava Kurdistan and carries out activities in Rojava. We on the other hand carry out our activities throughout the whole of Syrian territory. During our foundation process, we told almost all circles and belief groups about our project and asked their opinion. We announced our formation on February 20th, 2013. El-Akrad is not an organization that consists of Kurds alone. It consists of fighters from all belief groups and nations. The objective of our foundation is to defend all Kurds outside Rojava and all those who demand help, and at the same time to take part in the revolution in our own name and under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army. Arabs call Kurds ‘Akrad’ and this is why our name is Jabhat El-Akrad (The El-Akrad Front), Kurdish Front in other words. We deliberately chose the word Kurd in order that we are present with our Kurdish identity and do not

³⁴⁶ The Rojava Report , News from the Revolution in Rojava and Wider Kurdistan , AFN/AZAZ, Bahoz Deniz , <http://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/04/20/interview-with-jabhat-al-akrad-commander/> , April 20, 2014

³⁴⁷ Van Wilgenburg, Wladimir , "Syrian Kurds, rebels find common enemy in ISIS". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/syria-kurds-pyd-ypg-isis-rebels-kobani-afriin.html> , *Al Monitor*. 27 March 2014 .

³⁴⁸ Civiroglu, Mutlu , "Kurdish Commander: Jihadi Groups in Syria Have Hijacked FSA". <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/11082013> , Rudaw English. 11 August 2013.

act on behalf of other groups. We formed our first organization in the Ezaz region and our first fighters were Kurdish youths.”³⁴⁹

Heci Ehmet El Kurdi, the commander of the Jabhat Al Akrad, believes that the reasons behind why Bashar al- Assad and his government are still in power is due to the support of Iran and Hezbollah. The commander of the Jabhat Al Akrad points out that “If it had been left to the state Syria would have fallen long ago. It went beyond the state a long time ago. It is Iran and Hezbollah which are keeping the regime on its feet. There is the Baath regime but unofficially the country has passed [under the control of] Iran and Iran is governing. It is Iran and Hezbollah which are controlling [the situation] and doing the fighting. On the Syrian War Council there are five people; two are from Iran and two are from Hezbollah. One is from the Syrian regime. In Syria the brain is Iran and the body is Hezbollah.” ³⁵⁰

The Kurdish Union Party (Yekîti): The Kurdish Union Party is a Kurdish organization calling for the independence of Kurdistan from Syria. Isma‘il Hami is Secretary of the Kurdish Union Party in Syria (Yekîti), and he is based in the city of Al Qhamishli. Isma‘il Hami has stated that the Kurdish Union Party (Yekiti) can cooperate with other Syrian opposition groups including the Damascus Declaration and the National Union of the Forces for Democratic Change, and his party is also not opposed to the Muslim

³⁴⁹ The Rojava Report , News from the Revolution in Rojava and Wider Kurdistan , AFN/AZAZ, Bahoż Deniz , <http://rojavarreport.wordpress.com/2014/04/20/interview-with-jabhat-al-akrad-commander/> , April 20, 2014

³⁵⁰ The Rojava Report , News from the Revolution in Rojava and Wider Kurdistan , AFN/AZAZ, Bahoż Deniz , <http://rojavarreport.wordpress.com/2014/04/20/interview-with-jabhat-al-akrad-commander/> , April 20, 2014

Brotherhood of Syria. Isma‘il Hami points out that: “We, as Yekîî, have taken part in the demonstrations from the beginning and have been on the side of the revolution since the first day. Three months ago, we issued a joint declaration with the Future Movement and the Azadî. We declared that we are taking part in the demonstrations. This is also true of the Yekîî leadership....”. ³⁵¹

Kurdish Union Party (Yekiti) is not seeking to topple the government of Bashar al-Assad, but to introduce changes within the socio-political and socio- economic spheres of the Syrian government. ³⁵²

6.1.4.2 Assyrian and Christian Armed Groups

The Syriac Union Party: The Syriac Union Party is a political party, which aims at protecting the rights of Christians and Assyrians. The Syriac Union Party is opposed to the government of Bashar al- Assad and the party believes that President Assad and the Syrian government have not protected the social and legal rights of Christians. The members and proponents of the Syriac Union Party attacked the Syrian embassy in Stockholm, Sweden. ³⁵³³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Yekiti Media, “Our goal is the self-government of the Kurds in Syrian Kurdistan” <http://yekiti-media.org/archive/nuce.php?z=en&id=196> , 2011-10-02

³⁵² Yekiti Media, “Our goal is the self-government of the Kurds in Syrian Kurdistan” <http://yekiti-media.org/archive/nuce.php?z=en&id=196> , 2011-10-02

³⁵³ The Secretariat of Information of the Syriac Union Party in Syria , [http://suroyotv.com/en/images/files/The Syriac Union Party In Syria entered the syrian embassy in Sweden.pdf](http://suroyotv.com/en/images/files/The_Syriac_Union_Party_In_Syria_entered_the_syrian_embassy_in_Sweden.pdf) , August 14 2012

The Secretariat of Information of the Syriac Union Party of Syria in Stockholm Sweden issued a written statement on August 14, 2012, noting: “That regime works to protect the Christians!!! These repressive bloody massacres of our people will not be forgiven. We as Syrian Christians we condemn Bashar’s terrorist attack against our people after we made sure that the regime has converted it’s embassy in Stockholm into an office to Assad intelligence to collect all information about anti-Syrians regime and to torture them with their families. We decided to protest peacefully and in a civilized manner towards the Embassy of the oppressive regime. We wanted our voice and our message to be reached to all nations and for our people in general and Christian Syriac especially our churches and clergy who have not yet engaged in the ranks of the revolution against the Syrian regime of oppression and crime. Our purpose, is to unite the efforts of our people in order to establish our legal rights, to preserve our heritage, civilization, our culture and our political rights equally with all the components of Syria.” ³⁵⁵

The Syriac Military Council (MFS): The Syriac Military Council is a military organization, which was founded on January 8, 2013. A year after its establishment, the Syrian Military Council (MFS) made an announcement that it had joined the People's Protection Units (YPG), an official armed wing of the Kurdish Supreme

³⁵⁴ Mal Colm, "Syrian embassy protest sees several detained in Sweden". <http://www.icenews.is/2012/08/15/syrian-embassy-protest-sees-several-detained-in-sweden/#ixzz2666E5Wao> , IceNews. 15 August 2012.

³⁵⁵ The Secretariat of Information of the Syriac Union Party in Syria , [http://suroyotv.com/en/images/files/The Syriac Union Party In Syria entered the syrian embassy in Sweden.pdf](http://suroyotv.com/en/images/files/The_Syriac_Union_Party_In_Syria_entered_the_syrian_embassy_in_Sweden.pdf) , August 14 2012

Committee.³⁵⁶ According to Carl Drott, the Syriac Military Council (MSF) has recruited members under eighteen years old. Carl Drott stated “The teenagers from the Sutoro have instead mostly joined the Syriac Military Council (MFS), another PYD-backed group in the Syriac Christian political network. The MFS operates armed units more geared to front warfare than internal police work. The formal age limit for both the Sutoro and the MFS is eighteen, but several Sutoro members told me they were younger than that on my last visit. Both the Sutoro and the MFS deny that they have any underage members, but it seems highly unlikely that these groups would have forced their existing underage members to leave.”³⁵⁷ The Syriac Military Council’s mission and objective is to stand up for the social, economic, legal and political rights of the Syriac community across Syria, as well as the to overthrow the government of Bashar Al Assad.

³⁵⁸ ³⁵⁹

The Sutoro: The Sutoro is a Syriac and Christian militia group which began operating in the town of al-Qahtaniyah in the northeastern part of Syria, was founded after the uprising erupted in 2011. The Sutoro is in alliance with the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and some experts view it as a security and military wing of the Democratic Union

³⁵⁶ Gold, Danny , "Meet the YPG, the Kurdish Militia That Doesn't Want Help from Anyone". <http://www.vice.com/read/meet-the-ypg> , Vice.com , 31 October 2010

³⁵⁷ Carl Drott, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54797> , Carnegie Endowment Organization, Friday, March 7, 2014

³⁵⁸ Gold, Danny , "Meet the YPG, the Kurdish Militia That Doesn't Want Help from Anyone". <http://www.vice.com/read/meet-the-ypg> , Vice.com , 31 October 2010

³⁵⁹ MUTLU CIVIROGLU , “YPG Commander: Kurds Are Bulwark Against Islamic Extremism in Syria” , <http://rudaw.net/english/interview/22072013> , 22/7/2013

Party (PYD). According to Carl Drott, the operation and size of this Syriac and Christian militia group has increased since its establishment. Carl Drott notes that “First of all, the group is growing. The deputy head of the Sutoro’s central leadership, Louay Shamun, tells me there are plans to open new Sutoro branches in three other places, in addition to the existing groups in al-Qahtaniyah, al-Malikiyah, and Qamishli.” There are approximately 1,000 fighters in this Syriac and Christian militia group. ^{360 361 362 363}

6.1.5 The Fifth Domestic Battle : Other Major Armed and Rebel Coalitions

The Martyrs of Syria Brigades (Shuhada Suriya): The Martyrs of Syria Brigades, which is a sub-unit of Free Syrian Army, was founded in the province of Idlib in late 2011. The leader of the Martyrs of Syria Brigades is Jamal Maarouf and this rebel group has an estimated 7,000 fighters which operate mainly in the northwestern part of Syria, in the province of Aleppo, and 33 villages. It later expanded its operation to the South, in the province of Hama and in the north, close to the Turkish border, fighting against the government of Bashar al- Assad and the Syrian government’s armed forces . The

³⁶⁰ Carl Drott, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54797> , Carnegie Endowment Organization, Friday, March 7, 2014

³⁶¹ Von Peter Steinbach, "Bürgerkrieg : Die Christen in Syrien ziehen in die Schlacht - Nachrichten Politik - Ausland - DIE WELT".

<http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article121122500/Die-Christen-in-Syrien-ziehen-in-die-Schlacht.html> , Welt.de. 23 October 2013.

³⁶² al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad , "Christian Militia and Political Dynamics in Syria". <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/christian-militia-political-dynamics-syria/> , Syria Comment , 23 February 2014 .

³⁶³ Carl Drott , "Qamishli’s Cold War". <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62667> , Middle East Online, Le Monde diplomatique Distributed by Agency Global , 18 November 2013 .

Martyrs of Syria Brigades is believed not to pursue Islamist ideology. It has been known under other names such as Jabal al-Zawiya Martyrs' Brigade, Shuhada Jebel al-Zawiyah Battalion, Syrian Martyrs' Brigade, The original name of Martyrs of Syria Brigades was Martyrs of Jabal al-Zawiya Brigade.³⁶⁴³⁶⁵

Suqour al-Sham Brigade (Falcons of the Levant Brigade): Suqour al-Sham Brigade is one of the most powerful rebel and armed brigades and was formed in September 2011, in the province of Idlib, in the city of Sarjeh in the Jabal al-Zawiya region, under the leadership of Ahmed al-Sheikh, who is also known as Abu Issa. Suqour al-Sham Brigade, quickly expanded in its size and operations to the provinces of Aleppo and the capital city of Damascus. The group has claimed that it has between 9,000 to 10,000 fighters engaged in combat against the Syrian government and its armed forces. Suqour al-Sham Brigade was a member of the Free Syrian Army and, later, it joined the Islamic Front and the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front. ³⁶⁶ ³⁶⁷ The ideology of Suqour al-Sham Brigade is Islamism and they desire to establish an Islamist state based on Sharia law and run by a Majlis-ash-Shura. The group is opposed to secularism, representative democracy, or a Western style of governance. Suqour al-Sham Brigade has also been

³⁶⁴ Profile Syrian rebel group, BBC World News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

³⁶⁵ Martyrs of Syria Brigades , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , TRAC ,<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/martyrs-syria-brigade>

³⁶⁶ Mariam Karouny, "Syria's Islamist rebels join forces against Assad" , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/11/us-syria-crisis-rebels-idUSBRE89AoY920121011> , Reuters. 11 October 2012.

³⁶⁷ Elizabeth O'Bagy, Middle East Report 4, Syria's Political Opposition, Institute for the Study of War, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrias_Political_Opposition.pdf , April 2012 .

known under the following names: Suqour al-Sham Brigade, Hawks of Syria, Sukur al Sham, Falcons of Syria, Falcons of Greater Syria, Falcons of the Levant Brigade, Suqūr as-Shām, Liwa' Dawoud, Liwa' Ahfad as-Sahaba, Sham Falcons Brigade, and Suqour al-Sham Brigades. Abu Hussein al-Dik was one of the senior commanders of Suqour al-Sham Brigade, and was killed by Al Qaeda fighters. The group has fought in crucial domestic battles against the Syrian armed forces including the Battle of Aleppo, the Idlib conflict, and they tension with other radical Islamist groups including Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. ^{368 369 370 371}

6.1.6 The Sixth Domestic Battle: Independent Armed and Rebel Groups

The National Unity Brigades (Kata'ib al-Wahda al-Wataniya): The National Unity Brigades are comprised of several brigades operating in the city of Damascus, Hama, and its suburbs, Idlib, and Suweida, under the banner of the Free Syrian Army. The National Unity Brigades was founded in August 2012, and is estimated to have several

³⁶⁸ "Al-Qaeda fighters kill Syrian rebel leaders", Aljazeera Middle East News , <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/02/al-qaeda-fighters-kill-syrian-rebel-leader-2014229511898140.html> , 02 Feb 2014 15:27

³⁶⁹ Profile Syrian rebel group, BBC World News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

³⁷⁰ Suqour al-Sham Brigade , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , TRAC , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/sukour-al-sham-brigade>

³⁷¹ AFP news Agency , "New rebel alliance wants Syria as 'Islamic State'". <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/new-rebel-alliance-wants-syria-as-islamic-state.aspx?pageID=238&nID=58597&NewsCatID=352> , 26 November 2013.

hundred members and fighters. ³⁷² ³⁷³According to Darth Nader who conducted an interview with a member of the National Unity Brigades, a former student of Damascus University who was attempting to obtain a bachelor's degree in Information Technology- its sub-units of National Unity Brigades are the followings: Martyrs of Badama Brigade, Martyrs of the Wastani Mountains Brigade , Ahmad Maryoud Brigade, Abdel Rahman Al Shabandar Brigade, Martyrs of the Syrian Revolution brigade, Tamer Al-Awam, Joul Jamal Brigade, and Youssef Al-Admeh Brigade. The National Unity Brigades accept the parameters of the Geneva conventions.³⁷⁴ The goals of National Unity Brigades are the following: ³⁷⁵

1. To topple the regime of Bashar Al Assad
2. To establish a pluralistic democratic system of governance which includes all groups and minorities

³⁷² Darth Nader , “Interview with member of the “National Unity Brigades” of the FSA” , <http://darthnader.net/2012/10/17/interview-with-member-of-the-national-unity-brigades-of-the-fsa/> , October 17, 2012

³⁷³ Carnegie Endowment For International Peace , “Syria’s Armed Opposition: A Brief Overview” , <http://m.ceip.org/2013/02/07/syria-s-armed-opposition-brief-overview/fbgf&lang=en> , February 7, 2013

³⁷⁴ Darth Nader , “Interview with member of the “National Unity Brigades” of the FSA” , <http://darthnader.net/2012/10/17/interview-with-member-of-the-national-unity-brigades-of-the-fsa/> , **October 17, 2012**

³⁷⁵ Darth Nader , “Interview with member of the “National Unity Brigades” of the FSA” , <http://darthnader.net/2012/10/17/interview-with-member-of-the-national-unity-brigades-of-the-fsa/> , **October 17, 2012**

When Darth Nader asked the member of National Unity Brigades “Do the National Unity Brigades have a position on foreign military intervention?”, he responded “ The Syrian people are able to deal with their issues from the inside. Foreign states are not charity foundations, and we reject any intervention that is conditioned on anything that will restrict the future of Syria. But we also acknowledge that the decision is ultimately up to the Syrian people.” Although National Unity Brigades reject establishing an Islamist state, this rebel group has fought alongside other Jihadist groups against the government of Bashar Al Assad.³⁷⁶³⁷⁷

The Idlib Martyrs' Brigade: The Idlib Martyrs' Brigade is an insurgent group which was formed under the banner of the Free Syrian Army in the province of Idlib. This group primarily operates in the Idlib governorate and the surrounding countryside, against the Syrian government armed forces. The Idlib Martyrs' Brigade has admitted that they lack weapons and arms- otherwise they would have had more youth joining the insurgency. This insurgent group declared they will halt fighting only if they do not possess weapons, but they have been resorting to other ways of developing weapons and fighting against the government of Bashar al- Assad and his forces, such as developing

³⁷⁶ Carnegie Endowment For International Peace , “Syria’s Armed Opposition: A Brief Overview” , <http://m.ceip.org/2013/02/07/syria-s-armed-opposition-brief-overview/fbgf&lang=en> , February 7, 2013

³⁷⁷ Darth Nader , “Interview with member of the “National Unity Brigades” of the FSA” , <http://darthnader.net/2012/10/17/interview-with-member-of-the-national-unity-brigades-of-the-fsa/> , October 17, 2012

homemade explosives and carrying out roadside bombings.³⁷⁸ The fighters of the Idlib Martyrs' Brigade's rejected the ceasefire brokered by Kofi Annan. The group's total number of fighting forces is believed to be approximately a few thousand.^{379 380 381}

Ahrar al-Jazeera: Ahrar al-Jazeera is a Syrian armed rebel group fighting against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and its armed forces. Ahrar al-Jazeera, which is part of the Shammer Tribe, was capable of taking control of the city of Yaroubiya with the assistance of other Islamists and Jihadist rebel groups including Jabhat Al Nusra, Ahrar Al Sham, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, etc. However, afterwards, tension developed between Ahrar al-Jazeera, Jabhat Al Nusra, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and they were pushed out of the city of Yaroubiya .^{382 383}

The Raqqa Rebels: The Raqqa Rebels are currently affiliated with the Free Syrian Army, however, previously this rebel group was affiliated with Islamist and Jihadist rebel

³⁷⁸ Solomon, Erika , "Outgunned Syria rebels make shift to bombs" .
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/30/us-syria-bombs-idUSBRE83ToXY20120430> ,
Reuters. 30 April 2012 .

³⁷⁹ Carnegie Endowment For International Peace , "Syria's Armed Opposition: A Brief Overview"
, <http://m.ceip.org/2013/02/07/syria-s-armed-opposition-brief-overview/fbgf&lang=en> ,
February 7, 2013

³⁸⁰ Rania Abouzeid , "Syrian Rebels Plot Their Next Moves: A TIME Exclusive" .
<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2106648,00.html> , *Time*. 11 February
2012.

³⁸¹ Clarissa Ward, "Syrian rebels desperate for weapons".
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syrian-rebels-desperate-for-weapons/> , *CBS*. 24 February
2012.

³⁸² Carl Drott, "Arab Tribes Split Between Kurds And Jihadists".
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=55607> , Carnegie Endowment for
International Peace. 15 May 2014

³⁸³ Brown Moses Blog , "The Fall of Yaroubiya to the YPG In Context". <http://brown-moses.blogspot.sk/2013/11/the-fall-of-yaroubiya-to-ypg-in-context.html> ,. 5 November 2013.

groups. The Raqqa rebels operate mainly in the province of Raqqa. Their allegiance shifted to the Free Syrian Army, Raqqa when tensions developed with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Abu Diab was the leader of the Raqqa rebels, and he was killed in a conflict between the Raqqa rebels and the Al Qaeda affiliated ISIL , in the Northern part of Syria, in an area near Tel Abyad and Girespi. ^{384 385 386 387}

The Euphrates Islamic Liberation Front: The Euphrates Islamic Liberation Front, established after the uprising erupted in Syria, is comprised of 20 various brigades including Christians, fighting against the government of Bashar al- Assad and its armed forces. ³⁸⁸

The Syrian Resistance: The Syrian Resistance is a militant rebel group, which supports the Syrian government of Bashar al- Assad and its armed forces. The mission objective of Syrian Resistance is to protect the Alawite minorities as well as the religious minority of Twelver Shi'a. The Syrian resistance, which was formerly called the Popular Front for

³⁸⁴ Hana Muslim , "Syria's Raqqa in turmoil as violence increases" . <http://aranews.net/2014/04/syria-s-raqqa-in-turmoil-as-violence-increases/> , ARA News. 18 April 2014

³⁸⁵ Hana Muslim, "Leader of Raqqa Rebels brigade killed". <http://aranews.net/2014/05/leader-of-raqqa-rebels-brigade-killed/> , ARA News. 15 May 2014

³⁸⁶ Alex Simn, "Al-Tamimi: ISIS Claiming Control in Yarmouk 'Publicity Stunt'". <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14514/al-tamimi-isis-claiming-control-in-yarmouk> , Syria Direct. 5 March 2014

³⁸⁷ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , "The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham's dhimmi pact for the Christians of Raqqa province". <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/islamic-state-iraq-ash-shams-dhimmi-pact-christians-raqqa-province/> , Syria Comment. 26 February 2014

³⁸⁸ "Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , Key Updates on Albukamal (Abu Kamal)" . <http://brown-moses.blogspot.com/2014/04/aymenn-jawad-al-tamimi-key-updates-on.html> , Brown Moses Blog. 29 April 2014

the Liberation of the Liwa of Iskandarun (In Arabic : لواء لتحرير الشّعبية الجبهة : اسكندرون) was led by a Turk, Mihraç Ural, who is an Alawite himself and also known as Ali Kayali.³⁸⁹ ³⁹⁰ The Syrian resistance operates across Syria but their headquarters is in the city of Latakia. According to Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, Syrian resistance ideology is Marxist-Leninist.³⁹¹

The Popular Committees: The Popular Committees are local militia and vigilante groups, which consist mainly of minority groups but also include Sunni members. They are funded and armed by the Syrian government and its armed forces in order to fight against the opposition and rebel groups, which attempt to intervene in their area. The minority groups are comprised of Christians, Druze, Shia, and Alawite, etc. These pro-Syrian government militia and vigilante groups operate across Syria including in the minority concentrated areas of the cities of Damascus and Aleppo. Some residents of these areas view these local militia and vigilante groups as ratcheting up the sectarian language, trampling on their rights and carrying out extrajudicial executions, unlawful

³⁸⁹ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi. "A Case Study of "The Syrian Resistance," a Pro-Assad Militia Force". <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/aymenn-al-tamimi-speaks-to-ali-kayali-and-profiles-the-syrian-resistance-a-pro-assad-militia-force/> , *Syria Comment* , Sunday, September 22nd, 2013

³⁹⁰ Albayrak, Aydin. "Mihraç Ural, a man with a long history of terrorism". *Today's Zaman* ., <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-315474-mihrac-ural-a-man-with-a-long-history-of-terrorism.html> , May 14, 2013, Tuesday/ 17:21:00

³⁹¹ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi. "A Case Study of "The Syrian Resistance," a Pro-Assad Militia Force". <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/aymenn-al-tamimi-speaks-to-ali-kayali-and-profiles-the-syrian-resistance-a-pro-assad-militia-force/> , *Syria Comment* , Sunday, September 22nd, 2013

acts, and revenge killings, etc. Popular Committees are also known as Lijan militias . ³⁹²

393

From another perspective, these popular committees can be viewed as an instrument for the Syrian government to utilize less government armed forces in some areas by arming local groups, increasing the sectarian nature of the conflict, and projecting a picture to the minorities that the government of Bashar al- Assad is the sole viable alternative that can protect them from other Sunni extremists and Jihadist rebel groups. As Tony Badran pointed out in *Now Lebanon*: "Assad seeks to assemble the minorities around him in order to present himself as the sole and unavoidable interlocutor on behalf of these segments of Syrian society, where he has cultivated loyal patches". ³⁹⁴ In 2012, these local militia and vigilant groups came under one umbrella called the National Defense Force for better and more efficient organization, coordination, and cooperation with the Syrian government. ³⁹⁵

³⁹² reporting and writing by Erika Solomon in Beirut; editing by Philippa Fletcher , "Insight: Minority militias stir fears of sectarian war in Damascus".
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/07/us-syria-crisis-militias-idUSBRE88612V20120907> , Reuters. Fri Sep 7, 2012 1:49pm EDT

³⁹³ *Strategy Page*, "The Bloody Long Shot".
<http://www.strategypage.com/qnd/syria/articles/20120914.aspx> , *StrategyPage*, 14 September 2012.

³⁹⁴ Badran, Tony. "The minority strategy". <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en> , *Now Lebanon*, 8 September 2012.

³⁹⁵ Lund, Aron , "The Non-State Militant Landscape in Syria".
<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-non-state-militant-landscape-in-syria> , CTC Sentinel , 2013-08-27 .

6.1.7 The Seventh Domestic Battle: Conflicts, Tensions and Alliances Among The Syrian Oppositional Groups

6.1.7.1 Ethnic Paradigm and Conflict

The Kurdish Supreme Committee, In Kurdish, (*Desteya Bilind a Kurd*): The Kurdish Supreme Committee is an umbrella party of the Kurdistan region which was founded on July 12, 2012, as a result of the Syrian uprising. The Kurdish Supreme Committee has declared self-rule and independence in the northern part of Syria. Two parties, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish National Council (KNC) merged and established this governing body for the Kurdistan region in Syria. Juan Mohamed, a spokesman for the Kurdish Supreme Committee, conceded to *Asharq Al-Awsat*: “The issue of holding presidential elections in the three Kurdish areas, Djazirah [northeast of Syria], Ayn Al-Arab and Afrin [north of Aleppo] has yet to be resolved.” ³⁹⁶

397

Their self-dependence has not yet been recognized by the international community. Many rebel groups, which have attempted to overthrow the Syrian government, as well as remove President Bashar al-Assad have opposed their declaration of self-governance. The Kurdish Supreme Committee has been trying to not support a particular side in the

³⁹⁶ Asharq Al Awsat , “Syrian Kurds face split over presidential elections” <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/05/article55331893> , Sunday, 4 May, 2014

³⁹⁷ ADIB ABDULMAJID – AMSTERDAM, Netherlands , MESOP, "Kurdish Supreme Committee in Syria Holds First Meeting" . <http://www.mesop.de/2012/07/27/kurdish-supreme-committee-in-syria-holds-first-meeting/> , Rudaw. 27 July 2012.

Syrian civil war, and they have limited their operation to the northern part of Syria. Nevertheless, there exists some divisions within the Kurdish Supreme Committee attempts to whether or not accept the Geneva talks regarding the Syrian conflict or not.^{398 399}

The Kurdish Democratic Union Party: The Kurdish Democratic Union Party, is a Syrian-Kurdish opposition group formed in 2003, and calls for autonomy for the Kurdish region of Syria and establishment of a democratic and pluralistic political system of governance in Syria. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party suffered oppression under the government of Bashar al- Assad. Currently this Kurdish party has captured several towns in the northern part of Syria.⁴⁰⁰ The official website of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party states that : “The Democratic Union Party (PYD) is a Syrian-Kurdish political party established 2003 on the heritage and struggle of Kurdistan national liberation movement.

It is an ethical and equal opportunity political party promoting the culture of democracy and tolerance. The group attempts to resolve the Kurdish question in Syria on the basis of democratization of Syria and the right to self-determination by self-governing of Kurds.

³⁹⁸ *Sakar Abdullazada* , "Now Kurds are in charge of their fate: Syrian Kurdish official" . <http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2012/7/syriakurd563.htm> , Rudaw. 29 July 2012

³⁹⁹ Asharq Al Awast , “Syrian Kurds face split over presidential elections”, <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/05/article55331893>, Sunday, 4 May, 2014

⁴⁰⁰ Daren Butler , "Syrian Kurdish moves ring alarm bells in Turkey". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/24/us-syria-crisis-turkey-kurds-idUSBRE86N12W20120724> , *Reuters*. 23 July 2012.

“It is working on democratizing the authoritarian Syrian regime and establishing a democratic society, where everyone constitutionally is recognized and enjoys living together freely.

“It is a national public political party, and believes in social equality, justice and the freedom of belief.

“It supports pluralism and the freedom of political parties, implementing a democratic means and a peaceful political dialogue in addressing the issues and achieving the goals.

“ It is striving for a democratic solution that includes the recognition of cultural, national and political rights, and develops and enhances their peaceful struggle to be able to govern themselves in a multicultural, democratic society.” ⁴⁰¹

The current chairman of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party is Saleh Muslim Muhammad, a chemical engineer, and the co-chair of the party is Asiyah Abdullah. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party is in conflict with other Syrian opposition groups including the Syrian National Council, as well as the neighboring country, Turkey, due to the imprisonment of the leader of the militant Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan, by Turkey. The PKK is a Syrian-Kurdish militant group in which the Kurdish Democratic Union Party is affiliated with.⁴⁰² According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party ‘s

⁴⁰¹ The official website of The Democratic Union Party , About us, (PYD)
http://www.pydrojava.net/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=4&Itemid=28 , pydrojava.net .

⁴⁰² Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, “The Kurdish Democratic Union Party “
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48526>

policies towards the Syrian civil war are: the Kurdish Democratic Union Party is opposed to delivering arms to the Syrian rebel groups, or to foreign intervention and “it is one of the most important Kurdish opposition parties in Syria as well as a charter member of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change and the People’s Council of Western Kurdistan.” The Kurdish Democratic Union Party is in favor of the Annan Geneva Peace Plan for the Syrian crisis as well as supporting dialogue and negotiations with President Bashar al- Assad and the Syrian government.^{403 404}

The Assyrian Democratic Organization: The Assyrian Democratic Organization, which is also known as Mtakasto or Mtakasta " is a secular, nationalist and Christian party which was formed in 1957 and was banned under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad. The mission and objective of the Assyrian Democratic Organization is to protect the legal, social and political rights of the Assyrian people by establishing a democratic system of government in Syria that allows minorities to represent themselves. The president of the Assyrian Democratic Organization is Gabriel Moushe Gawrieh. Regarding the current crisis in Syria, the Assyrian Democratic Organization is in favor of foreign intervention to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. In addition, the Assyrian Democratic Organization rejects

⁴⁰³ Muhammad Ballout, “Syrian Kurds Trade Armed Opposition for Autonomy” , <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/06/syrias-kurds-oppose-the-regime-y.html#> , June 23, 2012

⁴⁰⁴ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, “The Kurdish Democratic Union Party “ <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48526>

dialogue and negotiation with the government of Bashar al-Assad, it is in favor of the Annan peace plan. ^{405 406 407}

The Syrian Turkmen Assembly: The Syrian Turkmen Assembly, was formed in Istanbul Turkey after the Syrian uprising, in order to represent the Syrian Turkmen, through a coalition of Turkmen parties and groups, including the Syrian Turkmen National Bloc and the Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement. The Syrian Turkmen Assembly attempted to represent the Syrian Turkmen in the Syrian National Coalition, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and other conferences. The Syrian Turkmen Assembly has a military wing, which is known as the Syrian Turkmen Brigades. The Syrian Turkmen Assembly's objective and mission is to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government, and establish a political system which allows for the representation of Syrian Turkmen. ^{408 409 410}

⁴⁰⁵ Daily Star, Lebanon, "Syrian authorities ban Assyrian party from marking Martyr", <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2004/Aug-09/64198-syrian-authorities-ban-assyrian-party-from-marking-martyr-day.ashx#axzz37x35Ivhr>, Middle East, Aug. 09, 2004 | 12:00 AM

⁴⁰⁶ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, "The Assyrian Democratic Organization", <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48365>, Syria Resources, April 20, 2012

⁴⁰⁷ Assyrian International News Agency, "The Assyrian Democratic Organization Rejects Iraq's Constitution", <http://www.aina.org/news/20050904120844.htm>, Posted 2005-09-04 17:08 GMT

⁴⁰⁸ The Global Post, Turkmen seek key positions in new Syrian cabinet, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/asianet/130403/turkmen-seek-key-positions-new-syrian-cabinet>, http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/trUploads/Yazilar/Dosyalar/201345_150turingsting.pdf, Asianet, Globalpost, 3 April 2013

⁴⁰⁹ ORSAM-Middle Eastern Turkmen Programme (In Turkish language), "Syrian Turkmen: Political Movements and Military Structures, ORSAM-Middle Eastern Turkmen Programme",

The Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement: The Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement, is an opposition party of Syrian Turkmen, which was also formed in Istanbul, Turkey in March 2012, in order to safeguard the political, social, and legal rights of the Turkmen in Syria. The Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement has not called for independence or autonomy. Turkmen are not concentrated in one part of Syria, but live in various cities. The Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement has representatives in both the Syrian National Coalition, and the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. Their mission is to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government and establish a democratic and political system of governance which includes the representation of Syrian Turkmen.^{411 412}

The Syrian Turkmen National Bloc: The Syrian Turkmen National Bloc is a Syrian opposition group and political party which was formed in Istanbul Turkey on February 2012, a month before the formation of the Syrian Democratic Turkmen Movement. The Syrian Turkmen National Bloc's mission and objective is to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government and safeguard the political, social, and legal rights

http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/trUploads/Yazilar/Dosyalar/201345_150turingsite.pdf , Report No: 22, Page: 10- 15, March 2013, Ankara

⁴¹⁰ Oytun Orhan , ORSAM , “Turkmen demands are key to protecting Syria’s territorial integrity” , <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showArticle.aspx?ID=2193> , 26 March 2013

⁴¹¹ Ipek Yezdani , “Syrian Turkmen Form New Opposition Front” , <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syrian-turkmens-form-new-opposition-front.aspx?pageID=238&nID=16582&NewsCatID=352> , Hurriyet Daily News, 22 March 2012, Istanbul

⁴¹² Jamestown Foundation, “Syrian Turkmen Join Opposition Forces in Pursuit of a New Syrian Identity”, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ac74374.html> , 30 May 2013 .

of the Turkmen in Syria. The chairman of the Syrian Turkmen National Bloc is Mazloun Deir.^{413 414}

The Kurdish Future Movement: The Kurdish Future Movement was founded in 2005 by Mashaal Tammo, a Kurdish politician and a Kurdish activist who was assassinated in October 2011. The current chairman of the Office of General Communications is Rezan Bahri Shaykhmus. The Kurdish Future Movement, later joined the Arab Syrian National Council and it is the sole Kurdish member of the Arab Syrian National Council. Unlike many other Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Future Movement does not call for an independent state for Kurdish people, but for a pluralistic, civil and democratic system of government where the Kurdish communities are represented and are recognized.⁴¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Kurdish Future Movement is in favor of foreign intervention in order to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. It supports arming the rebels and rejects dialogue or negotiations with the Syrian government. The Kurdish Future Movement is in favor of Annan's Peace plan. In addition, in

⁴¹³ Abdel Naser Senky , BBC Arabic ,
http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2012/02/120216_syria_turky_opposition_group.shtml , BBC Arabic, 02/16/2012 19:01 GMT

⁴¹⁴ Marah Mashi , *Al-Akhbar* , "Syria's Turkmen Join the Fight" , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/11522> , Published Tuesday, August 28, 2012

⁴¹⁵ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, " The Kurdish Future Movement" ,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48524> .

comparison to other Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Future Movement is more of a hard-line organization.⁴¹⁶

The Syrian Turkmen Brigades: The Syrian Turkmen Brigades are armed organizations comprised of multiple Turkmen Brigades across Syria including the Turkmen Brigades in Aleppo , the Turkmen Brigades in Homs , the Turkmen Brigades in Damascus, the Turkmen Brigades in Idlib, the Turkmen Brigades in Hama and Tartus, and the Turkmen Brigades in Raqqah. The aim, objective and mission of the Syrian Turkmen Brigades is to overthrow President Bashar al- Assad and the Syrian government and to establish a democratic, civil, and multi party system of governance where Syrian Turkmen are allowed to represent themselves fairly. The founder of the Syrian Turkmen Brigades is Colonel Ebu Bekir Muhammad Abbas and the major commanders of this armed rebel group are Colonel Muhammad Awad (operating in city of Latakia), and Ali Basher (operating in city of Aleppo). The Syrian Turkmen Brigades are a military wing of the Syrian Turkmen Assembly, and they are not seeking to obtain an independent state and autonomy for Syrian Turkmen by disintegrating Syria. The Syrian Turkmen Brigades are also known as the Syrian Turkmen Army.^{417 418 419 420}

⁴¹⁶ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, “ The Kurdish Future Movement” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48524> .

⁴¹⁷ Ana Sayfa , “Türkmen ordusu yemin etti”, in Turkish Language, <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/dunya/19468.aspx> , Türkiye Newspaper, 7 August 2012

⁴¹⁸ ORSAM-Middle Eastern Turkmen Programme (In Turkish language) , “Syrian Turkmen: Political Movements and Military Structures, ORSAM-Middle Eastern Turkmen Programme”, http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/trUploads/Yazilar/Dosyalar/201345_150turingite.pdf , Report No: 22, Page: 10- 15, March 2013, Ankara

⁴¹⁹ Oytun Orhan , ORSAM , “Turkmen demands are key to protecting Syria’s territorial integrity” , <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showArticle.aspx?ID=2193> , 26 March 2013

The Kurdish National Council: The Kurdish National Council, was formed after the war erupted in Syria, in October 2011 with the support of President Massoud Barzani , the president of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish National Council is at odds with other Syrian rebel groups and political parties, which are opposed to the decentralization of Syria or creation of a federalist system of governance, as well as President Bashar Al Assad, and the Syrian government. The Kurdish National Council has also criticized the Turkish government for pressuring the major Syrian oppositional groups not to accept decentralization of Syria, and the creation of an autonomous or independent state for Kurds in Syria. The Turkish government is concerned that an independent state and autonomy for Kurds in Syria will cause the Kurds in Turkey to take up arms and demand independence. The Kurdish National Council is also at odds with major Syrian oppositional groups including the Syrian National Council as well as the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change.^{421 422}

There were some conflicts between the Kurdish National Council and other Kurdish parties including the Democratic Union Party. Nevertheless, President Massoud Barzani was influential in encouraging these two parties to join and create a coalition called, the

⁴²⁰ Jamestown Foundation, "Syrian Turkmen Join Opposition Forces in Pursuit of a New Syrian Identity", <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51ac74374.html> , 30 May 2013 .

⁴²¹ *Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center* , "The Kurdish National Council in Syria" , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48502> .

⁴²² Rudaw , "Political Groups to Run Liberated Kurdish Cities in Syria Through Joint Committee". <http://archive.today/kb5pF> , Rudaw. 2012-07-20.

Kurdish Supreme Committee.⁴²³ Crucial political figures of the Kurdish National Council are the following: Dr. Abdul Hakim Bashar, who is the chairman of the Kurdish National Council, and Khair al-Dien Murad who is the head of foreign relations at the Kurdish National Council. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, the Kurdish National Council is comprised of sixteen Kurdish parties:

- “The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (al-Parti) led by Dr. Abdul Hakim Bashar
- The Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (al-Parti) led by Nasreddin Ibrahim
- The Kurdish Democratic National Party in Syria led by Tahir Sfook
- The Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria led by Aziz Dawe
- The Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria led by Hamid Darwish
- The Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria (Yekiti) led by Sheikh Ali
- The Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria led by Ismail Hamo
- The Azadi Kurdish Party in Syria led by Mustafa Oso
- The Azadi Kurdish Party in Syria led by Mustafa Jumaa
- The Syrian Democratic Kurdish Party led by Sheikh Jamal
- The Kurdish Left Party in Syria led by Muhammad Musa
- Yekiti Kurdistani led by Abdul Basit Hamo
- Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria led by Abdul Rahman Aluji

⁴²³ Hazal Ates , "Barzani Unites Syrian Kurds Against Assad". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/07/barzani-grabs-assads-kurdish-car.html#> , Al-Monitor , July 16, 2012 .

- Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria led by Yusuf Faisal
- The Kurdish Democratic Wifaq Party led by Nash'at Muhammad
- The Kurdish Left Party in Syria led by Salih Gado”⁴²⁴

The Kurdish National Council’s foreign policy mission and objective is to obtain recognition as an independent and autonomous state and build good relationships with the Western countries, including Europe and the United States. The Kurdish National Council’s domestic mission and objective in Syria is to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian government, and obtain independence with recognition of the Kurdish communities.^{425 426}

6.1.7.2 Conflict Among Other Coalitions of Oppositional Groups: Secular, Islamist, Moderate

The National Co-ordination Committee (NCC): The National Co-ordination Committee (NCC) is one of the largest Syrian opposition parties, and was founded in 2011 soon after the uprising began in Syria. The National Co-ordination Committee is considered the “most moderate” Syrian opposition group. The National Co-ordination Committee is comprised of 13 leftist parties and four Kurdish parties, three of which left the National

⁴²⁴ *Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center* , “The Kurdish National Council in Syria” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48502> .

⁴²⁵ Rudaw , "Political Groups to Run Liberated Kurdish Cities in Syria Through Joint Committee". <http://archive.today/kb5pF> , Rudaw. 2012-07-20.

⁴²⁶ *Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center* , “The Kurdish National Council in Syria” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48502> .

Co-ordination Committee in 2012 in order to be part of the Kurdish National Council which had been founded in October 2011.^{427 428}

The National Co-ordination Committee is opposed to the other large Syrian oppositional party,, the Syrian National Council, due to their relationship with Turkey and other Arab Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The major difference between the National Co-ordination Committee, and the Syrian National council is their acceptance and position of violence and foreign intervention to topple the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. The National Co-ordination Committee has emphasized dialogue, and has not ruled out political settlement with the current Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.⁴²⁹ The National Co-ordination Committee is opposed to :

1. Any foreign intervention in Syria,
2. Inciting sectarian violence and
3. Militarization of the conflict.
4. Acceptance of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria^{430 431}

⁴²⁷ *Carnegie Middle East Center*. "National Coordination Body for Democratic Change". <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48369> , *Carnegie Middle East Center*. January 15, 2012

⁴²⁸ BBC World News, "Guide to the Syrian opposition". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218> , *BBC News*. 25 July 2012.

⁴²⁹ BBC World News, "Guide to the Syrian opposition". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218> , *BBC News*. 25 July

⁴³⁰ Press TV Islamic Republic of Iran, "New initiative presented to solve unrest in Syria". <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/08/15/256297/initiative-unrest-syria/> , *PressTV*. 15 August 2012.

The National Co-ordination Committee published its main principles, objectives and mission on September 22, 2012 after a conference. The main principles, objectives and mission are the following:

“1. Toppling the regime with all its figures and facets, which ensures the ability to build a civil democratic state, a state of law, justice and equal citizenship regardless of race, sex and religion.

“2. Rejection of sectarianism and everything else that contributes to dividing Syrian society on a pre-civic basis.

“3. Adopting non-violent resistance as the strategy to accomplish the goals of the revolution. We recognize that militarizing the revolution (arming civilians) is a danger to both the revolution and society. In this context we view the “Free Syrian Army” as an objective phenomenon that emerged from the refusal of Syrian soldiers to kill their fellow countrymen who protested peacefully, and from this perspective we consider the “Free Syrian Army” one of the components of the revolution. As such, it has a duty to support, strengthen and defend the peaceful strategy of the revolution.

“4. Affirming the importance of bringing back the Syrian Army to its true national role, which it was created for, and to extract it from the clutches of the regime, who have forced this national institution to play a contradictory role in placing it against its countrymen. The conference members agree on the importance of the Syrian Army to be under a political leadership that represents the Syrian people. The primary objective of

⁴³¹ *Carnegie Middle East Center*. "National Coordination Body for Democratic Change". <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48369> , *Carnegie Middle East Center*. January 15, 2012

the Army should be to restore the Syrian occupied territories, and to respond to any dangers that jeopardize the security of Syria. The Army must also protect national security, considering Zionism as the main threat to Syria and the peoples of the region.

“5. To ensure the accomplishment of the revolution’s goals by using the power of the Syrian people, and to hold the regime primarily responsible for creating the atmosphere that is used for foreign intervention.

“6. To work on protecting civilians based on international law. Protecting civilians is a primary demand in the midst of all the killing and massacres that have been committed against innocent civilians.

“7. The Kurdish ethnicity is a primary and historical part of the Syrian people. This has to be guaranteed in clear constitutional principles. The Kurdish national case must, and can only, be solved in a democratic and just manner through a free and united Syria – united in its people and territory.

“8. Syria is an undivided part of the Arab Nation. Syria is an unbreakable social unit in itself; none of its components are allowed to be taken from it.” ⁴³² ⁴³³

The chairman of National Co-ordination Committee is Hassan Abdul Azim, who is a left-wing opposition activist and the leader of the Democratic Arab Socialist Union and

⁴³² Preparatory Committee, National Conference for Syria Salvation
"Syria Salvation Conference: Our Main Principles" . <http://syrianncb.org/2012/09/23/syria-salvation-conference-our-main-principles/> , *NCC/NCB*

⁴³³ Preparatory Committee, National Conference for Syria Salvation
"Syria Salvation Conference: Our Main Principles" . <http://syrianncb.org/2012/09/23/syria-salvation-conference-our-main-principles/> , *NCC/NCB*

deputy chairman. The international spokesperson of the National Co-ordination Committee is Haytham Manna. The National Co-ordination Committee has recognized the Syrian Free Army, although the leaders of the Free Syrian Army do not view the National Co-ordination Committee as a legitimate Syrian oppositional group.⁴³⁴ The National Co-ordination Committee is also known as the National Coordination Committee for the Forces of Democratic Change, or National Coordination Body for Democratic Change.⁴³⁵

The Syrian National Council (SNC) , (*al-Majlis al-Waṭani al-Souri*): The Syrian National Council (SNC), which is also known as the National Council of Syria or the Syrian National Transitional Council, was the most powerful, largest, and influential Syrian opposition group- among the groups which were formed outside Syria after the war erupted in Syria and until late 2012.⁴³⁶

The Syrian National Council was founded in Istanbul Turkey with 310 representatives from various parties, and it has several offices and sections including : the Finance Bureau, the Relief and Development Bureau, Media Bureau, the Logistical Support Bureau, Foreign Relations Bureau , Policy and Planning Bureau, Revolution Support

⁴³⁴ Reuters News UK, "Damascus meeting calls for peaceful change in Syria" .
<http://www.trust.org/item/?map=damascus-meeting-calls-for-peaceful-change-in-syria> ,
Reuters UK. 23 September 2012.

⁴³⁵ Haddad, Bassam , "The Current Impasse in Syria: Interview with Haytham Manna".
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6245/the-current-impasse-in-syria-interview-with-haytha> ,
Jadaliyya , 2012-06-30 .

⁴³⁶ Yezdani, Ipek , "Syrian dissidents form national council".
http://www.edmondsun.com/news_tab3/x2122765173/Syrian-dissidents-form-national-council ,
The Edmond Sun, August 24, 2011

Bureau, and Legal Affairs and Human Rights Bureau. According to the Syrian National Council, the mission of establishing such an opposition council is “...to represent the Syrian Revolution, embody its aspirations in toppling the regime, achieve democratic change, and build a modern civil state.” ⁴³⁷

The Syrian National Council called for a “democratic, pluralistic, and civil state..., parliamentary republic with sovereignty of the people based on the principles of equal citizenship with separation of powers, the peaceful transfer of power, the rule of law, and the protection and guarantee of the rights of minorities.” ⁴³⁸

The Syrian National Council has four principles upon which its mission is anchored:

1. “Working to overthrow the regime using all legal means.
2. Affirming national unity among all components of Syrian society (Arabs and Kurds, as well as ethnic, religious and sectarian groups) and rejecting all calls for ethnic strife.
3. Safeguarding the non-violent character of the Syrian Revolution.
4. Protecting national independence and sovereignty, and rejecting foreign intervention.” ⁴³⁹

The goals and objectives of the Syrian National Council are :

⁴³⁷ Foreign Policy, “ The Syrian National Council SNC “ , http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/110916_About%20SNC.pdf

⁴³⁸ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian National Council, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48334> , September 25, 2013

⁴³⁹ Foreign Policy, “ The Syrian National Council SNC “ , http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/110916_About%20SNC.pdf

1. “To deliver the voice of the Syrian revolution and its demands to the international community
2. To secure political support for the peaceful revolution
3. To promote national unity during the transition phase
4. To ensure there is no political vacuum
5. To develop a roadmap for democratic change in Syria”⁴⁴⁰

However, the Syrian National Council’s activities and its leadership’s subsequent announcement contradict their mission of using non-violent strategy- in 2012, the Syrian National Council called for arming the rebels and supported foreign and Western intervention to topple the government of Bashar al- Assad.⁴⁴¹

At the beginning of its establishment, Syrian National Council’s influence and legitimacy quickly increased when the Arab League granted a seat to the Syrian National Council. Many UN state members recognized the Syrian National Council as legitimate representative of Syrian people, and more than 100 countries, which are members of the Friends of Syria, acknowledged that they recognized the Syrian National

⁴⁴⁰ Foreign Policy, “ The Syrian National Council SNC “ , http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/110916_About%20SNC.pdf

⁴⁴¹ “SNC to coordinate arms supplies to Syrian rebels” , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/4710>, Al Akhbar and AFP, March 1, 2012

Council as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and as “the umbrella organization under which Syrian opposition groups are gathering.”⁴⁴²

A few months after its formation, the Syrian National Council experienced a schism and internal conflict when some of the parties seceded from the council. In November 2012, the Syrian National Council joined another Syrian opposition group: the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The major and influential political figures in the National Syrian Council are the following: George Sabra is the chairman of the Syrian National Council, Burhan Ghalioun was the former chairman of the council until June 2012, Muhammad Farouk Tayfour is the head of the Relief & Development Projects Bureau and part of the Executive Committee of the National Syrian Council, Ahmad Ramadan is the spokesperson of the council, and Abdul Basit Sida was the former chairman of the Syrian National Council.⁴⁴³

Some major parties in the Syrian National Council were the Kurdish Bloc, the Damascus Spring, grassroots movements, independent crucial figures, the National Bloc, the Damascus Declaration, the Muslim Brotherhood Alliance, and the Assyrian Democratic Organization. However, the Muslim Brotherhood dominated the Syrian National Council and soon tensions occurred, specifically between the Kurdish segments and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as tension among several Islamic groups. The

⁴⁴² Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Chairman’s Conclusions Second Conference Of The Group Of Friends Of The Syrian People”, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/chairman_s-conclusions-second-conference-of-the-group-of-friends-of-the-syrian-people_-1-april-2012_-istanbul.en.mfa , 1 April 2012, Istanbul

⁴⁴³ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian National Council, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48334> , September 25, 2013

Muslim Brother resisted the idea of granting the Kurdish groups autonomy and the ability to establish a political system based on federalism. The Brotherhood also opposed decentralizing the political system of Syria. The Syrian National Council protested the Geneva negotiations between the Syrian oppositional groups and the government of Bashar al- Assad, and in early 2014 it seceded from the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.^{444 445}

The influence and legitimacy of the National Syrian Council began to erode as several countries changed their stance as to whether the Syrian Nation Council was a legitimate representative of the Syrian people. In late 2012, then the United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton declared that the United States is an dvocate for the formation of a different Syrian opposition group which would be a representative of “those who are in the frontlines, fighting and dying today to obtain their freedom.” and she pointed out that United States does not view the Syrian National Council as “the visible leader of the opposition”.^{446 447}

The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces: During a meeting in Doha, Qatar, several opposition groups formed a coalition named, the

⁴⁴⁴ Associated Press and The Times of Israel , "Main bloc quits Syrian National Coalition over Geneva". <http://www.timesofisrael.com/main-bloc-quits-syrian-national-coalition-over-geneva/> , 21 January 2014.

⁴⁴⁵ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian National Council, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48334> , September 25, 2013

⁴⁴⁶ Matthew Weaver, “Syria conflict: Clinton calls for opposition overhaul” , <http://www.theguardian.com/world/middle-east-live/2012/nov/01/syria-conflict-clinton-opposition-overhaul-live> , The Guardian , Thursday 1 November 2012

⁴⁴⁷ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian National Council, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48334> , September 25, 2013

National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, also known as the Syrian National Coalition (in Arabic: **الائتلاف السوري الوطني**), in November 2012. Later, the government of Qatar attempted to persuade other opposition groups including the Syrian National Council to join the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The first leader of this group was Mouaz al-Khatib, who was previously the Imam of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Syria. Other influential and crucial political figures were Walid al-Bunni, the spokesman, Riad Seif and Suheir Atasi, vice presidents of the coalition, and Mustafa Sabbagh, the secretary general. Moaz Al Khatib stepped down from his position claiming that there were significant pressures and interference from other countries. Afterwards, George Sabra was elected as president until July 6, 2013, Ahmad Jarba, who was supported by Saudi Arabia was elected at a later date and lasted until July 2014. The current leader is Hadi Al Bahra. ⁴⁴⁸⁴⁴⁹

On November 12, 2012, the member states of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman) recognized the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as a credible and legitimate representative of the Syrian people. In addition, the United States also recognized the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and congratulated the coalition, stating, "We look

⁴⁴⁸ Alarabiya English, Syria's opposition chooses president, formally signs coalition deal". <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/12/249032.html>, Al Arabiya, Monday, 12 November 2012

⁴⁴⁹ BBC World News, Syrian Oppositional Group, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218>, 17 October 2013 Last updated at 02:41 ET

forward to supporting the National Coalition as it charts a course toward the end of Assad's bloody rule and the start of the peaceful, just, democratic future that all the people of Syria deserve." ⁴⁵⁰ Other countries including France, Turkey and over 100 state members of the group, Friends of Syria, followed the same direction, by recognizing the Syrian National Council politically. ⁴⁵¹ ⁴⁵²

The objectives and goals of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces are the following:

“Removal of the Bashar al-Assad regime and "its symbols and pillars of support";

- Dismantling of the Syrian security services
- Unifying and supporting the Free Syrian Army;
- Rejecting dialogue and negotiation with the al-Assad government, and "holding accountable those responsible for killing Syrians, destroying [Syria], and displacing [Syrians]." ⁴⁵³

The National Democratic Rally: The National Democratic Rally, a Syrian opposition group was formed in Syria in 1980. The National Democratic Rally's role and activity is

⁴⁵⁰ Toner, Mark C. , "Formation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces". <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/11/200435.htm> , U.S. Department of State. 11 November 2012 .

⁴⁵¹ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces “ , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50628>

⁴⁵² Aljazeera English Middle East, “Friends of Syria' recognize opposition”, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212124541767116.html> , Last Modified: 12 Dec 2012 14:55

⁴⁵³ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces “ , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50628>

marginal after they were banned from operation by the Syrian government of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. Several crucial parties formed the National Democratic Rally including : The Arab Socialist Movement, the Democratic Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party, the Communist Labor Party, the Democratic Arab Socialist Union, the Syrian Democratic People's Party, and the Arab Revolutionary Workers Party , a leftist-Marxist group. ⁴⁵⁴

The National Salvation Front in Syria: The National Salvation Front in Syria is a Syrian opposition group which was formed in Belgium in 2005. The leader of the National Salvation Front in Syria is the former Syrian vice president, Abdel Halim Khaddam. In addition, the National Salvation Front in Syria includes parties from the Muslim Brotherhood, communist, and Kurdish parties. Ali Sadreddine Al Bayanouni, former leader of the Muslim Brotherhood is one of the leaders. ⁴⁵⁵

Syrian National Democratic Council: The Syrian National Democratic Council, was formed in Paris, France in November, 2011. The Syrian National Democratic Council advocates for a pluralistic and proportional representation system of governance. The committee of the Syrian National Democratic Council is comprised of figures from the Opposition Ba'ath Party, the Kurdish Independent, the Syrian Women's Party, etc. ⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Alan George, *"Syria: Neither Bread nor Freedom"*, London, Zed Books, 2003, p. 85-102

⁴⁵⁵ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, , "Human Rights Activists Detained in Syria; National Salvation Front Meets in London" , <http://carnegieendowment.org/2008/08/18/human-rights-activists-detained-in-syria-national-salvation-front-meets-in-london/6ga4> , June 18, 2006

⁴⁵⁶ "Formation of Syrian National Democratic Council" , <http://ncfsyria.blogspot.com/2011/11/formation-of-syrian-national-democratic.html> , Syria and Lebanon, Tuesday, November 15, 2011

The Syrian Revolution General Commission: Over forty of Syria's opposition groups, including the Syrian Revolution Coordinator's Union, merged and created the umbrella group, the Syrian Revolution General Commission in Istanbul, Turkey on August 18, 2011. The Syrian Revolution General Commission has a conflicted relationship with several other oppositional groups, including the National Syrian Council. At the beginning of its establishment, the Syrian Revolution General Commission advocated for civil disobedience, creating a pluralistic, civil and democratic system of governance, and promoting human rights. The headquarters of the Syrian Revolution General Commission resides in Istanbul. Other crucial political figures in the Commission are Saleh al-Hamwi who is the spokesman, as well as Nidal Darwish, Mohammad Aloush, and Rania Kisar, who are members of the Syrian Revolution General Commission.^{457 458}

However, as the Syrian civil war escalated, the Syrian Revolution General Commission changed its stance and called for military intervention and delivery of arms to rebel groups. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, the Syrian Revolution General Commission "is most effective in the media and humanitarian relief fields as a result of its activities inside Syria assisting opposition activists with demonstrations and providing relief to those targeted by the regime. Examples of this

⁴⁵⁷ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, "The Syrian Revolution General Commission " , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50425>

⁴⁵⁸ AFP , Lahore Times "Syrian opposition to launch 'national council". <http://lhrtimes.com/syrian-opposition-to-launch-national-council.html> , AFP (Lahore Times) . 20 August 2011 .

work include SRGC documents providing basic principles and suggestions to activists on how to organize successful anti-regime demonstrations”.⁴⁵⁹

According to Elizabeth O’Bagy at Foreign Policy magazine, the Syrian Revolution General Commission follows an aggressive strategy in comparison to other opposition groups and “has adopted an aggressive platform for Assad's removal, actively supporting armed rebels through provincial military councils. The organization refuses to cooperate with the Syrian National Council (SNC), an umbrella opposition group that operates from exile, due to disillusionment with the SNC's endless internal power squabbles.”⁴⁶⁰

The Syrian Revolution General Commission provides assistance such as financial aid, intelligence, managerial and logistical assistance to rebel groups fighting in Syria, including the Free Syrian Army.⁴⁶¹

The Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians: The Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians, also known as the Syrian Coalition of Secular and Democratic force is comprised of secular and democratic Syrian opposition groups, from various sects and communities, including Christians, Kurds, and Arabs. The Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians calls on the minorities to rise against the government of President

⁴⁵⁹ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian Revolution General Commission “ , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50425>

⁴⁶⁰ Elizabeth O'Bagy , “Disorganized Like a Fox “ , http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/06/29/disorganized_like_a_fox , JUNE 29, 2012

⁴⁶¹ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East, “The Syrian Revolution General Commission “ , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50425>

Bashar al-Assad. The Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians has advocated for a creation of safe zones, and military intervention by means of a no fly zone to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad.⁴⁶²

The Damascus Declaration: The Damascus Declaration was formed in 2005 after Syrian opposition figures made a plea for a unity and called for the peaceful transition of the Syrian government to a pluralistic and democratic system of governance with a multi-party system. The Damascus Declaration was established as a result of a merger among fractured Syrian opposition groups. The Damascus Declaration is a secular group and it was one of the first opposition groups, under the presidency of Bashar al-Assad, to have members and parties from minorities groups, including the Kurdish and Assyrian communities, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood.^{463 464}

Nevertheless, the Damascus Declaration encountered an internal crisis in its leadership due to the differences between the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and objectives, and the Damascus Declaration's secular goals. In addition, the Kurdish and Assyrian parties were also dissatisfied due to their marginalization. Regarding the current conflict in Syria, the Damascus Declaration opposes any foreign intervention, dialogue with President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government, and advocates for

⁴⁶² AFP , Agence France-Presse , "Les partis d'opposition laïcs syriens unissent leurs forces à Paris", <http://www.france24.com/fr/20110918-syrie-france-lancement-coalition-partis-syriens-laics-democratique-bachar-al-Assad-opposes-islamisme/> , Agence France-Presse, 18 September 2011.

⁴⁶³ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, " The Damascus Declaration" , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48514>

⁴⁶⁴ Syria Revolt, "Syria, alliances and a proxy war" , <https://syriarevolts.wordpress.com/tag/the-damascus-declaration-for-national-democratic-change/> , February 7, 2012

a peaceful transition and equality for all citizens. Their perspective towards the religion of Islam is moderate- the Damascus Declaration only views Islam as a crucial part of the Syrian culture, but they do not call for an Islamic State. Their foreign policy objectives are nationalistic , and call for regaining the occupied Golan Heights from Israel. They also demand reform in the Lebanese government.⁴⁶⁵

The Damascus Declaration gave birth to the Syrian National Council which supports foreign intervention and arming the Syrian rebel groups. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, at the beginning of its formation, the Damascus Declaration was comprised of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria (Yekiti), the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Kurdish Democratic Equality Party in Syria, the Democratic Socialist Arab Baath Party, the Assyrian Democratic Organization, the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria, and the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria. ^{466 467}

Currently, the parties, which are members of the Damascus Declaration are the following: the Arab Socialist Movement , the Syrian Democratic Peoples' Party, the Movement for Justice and Development , the National Liberal Alliance , and the Arab Revolutionary Workers Party. Crucial political figures in the Damascus Declaration are: Abdul Hamid al-Atassi, who is the spokesperson, Anas al-Abdeh, who is the president

⁴⁶⁵ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, " The Damascus Declaration" , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48514>

⁴⁶⁶ Syria Revolt, "Syria, alliances and a proxy war" , <https://syriarevolts.wordpress.com/tag/the-damascus-declaration-for-national-democratic-change/> , February 7, 2012

⁴⁶⁷ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, " The Damascus Declaration" , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48514>

of the Secretariat General in other countries rather than Syria, Samir Nashar, who is the president of the Secretariat General in Syria, and Abdulrazak Eid, who is the head of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration.⁴⁶⁸

The Movement of the Future: The Movement of the Future is a Lebanese political movement which was led by Rafiq Hariri. After the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, Saad Hariri, son of Rafiq Hariri became the leader of the Movement of the Future. Reportedly, the Movement of the Future has been involved in the Syrian civil war, funneling arms to the Syrian rebels and opposition groups who are attempting to overthrow President al-Assad and the Syrian government. The Movement of the Future is opposed to Hezbollah, the Shiite political party and paramilitary group in Lebanon. According to one of the officials of the Movement of the Future, Dr Mustafa Allouch, pointed out that “Hezbollah is qualified to be a terrorist party regardless whether it assassinated former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 or not”. The official from the Movement of the Future has argued that Hezbollah has attempted to establish a theocratic state of in Lebanon, similar to the Shiite government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.^{469 470}

⁴⁶⁸ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, “The Damascus Declaration”, <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48514>

⁴⁶⁹ Radwan Mortada, “Exclusive: Inside Future Movement's Syria Arms Trade”

<http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14183> , Published Thursday, November 29, 2012

⁴⁷⁰ Future Movement Official Website, <http://www.almustaqbal.org/links.php?lang=en> , Al Mustaqbal in Arabic: <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Home.aspx>

According to Al Akhbar news, “....there are several operations centers: one in Antakya, one in Adana, and one in Istanbul. He mentioned that Sakr had his own building in the Floriya neighborhood in Istanbul where meetings are held from time to time.

He also said that around 20 young men from various Syrian regions are engaged in running military operations from the building. They coordinate with commanders of armed opposition groups to provide needed funding and hardware, and then they direct fighters toward areas under attack or siege, all under the supervision of Turkish and Qatari intelligence officers.” The Movement of the Future has accused the Syrian government for the assassination of Rafiq Hariri. ⁴⁷¹

The Movement for Justice and Development in Syria (MJD): The Movement for Justice and Development in Syria, is a political, opposition group which was established before the uprising began in Syria. This group was formed in London, in 2006, and led by Anas Al Abdsh. Its members criticize the corruption in the Syrian political system and its undemocratic character. According to the book, “The World Almanac of Islamism: 2014” by the American Foreign Policy Council, the Movement for Justice and Development in Syria has declared on its official website that the movement is

⁴⁷¹ Ya Libnan, Allouch: Hezbollah qualifies as a terrorist group.
<http://archive.today/HoPZT#selection-165.1-165.133> , *YaLibnan*. 23 May 2011

“committed to peaceful, democratic change in Syria, and the creation of a modern state which respects human rights and promotes economic and social development”.⁴⁷²

This group has been criticizing the President al-Assad and the Syrian government for atrocities during the conflict, and drawing attention on the status of Syrian refugees and exiles across the world. There are no indications that the Movement for Justice and Development in Syria is involved in arming or inciting violence in Syria.⁴⁷³

The Syrian Democratic People's Party: The Syrian Democratic People's Party, which was originally called the Syrian communist party has been active in the Syrian civil war against President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. The Syrian Democratic People's Party was originally formed in the early 1970s, led by Riad al-Turk, and it adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology, but later it shifted its objectives to a Western-style social democracy. Currently, Giath Uyoun al-Soud is the chairman of the Party. The Syrian Democratic People's Party has rejected dialogue and negotiation with the Syrian government and it has been calling for foreign intervention along with delivering arms and weapons to the rebels. The Syrian Democratic People's Party has endorsed Annan's peace plan, and its objective is to establish a multi-party, pluralistic, democratic political system of government where there is no discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity,

⁴⁷² The World Almanac of Islamism: 2014 , American Foreign Policy Council , https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=9fQ3AwAAQBAJ&rdid=book-9fQ3AwAAQBAJ&rdot=1&source=gbs_vpt_read&pcampaignid=books_booksearch_viewport , - Rowman & Littlefield- Publisher , January 30, 2014

⁴⁷³ International Association of Anti Corruption Authorities , “The Movement for Justice and Development (MJD) ” http://www.iaaca.org/AntiCorruptionAuthorities/ByCountriesandRegions/S/Syria/201202/t20120215_805339.shtml , 2012-02-15

or religion. Currently, the Syrian Democratic People's Party is a member of the Syrian National Council, National Democratic Rally, and the Damascus Declaration.⁴⁷⁴

The Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution (SCLSR): The Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution is a grassroots movement in Syria which is comprised of academics, the educated middle class in urban areas, as well as forty various Revolutionary Councils in several crucial cities in Syria including Aleppo, Hama, Damascus, Deir El Zzour, Homs, etc. The SCLSR's objective and mission is to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad and establish a democratic and pluralistic government. The SCLSR is in favor of foreign intervention, arming the rebels and funding them. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center, the Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution "was one of the founding members of the SNC in October 2011. Out of all the grassroots civilian networks in Syria, the SCLSR is the strongest and best represented within the council... On November 7, 2012, at least four SCLSR members were elected to the new General Secretariat of the SNC".⁴⁷⁵

Although the Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution aspires to establish a democratic system of governance in Syria which includes freedom, social justice and equality, the Council, according to the Carnegie Endowment Institute,

⁴⁷⁴ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, "The Syrian Democratic People's Party", <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/10/syrian-democratic-people-s-party/fckn>, January 10, 2012

⁴⁷⁵ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, "the Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution", <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/12/20/supreme-council-for-leadership-of-syrian-revolution/ewm5>, December 20, 2012

Middle East Center “..does not, however, have a well-defined political agenda nor a party affiliation or ideology.” At the beginning of its establishment, the SCLSR utilized peaceful means to organize and coordinate demonstrations and protests. Nevertheless, the militarization in the Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution has escalated and this council has been funding, organizing and arming the rebels. ⁴⁷⁶

The Local Coordination Committees of Syria

The Local Coordination Committees of Syria, a network of dozens of local committees in Syria, was formed at the beginning of the uprising in Syria in March 2011. Members of the Local Coordination Committees of Syria are mainly lawyers, human rights activists, and young journalists from various religious and ethnic backgrounds and the Local Coordination Committees of Syria have been effective in organizing and mobilizing protests and demonstrations across the country. Currently, this organization is comprised of 70 coordination groups . which are called. *Tansiqiyat, in Syria*. The Local Coordination Committees of Syria opposes violence, foreign military intervention, arming the rebels and engaging in armed struggle. ^{477 478}

⁴⁷⁶ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center, “the Supreme Council for the Leadership of the Syrian Revolution” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/12/20/supreme-council-for-leadership-of-syrian-revolution/ewm5> , December 20, 2012

⁴⁷⁷ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center , “The Local Coordination Committees of Syria” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50426&reloadFlag=1>

⁴⁷⁸ Asi Abu Najm , “Syria’s Coordination Committees: A Brief History” , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/764> , Published Saturday, October 1, 2011

Instead, this group is in favor of promoting civil disobedience, and nonviolent ways to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad.^{479 480} However, the Local Coordination Committees of Syria have been sidelined by the increased militarization of the conflict and has lost ground and its initial organized connections with the activists involved in leading the conflict. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle East Center: “In fact, despite being one of the largest and best-organized opposition groups inside Syria, the LCC receives the least amount of funding due to its nonmilitary stance and lack of religious affiliation. “⁴⁸¹ In addition, the Local Coordination Committees of Syria supports peaceful transition of power to a democratic system of governance with social justice and equality.⁴⁸²⁴⁸³

The Local Coordination Committees of Syria, alongside with the Center for Documentation of Violations in Syria have been involved in delivering humanitarian aid and became crucial in documenting human rights violations, the number of people being killed, detained, or those who are missing. Crucial figures in the Local

⁴⁷⁹ Official Website of Local Coordination Committees , “ About the LCCS” , <http://www.lccsyria.org/about> .

⁴⁸⁰ Arab Studies Institute , "Syrian Local Coordinating Committees on Taking Up Arms and Foreign Intervention". <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2539/syrian-local-coordinating-committees-on-taking-up-> , *Jadaliyya*. Arab Studies Institute. 2011-08-31

⁴⁸¹ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center , “The Local Coordination Committees of Syria” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50426&reloadFlag=1> ,

⁴⁸² Official Website of Local Coordination Committees , “ About the LCCS” , <http://www.lccsyria.org/about> .

⁴⁸³ Arab Studies Institute , "Syrian Local Coordinating Committees on Taking Up Arms and Foreign Intervention". <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2539/syrian-local-coordinating-committees-on-taking-up-> , *Jadaliyya*. Arab Studies Institute. 2011-08-31

Coordination Committees of Syria are: Razan Zaitouneh who is a member of the media office, and a human rights lawyer located in Syria. Omar Idilbi who is a member of the LCC Executive Committee and the spokesperson of the Jordanian branch, and Manhal Bareesh who is the Local Coordination Committees of Syria's representative in the Syrian National Council, and located in Turkey. The Local Coordination Committees of Syria recognized the Syrian National Council as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.⁴⁸⁴

Notwithstanding this, the Local Coordination Committees of Syria warned the Syrian National Council that it will withdraw from the council due to lack of organizational democracy and the structure of the Syrian National Council.⁴⁸⁵⁴⁸⁶ ⁴⁸⁷

Some of the crucial committees under the supervision of the Local Coordination Committees of Syria are the following: the Committee of the Der El Ezzor , the Committee of the Syrian Coast, the Committee of the Raqqa, the Committee of the Swayda', the Committee of the Damascus suburbs, the Committee of Damascus, the Committee of Hama, the Committee of Dara, the Committee of Homs, the Committee

⁴⁸⁴ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center , "The Local Coordination Committees of Syria" , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50426&reloadFlag=1>

⁴⁸⁵ Asi Abu Najm , "Syria's Coordination Committees: A Brief History" , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/764> , Published Saturday, October 1, 2011

⁴⁸⁶ Arab Studies Institute , "Syrian Local Coordinating Committees on Taking Up Arms and Foreign Intervention". <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2539/syrian-local-coordinating-committees-on-taking-up-> , *Jadaliyya*. Arab Studies Institute. 2011-08-31

⁴⁸⁷ Carnegie Endowment Institute, Middle east Center , "The Local Coordination Committees of Syria" , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=50426&reloadFlag=1>

of Baniyas , the Committee of Saraqeb, the Committee of Idleb, the Committee of Hasaka, and the Committee of Qamishli. ⁴⁸⁸

The Military Council of The Free Syrian Army & Higher, Paramilitary: The Free Syrian Army, an armed and military organization, was formed in July 20th 2011, a few months after the uprising began. The Free Syrian Army is comprised of defectors from the Syrian Armed Forces, commanders as well as many other armed volunteers who desire to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. The ideology of the Free Syrian Army is secularism and they desire to set up a democratic, pluralistic and multi-party system, as well as to abide by international law. The majority of the fighters in the Free Syrian Army are Sunni, though the Free Syrian Army claims that it has fighters from minority groups (Kurds, Alawaite, Turkmen, Druze, etc). Their agenda is not sectarian. The Free Syrian Army operates across several cities in Syria. In addition, the FSA has been supported by Western powers including the United States and has received training and weapons, including advanced American made anti-tank missiles such as the BGM-71 TOW. ^{489 490 491 492}

⁴⁸⁸ Official Website of Local Coordination Committees , “ About the LCCS” , <http://www.lccsyria.org/about> .

⁴⁸⁹ Nancy A. Youssef , "Syrian Rebels Describe U.S.-Backed Training in Qatar", <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/syria-arming-the-rebels/syrian-rebels-describe-u-s-backed-training-in-qatar/> , 2014-05-26 .

⁴⁹⁰ Hassan Hassan , "Despite the narrative, Syria's rebels may be gaining ground", <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/despite-the-narrative-syrias-rebels-may-be-gaining-ground> , The National United Arab Emirates, 2014-05-06 .

⁴⁹¹ CNN World , “Who and what is the Free Syrian Army?”, <http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/17/who-and-what-is-the-free-syrian-army/> , November 17th, 2011

The Military Council of The Free Syrian Army has been in opposition to the hard-line Islamist and Jihadist rebel groups which are attempting to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad and establish an Islamic state. The Military Council of The Free Syrian Army has been involved in clashes and battles with several of these Islamists groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Jubhat Al Nusra, etc, in Damascus, Aleppo and other major cities in Syria. Several commanders from various provinces issued a statement laying out their mission and objectives.⁴⁹³ The following is their statement, which is translated into English:

“We the commanders and representatives of the Military Councils of the Free Syrian Army hereby proclaim these principles:

We believe in a free and democratic Syria where all Syrian citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, creed, religion or class shall enjoy equal rights and live in liberty, justice and peace.

We believe in a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society that honors and upholds freedom of expression, thought and conscience.

⁴⁹² Elizabeth O'Bagy, “The Free Syrian Army, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/free-syrian-army> , Middle East Security Report 9 , Institute for the Study of War , March 2013 .

⁴⁹³ Kim Sengupta , “Syria's three-way war: Free Syrian Army rebels fight the regime and, now, the Islamists” , <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrias-threeway-war-free-syrian-army-rebels-fight-the-regime-and-now-the-islamists-9052660.html> , Friday 10 January 2014

We believe in the freedom of association and assembly. No Syrian shall be forced into a political association or denied equal participation in political life.

We believe that the rule of law shall apply equally to all Syrians shall be honored by the governing bodies of Syria and shall reign supreme throughout the nation.

We believe that the governing bodies and public authorities shall protect all citizens from persecution, fear and cruel or unusual punishment.

We reject all forms of terrorism and will fight against the scourge of revenge killing in our land.

We recognize the threat posed by Syria's chemical and biological weapons stockpiles and pledge to safeguard these dangerous materials.

We welcome peace and security along our regional borders and we look forward to establishing political partnerships and alliances in the Middle East and beyond.

The Free Syrian Army is a military structure responsible to all Syrian citizens and will submit to under the authority of a democratically elected civilian government.

We seek a peaceful end to Syria's crisis but will fight if necessary to end the tyranny and dictatorship of the Assad regime. Our aim is to protect Syria's civilians and to guarantee them a brighter future.

We will do our utmost to uphold international humanitarian law and norms, including by treating prisoners humanely, even as the Assad regime engages in crimes against humanity.

We welcome our international allies and partners joining us in this revolution for freedom and dignity.

Signed by the commanders of the Military Councils of the Free Syrian Army in Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa, Dayr azZawr, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Latakia”⁴⁹⁴

The Free Syrian Army emerged as one of the most powerful and effective armed forces at the beginning, however, for several reasons it lost that momentum. First of all, the Free Syrian Army experienced fragmentation, lack of organization, a leadership split and crisis, and fracture within its institution. The first leader of the Military Council of The Free Syrian Army was Lieutenant General Salim Idris, who was replaced with Brigadier General Abdel-Ilah Bashir al-Nuaymi, as a result of rivalry between the government of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, after his relations with the government of Saudi Arabia deteriorated and he favored and the government of Qatar. Lieutenant General Salim Idris contested the replacement, however, Brigadier General Abdel-Ilah Bashir al-Nuaymi was backed by the government of Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the rising power of the Islamists and Jihadist groups in various Syria cities has undermined the Military Council of the FSA^{495 496}

⁴⁹⁴ Al Monitor, FSA statement in Arabic and English, <http://backchannel.al-monitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/FSAProclamationofPrinciples-Logo.pdf>

⁴⁹⁵ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, “Free Syrian Army sacks chief, appoints replacement”, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/17/us-syria-crisis-rebels-idUSBREA1G12J20140217> , AMMAN Mon Feb 17, 2014 12:19pm EST

⁴⁹⁶ Elizabeth O'Bagy, “ The Free Syrian Army, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/free-syrian-army> , Middle East Security Report 9 , Institute for the Study of War , March 2013 .

Liwaa al-Umma, Literal translation would be : "Banner of the Nation": The Liwaa al-Umma, also known as Brigade of the Muslim Nation, is an armed rebel group. Its leaders are Irish-Libyan, and most of its fighters are Syrian -although some are from other countries including Libya, Palestine, and other Arab states. ⁴⁹⁷ ⁴⁹⁸The leader of the Liwaa al-Umma is Abd al Mahdi al Harati, who was formerly the leader of the Libyan rebel group, Tripoli Brigade. The leader of this rebel group, Abd al Mahdi al Harati, has been characterized as a Libyan revolutionary, not a Jihadi. ⁴⁹⁹

The goal of the Liwaa al-Umma is to overthrow the Syrian government and oust President al-Assad in order to establish an Islamic state. In comparison to other hard-line and Jihadist rebel groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the Liwaa al-Umma is considered less extreme. At the beginning, the Liwaa al-Umma joined the Free Syrian army to fight against the armed forces of the Syrian government. Later, they joined Jihadist and extremist groups such as Jund al-Aqsa as well as Liwa al-Haqq in order to create a new coalition named, Muhajirin wa-Ansar

⁴⁹⁷ CATHY HAYES , "Irish Libyans join rebels trying to oust Gadafy".
<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-born-libyans-join-the-rebels-in-the-fight-against-muammar-gaddafi-128215983-237407711.html> Irish Times. 13 August 2011.

⁴⁹⁸ Sharq Al Awsat in Arabic Language,
<http://classic.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=12364&article=698238&feature=> ,
 Aawsat.com.

⁴⁹⁹ NEIL MacFARQUHAR and HWAIDA SAAD,
 , "As Syrian War Drags On, Jihadists Take Bigger Role".
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/30/world/middleeast/as-syrian-war-drags-on-jihad-gains-foothold.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> , *The New York Times*. 29 July 2012

Alliance . The Liwaa al-Umma has approximately 6,000 fighters, according to its former leader Abd al Mahdi al Harati.^{500 501 502}

The Popular Front for Change and Liberation: The Popular Front for Change and Liberation is an internal Syrian opposition group, in contrast to those Syrian oppositional groups which were formed in Istanbul, Turkey, Duha, Qatar or other countries. The Popular Front for Change and Liberation is opposed to any foreign intervention or interference in Syrian domestic affairs and politics, and arming the rebels. It rejects sectarianism. The Popular Front for Change and Liberation has defended the Syrian army pointing out, “ The statement noted that the Syrian army is a symbol of sovereignty and national unity whose mission is the protection of the homeland and targeting the army means targeting the national sovereignty and unity with the emphasis on the choice of the Syria people in the liberation of the Syrian Golan

⁵⁰⁰ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, “ The Liwaa al-Umma”,
http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/liwaa-al-umma?ip_login_no_cache=520afbd14df3d786e0c7ccdab9a1fc12 .

⁵⁰¹ Cedric Labrousse , "The new face of the Syrian rebellion". <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#> , Arab Chronicle , 5 March 2014 .

⁵⁰² Sharq Al Awsat in Arabic Language,
<http://classic.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=12364&article=698238&feature=> ,
Aawsat.com.

and the usurped lands as a whole.”⁵⁰³ The president of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation was Ali Haidar who was replaced in 2014 with Qadir Jamil.^{504 505}

The ideology and mission of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation is anchored in secularism, socialism, and distribution of wealth. This group is in favor of the Geneva II Peace Conference and the Geneva communiqué, as well as drafting a new constitution as well as bringing the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad and other oppositional groups together in order to resolve the Syrian civil war.^{506 507}

6.1.8 Loyalist and Quasi- Loyalist Oppositional Groups

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party: The Syrian Social Nationalist Party is a Syrian secular and socialist opposition group which was founded in Beirut Lebanon in 1930s. It is considered to be in close relationship with the ruling Ba’ath party of the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party is

⁵⁰³ Uprooted , “Popular Front for Change and Liberation in Syria established... Rejection of all forms of pressure, foreign interference” ,
<http://uprootedpalestinians.blogspot.com/2011/07/popular-front-for-change-and-liberation.html> , Sunday, 10 July 2011

⁵⁰⁴ Global Security , “Popular Front for Change and Liberation” ,
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/pfcl.htm> .

⁵⁰⁵ English.news.cn , “Syrian candidate says parliamentary elections marred with violations” ,
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-05/09/c_131578032.htm , *Xinhua*, May 9, 2012

⁵⁰⁶ ITAR- TASS News Agency , “Popular Front for Change and Liberation to do best to make Geneva II successful , <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/715273> , January 20, 14:39 UTC+4

⁵⁰⁷ Uprooted , “Popular Front for Change and Liberation in Syria established... Rejection of all forms of pressure, foreign interference” ,
<http://uprootedpalestinians.blogspot.com/2011/07/popular-front-for-change-and-liberation.html> , Sunday, 10 July 2011

opposed to any foreign intervention, arming the rebels, or interference in Syrian domestic affairs and politics, and it rejects sectarianism. It seeks to resolve the current crisis through dialogue with President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government, and it supports the Annan Peace Plan. Its objectives and goals are to promote freedom of speech, press, equality, as well as the establishment of a democratic and civil political system of governance with emphasis on Syrian nationalism. With respect to foreign policy objectives, it is opposed to Israeli occupation of Golan Heights. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party withdrew from the Popular Front for Change and Liberation. Crucial figures in the Syrian Social Nationalist Party are Antoun Saadeh, the founder, as well as the chairman Ali Haidar. ^{508 509}

The People's Will Party: The People's Will Party, also known as the National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists, is an internal Syrian political party, which is part of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation alongside with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. The ideology of the People's Will Party is anchored in Marxist-Leninism. The founder and leader of the Party is Qadro Jamil and the People's Will Party is considered to have close relationship with the ruling Ba'ath party of the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. The People's Will Party played a role in drafting the new constitution in 2012 after the conflict erupted and it won several seats

⁵⁰⁸ English.news.cn , "Syrian candidate says parliamentary elections marred with violations", http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2012-05/09/c_131578032.htm , *Xinhua*, May 9, 2012

⁵⁰⁹ *Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center* , " The Syrian Social Nationalist Party" , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48565> , Syria Resources , January 1, 2012 .

in the first Syrian parliamentary elections which were based on the new constitution. ⁵¹⁰

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The National Development Party: The National Development Party was one of the political parties legally formed, and licensed inside Syria after the uprising and after a new constitution was drafted. Specifically article eight of the Syrian constitution was amended in order to allow participation of other political parties independent from the Baath dominated National Progressive Front. The National Development Party, founded in February 2012, is a secular party which advocates for a democratic system of governance, as well as an electoral structure and abiding by rule of law. The current leader and founder of the National Development Party is Zaher Saadaldine, and the spokesperson for the National Development Party is Mohammed Samaan. The Party's mission and objective is to have a democratic and constructional system of government, with redistribution of wealth, provision of a social safety net for Syrians, removing corruption and state monopolies. The National Development Party, which is considered a loyalist opposition political party, endorses free market economics and it is in favor of Western investment in Syria.^{512 513}

⁵¹⁰ Waziruddin, S. Saleh , "Communist Parties Win 11 Seats in Syrian Parliamentary Elections", <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2012/waziruddin180612.html> , *Monthly Review*, 18 June 2012 .

⁵¹¹ Anas Zarzar and Tamam Abdallah “ Syrian Parliamentary Elections: Cynicism Wins The Day” , *Al Akhbar Beirut , Lebanon* , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/syrian-parliamentary-elections-cynicism-wins-day> , 7 May 2012

⁵¹² Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim world (OPEMAM) , “National Development Party” , <http://www.opemam.org/node/945?language=en> .

Al-Ansar Party: Al-Ansar Party is another political party which was formed inside Syria after a new constitution was drafted and article eight of the Syrian constitution was amended, to allow participation of other political parties independent from the Baath dominated National Progressive Front.⁵¹⁴

The National Democratic Solidarity Party: The National Democratic Solidarity Party is a political party which was licensed by the Syrian Interior Ministry in February 2012 after a new constitution was drafted and article eight of the Syrian constitution was amended, to allow participation of other political parties independent from the Baath dominated National Progressive Front. The National Democratic Solidarity Party is opposed to foreign intervention, interference in Syrian domestic affairs and politics, and arming the rebels. The National Democratic Solidarity Party is in favor of dialogue and negotiation with president Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. According to the Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center : “As with other parties that have been licensed by the Interior Ministry since February 2012, it is difficult to verify whether the National Democratic Solidarity Party belongs to the “loyalist” opposition or whether it is a regime creation and part of the “pseudo-opposition.”⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center , “ The National Development Party” , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48762&reloadFlag=1> .

⁵¹⁴ Russian TV, RT , “Syrian elections: Baath of most resistance” , <http://rt.com/news/syria-opposition-parliamentary-elections-939/> , Published time: March 06, 2012 08:11
Edited time: March 06, 2012 21:07

⁵¹⁵ The Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center , “ The National Democratic Solidarity Party” ,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=49340&lang=en&reloadFlag=1> .

The mission and objectives of the National Democratic Solidarity Party is to establish a democratic system of governance with rule of law and social justice. It's foreign policy objectives are anchored in a free and open market, privatization and economic liberalization, as well as anti-Israeli policies regarding the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.^{516 517}

Syria the Homeland Party (Souria al-Watan): Syria the Homeland Party was licensed by the Syrian Interior Ministry in 2012 after the new constitution and amendment to article 8 to permit participation of other political parties independent from the Baath dominated National Progressive Front. The founder of the Syria the Homeland Party is an engineer, Ghatfan Hammoud, and the secretary-general is the artist, Majd Niazi. Syria the Homeland Party does not have any seats in the parliament due to the fact that the party withdrew from running in the 2012 elections. Syria the Homeland Party is opposed to foreign and military intervention, arming the rebels and it is in favor of dialogue and negotiation with President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government, as well as supporting the Annan Peace Plan. The foreign policy objectives of the Party is to defend the Syrian sovereignty and its mission and objectives are to create a pluralistic

⁵¹⁶ Russian TV, RT , “Syrian elections: Baath of most resistance” , <http://rt.com/news/syria-opposition-parliamentary-elections-939/> , Published time: March 06, 2012 08:11
Edited time: March 06, 2012 21:07

⁵¹⁷ The Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center , “ The National Democratic Solidarity Party”,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=49340&lang=en&reloadFlag=1> .

and transitional democratic system of government with social justice, rule of law, and “Citizenship, dignity, love”.⁵¹⁸⁵¹⁹

The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development, Syrian National Youth Party,

The National Development Party (English): The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development is one of the few political parties with a female president and leader. The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development is a legal political party in Syria and it was licensed by the Syrian Interior Ministry in March 2012 as the new constitution allowed a multi-party system as a result of the amendment to article eight. The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development contested and competed in the parliamentary elections but did not win any seats. The president and founder of the Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development is Parwin Ibrahim, who is a journalist for the daily newspaper, Kuwait News.⁵²⁰

The ideology of the Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development is anchored in secularism and it supports the Kurdish communities and advocates for retaining the Kurdish identity, particularly its linguistic and cultural identity. Similar to other legal political parties, which are licensed by the Syrian Interior Ministry, the

⁵¹⁸ Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim world (OPEMAM), “Syria The Homeland Party”, <http://www.opemam.org/node/954?language=en>.

⁵¹⁹ The Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center, “Syria the Homeland Party”, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48765>.

⁵²⁰ Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Arab and Muslim world (OPEMAM), “The Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development”, <http://www.opemam.org/node/948?language=en>.

Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development is opposed to foreign and military intervention, interference in Syria's domestic affairs and politics, arming the Syrian rebel groups, and it advocated for dialogue, political settlement and negotiations with President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government. In addition, the Party is in favor of the Annan Peace Plan, and its mission is to reform the Syrian political system by supporting and empowering the Syrian youth and bringing them into leadership positions, thus making them crucial in the decision-making political process of Syria.

521 522

6.1.9 The Eighth Domestic Battle: Syrian Government Armed Forces and paramilitary Organization Fighting the Armed Rebel Groups

The National Defense Force, *Qhuwat alddifa al Watani*, The National Defense Force, which is also known as the National Defense Army, is one of the largest militia groups in Syria and it is considered the Syrian government's major military organization and its most effective one. The National Defense Force was founded by the Syrian government in the midst of the civil war in 2012, in order to have an organized militia and locally

⁵²¹ Tareq Abdel Hay , “ Syria's New Parties: Modest Goals Against Baath Hold” , *Al Akhbar Beirut Lebanon*, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/5347/> , 18 March 2012

⁵²² The Carnegie Endowment Institute, The Middle East Center , “the Syrian National Youth Party for Justice and Development” , <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48764> , Syria Resources , January 14, 2012 .

based fighters in comparison, competition and counter to the militia group, Al Shabiha.

523

Although many scholars and experts predicted the fall of the Syrian government and President Bashar Al Assad at this time, the National Defense Force became one of the most effective pro government militia groups to ensure the power of the Syrian government. Volunteers are recruited, armed and paid salaries, to fight locally, though they can be deployed in other areas, and most of the National Defense Force's fighters are from the minorities; Alawites, Shia, Druze, Christians, etc. ⁵²⁴

The National Defense Force has approximately 60,000 fighters and one of its subunits is comprised of only women, is called the "*Lionesses of National Defense*". Reportedly, the National Defense Force was founded, trained, and funded with the assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ^{525 526 527 528 529}

⁵²³ Writing by Erika Solomon and Editing by Will Waterman, "Insight: Battered by war, Syrian army creates its own replacement", <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/21/us-syria-crisis-paramilitary-insight-idUSBRE93Ko2R20130421> , Reuters. April 21, 2013

⁵²⁴ Sam Dagher, "Syria's Alawite Force Turned Tide for Assad ". <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323997004578639903412487708?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424127887323997004578639903412487708.html> , Wall Street Journal. 26 August 2013.

⁵²⁵ Racha Abi Haidar , "Armenians in Syria, After the Conflict" , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/armenians-syria-after-conflict> , Al Akhbar , 8 February 2014 .

⁵²⁶ Sam Dagher, "Syria's Alawite Force Turned Tide for Assad ". <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323997004578639903412487708?mg=reno64wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424127887323997004578639903412487708.html> , Wall Street Journal. 26 August 2013.

⁵²⁷ The Economist , "Syria's civil war: The regime digs in ". <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21579494-president-bashar-assad-and-his-forces-have-won-new-lease-life-regime-digs> , The Economist. 15 June 2013.

The Syrian Arab Army: Most members, of the Syrian Arab Army , which was established in 1948, are Sunni.

Many defected from the military during the Syrian civil war, though the Syrian Arab Army retained much of its power and strength.⁵³⁰ The majority of the military personnel, remaining, are from the Alawite communities.⁵³¹ Active Frontline Personnel in the Syrian Arab Army are approximately 178,000 Active Reserve Personnel in the Syrian Armed Forces are approximately 570,000. Reportedly, the Syrian Arab Army possess 4,950 tanks, 5,155 Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) , 3,360 Towed-Artillery, 680 Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems (MLRSs) , and 436 Self-Propelled Guns (SPGs).⁵³²

Some of the crucial divisions of the Syrian Arab Army are the Republican Guard, 4th Armored Division under the control of Maher al-Assad, the brother of the President Bashar al-Assad, Special Forces Command, 14th Special Forces Division , and the 1st

⁵²⁸ Adam Heffez , "Using Women to Win in Syria ". <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2013/09/women-fighters-syria-rebels-regime.html> , Al-Monitor , 28 November 2013 .

⁵²⁹ Anne Barnard , “ Syria Military Shows Strain in a War It Wasn’t Built to Fight” ,
 , <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/13/world/middleeast/signs-of-strain-on-syrias-military-build.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> , *The New York Times*, Published: March 12, 2013

⁵³⁰ Global Fire Power, “ Syria Military Strength: Despite the ongoing civil war, the Syrian military is one of the largest in all of Middle East.” http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=syria , Last updated: 3/27/2014

⁵³¹ Bhalla, Reva , "Making Sense of the Syrian Crisis" .
http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110504-making-sense-syrian-crisis?utm_source=GWeekly&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=110505&utm_content=realmore&elq=2ef73758a9434404bd465acd3490d5fe#ixzz1LTPFUuuw , Stratfor , 5 May 2011 .

⁵³² Global Fire Power, “ Syria Military Strength: Despite the ongoing civil war, the Syrian military is one of the largest in all of Middle East.” http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=syria , Last updated: 3/27/2014

Armored Division. Four crucial figures in the Syrian military forces were killed in Damascus at the National Security building in the district of Rawda (where several ministers and major political figures had a meeting) in a bomb attack by rebel groups including, Defense Minister Gen. Daoud Rajha and President Bashar al-Assad's brother-in-law and his deputy, Assef Shawkat, Syrian General Hassan Turkmani, a former defense minister and senior military official. The injured included Interior Minister Mohammad al-Shaar and Maher al-Assad- the president's younger brother, and the commander of the Syrian Army's elite Fourth Armored Division.⁵³³

The Military Intelligence Directorate: The Military Intelligence Directorate, the Mukhabarat, is one of the most influential forces in the Syrian socio-political and socio-economic landscapes, and was established before the formation of the Syrian Armed Forces. The Military Intelligence Directorate was originally founded during the French mandate but some changes occurred in the late 1960s.⁵³⁴

The Military Intelligence Directorate is controlled by the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad. The Military Intelligence Directorate is considered a symbol of repression and corruption by many Syrian people.⁵³⁵ The head of the Military Intelligence Directorate

⁵³³ Russian TV, "Syria's top security ministers slain in Damascus bombing", <http://rt.com/news/damascus-suicide-government-wounded-458/>, Published time: July 18, 2012 10:21, Edited time: July 19, 2012 13:26

⁵³⁴ Wege, Carl Anthony (2011). "Hizbollah–Syrian Intelligence Affairs: A Marriage of Convenience". <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=jss>, *Journal of Strategic Security Volume 4* (3): 1–12.

⁵³⁵ Mariam Karouny, "Syria's rebels form their own secret police",

was injured in the bomb attack in Damascus at the National Security building in the district of Rawda. Normally, the head of the Military Intelligence Directorate has been from inner circle of President Bashar al-Assad and from the Alawite community. The current head of the Military Intelligence Directorate is Rafiq Shahadah.⁵³⁶

The Syrian Arab Navy: The Syrian Arab Navy has been involved in the Syrian civil war by supporting the military attacks. The Syrian Arab Navy is considered the smallest subunits among other units of the Syrian Armed Forces. The Syrian Arab Navy possess approximately 44 Coastal Defense Craft, 7 Mine Warfare, and two Frigates.⁵³⁷

The Syrian Arab Air Force: The Syrian Arab Air Force, which was established in 1948, did not play a crucial role at the beginning of the Syrian conflict. Nevertheless, the use of jets, armed Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters, Mi-24/25 attack helicopters, Mil Mi-17 helicopter modern MANPADS with Russian and Chinese designs, Sukhoi Su-22, MiG-23, S-8 armed MiG-29, rockets and firing helicopters became essential as the conflict continued.^{538 539 540 541 542}

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/10/us-syria-crisis-mukhabarat-idUSBRE9090K420130110>, Reuters, BEIRUT Thu Jan 10, 2013 8:01am EST

⁵³⁶ Russian TV, "Syria's top security ministers slain in Damascus bombing", <http://rt.com/news/damascus-suicide-government-wounded-458/>, Published time: July 18, 2012 10:21, Edited time: July 19, 2012 13:26

⁵³⁷ Global Fire Power, "Syria Military Strength: Despite the ongoing civil war, the Syrian military is one of the largest in all of Middle East." http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=syria, Last updated: 3/27/2014

⁵³⁸ Location Settings, "Syrian rebels down aircraft". <http://www.news24.com/World/News/Syrian-rebels-down-aircraft-20121202>, News24, 2 December 2012.

Currently, the Syrian Arab Air Force plays a crucial role in fighting the rebels, and bombing various areas. The Syrian Arab Air Force has lost some of its military equipment, such as helicopters during the Syrian civil war. The Syrian Arab Air Force's total Aircraft is approximately 473,-there are roughly 216 fighters and interceptors in the Syrian Arab Air Force, 142 transport aircraft, 84 fixed-wing attack aircraft , 66 trainer aircraft , 169 various kinds of helicopters , and 28 attack helicopters.⁵⁴³

Jaysh al-Sha'bi (People's Army), *Or Al Jaysh alSha'bi*, "People's Army": Jaysh al-Sha'bi is an armed paramilitary group, founded in the 1980s, which supports President Bashar al-Assad, the Ba'ath Party and the Syrian government. Jaysh al-Sha'bi has been assisting the Syrian government forces and its security apparatuses in several battles, and it is mainly active in large provinces including Aleppo, Hama, Damascus, Homs, etc. The Jaysh al-Sha'bi's members are primary from the Shiite and Alawite communities. The Jaysh al-Sha'bi is supported, trained, armed, and funded by Iran's Quds Force, an elite force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards(IRGC) as well as the

⁵³⁹ The Aviationist , " Syrian Mig-29 Fulcrum jets appear in the skies over Damascus during ground attack missions <http://theaviationist.com/2013/10/22/mig-29-damascus/> , Oct 22 2013

⁵⁴⁰ By: David Kaminski-Morrow , "PICTURES: Circumstances of Syrian A320 collision remain hazy". <http://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/pictures-circumstances-of-syrian-a320-collision-remain-377309/> , Flightglobal.com. 4 October 2012.

⁵⁴¹ By Lieven Dewitte , F-16 Fighting Falcon News, "Turkish F-16 jets scramble to intercept 2 Syrian Su-24s", <http://www.f-16.net/f-16-news-article4842.html> , March 17, 2014 .

⁵⁴² Jaish al-Islam using a 9K33 Osa (2) <http://spioenkop.blogspot.com.au/2014/01/liwa-al-islam-and-her-9k33-osa-2.html> , Oryx Blog , Friday, 17 January 2014

⁵⁴³ Global Fire Power, " Syria Military Strength: Despite the ongoing civil war, the Syrian military is one of the largest in all of Middle East." http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=syria , Last updated: 3/27/2014

Shiite political party and militant group Hezbollah. Reportedly, this militia group has approximately 50,000 fighters and it is modeled after the Iranian militia group, the Basij. The United States Department of the Treasury sanctioned al-Jaysh al-Sha'bi in December 2012 by the Executive Order 13582. ^{544 545 546}

Suqur al-Sahara, The Desert Falcons: Suqur al Sahara is an armed elite force which is fighting in the Syrian civil war in support of the President Bashar al-Assad, the Ba'ath Party and the Syrian government. Suqur al Sahara is comprised of retired military officers with military expertise in addition to well-trained fighters. According to the translation in Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's article, they are referred to as "The Desert Falcons: An Elite Pro-Assad Force". ⁵⁴⁷ The Arabic media outlet El-Nashra sheds light on this elite force: "Among these forces [that have emerged in the Syrian civil war] are the Desert Falcons that are fighting in Kasab and are considered the prong of attack and defense of the region especially at Point 45. They began operating in Homs and especially on the borders with Iraq to cut supply/aid paths between armed men in the two lands.

⁵⁴⁴ Karen DeYoung and Joby Warrick , " Iran and Hezbollah build militia networks in Syria, officials say ". <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/12/iran-hezbollah-milita-networks-syria> , *The Guardian*, 12 February 2013.

⁵⁴⁵ Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, and Sam Wyer
" Iranian Strategy in Syria ", Institute for the Study of War, Executive Summary, May 2013

⁵⁴⁶ *The United States Department of the Treasury* , " *Treasury Sanctions Al-Nusrah Front Leaders, Militia Groups in Syria* ". <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2012/12/20121211139861.html#axzz2GxiqHxql> , 11 December 2012

⁵⁴⁷ Al Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad , " The Desert Falcons: An Elite Pro-Assad Force ". <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/desert-falcons-elite-pro-assad-force/> , Syria Comment , 8 April 2014 .

These forces are considered among the elite of men fighting in Syria in support of President Bashar al-Assad, and there are fighting in its ranks members of military expertise, retired officers and members of the army, as well as volunteers from Syrian youth and age groups averaging between 25 and 40 years of age.

The Desert Falcons forces have medium capabilities and arms as well as machine-gun fire, and the army supports it with artillery when necessary, but it specializes in setting up ambushes and carrying out difficult special assignments.

They have already carried out a large number of combat missions on the Jordanian and Iraqi borders, and a group of them are currently participating in the battles in the Kasab area and it's surrounding.”⁵⁴⁸

At the beginning of its formation, this elite force mainly operated in the province of Homs and near the borders with Iraq ,in order to block the route which the Syrian oppositional groups and rebels utilize as a supply network. They have been involved in several battles alongside the Syrian government forces including the battle to retake Kasab and capture of the town of al-Qaryatayn on June 2013.^{549 550}

⁵⁴⁸ Al Nashra in Arabic language,
<http://www.elnashra.com/news/show/730174/%D8%B5%D9%82%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B8%D9%87%D8%B1-%D9%83%D8%B3%D8%A8-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%A8-%D9%83%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D8%B5%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%A9> , El Nashra. 1 April 2014.

⁵⁴⁹ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium , “ Desert Falcons” ,
<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/desert-falcons> .

Shabiha, (Literal translation Apparitions): Shabiha is a militia and armed group, also known as the “Thugs”, which were reportedly unleashed by the Syrian government in order to crack down on dissidents and other opposition rebel groups. Shabiha was created in the 1980s, by President Hafez al-Assad’s cousin, Namir al-Assad as well as President Hafez al-Assad’s brother, and Rifaat al-Assad.⁵⁵¹ Shabiah has been accused of killing, raping, and kidnapping protesters. This militia group has been engaged, according to witnesses, in conducting massacres including the Houla massacre, where 49 children were massacred out of a total of 78 people killed. This massacre drew unanimous criticism from the United Nations Security Council members.^{552 553 554}

Other alleged massacres include the Al-Qubair massacre where several women and children were killed. Reportedly, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps is training Shabiha

⁵⁵⁰ Al Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad , " The Desert Falcons: An Elite Pro-Assad Force ".
<http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/desert-falcons-elite-pro-assad-force/> , Syria Comment , 8 April 2014 .

⁵⁵¹ Hugh Macleod and Annasofie Flamand , “ Inside Syria’s shabiha death squads” ,
http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/06/15/inside_syrias_shabiha_death_squads.html ,
thestar.com, June 2012

⁵⁵² Nebehay, Stephanie , "Most Houla victims killed in summary executions: U.N.".
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/29/us-syria-un-idUSBRE84S10020120529> , Reuters
, May 29, 2012 .

⁵⁵³ BBC World News , "Syria UN team 'shot at' near Qubair 'massacre site'".
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18352281> , BBC News. 7 June 2012.

⁵⁵⁴ Gul Tuysuz , "Syrian men promise to marry women who were raped".
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/syrian-men-promise-to-marry-women-who-were-raped/2011/06/20/AG6sO1cH_story.html , *The Washington Post*. 21 June 2011 .

members as well as the Jaysh al-Sha'bi of the Syrian government.⁵⁵⁵ Witnesses of the village Tell Kalakh has reported peoples throat being slit by black-uniformed Shabiha.⁵⁵⁶ Shabiha has been assisting the Syrian government armed forces along with security forces in some of the battles, and they have fought with several Syrian rebel groups including the Free Syrian Army. Most of the members of Shabiha militia group are reportedly from the Alawite communities, although Shabiha has members from the Sunni and other communities as well.⁵⁵⁷

6.2 The Multi-layered Domestic Dimensions of The Conflict in Syria

Here are some of the crucial rebel, militant, and oppositional groups classified based on their ideology, objective, and ethnicity. It is critical to point out that the objectives of these groups might overlap. Often, they build alliances and sometimes to battle against each other. This was shown in tables 1, 2, and 3.

As illustrated in the previous section, the interactions, battles, balance of power, strategic, ethnic and ideological alliances of hundreds of various armed rebel groups and governmental forces and paramilitary groups, with diverse political, ideological, ethnic, religious and social-economic perspectives are involved in impacting the balance of

⁵⁵⁵ United States Department of the Treasury , “Treasury Sanctions Al-Nusrah Front Leadership in Syria and Militias Supporting the Asad Regime” , <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1797.aspx> , 12/11/2012

⁵⁵⁶ BBC World News, “Syria unrest: Who are the shabiha?” , <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14482968> , 29 May 2012 Last updated at 12:20 ET

⁵⁵⁷ BBC World News, “Syria unrest: Who are the shabiha?” , <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14482968> , 29 May 2012 Last updated at 12:20 ET

power, militarization of the conflict, its intensity, scope, duration as well as directing the Syrian civil war in one direction or another. In the following section, an explanation will be provided on some of the main geopolitical, religious, ethnic and ideological tensions, battles, and conflicts among the different fractured or organized armed groups, as well as the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, his Armed Forces and other parties involved domestically. This highlights the complexity of the domestic dimension of the Syrian civil war.

6.2.1 Secular Armed Groups Versus Moderate Islamist and Salafi-Jihadist Groups

The other ideological clashes between the Syrian rebel groups rests between the secular armed groups on the one hand and the Moderate Islamist and Salafi-Jihadist on the other. The Moderate Islamist and Salafi-Jihadist Secular armed groups have opposed both the mission and ideological objectives of secular armed rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army, in spite of their effectiveness in fighting the war against President Bashar Al Assad, the Ba'ath party and the Syrian Armed Forces.

Secular armed rebel groups primarily advocate for a democratic system of governance, free market, separation of religion from the state, rule of law, and separation of powers. However, these concepts, particularly separation of religion from the state, are being totally opposed by the Islamist rebel groups. While at the beginning of the civil war in Syria, secular groups such as the Free Syrian Army were the major and most effective rebel groups fighting against the Syrian government and various branches of its Armed Forces, later the Islamists and Jihadist groups have emerged as the most

powerful rebel groups in the Syrian civil war fighting President al-Assad and the various branches of the Syrian government armed forces.⁵⁵⁸

There are several crucial phenomenon and implications in the emergence and increasing power of radical Islamists and Salafist rebel groups in Syria. First of all, the involvement of these radical Islamist and Salafist rebel groups appear to strengthen and buttress the President Bashar Al Assad's position, narrative and argument- that he has been attacked by terrorists groups and that the Syrian conflict was not a popular uprising but a foreign backed conspiracy.

Secondly, the rising power and strength of the Islamists, al-Qaeda linked groups, and the Salafists and Jihadists in Syria, add to the perception that there is no better alternative to the current Ba'th party of Syria and President Bashar Al Assad. Third, the clashes between these various rebel groups has weakened some of these groups and shifted some of the emphasis and concentration of these groups from solely fighting the Syrian government. Although these three factors bode well for the Syrian government and President al-Assad by boosting his arguments, weakening the rebel groups and preventing Western or foreign and military intervention, the rising power and military strength of the Islamists, al-Qaeda linked groups, the Salafists and Jihadists in Syria have caused severe damage to the control of the Syrian government over some territories.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Peter Beumont , "Growing strength of Syria's Islamist groups undermines hopes of ousting Assad" , <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/14/syria-islamist-militants-growing-strength> , The Guardian, Saturday 14 December 2013 10.21 EST

⁵⁵⁹ Associated Press and CBS News , "ISIS takes Syrian towns and key oil field as rivals give up

6.2.2 Secular, Socialists, Moderate Islamists, and Salafi Jihadist Versus The Syrian Government

While there are tensions and clashes among various rebel groups including the secular, socialists, moderate Islamists, and Salafi Jihadist rebel groups, the mission, objectives and goals of most of these fractured and ideologically diverse armed groups are to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad, the Ba'th party under his control, and defeat the Syrian Armed Forces and its allies. The Syrian government has frequently labeled rebel groups, which attempt to overthrow its government, as terrorist or foreign backed groups. In addition, until this moment, the Syrian government and president Bashar al- Assad has been capable of staying in power because they utilize various sections of the government Armed Forces, by providing funding, military training, advisory and security assistance, etc. ⁵⁶⁰

After the establishment of any Syrian rebel group, the crucial shortcomings common in the various rebel groups when it comes to fighting different branches of the Syrian Armed Forces, have been a leadership crisis, split within the armed rebel groups, ideological discrepancies, differences in missions and objectives, lack of a command and control system, fragile coordination and organization, lack of adequate funding,

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-takes-syrian-towns-and-key-oil-field-as-rivals-give-up/> ,
July 3, 2014, 1:40 PM

⁵⁶⁰ ABC Australia , “Syria's Bashar al-Assad vows to combat 'terror with iron fist'” ,
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-05/syria-bashar-assad-speech-rebels-terror/4864872> ,
Posted Mon 5 Aug 2013, 10:56am AEST

arms, weapons, equipment and training. After more than three years of conflict and civil war, it appears that neither the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad nor any of the Syrian rebel groups are capable of tipping the balance of power completely in their own favor, although the Syrian government is still superior when it comes to its military and funding. In addition, as the civil war has lasted for more than three years and as it enters the fourth year, neither the Syrian rebel and armed rebel groups nor the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad seem willing to give up. As a result, the stalemate between the Syrian rebel groups and the government of Bashar al-Assad continues and the militarization of the conflict, its scope, death toll, intensity, duration and violence is also escalating.^{561 562}

6.2.3 Syrian Opposition Groups Versus the Rebels

At the beginning of the formation of most of the major Syrian oppositional groups and political parties- primarily those founded outside Syria- the opposition parties objected to foreign and military intervention as well as arming or delivering weapons to the rebel groups. Nevertheless, as the conflict became more militarized, the expectations of these Syrian opposition groups- that President Bashar al-Assad will fall soon, since stronger and more powerful dictators such as Hosni Mubarak or Qaddafi

⁵⁶¹ NEIL MacFARQUHAR , “*Turkish Border Is Crucial Link in Syrian Conflict*” , <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/world/middleeast/syrian-opposition-gets-supplies-but-unity-is-elusive.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> , The New York Times, Published: June 25, 2012

⁵⁶² Liz Sly , “*On third anniversary of Syrian rebellion, Assad is steadily winning the war*” , http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/on-third-anniversary-of-syrian-rebellion-assad-is-steadily-winning-the-war/2014/03/14/f189649a-bd1a-4c9e-9060-755984ea92c8_story.html , The Washington Post, March 14 2014

were overthrown within months- were scuttled. Consequently most of the Syrian opposition groups shifted to being in favor of military and foreign intervention as well as training, arming and financing the rebels. Not surprisingly, each opposition group selected a particular rebel group as the legitimate one, mostly the Syrian Free Army.

The main reason behind this selection is that these Syrian opposition groups do not desire to project a picture that they are supporting Salafi-Jihadist groups and other hard-line, extremists Islamist groups which were listed as terrorist groups, mainly by Western countries and the United States. Secondly, most of the Syrian oppositional groups have secular leadership which objects to the establishment of an Islamist state. Thirdly, Western or other countries are more reluctant to provide funding training, heavy or light weapons to a Syrian oppositional group which supports Islamist rebel, and armed groups.⁵⁶³

As a result of the further militarization of the conflict, and President Bashar al-Assad's ability to stay in power, Western and Arab countries' stance- toward the Syrian government, the death toll, number of refugees, displaced families, atrocities, number of casualties, number of people being tortured and raped, ideological, socio-political and socio-economic interests- most of the newly founded Syrian oppositional groups in exile are in favor of foreign intervention. In addition, they are attempting and pushing to persuade other countries, particularly the United States or other global and regional powers and state actors, for foreign and military intervention, arming the Syrian rebel

⁵⁶³ CNN International News, "Syrian opposition calls for international military intervention", <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/12/world/meast/syria-unrest/>, updated 10:46 PM EDT, Mon March 12, 2012

groups, training them and providing them with heavy or light weapons and equipment in order to topple President Bashar al-Assad, the Ba'ath Party, and the Syrian Armed Forces.⁵⁶⁴

On the other hand, while some of the Syrian rebel groups are working, cooperating and receiving financial and military assistance through the efforts of the Syrian opposition groups, there have been tensions between the rebels and the Syrian opposition groups in exile as well. The main contention that most of the Syrian rebel and armed groups make is that the Syrian opposition groups and political parties outside Syria do not represent the Syrian people because they have lived many years abroad, and do not full have control and connection on the ground, as a result, they are not legitimate.⁵⁶⁵

In addition, the other criticism of the Syrian oppositional groups and Syrian political parties in exile, is that these groups do not have full control of the Syrian rebel groups and what is occurring on the ground. Moreover, there is no assurance that the weapons and arms will reach a particular rebel group without falling in the hands of terrorists, al-Qaeda affiliated groups, or Salafi Jihadist armed groups.

The second type of Syrian opposition groups are those which were created in 2012 in Syria, after a new constitution was introduced and after article 8 was amended in order

⁵⁶⁴ CNN International News, "Syrian opposition calls for international military intervention", <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/12/world/meast/syria-unrest/> , updated 10:46 PM EDT, Mon March 12, 2012

⁵⁶⁵ Voice of Russia , "Syrian rebels do not recognize "National Coalition"" , http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013_09_25/Syrian-rebels-do-not-recognize-National-Coalition-7419/ , Voice of Russia , 25 September 2013, 03:29

to permit participation of other political parties independent from the Baath dominated National Progressive Front. These Syrian political parties and opposition groups which operate in Syria are primarily opposed to any military and foreign intervention as well as arming or training the Syrian rebel groups attempting to topple President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian Armed Forces.

These domestic Syrian political parties and opposition groups are opposed to the armed rebel groups. In addition, the Syrian rebel groups view these domestic Syrian political parties and oppositional groups as loyalist or semi-loyalist to the Ba'ath party, President a- Assad and the Syrian government.

6.2.4 Syrian Opposition Groups Versus the Syrian Government

The Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad have maintained that the opposition groups outside Syria do not represent the Syrian people and therefore are illegitimate. Although there are tensions between and within the opposition groups in exile, the common mission and objective of most of these oppositional groups is to remove President Bashar al-Assad from power through any means available, including military and foreign intervention, arming the armed rebel groups, etc.

Although, at the beginning, most of the major opposition groups outside Syria rejected talks and dialogue with the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad until he would step down from power, some of the members of these opposition groups participated in the Geneva conference, where they came under one roof with the Syrian government and President Bashar al- Assad's delegates. The negotiations were

considered a failure where both sides blamed each other for the violence, civil war, its scope, duration and intensity.⁵⁶⁶

6.2.5 Syrian Opposition Groups Versus Syrian Opposition Groups

There are two sources of tension between the Syrian opposition groups and Syrian political parties. The first area of conflict is between the domestic Syrian oppositional groups and political parties, and the Syrian opposition groups which are formed outside Syria such as in Turkey, Qatar and other countries. These include the two major Syrian opposition groups; the Syrian National Council and National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

The first reason for tension rests on the difference of position on military and foreign intervention as well as on arming, training and funding the Syrian rebel groups. While the domestic Syrian opposition groups and political parties are opposed to any foreign intervention and delivering arms and weapons to the Syrian rebel groups (they are mostly in favor of reform and transitional democracy, and protecting Syrian government sovereignty), most of the Syrian opposition groups in exile do support foreign intervention and delivering arms and weapons to the Syrian rebel groups.

The second reason for conflict is the issue of legitimacy and loyalty to the Ba'ath party and President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian opposition groups and political parties inside Syria criticize the groups in exile for being disconnected from the Syrian people, and

⁵⁶⁶ By George Baghdadi , “Syria peace talks in Geneva end in failure” , <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-peace-talks-in-geneva-end-in-failure/> , CBS News . February 14, 2014, 10:44 AM

therefore, not being representative of the Syrian people. Hence their view is that these opposition groups, formed outside Syria, lack legitimacy. In addition, from their point of view, the Syrian opposition groups in exile are an instrument for the Arab Gulf states and Western powers to achieve their own geopolitical, strategic, economic and ideological interests.

On the other hand, from the perspective of most of the Syrian opposition groups outside Syria, the Syrian political parties and opposition groups which are licensed by the Syrian Interior ministry after 2012, are loyal to President Bashar al-Assad, the dominant Ba'ath party, and the Syrian government.⁵⁶⁷

The second type and force of tension is among the Syrian oppositional groups outside Syria per se. Each group attempts to obtain visibility, recognition by the international community, and funds in order to advance its own mission and interests. Some of the opposition groups outside Syria support the Geneva talks and the Geneva communiqué, while others oppose any dialogue with the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Similar to the Syrian rebel groups, the major problems within Syrian oppositional groups in exile have been lack of organization, coordination, accusations of corruption, a leadership crisis, and diverse ideological and political interests (the Muslim Brotherhood, Kurdish, Christians, Sunni, Socialists, Secular groups, Islamists, etc) which have paralyzed these opposition groups in the last three years. As a result there is

⁵⁶⁷ By Richard Spencer, Middle East Correspondent, "Assad loyalists take up 'challenge' in Syrian election race", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10786543/Assad-loyalists-take-up-challenge-in-Syrian-election-race.html>, The Telegraph United Kingdom, 8:49PM BST 24 Apr 2014

no single Syrian opposition group in exile that is viewed the sole representative of the Syrian people by other countries. ⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ By Suheil Damouny and Emily Benammar
“Syria opposition parties: explained”, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-29/syria-opposition-parties/4913162>, ABC Australia , Updated Tue 10 Jun 2014, 2:35pm AEST

Chapter Seven

Regional Dimension, Circle and Forces of Conflict

What highlights the complexity, intensity and scope of the Syrian civil war is the regional factor as well as the interactions, contradictions, and excesses created by the interconnectedness of the domestic dimension of the conflict, along with the regional tensions. From the point of view of realist theories, when a conflict erupts in a country, other states react in two different ways. The first approach is political opportunism in which other states attempt to shift the direction of the conflict in the affected state in a direction that serves their own geopolitical, strategic, geo-economic, national and security interests. Changing the direction of the conflict can occur through direct military intervention, or indirect intervention by supporting, funding, financing, training, advising, a particular non-state armed actor, or the government in the conflict.

On the other hand, in the second approach, some states might attempt to take a neutral position in public, in order to prevent the conflict or civil war from expanding to their own country as well as to prevent being a target of attacks by any particular group, non state armed parties, or the government of the conflict-affected state. This applies predominantly to the countries which border the affected state.

The extension of the conflict can occur in several ways: It can happen in terms of the flow of refugees or displaced people across the border, in the spillover of sectarianism,

or in the emergence of militarization and ethnic conflict within the borders of other neighboring states.

It is crucial to point out that, in both cases, the flow of refugees or displaced population, as well as the spillover of the war, sectarianism, and militarization, to other states, can have negative repercussions on several critical spectrums of neighboring countries: such as the political stability, economic growth, and security of those states which are bordered by the state in conflict. In this scenario, usually the countries bordering the state involved might take this approach at the beginning of the emergence of the conflict- avoid taking sides with anti-government groups, rebels, or the government of the state in question, publicly. Nevertheless, it is important to add that as conflict and civil war escalate and as the flow of refugees increases to other countries, these countries, which are bordered by the conflict-inflicted state, are more likely to attempt to take both approaches: political opportunism on the one hand, and being publicly neutral to prevent attacks from other sides in the conflict.

When it comes to the Syrian civil war, the strategic, geographical and geopolitical significance of Syria and its potential role in tipping the balance of power in favor of some regional powers and against others, has increased the number of state actors which are directly or indirectly intervening in the country, through military, financial, advisory, intelligence, and political assistance, by training specific armed groups, various branches of the government and security forces.

This phenomenon turns the state, suffering the unrest, into a regional proxy battleground. In the section below, the research will shed light on some of the key

regional players, state actors and non-state actors which play a crucial role in shaping the character of the Syrian civil war as well as defining the scope and intensity, thus impacting the duration of the conflict. In addition, the following section will outline the interactions, contradictions and excesses created from the policies of various state and non-state actors involved in the Syrian civil war.

Finally, it is critical to make a distinction empirically and theoretically between the stance of those countries which are bordered by Syria (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey), and other regional state and non-state actors. The distinction is due to the fact that the countries which are bordered with a state undergoing a civil war, or other type of conflict, will encounter other issues due to the conflict that other regional state and non-state players might not face. These issues are the flow of refugees to the neighboring countries, as well as the conflict, sectarianism, militarization, and civil war potentially spilling over to their nations, in comparison to those regional state actors, which are not bordered by the state in conflict and are less likely to be a major refugee receiving state.

7.1 The First Regional Battle: The Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Syria are considered two odd bedfellows with regards to their political systems and ideology. On the one hand, Syria is governed by the Ba'ath party ideology of secularism, socialism and Arab nationalism in which religion does not play a crucial role in the state, while in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the state is governed by religion and it opposes the notion of secularism. Nevertheless,

an alliance between the Islamic Republic and Syria has been formed for decades and is considered to be one of the most enduring and oldest alliances in the Middle East. ⁵⁶⁹

The partnership and alliance between Syria and the Islamic Republic emerged after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, and more specifically when the Iran-Iraq war began. The common and shared strategic and geopolitical goals between the Islamic Republic and Syria brought these two countries closer to each other. The Syrian government and its Ba'ath party (under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad, the father of current President Bashar al-Assad), was in competition ideologically with the Iraqi ruling Ba'ath party and its president Saddam Hussein. While almost all Arab countries supported Iraq during the eight year war, Syria was the only Arab country aligned with the Islamic Republic. Syria played an influential role in providing weapons to Iran, at the time that the Islamic Republic was under embargo and sanctions. In addition, Syria blocked off the route through which Iraqi oil was being exported through Syria. On the other hand, the Islamic Republic provided other financial compensation, including oil, to Syria. ⁵⁷⁰

After eight years of the Iraq-Iran war, the Islamic Republic and Syria found common strategic, geopolitical, and geo economic interests in other areas of the region, which led to the endurance of this alliance. First of all, both countries were opposed to United States foreign policy in the region as well as to its ally, Israel. Secondly, ideologically

⁵⁶⁹ Daniel L. Byman, "Syria and Iran: What's Behind the Enduring Alliance? ", <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2006/07/19middleeast-byman>, Brookings Institute , July 19, 2006

⁵⁷⁰ Jubin Goodarzi, "Iran and Syria", <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/iran-and-syria>, United States Institute of Peace, The Iran Primer, July 19, 2006

speaking, the Syrian government, is mainly dominated by the Alawites, and the Alawite sect is offshoot of Shiism, which is the official religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Third, the Islamic Republic found Syria to be a crucial platform geographically to give birth as well as support to other proxies in the Levant, such as Hezbollah. It is also a conduit to deliver weapons and train other proxies in Lebanon, which is bordered by Syria. Fourth, the Islamic Republic viewed Syria as a gateway into the Arab world.⁵⁷¹

Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that the Iranian-Syrian alliance has not always been without difficulties, or in an extended honeymoon phase. Tensions occurred, particularly in Lebanon, where the Islamic Republic's proxy Hezbollah was fighting with the Syrian proxy, the Amal party, in the 1980s. However, Syria and the Islamic Republic came to reconcile their differences by understanding each other's strategic priorities, and boundaries continuing their strategic and geopolitical alliance for decades.⁵⁷²

In addition to the aforementioned factors and reasons behind this formidable strategic, geopolitical, geo-economic and security alliance between Syria and the Islamic Republic, the regional balance of power plays a crucial role, from the standpoint of realism.

When it comes to the continuing conflict and civil war in Syria, from the viewpoint of the Islamic Republic, if the Alawite-dominated state of Syria and President Bashar al-

⁵⁷¹ Jonathan Gilbert , "Thee Iran-Syria Axis:A Critical Investigation" , http://web.stanford.edu/group/sjir/12-1/fall10-final_5.pdf, Fall 2012, P. 36-42

⁵⁷² Jubin Goodarzi , " Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East" , Library of Modern Middle East Studies, I. B. Tauris (July 7, 2009), P. 8-36

Assad are overthrown, the regional balance of power will tip against the Islamic Republic and in favor of other Sunni majority states such as the Arab Gulf states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar.

There have been competing strategic, ideological, and geopolitical interests and traditional rivalry (Persian versus Arabs) between the Islamic Republic and other Sunni Arab countries, particularly the Arab states in the Gulf. In addition, since majority of the Syrian population are Sunni (approximately 72 percent out of 85 percent of Muslim population in Syria), the government that will replace the Alawite-dominated Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad, the Iranian government fears, will more likely be a Sunni majority.⁵⁷³

As a result, the alternative to President Bashar al-Assad and his government will more likely build better relationships with the other Arab states, and sympathize and shift towards their policies. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the Syrian opposition groups and Syrian armed rebels which are attempting to overthrow the Ba'ath party and the Syrian government do not have a positive view of the Islamic Republic- for providing the government with assistance financially, and militarily, along with intelligence, and advisory support. These oppositions and armed rebel groups have built better relationships with other Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia and Qatar. As a result, the fall of Assad will significantly shift the regional balance of power against the Islamic Republic. This will lead to the loss of the aforementioned four crucial strategic,

⁵⁷³ Ref World, "Syria: Treatment of Sunni Muslims" , Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad8838.html>

security, geo-economic and geopolitical interests that the Islamic Republic gains by being a close ally with the Syrian government. In some cases, because of the significance of Syria strategically, geopolitically, and ideologically for the Islamic Republic, Iranian leaders have at times called Syria, the Islamic Republic's "35th province".^{574 575}

Due to the aforementioned factors and shared strategic, geopolitical and security interests, since the uprising began in Syria, the Islamic Republic's foreign policy towards Syria- its only formidable Arab ally- has been to consistently stand by the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad against the armed rebel groups and opposition parties. There has not been any fundamental shift in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy towards Syria during this conflict even under the Presidency of Hassan Rouhani or his predecessor, the hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This is also due to the fact that the Islamic Republic's foreign policy is directly led by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the senior cadre of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps elite branch, the Quds forces, as well as Iran's security and intelligence ministries.

On the other hand, although the Islamic Republic supported uprisings in other countries against secular governments such as in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and labeled

⁵⁷⁴ Eskandar Sadeghi Boroujerdi , "Head of Ammar Strategic Base: Syria is Iran's 35th Province; if we lose Syria we cannot keep Tehran" , <http://iranpulse.al-monitor.com/index.php/2013/02/1346/head-of-ammar-strategic-base-syria-is-irans-35th-province-if-we-lose-syria-we-cannot-keep-tehran/>, Al Monitor Pulse, Posted on February 14, 2013 .

⁵⁷⁵ By Ashish Kumar Sen, "Proxy war between Iran, Saudi Arabia playing out in Syria, Sectarian tensions entangling Middle East a worry for U.S." , Read more: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/feb/26/proxy-war-bet> <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/feb/26/proxy-war-between-iran-saudi-arabia-playing-out-in/?page=all> , Washington Times, Wednesday, February 26, 2014

these uprisings as an “Islamic Awakening”, nevertheless, when it came to the Syrian uprising, the Islamic Republic did not use the phrase “popular uprising” in its characterization of the conflict in Syria. From the beginning, the Islamic Republic described the rebels in Syria as terrorists and foreign backed groups fighting the legitimate government of President Bashar al-Assad. Therefore, a shift in the Islamic Republic’s narrative was evident. As a result, when it comes to the Islamic Republic’s regional strategic and geopolitical and ideological interests, survival of the Syrian government- the Alawite-dominated state, and President Bashar al-Assad is critical.⁵⁷⁶

The Islamic Republic’s intervention in Syria- through financial, military, intelligence, and advisory assistance- has increased as the civil war in Syria became more militarized. At the beginning of the uprising, in 2011, the Islamic Republic provided mainly security assistance, security forces, intelligence and technological assistance, thus helping the Syrian government to better monitor the social media and telephones. Afterwards, as it became clearer that President Bashar Al Assad was not capable of completely crushing the armed rebel groups, and as the civil war became more militarized, the Islamic Republic’s Quds forces, which operate outside the Islamic Republic in foreign countries,

⁵⁷⁶ Robert F Worth , “Effort to Rebrand Arab Spring Backfires in Iran”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/world/middleeast/effort-to-rebrand-arab-spring-backfires-in-iran.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>, *The New York Times*, Published: February 2, 2012

sent thousands of troops and commanders to fight on the ground and provide training to the Syrian Armed Forces.^{577 578}

In addition, as the international and regional sanctions against the Syrian government escalated, the Islamic Republic increased its financial and economic assistance to Syria with billion of dollars of credit, shipment of fuel to Syrian ports, as well as providing oil to the Syrian government.⁵⁷⁹

In the next phase, the shipment of arms and weapons began. According to United Nations Panel's report, the Islamic Republic of Iran has defied international law and sent arms and weapons to Syria. The United Nations report points out that "Iran has continued to defy the international community through illegal arms shipments. Two of these cases involved shipment to Syria, as were the majority of cases inspected by the Panel during its previous mandate, underscoring that Syria continues to be the central party to illicit Iranian arms transfers."⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ By Geneive Abdo, "How Iran Keeps Assad in Power in Syria , The Weapons, Technology, and Expertise Tehran Sends Damascus." Foreign Affairs , *Inside Iran*.
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68230/geneive-abdo/how-iran-keeps-assad-in-power-in-syria> , 25 August 2011.

⁵⁷⁸ Saeed Kamali Dehghan , "Syrian army being aided by Iranian forces". The Guardian.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/28/syria-army-iran-forces> , May 28, 2012.

⁵⁷⁹ By Farnaz Fassihi, Jay Solomon and Sam Dagher , "Iranians Dial Up Presence in Syria ; Shiite Militiamen From Across the Arab World Train at a Base Near Tehran to Do Battle in Syria" ,
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323864604579067382861808984> ,
Th Wall Street Journal , Updated Sept. 16, 2013 7:41 a.m. ET

⁵⁸⁰ Charbonneau, Louis (16 May 2012). "Exclusive: Iran flouts U.N. sanctions, sends arms to Syria: panel". Reuters.

Afterwards, the Islamic Republic made a decision to send an additional 4,000 troops from the Islamic Republic's Revolutionary Guards to Syria. According to an official from the United States, the Islamic Republic's Quds force have "coordinated attacks, trained militias, and set up an elaborate system to monitor rebel communications". ⁵⁸¹

Notwithstanding Iran's involvement, when it comes to the Geneva diplomatic talks and peace conferences, there has been opposition towards inviting the Islamic Republic to the negotiations, particularly from the West and Arab States in the Gulf, primarily Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. In one incident, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon officially invited the Islamic Republic of Iran to participate in the Syria peace conference on January 22 2014. However, the opposition to this invitation from various resistance groups and governments led the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to withdraw the invitation. ⁵⁸²

Although the financial, military, political, advisory and intelligence support of the Islamic Republic have been crucial in maintaining the government of its close strategic and geopolitical ally, and although this assistance has boosted President al-Assad's army's capabilities to fight with the rebel groups, the Islamic Republic's image among the ordinary Arab people, specifically Syrian people, has been negatively impacted. In addition, although the Islamic Republic denies that it has troops on the ground in various parts of Syria assisting the Syrian government's security forces, several crucial

⁵⁸¹ Filkins, Dexter| "The Shadow Commander"| *The New Yorker*, Sept 30, 2013.

⁵⁸² Russian Tv, RT, "Iran invitation puts Syria peace talks at risk", <http://rt.com/news/lavrov-syria-iran-geneva-882/>, Published time: January 20, 2014 08:53, Edited time: January 20, 2014 16:27

commanders and generals of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been killed in the Syrian civil war - such as Iranian Brigadier General Mohammad Jamali Paqaleh as well as General Hassan Shateri, both from Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps.^{583 584}

Several Syrian rebel groups have claimed that President al-Assad and his government would not have been capable of retaining power without the Islamic Republic's financial, military, intelligence, advisory and security assistance. In the last phase, the Islamic Republic has utilized foreign non-state actors, such as Hezbollah or some Iraqi militias, to assist the Syrian government, and has armed and security forces. In addition, the Islamic Republic has also been accused of utilizing armed rebel groups from outside of, and within Syria, primarily the Shiite rebel groups, which support the Syrian government, such as the Mehdi Army and Hezbollah, in order to assist President al- Assad in suppressing other armed rebel groups.^{585 586} These interventions-economical, political, military, advisory, and intelligence, have been crucial in shaping the character of the Syrian civil war and conflict, and in impacting the balance of power in Syria, and in defining the scope, intensity and duration of the civil war. This

⁵⁸³ BBC World News, "Iran buries Guards commander 'killed in Syria'". BBC News. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24818043>, 5 November 2013 .

⁵⁸⁴ Saeed Kamali Dehghan , "Elite Iranian general assassinated near Syria-Lebanon border". The Guardian. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/14/elite-iranian-general-assassinated-syria-lebanon> , 14 February 2013 .

⁵⁸⁵ "Iran accused of setting up pro-Assad militias". Al Jazeera. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/08/20128154537913351.html> , 15 August 2012.

⁵⁸⁶ Nick Paton Walsh| , "Iranian drones guiding Syrian attacks, rebels say " , CNN World News , <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/31/world/meast/syria-drones/index.html> , October 31, 2012

phenomenon adds another layer of complexity to resolving and comprehending the character of the civil war and internal conflict in Syria.

7.2 The Second Layer of the Regional Conflict: Gulf Arab States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, etc)

On the other hand, Other key regional state actors which significantly influence the direction of the civil war in Syria, and which have intervened in Syria in various ways including funding some rebel groups, are the Gulf Arab states ⁵⁸⁷ This phenomenon has created a second stalemate and the so called cold war between the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Arab countries which support the fall of Assad's government.

For example, since the secular, Arab nationalist, and socialist Ba'ath party has been in power, particularly under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar, Saudi Arabia and Syria have experienced significant tension in the region. There are several reasons underlying this tension. First of all, the government of Assad has steadfastly supported the Islamic Republic of Iran, a strategic, ideological and geopolitical rival of Saudi Arabia. ⁵⁸⁸

Ideologically speaking, since the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, Iranian leaders began promoting the religion of Shiism by establishing several seminaries in the city of

⁵⁸⁷ Josh Ragin, America's Allies Are Funding ISIS
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/14/america-s-allies-are-funding-isis.html> ,
World News, The Dailt Beast
06.14.14

⁵⁸⁸ Christopher Boucek and Karim Sadjadpour Q&A/ Rivals: Iran VS Saudi Arabia,
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/09/20/rivals-iran-vs.-saudi-arabia>, Carnegie Endowment
Institute, September 20, 2011

Qom as well as by supporting, empowering and creating other Shiite state and non-state actors in the region such as Hezbollah, Syria's Alawite-dominated state, Shiite armed groups in Yemen, Shiite parties in Iraq and Bahrain. The Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated in March 21, 2011 that "[Iran] supports all the popular movements which are under the slogan of Islam and (seeking) freedom." This is characterized as an ideological competition between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, which views itself as the forerunner of the religion of Islam in the Islamic world.⁵⁸⁹

On the other hand, from a military perspective, as well as from the perspective of the regional balance of power, the rising power of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps in the region- particularly the Quds Forces; the elite branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps- has increased the tension and rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Third, the Islamic Republic's socio-political, security and socio-economic influence in other Arab countries, particularly within Iraq, and the Shiite community of Bahrain, can be viewed by Saudi Arabia as Persian interference in the internal affairs of Arab nations and a source for destabilization. Fourth, Iran's nuclear program has been a great concern for leaders of Saudi Arabia. In the event that the Islamic Republic reaches a nuclear break-out capacity, the balance of power in the region can be fundamentally shifted. Fifth, Iran's influence in Syria, which was once considered as the "palpitating heart of Arabism", is

⁵⁸⁹ Alarabiya English, Bahrain's unrest halts UAE from sending planes to Libya , <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/03/22/142571.html>, Tuesday, 22 March 2011

another factor of the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic. These factors have expanded the tension and strategic, geopolitical, geo economic and ideological competition between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁵⁹⁰

As a result, with regards to the current civil war in Syria- and fate of the President Bashar al-Assad, the Ba'ath party and Syrian government- the aforementioned sources of tension have created a regional cold war between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which adds other layers of complexity and nuance to the character of the civil war and conflict in Syria.

In other words, if President al-Assad and the Syrian government, a close strategic ally of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are overthrown, the alternative might shift the regional balance of power in favor of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states for several reasons. First of all, the majority of Syrian rebel groups, as well as Syrian opposition and political parties are more sympathetic to - and have better relationships with- Saudi Arabia than with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which supports the Syrian government militarily, and financially, along with providing intelligence, military equipment, and combat training.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁹⁰ FF Gregory Gause III , Saudi Arabia in the New Middle East , Council on Foreign Relations, Council Special Report No. 63 December 2011

⁵⁹¹ By ANNE BARNARD , *Crisis in Syria: Syrian Rebels Say Saudi Arabia Is Stepping Up Weapons Deliveries*
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/13/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-say-saudi-arabia-is-stepping-up-weapons-deliveries.html?_r=0, the New York Times, Published: September 12, 2013

Secondly, majority of the Syrian people are Sunni (an estimate of 72 percent out of 85 percent of Muslim population in Syria). ⁵⁹²As a result, even in the case of a democratic election and establishment of a democratic system of governance, the Sunni majority will be the dominant force in Syria's political structure, not the Alawite or other minority groups in Syria. From the point of view of leaders of Saudi Arabia, a majority Sunni state is more likely to have better political and diplomatic relationships with Saudi Arabia, as well as, make a strategic, geopolitical, economic and ideological alliance with Saudi Arabia rather than with the Shiite government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

As a result of the aforementioned factors, since the uprising began in Syria in March 2011, the position and foreign policy objectives of the leaders of Saudi Arabia towards the government of Bashar al-Assad, and the Ba'ath party, have been clear- that the Syrian government should step down and that President al-Assad has lost his credibility and legitimacy domestically, regionally and in the international arena. Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that the position of the Arab states in the Gulf has gone through several phases.

With regards to collective actions, one of the institutions that the Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, have been utilizing against President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian government, and its leaders is the Arab League. The Arab League is a regional organization which was formed in Cairo on

⁵⁹² Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada , Refworld, Syria: Treatment of Sunni Muslims <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad8838.html>, Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

March 22, 1945, and it had 22 members before the Syrian government was suspended from it.⁵⁹³

The Arab League points out that its mission and objective is to facilitate political, social, educational, scientific, economic cooperations between Arab states and to "draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries".⁵⁹⁴

The organization of the Arab League has gained more power and influence particularly as uprisings occurred in several countries in the region. For example, the Arab League became instrumental in pushing the international community to support a no-fly zone, which resulted in the NATO-led invasion of Libya, and assisting the rebels by arming and training them. For the international community, particularly the Western countries and the United States, it was also crucial to have the approval of a powerful regional organization made up of many Arab countries in order to support the case of legitimacy of the invasion and intervention. When it comes to Syria, the Arab Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, and

⁵⁹³ The "Arab League". *The Columbia Encyclopedia* 6th ed. <http://www.questia.com/read/1E1-ArabLeag/arab-league>, 2013.

⁵⁹⁴ Yale University Law School, Pact of the League of Arab States, March 22, 1945, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp

Oman utilized the Arab League in several different ways to approach and handle the situation.⁵⁹⁵

Initially, the organization of the Arab League issued a statement in which it firmly condemned the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad for the violence. On August 7 2011, the Arab League secretary general Nabil El Araby demanded that the Syrian leaders “immediately stop all acts of violence and security campaigns, and speed up the necessary steps to do so, in order to preserve Syrian national unity and prevent more blood shed.”⁵⁹⁶

In addition, the Arab League secretary general pointed out that an independent judicial committee should be established in order to “investigate the acts of violence and violations against human rights in Syria.” However, at the beginning the civil unrest, the Arab League did not call for NATO assistance or foreign and military intervention.⁵⁹⁷

On the same day of August 7 2011, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah recalled the Saudi ambassador to Syria from Damascus, due to the Syrian government's crackdown on protesters and violence. Immediately afterwards, other Arab states in the Gulf, including

⁵⁹⁵ By Colin Freeman in Cairo, Nick Meo in Benghazi and Patrick Hennessy in London
“Libya: Arab League calls for United Nations no-fly zone”
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8378392/Libya-Arab-League-calls-for-United-Nations-no-fly-zone.html> , 6:35PM GMT 12 Mar 2011

⁵⁹⁶ Al Jazeera English, <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/topic/syria/syria-aug-7-2011-1744> , Syria - Aug 7, 2011 - 17:44

⁵⁹⁷ Al Jazeera English, <http://blogs.aljazeera.com/topic/syria/syria-aug-7-2011-1744> , Syria - Aug 7, 2011 - 17:44

Bahrain and Kuwait, followed the same path by recalling their ambassadors from Syria.⁵⁹⁸

In September 2011, the Arab League developed a 13 point document which called for President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government to implement political and social reforms. Arab League chief Nabil al Arabi met with President al-Assad and discussed the 13 point document. Some of the articles in the document called for the President to withdraw all military and security forces from the cities and allow for the entrance of investigators and journalists. On September 13, 2011, the Arab League characterized the conflict in Syria as very urgent and serious, and called for an “ Immediate change”.⁵⁹⁹ The next day, on September 14 2011, a proposal was introduced, by Arab and international rights groups, to suspend the Syrian government and President Bashar Al Assad from the Arab league.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ BBC World News, Saudi Arabia recalls ambassador to Syria, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14439303> , 8 August 2011 Last updated at 07:34

⁵⁹⁹ Müjge Küçükkeleci , Arab League’s Syrian Policy http://setadc.org/pdfs/SETA_Policy_Brief_No_56_Arab_Leagues_Syrian_Policy.pdf , SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | April, 2012 | www.setav.org | Brief No: 56

⁶⁰⁰ Müjge Küçükkeleci , Arab League’s Syrian Policy http://setadc.org/pdfs/SETA_Policy_Brief_No_56_Arab_Leagues_Syrian_Policy.pdf , SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | April, 2012 | www.setav.org | Brief No: 56

On October 16, 2011, the Arab foreign ministers gave Syria an ultimatum of fifteen days to enact a ceasefire in the country.⁶⁰¹ In addition, the Arab foreign ministers held an urgent meeting in Cairo to talk about suspending the Syrian government from the Arab League organization.⁶⁰²

On October 17, 2011, the Arab League made an offer to both the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian opposition group in exile (The Syrian National Council) that the Arab League will host talks between these two parties. Nevertheless, the Syrian National Council rejected the offer due to their belief that President al-Assad was still using violence and the military against the Syrian people. On October 21, 2011, an Arab delegation led by the Qatari government decided to travel to Syria and meet the Syrian leadership and urge them to implement reforms and put an end to the violence and conflict. The Arab delegation led by the Qatari government met with the Syrian government and President al-Assad on October 26 2011. Four days later, on October 30, 2011, the Syrian authorities met in Qatar with other Arab officials to discuss the conflict in Syria.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ Associate Press and Ynet News, Arab League gives Syria 15-day ultimatum to enact cease-fire, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4135826,00.html> , 10.17.2011, 08:19

⁶⁰² Al Arabiya English, Arab League Meets Over Syria Crisis

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/17/172274.html> , Monday, 17 October 2011

⁶⁰³ Mijge Küçükkeleci, Arab League's Syrian Policy

http://setadc.org/pdfs/SETA_Policy_Brief_No_56_Arab_Leagues_Syrian_Policy.pdf , SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | April, 2012 | www.setav.org | Brief No: 56

Eight months after the conflict erupted in Syria, on November 2, 2011, President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government agreed to the Arab League's 13 point document.⁶⁰⁴ Shortly thereafter, on November 7, 2011, the Arab League announced that the Syrian government had failed to follow the 13 point document. The leaders of the Arab League held an urgent meeting in Cairo to discuss the Syrian government's failure in implementing the 13 point document and plan which was offered by the Arab League.⁶⁰⁵

Finally, on November 12, 2011, members of the Arab League voted that the Syrian government will be suspended from the organization of the Arab League.⁶⁰⁶

Four days later, on November 16 2011, the Arab League gave the Syrian government and President al-Assad an ultimatum of three days for the Syrian government to stop the violence, use of hard power, including the deployment of the military and security forces. In the event that Syria did not meet the deadline, the Arab League confirmed that they would impose political and economic sanctions on the Syrian government. When President al-Assad did not comply and meet the ultimatum, the Arab League

⁶⁰⁴ Al Jazeera English, Middle East, Syria agrees to Arab League plan , <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/2011112163044247764.html> , Last Modified: 03 Nov 2011 08:48

⁶⁰⁵ Mjuge Küçükkele, Arab League's Syrian Policy http://setadc.org/pdfs/SETA_Policy_Brief_No_56_Arab_Leagues_Syrian_Policy.pdf , SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | April, 2012 | www.setav.org | Brief No: 56

⁶⁰⁶ By NEIL MacFARQUHAR , Arab League Votes to Suspend Syria Over Crackdown , <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/world/middleeast/arab-league-votes-to-suspend-syria-over-its-crackdown-on-protesters.html?pagewanted=all> , The New York Times, Published: November 12, 2011

imposed sanctions on the Syrian government and Bashar al-Assad including freezing some of its assets, banning some of the Syrian officials from traveling, halting as well as suspending financial dealings with some of the Syrian banks.⁶⁰⁷

On December 3 2011, the Arab League heightened its threats and called for the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad to halt its crack down, the use of military and security forces, to release prisoners, and allow the international monitors to enter Syria. In case the Syrian government did not comply, economic and political sanctions would escalate. The organization of the Arab League effectuated this increase in economic and political sanctions on Syria by freezing the assets of nineteen Syrian officials, adding to the number of Syrian officials who are banned from traveling. The Syrian government allowed the international monitors, which were part of an Arab mission to observe what is occurring on the ground. This action reversed some of the political and economic sanctions imposed by the organization of the Arab League.⁶⁰⁸

After the observers and monitors from the Arab League concluded their mission in Syria on December 26, 2011, they characterized the situation in Syria as genocide. On January 2, 2012, the speaker of the Arab Parliament declared that the actions Syrian

⁶⁰⁷ Mijge Küçükkele, Arab League's Syrian Policy http://setadc.org/pdfs/SETA_Policy_Brief_No_56_Arab_Leagues_Syrian_Policy.pdf , SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | April, 2012 | www.setav.org | Brief No: 56

⁶⁰⁸ Global Center For the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria <http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

government is taking against their civilians is “a clear violation of the Arab League protocol which is to protect the Syrian people.” ⁶⁰⁹

Later, the Arab League had another emergency meeting in Cairo, to determine whether to pull their observers from Syria. Instead, they decided to add fifty additional observers to the Arab mission in order to continue monitoring the situation in Syria. Afterwards, one of the observers from the Arab League resigned and described what is occurring in Syria as a “humanitarian disaster”. ⁶¹⁰

On January 15 2012, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, offered a proposal for ending the conflict and violence caused by the Syrian government and President al-Assad. The proposal suggested military intervention by Arab countries and an Arab army. ⁶¹¹

On January 24 2012, the Qatari Prime Minister stated that they intend to take the Syrian case to the United Nations Security Council, due to the notion that President Bashar Al-Assad was not complying with the Arab League’s observers and was cracking

⁶⁰⁹ Relief Web, Arab League urged to withdraw monitors over violence

<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/arab-league-urged-withdraw-monitors-over-violence> , Published on 01 Jan 2012

⁶¹⁰ The associated Press, Syria activists heap criticism on Arab monitors,

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/315415/syria-activists-heap-criticism-on-arab-monitors/> , By AFP , Published: January 2, 2012

⁶¹¹ By Richard Spencer, Middle East Correspondent, Syria: growing Arab calls for military intervention as Assad announces amnesty

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9016510/Syria-growing-Arab-calls-for-military-intervention-as-Assad-announces-amnesty.html> , 9:09PM GMT 15 Jan 2012

down the Syrian people, using violence, security and military forces. On January 25 2012, the Arab observers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), decided to leave the mission declaring that they are sure that “...the bloodshed and killing of innocents would continue.” ⁶¹²

Then on January 26, 2012, the Qatari Prime Minister as well as the Arab League chief announced that they will develop a plan for the United Nations Security Council requiring President Bashar al-Assad to step down from power. The United States ambassador to the United Nations supported the proposed plan. On January 28 2012, the Arab mission to observe the situation in Syria was terminated, due to intensity of violence, and as a result the Arab observers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) left Syria. The 2nd Humanitarian Conference on Syria was held on March 4, 2012, by the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Humanitarian Forum. It included United Nations agencies, over 70 non-governmental organizations, and 110 participants. ⁶¹³

On March 15 2012, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain closed their embassies in Damascus and withdrew all their diplomats from Syria, and on May 6 2012, Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Affairs Ministry warned its citizens against travel to Syria. On May 30 2012, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Western countries, including the United Nations Security Council, asked the Human Rights Council for a meeting to discuss the

⁶¹² Gulf states to withdraw observers from Syria,
<http://articles.islamweb.net/eramadan/index.php?page=articles&id=175019> , Tuesday
24/01/2012

⁶¹³ Carnegie Endowment Organization, Group of Friends of the Syrian People: 2nd Conference , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=48434&reloadFlag=1>

humanitarian situation in Syria. On August 21, 2012, the Arab League and the United Nations appointed the Deputy to JSE (Joint Special Envoy between the UN and the Arab League) Annan, Nasser Al Kidwa, as the new Deputy to JSE Brahimi who was recently appointed. Later, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC states) demanded the international community take responsibility and stop the killing and violence committed by the government of Bashar al-Assad and his military and security forces.⁶¹⁴

In addition to the diplomatic, economic and political sanctions imposed on the Syrian government, and in addition to the organization of the Arab League's efforts to plan military and foreign intervention in Syria either through the Arab countries' military or through the international community - particularly the United States and Western countries, several countries in the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC states) have been intervening separately in the civil war in Syria by selecting some rebel armed groups which share relatively common geopolitical, economic, and strategic interests with each country. This indirect intervention is conducted mainly through funding the rebels, arming them, training them and providing equipment to them. Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that even within the Gulf Arab states there has been conflict, contradictions and tensions. ⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁴ United Nations Official Site, United Nations News Center, UN, Arab League appoint Deputy for new representative on Syrian crisis
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42717#.U9qjjKh7-Y>

⁶¹⁵ Eric Draitser, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Struggle for Influence in Syria
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/saudi-arabia-qatar-and-the-struggle-for-influence-in-syria/5342223> , Gliba Research Institute, Global Research, July 09, 2013

For example, the Qatari government and Saudi Arabia competed over placing the individual that they desired as head of the main Syrian opposition group in exile, the Syrian National Council. In July 2013 when there was a crisis in the leadership of the Syrian National Council, Saudi Arabia pushed to have the Saudi-backed Ahmed Jarba, instead of George Sabra selected as leader of this main opposition group.⁶¹⁶ The replacement of George Sabra with Ahmed Jarba was considered a defeat to the Qatar-backed individual and a victory for Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Qatari government's tension with Saudi Arabia is a likely factor behind the lack of unification, coordination, and organization in the Syrian opposition groups outside Syria. However, several of these Arab countries in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, share the same view about the Islamic Republic of Iran and they have both accused the Islamic Republic of supporting the Syrian government, and its Armed Forces. The leaders of Saudi Arabia have declared that the role of the Islamic Republic has been to provide military intervention in Syria.⁶¹⁷

These two layers of regional confrontation, on the one hand between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Arab Gulf states in regards to supporting the government of Assad or the Syrian rebel groups, and on the other hand the tensions within some of the Gulf Arab states are crucial factors in defining the character of the conflict and civil war in Syria, as well as impacting its scope, intensity and duration.

⁶¹⁶ Carnegie Endowment Organization, Ahmad Al Jabra , <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53176&reloadFlag=1>

⁶¹⁷ Iranian State News Outlet, Press TV, <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/11/04/332964/ksa-accuses-iran-of-syria-intervention/>

7.3 The Third Regional Battle: The Neighboring Countries of Syria (Turkey, Lebanon, The Kingdom of Jordan, and Iraq)

When analyzing the regional forces of tension and confrontation among various state and non state actors, a distinction should be made between the intervention or policies of those countries which share a border with the conflict plagued state, and other regional state actors which are intervening in the conflict. The major reason behind this is that the countries, which border the conflict affected state, encounter different issues and phenomena, in comparison to other regional countries. These issues predominantly form their foreign policy objectives towards the conflict inflicted state.

Some of the crucial issues that the states, neighboring the impacted state, encounter are the flow of refugees to their countries, which affects the stability of their country, security, as well as the potential of becoming a target of the rebel groups or governmental security forces of the state plagued in crisis. In addition to the potential of becoming a target of attacks by the rebels or the government, the spill over of the militarization and conflict to their countries is a crucial factor in shaping their policies towards the conflict inflicted state. For example, the government of Lebanon has already experienced the spill over of the Syrian civil war and conflict in their own nation).⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁸ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

In addition, the alliances of these neighboring countries with other regional powers is another parameter in determining their position or potential intervention in the crisis- inflicted state. As a result, the countries which border with the affected state, might require further strategic, geopolitical, and economic calculations as well as implementing cautious policies when it comes to intervening in the conflict plagued state, or siding with the rebel groups or the government of the state experiencing conflict. Nevertheless, the stance and foreign policy of the neighboring countries with Syria also depends also on the relationships of bordering countries with other regional powers -primarily the Sunni Arab States in the Gulf and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Idean Salehyan points out that there is a statistically significant relationship between the refugee flow into different states and the likelihood of “militarized interstate disputes” (MIDs).⁶¹⁹ As people flee their homes in search of refugeehood, security and safety- as a result of internal civil wars in countries like Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iraq- the tensions between the refugee-receiving states and the refugee-sending states, which are involved in the civil war, will rise . This can further the possibility of not only regional but also international conflict.⁶²⁰

The result of this study indicates that there is statistically significant relationship between the refugee flow from a “refugee-sending state” to a “refugee-receiving state”

⁶¹⁹ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁶²⁰ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

and the likelihood of “militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)”.⁶²¹ In addition, Salehyan found, that although many studies have focused on the humanitarian aspect of refugees, refugee crises should not only be characterized as humanitarian disasters, but they bear significant security consequences for the “refugee-receiving states”, “refugee-sending states”, and other states regionally and internationally.⁶²²

The civil war in Syria, occurring between different fractured and organized groups of rebels and the regime has caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee the country in order to avoid violence, rape, torture, and death. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the total number of registered refugees and individuals awaiting registration is approximately three million as of August 1, 2014. This number includes roughly 140,000 Syrian refugees registered in North Africa.⁶²³ Salehyan’s hypothesis can be also illustrated in the case of Syria. To escape the atrocities, civil war and the violence, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have fled their homes to the bordered countries of Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. As refugee-receiving states, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan have approximately each accepted more than 200,000 refugees.⁶²⁴

⁶²¹ Idean Salehyan, The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf>, March 16-17, 2007.

⁶²² Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan. *Civil War and Interstate Disputes. In Resources, Governance and Civil Conflict*, ed. Kaare Strøm and Magnus Oberg. London, 2007

⁶²³ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶²⁴ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

By applying this study's hypothesis and findings to the current conflict, the status of neighboring countries, and the situation of refugees and displaced communities in Syria, several issues can be isolated, as well as some questions raised. Although there has been a flow of millions of refugees to countries which border with Syria, there has not yet been noticeable "militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)".⁶²⁵ Nevertheless, the political, economic, diplomatic, security and social relationships between the Syrian government of Bashar Al Assad on the one hand, and Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq on the other, have significantly deteriorated. By extrapolating and studying the aforementioned research, the increased tensions and threats between the Syrian refugee-receiving states and refugee-sending state can be further explained.

For example, when it comes to Turkey, the Syrian government and the Turkish government used to be allies and have effective diplomatic, economic, strategic, and geopolitical relationships, before the uprising occurred in Syria in early 2011.⁶²⁶ Since the upheavals began in various Syrian cities, Turkey, along with Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq have been faced with the hefty challenge of how to judiciously respond to its long-standing ally in terms of security, health, and economic landscapes, in response to the refugee flow. . After the refugee flow to Turkey, reached into the thousands, the Turkish

⁶²⁵ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁶²⁶ Isadora Bilancino , Turkey: former ally Syria turns to Russia , Equilibri , <http://www.equilibri.net/nuovo/articolo/turkey-former-ally-syria-turns-russia> , 16 Gen 2012

government's relationship with Syria, like that of other neighboring countries, which were once close allies of Assad's regime, went through several deteriorating phases.⁶²⁷

First of all, through dialogue, diplomatic meetings and negotiations, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attempted to persuade the Syrian government and President al-Assad to implement socio-political and socio-economic reforms. On Aug 9 2011, the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met in person with the Syrian President in order to discuss the steps needed to stop the conflict and violence in Syria.⁶²⁸

In the second phase, as the conflict continued and as the flow of refugees increased, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned the Syrian government and the President about the incapability of the government with respect to managing and controlling the unrest and conflict. Other countries such as Jordan have also warned Syria due to the refugee flow into their countries and the resulting socio-economic, socio-political, strategic, security and health implications of the conflict and civil war. In the next phase, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan terminated Turkey's diplomatic, political and economic ties with the Syria government.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁷ Glen Johnson , Syria's conflict raises Turkey tension, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/04/syria-conflict-spikes-tensions-turkey-kassab-20144141473318973.html> , Al Jazeera English, Last updated: 15 Apr 2014 12:05

⁶²⁸ Turkish foreign minister meets Syrian president , <http://www.tehrantimes.com/middle-east/1393-turkish-foreign-minister-meets-syrian-president> , Tehran Times, On Line: 09 August 2011 17:26 In Print: Wednesday 10 August 2011

⁶²⁹ Zenonas Tziarras , TURKEY'S SYRIA PROBLEM: A TALKING TIMELINE OF EVENTS, http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/vol_11-no_3%20tziarras.pdf , Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume 11 Number three, 2012 .

Currently, the highest number of Syrian refugees have taken shelter in Lebanon, according to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) based on its statistics from the Syrian Regional Refugee Response. According to the UNHCR, there are currently (as of August 1, 2014), and estimated 2,933,123 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. ⁶³⁰

The number of Syrian refugees, - who have fled their country in order to search for safety, and a place of shelter to live, and to escape from the violence and bloodshed, by governmental forces bombing and shelling, and the fighting between various armed rebel groups – including the battles between secular, Islamists, moderate, Salifist, Jihadists, foreign fighters, etc- - is significantly higher if we take into consideration those Syrian refugees who have fled Syria but have not registered their names with UNHCR. This puts the number of the Syrian refugees who have fled their country at approximately 20 percent of the Syrian population. If an analogy is made between the population of Syria and the United States, this statistics would be an equivalent to an estimate of seventy million people in the United States fleeing their homes as refugees to other countries which border the United States- for example Canada and Mexico- in search for safety and shelter, and in order to escape from violence, bloodshed from governmental forces, and from the bombing, shelling, and fighting between various armed rebel groups. ⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶³¹ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

On the other hand, the number of Syrian people who are unable or unwilling to escape and find shelter or seek refugee status in other countries, and those who are internally displaced and fled from their homes or lost their homes as a result of violence and fighting between various armed rebel groups - are much higher than the refugees. The estimated number of the Syrian people who are internally displaced, lost their homes or fled from their homes are approximately ten million people, that is fifty percent of the population in Syria. If an analogy is made between the number of the population in the country Syria and the United States, this statistics would be an equivalent of hundred and seventy and five million people in the United States being internally displaced and are in search of shelter.

On October 3, 2011, Turkey's Prime Minister made an announcement that they intended to impose political and economic sanctions on the Syrian government and President al-Assad. ⁶³²And three days later, on October 6 2011, Turkey prepared to impose political and economic sanctions on Syria. On November 15, the government of Turkey imposed as well as extended its political and economic sanctions on Syria- by threatening to cut off electricity to the government of Syria. ⁶³³

⁶³² The Associated Press and Haaretz, "EU blasts Russia, China for vetoing UN Syria sanctions" <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/eu-blasts-russia-china-for-vetoing-un-syria-sanctions-1.388358> , Oct. 5, 2011 | 4:47 PM

⁶³³ Ivan Watson, Turkey threatens to cut electricity as Syria is more isolated, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/15/world/meast/syria-isolation/> , CNN World News, updated 11:51 AM EST, Tue November 15, 2011

On November 30 2011, Turkey announced that President al-Assad had reached “the end of the road”. In addition, on the same day, the government of Turkey halted its financial deals with Syria and it froze all assets of the Syrian President.⁶³⁴

On December 8, 2011, the government of Turkey further announced that it would attempt to use other routes rather than through Syria in order to transport its goods and articles to the Gulf states and other Middle Eastern countries. Additionally, the Turkish government announced that it intended to increase the tax on the imported goods and articles from Syria by thirty percent.⁶³⁵ Six days later, on December 14 2011, the government of Turkey eliminated its tax cuts on industrial goods and articles which were imported from Syria.⁶³⁶

Then on March 16 2012, the government of Turkey declared that the security risk in Syria was very high and it urged Turkish citizens to leave Syria. In addition, the government of Turkey stated that it would close the Turkish consular in Damascus on March 22, 2012.⁶³⁷

Later, Turkey became the major host for Syrian opposition parties as well as Syrian

⁶³⁴ Al Akhbar English News , Turkey slaps sanctions on Syria ,
 , <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/2052> , Published Wednesday, November 30, 2011

⁶³⁵ By Enre Peker, Turkey Levies 30% Tax on Syrian Goods as Al-Assad Freezes Trade
<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-08/turkey-levies-30-tax-on-syrian-goods-as-al-assad-freezes-trade.html> , The Business Week, December 08, 2011

⁶³⁶ Turkey abolishes tax cuts for Syria-imported goods
<http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/86545/> , December 14, 2011 - 13:15 AMT

⁶³⁷ By Tom A. Peter, Correspondent , Turkey closes its Syria embassy, boosts aid to opposition, CS Monitor , <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/terrorism-security/2012/0326/Turkey-closes-its-Syria-embassy-boosts-aid-to-opposition> , March 26, 2012

rebel groups. The Syrian government warned Turkey against hosting “terrorist” groups. On April 1, 2012, the government of Turkey hosted a meeting between the “Friends of Syria”, and pledged to give salaries to the Free Syrian Army as well as over one hundred million dollars to Syrian opposition groups. In this meeting, the Friends of Syria decided to take “additional and appropriate measures with a view to the protection of the Syrian people.” ⁶³⁸ ⁶³⁹

In the last phase, on April 11 2012, Prime Minister Erdogan indicated that Turkey might request NATO forces to protect the Turkish border with Syria due to invasions by the government of Syria and its armed forces. On May 30 2012, Turkey and other countries asked the Human Rights Council for a meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria. On June 5, 2012, the Syrian government banned seventeen diplomats from several countries including Turkey, Canada, Germany, the United States, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, and France. On June 13, 2012, The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund gave Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon nine million dollars to aid Syrian refugees. Later, when the refugee flow continued, Turkey's

⁶³⁸ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Chairman’s Conclusions Second Conference Of The Group Of Friends Of The Syrian People” , http://www.mfa.gov.tr/chairman_s-conclusions-second-conference-of-the-group-of-friends-of-the-syrian-people_-1-april-2012_-istanbul.en.mfa , 1 April 2012, Istanbul

⁶³⁹ Zenonas Tziarras , TURKEY’S SYRIA PROBLEM: A TALKING TIMELINE OF EVENTS, http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/vol_11-no_3%20tziarras.pdf , Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume 11 Number three, 2012 .

top military commander warned Syria that it would respond with much more robust force if the current violence in the country continued.⁶⁴⁰

On June 22 2012, as Turkey became a major host for Syrian oppositional and rebel groups, the Syrian Armed Forces shot down a Turkish fighter jet claiming that it was over Syrian airspace. The Turkish government responded, claiming that the fighter jet was not over the Syrian territories, but flying over the international waters. On June 24 2012, Turkey's Foreign Ministry cautioned that the government of Turkey "reserves the right to respond," according to international law.⁶⁴¹

On the same day, June 24 2012, Turkey requested an emergency NATO meeting invoking article four of the NATO treaty which specifies that "The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened."^{642 643}

⁶⁴⁰ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria

<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

⁶⁴¹ by Eyder Peralta, As Turkey Looks To NATO, Syria Defends Shooting War Plane , <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/06/25/155700331/as-turkey-looks-to-nato-syria-defends-its-downing-of-war-plane> , NPR News, June 25, 2012 9:46 AM ET

⁶⁴² North Atlantic Treaty Organization,

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm , Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949

⁶⁴³ By Liz Sly, Turkey calls for emergency NATO meeting over Syria downing of jet http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-calls-for-emergency-nato-meeting-over-syria-downing-of-jet/2012/06/24/gJQAYm2rzV_story_1.html , The Washington Post, Published: June 24, 2012

Later, on June 26 2012, NATO members met with the government of Turkey, but decided not to intervene militarily in Syria.⁶⁴⁴ On August 11 2012, Turkey and the United States Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, met to discuss the available options as well as approaches in order to put an end to the violence spreading throughout Syria.⁶⁴⁵

Then on August 29 2012, the Turkish government made a request that the United Nations Security Council members set up a safe zone for the sake of the Syrian refugees.^{646 647}

During 2013 and early 2014, the Turkish government's diplomatic, strategic, geopolitical and economic relationships with the government of Syria continued to be strained. In addition, the issue of Syrian Kurds seeking autonomy and an independent state, and the rise of Kurdish Syrian armed rebel groups had become another concern for Turkey. This concern was due to the Kurdish community in Turkey who reside near the border of Syria and have been seeking autonomy, by means of secession and to

⁶⁴⁴ By SLOBODAN LEKIC and SUZAN FRASER , Turkey jet crisis unlikely to pull NATO into Syria, <http://news.yahoo.com/turkey-jet-crisis-unlikely-pull-nato-syria-153959877.html> , The Associated Press, June 25, 2012 3:51 PM

⁶⁴⁵ Julian Borger , US and Turkey meet to discuss Syrian chemical weapons , <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/23/us-turkey-syrian-chemical-weapons> , The Guardian, Thursday 23 August 2012 13.50 EDT

⁶⁴⁶ By EDITH M. LEDERER, Turkey appeals to UN council for Syria safe zone <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/britain-and-france-all-options-table-syria> , The Associated Press, — Aug. 30, 2012 8:49 PM EDT

⁶⁴⁷ Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan. 2007. Civil War and Interstate Disputes. In Resources, Governance and Civil Conflict, ed. Kaare Strøm and Magnus Oberg. London: Routledge.

gain recognition as an independent state by the international community.⁶⁴⁸ Until this point, the Turkish government had been capable of suppressing the aspiration of many Kurds for an autonomous and self-governing state.⁶⁴⁹

The Turkish government is still hosting conferences for Syrian opposition groups and has kept its position that President Bashar al-Assad should step down from power and that the Syrian government, as well as President al-Assad have lost their legitimacy and creditability. In addition, the flow of refugees and number of refugees in Turkey has increased in the last two years, notwithstanding the fact that the Turkish government has not given the Syrian refugees who fled their home in Syria, refugee or asylum status. Instead, the Syrian refugees are referred to as “guests” of the government of Turkey.⁶⁵⁰

As a result, it is crucial, according to Salehyan, that in order to address and protect these vulnerable populations of refugees from persecution and abuse, the international community needs to address the refugee disaster not only from the humanitarian perspectives, but it should also pay “greater attention to the security needs” of refugee-

⁶⁴⁸ Zenonas Tziarras , TURKEY’S SYRIA PROBLEM: A TALKING TIMELINE OF EVENTS, http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/vol_11-no_3%20tziarras.pdf , Turkish Policy Quarterly, Volume 11 Number three, 2012

⁶⁴⁹ Mark Tran , Turkey's main Kurdish party appeals for help after crackdown, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/27/turkey-kurds-arrests-appeal> , The Guardian, Monday 27 April 2009 09.07 EDT

⁶⁵⁰ Çenay Özden , Syrian Refugees in Turkey, Migration Policy Center, <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/MPC-RR-2013-05.pdf> , MPC Research Report 2013/05

receiving and refugee-sending states as well as “the refugees themselves”.⁶⁵¹

According to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its statistics referring to the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, there are currently (as of August first 2014), 621,997 Syrian people who are registered with the office of UNHCR as refugees throughout the country of Jordan.⁶⁵² As a result, the country of Jordan would have the third highest number of the Syrian people who have fled their homes and sought shelter and safety in other countries, and to escape the violence, bombing, shelling and bloodshed, between the government forces, and various armed rebel groups.

The Kingdom of Jordan’s foreign policies and indirect military financial, diplomatic, and geopolitical approaches towards the conflict and civil war in Syria, are relatively similar to, and went through similar as well as common phases, as those of the Turkish government. Nevertheless, Jordan has also experienced tension and clashes with several Syrian armed rebel groups, which attempted to enter the country illegally . In addition, it is crucial to recognize that the Kingdom of Jordan has been less strict regarding imposing economic and political sanctions on Syria in comparison to the government of Turkey. For example, on November 10 2011, the Treasury Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing pointed out that the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad was evading US and EU sanctions through the financial and banking systems of

⁶⁵¹ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁶⁵² Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

Lebanon and Jordan. ⁶⁵³ The Treasury Assistant Secretary added that steps should be taken to “ensure a transparent and well-regulated financial sector”. ⁶⁵⁴

In the first phase, Jordan used soft power, such as diplomatic negotiations to halt the flow of refugees from, and the violence in, Syria. In the next phase, Jordanian authorities threatened to impose economic and political sanctions. As the flow of refugees continued through the border of Jordan, authorities followed up with economic and political sanctions. In the third phase, on November 14 2011, King Abdullah (of Jordan), called for President Bashar al-Assad to step down because he had lost his legitimacy and credibility due to use of force, violence, and the brutal crack down on Syrian citizens and opposition groups, and the use of the Syrian Armed Forces to suppress the Syrian people. Nevertheless, King Abdullah, also pointed out that he is concerned about the political situation in Syria if the government is removed and there is a vacuum during a post-Assad period. ⁶⁵⁵

As a member of the Arab League, a Sunni majority government and nation, and as a close strategic, geopolitical, ideological and geo-economic ally of the other Gulf Arab states (particularly Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait), the Kingdom of Jordan's foreign policies towards the Syrian civil war and President al-Assad have followed and been

⁶⁵³ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

⁶⁵⁴ By Dominic Evans and Suleiman Al-Khalidi , Syria's crisis-hit economy under further pressure , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE7AG14R20111117> , Reuters News Agency, Thu, Nov 17 10:54 AM EST

⁶⁵⁵ Jordan's king calls on Syria's Assad to step down

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15723023> , BBC World News, 14 November 2011 Last updated at 16:28 ET

influenced by the measures and steps that other Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have carried out.

For some global and regional powers, Jordan's territories have been viewed as an effective platform for any military or foreign intervention in Syria. In October 2011, US Senator John McCain s pointed out in the meeting of the World Economic Forum meeting in Jordan that "Now that military operations in Libya are ending, there will be renewed focus on what practical military operations might be considered to protect civilian lives in Syria." ⁶⁵⁶

On October 24, 2011, King Abdullah of Jordan declared that his dialogue with President al-Assad had been fruitless. On February 2012, the kingdom of Jordan, which had sent observers for the Arab mission on behalf of the Arab League, in order to monitor the political situation and violence in several cities in Syria, decided to withdraw them. On February 6 2012, after Russia vetoed the United Nations resolution, Jordan, Singapore, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Costa Rica (The Small 5 Group) urged Russia not to use its veto power in the United Nations Security Council in cases of brutality and atrocities against Syrian civilians. On June 4, 2011, there existed approximately 125,000 Syrian refugees in both Lebanon and Jordan. As a result, Refugees International advised that the flow of refugees could threaten the socio-political and socio-economic stability of both the Kingdom of Jordan and the government of Lebanon. In addition, Refugees International requested that donors

⁶⁵⁶ The Associated Press and Info Wars , McCain raises prospect of military option in Syria , <http://www.infowars.com/mccain-raises-prospect-of-military-option-in-syria/> , Monday, October 24, 2011

increase humanitarian assistance. On June 13, 2012, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund gave Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey nine million dollars to assist Syrian refugees. On June 27, 2012, Human Rights Watch claimed that the Syrian Armed Forces, near the Jordanian border, were shooting at Syrian civilians who were fleeing to the Kingdom of Jordan.⁶⁵⁷

Unlike Jordan, Lebanon has experienced more attacks and has become a target of military clashes, sectarian conflict, and militarized spill-over of the conflict and civil war in Syria, and more fundamentally , has experienced a tremendous number of Syrian refugees and displaced people into the country . This can be attributed to the historical, ethnic, security and socio-political similarities and relationships between the government of Lebanon, Syria and various political parties, as well as the porous border between Lebanon and Syria. Another factor is the role of the Lebanese Shiite political party and paramilitary movement, Hezbollah, and its involvement in the Syrian civil war on the side of the President al-Assad and his armed forces against the mainly Sunni armed rebel groups in Syria.^{658 659}

These aforementioned factors have significantly heightened the sectarian conflict in Syria and Lebanon, as several Syrian rebel groups interpret the role of Hezbollah

⁶⁵⁷ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria
<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

⁶⁵⁸ By Nour Malas And Maria Abi-Habib , Lebanese Army Strained by Spillover from Syria Conflict, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/syria-conflict-puts-lebanese-army-under-pressure-1401229578> , The Wall Street Journal, May 27, 2014 7:02 p.m. ET

⁶⁵⁹ <http://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137#!/?marker=15> , Council on Foreign Relations

fighters in Syria, who are supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a war between the Shiite and Sunni. In addition, several of the major Syrian Army Generals and officers who defected sought refugee status in Lebanon. The Lebanese financial sector has also been utilized by the Syrian government as a way to bypass the economic and political sanctions imposed on Damascus by the United States, the European Union and other countries, according to the Treasury Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing.⁶⁶⁰

According to UNHCR and the statistics from the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, there are currently (as of August 1 2014), 1,138,276 Syrian people who are registered with UNHCR as refugees throughout Lebanon. ⁶⁶¹As a result, Lebanon has the highest number of the Syrian refugees who have fled their homes in order to escape violence and bloodshed, caused by the fighting between the Syrian government and rebel groups.

On October 20 2011, the United Nations demanded that Syria halt its raid on the Lebanese territories. These raids were aimed at targeting Syrian opposition members as well as those generals and officers from the Syrian armed forces who defected and sought refugee status in Lebanon. ⁶⁶² On October 11, 2011, the most senior Sunni cleric in Syria announced that “we will prepare our suicide bombers who are already with you

⁶⁶⁰ By Dominic Evans and Suleiman Al-Khalidi , Syria's crisis-hit economy under further pressure , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE7AG14R20111117> , Reuters News Agency, Thu, Nov 17 10:54 AM EST

⁶⁶¹ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶⁶² UN chief: Syria war threatens Lebanon's stability, <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/un-chief-syria-war-threatens-lebanons-stability> , Associated Press and CNS News, April 24, 2014 - 4:05 PM

if you bombard Syria or Lebanon. From today an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” This cleric was warning the United States, and Western powers including European countries against intervening in Syria. ⁶⁶³

On April 8 2012, the Lebanon’s Higher Islamic Council criticized and condemned the Syrian government and its armed forces for the brutality and atrocities committed against the Syrian people and it called on the Arab League and the international community to assist the Syrian citizens. ⁶⁶⁴ On May 25, 2012, the United States Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton, opined that the violence and civil war in Syria is causing political instability in Lebanon and the Syrian government of President al-Assad and its armed forces should halt the violence and the use of hard power to crack down on civilians and opposition groups. ⁶⁶⁵

On April 24 2012, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), announced that sectarian clashes in Lebanon and Tripoli have been impeding the efforts of the Office to deliver assistance and aid to the Syrian refugees.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶³ Syrian cleric warns U.S., Europe against attack, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/10/11/idINIndia-59822420111011>, Reuters News Agency , BEIRUT Tue Oct 11, 2011 2:40pm IST

⁶⁶⁴ Higher Islamic Council urges Arabs to save Syrian lives, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Apr-08/169582-higher-islamic-council-urges-arabs-to-save-syrian-lives.ashx> , The Daily Star, Apr. 08, 2012 | 08:55 AM

⁶⁶⁵ Syria may exploit instability in Lebanon: Clinton <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSBRE89N1JG20121024?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews> , Reuters News Agency, Wed, Oct 24 16:10 PM EDT

In 2013, and early 2014, the sectarian conflict between various Sunni armed rebel groups and Hezbollah as well as the flow of the Syrian refugees to Lebanon had escalated. The Syrian Sunni rebel groups had attacked several locations in Lebanon claiming that these actions were in retaliation for the role of Hezbollah fighters in the Syrian conflict.⁶⁶⁷

The government of Lebanon, while it has condemned the Syrian government and President al-Assad, and the Syrian armed forces for its violence against the Syrian people, it has not been that assertive towards Syria in comparison to other countries which border with Syria- particularly Turkey and the Kingdom of Jordan. The reasons behind this stance can be attributed to the influence of the Syrian security and police forces in Lebanon, the country's vulnerability to sectarian and civil war, the superiority of the Syrian armed forces in comparison to the Lebanese armed forces, the historical socio-political and ethnic similarities between Syria and Lebanon, Lebanon's past history of civil war and sectarian conflict, the large number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and the role of the Lebanese political party and paramilitary group Hezbollah

⁶⁶⁶ By Issam Abdallah, Lebanon marks "devastating" milestone with millionth refugee <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/04/03/syria-crisis-refugees-idINDEEA3209T20140403> , The Reuters News Agency , TRIPOLI, Lebanon Thu Apr 3, 2014 5:23pm IST

⁶⁶⁷ Syrian rebels attack Hezbollah's positions in Lebanon: FSA commander , <http://www.hurriyetaailynews.com/syrian-rebels-attack-hezbollahs-positions-in-lebanon-fsa-commander.aspx?pageID=238&nid=41647> , The Hurriye Daily News,

in supporting the Syrian government of President al-Assad and the Syrian armed forces.⁶⁶⁸

When it comes to the Republic of Iraq, the flow of Syrian refugees to the various cities of Iraq has been less when compared to other countries bordering with Syria, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.⁶⁶⁹

On September 20 2011, the government of Iraq delivered a message to President al-Assad , through an advisor to the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, that the government of Iraq recommended that the Syrian President step down from power and made it clear that the government of Iraq opposes “the one party rule and the dictatorship that hasn’t allowed for the freedom of expression.”⁶⁷⁰ On October 10 2011, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki stated to Reuters news agency that, “Certainly, we support the idea of ending one party rule, rule by one person [in Syria]” . The Prime Minister then added that the government of Iraq supports “states that come from the

⁶⁶⁸ , PEW Research, Global Attitude Project, Syria’s Neighbors Want Assad to Step Down, But No Appetite for Aid to Rebels , <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/06/16/syrias-neighbors-want-assad-to-step-down-but-no-appetite-for-aid-to-rebels/> , PEW Research, Global Attitude Project , June 16, 2014

⁶⁶⁹ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶⁷⁰ By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT and YASIR GHAZI , Iraq Calls for Change of Syrian Regime , http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/21/world/middleeast/iraq-tells-bashar-al-assad-of-syria-to-step-down.html?_r=0 , The New York Times, Published: September 20, 2011

people, states and governments appointed by the people, not those appointed behind closed doors.”⁶⁷¹

On June 30 2012, the Syria Action Group, which includes Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Foreign Ministers of the P5, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the Secretaries General of the UN and the organization of the Arab League are being hosted by JSE Annan in order to discuss ways to halt the violence against the Syrian people and in order to discuss “steps and measures to secure full implementation of the six point plan.”⁶⁷²

In comparison to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, Iraq has not experienced military combat with the Syrian armed forces during 2013 and early 2014. However, the porous border between Syria and Iraq has become a staging area- for the Islamist and Salafi-Jihadist armed groups, which are fighting in Syria against President al-Assad- to enter Iraq and create socio-political and socio-economic instabilities. One of these hard line Islamist armed rebel groups, which entered Iraq from Syria, is the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and it has been capable of capturing several large cities including Mosul with a population of over a million. If there was not conflict, political instability, economic instability, or a civil war in Syria, it is unfathomable to envision that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant would have been capable of making such a

⁶⁷¹ By Suadad al-Salhy, Iraq's Maliki urges Syria to end one-party rule <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/10/us-iraq-syria-maliki-idUSTRE7993V820111010> , The Reuters News Agency , BAGHDAD Mon Oct 10, 2011 11:44am EDT

⁶⁷² United Nations Official Website, The Geneva Communique, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf> , Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué , 30.06.2012

remarkable rapid military advance in Iraq. The social, political, military, and economic instability as well as the militarization of the conflict in Syria appear to have provided a suitable platform for such rebel armed groups or other Islamist Salafist groups to organize, grow in number, coordinate and become more effective in combat, fighting, and military skills. ⁶⁷³ ⁶⁷⁴

Although the government of Iraq has condemned President al-Assad and his military for the violence, socio-political and socio-economic instability, nevertheless, the leaders of Iraq have not taken a strong position against the Syrian government in comparison to other countries which share a border with Syria -particularly Turkey, and Jordan. In other words, the diplomatic, political, economic and social relationships between the government of Iraq and Syria is much better in contrast to the diplomatic, political , economic and social relationships between the government of Syria, and Turkey or the Kingdom of Jordan. For example, the leadership of Iraq and the government of Syria still have diplomatic relations and Iraq has not yet closed its embassy in Damascus, while Jordan and Turkey shut their embassies in Damascus a year after the uprising in Syria occurred. ⁶⁷⁵ Another example of this continuing relationship with Iraq is the fact

⁶⁷³ Anne Allmeling / gsw, Editor Ben Knight , ISIS threatening to redraw Mideast borders

, <http://www.dw.de/isis-threatening-to-redraw-mideast-borders/a-17811889> , Dutch Wel News Agency, Date 28.07.2014

⁶⁷⁴ Azeem Ibrahim, The Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Syria and Iraq, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB1210.pdf> , The Strategic Studies Institute

⁶⁷⁵ The Iraqi Embassy in Syria, Official Website, <http://www.mofamission.gov.iq/syr/ab/articles.aspx>

that Iraq was the only country abstaining from voting to suspend Syria from the Arab League, while 22 other members voted in favor of suspending the government of Syria's membership.⁶⁷⁶

The question which is then raised, is why Iraq has not quietly engaged in the same phases, and utilized the same diplomatic, political, economic and social path that other countries- which have a common border with Syria, particularly Turkey and Jordan- have taken towards President al-Assad, and the Syrian government? These actions include closing embassies, imposing economic and political sanctions, using coercive diplomacy, threatening to use NATO forces or military intervention. Several factors appear to be behind this particular socio-political, socio- economic, diplomatic, strategic, and geopolitical stance that the government of Iraq has taken towards the Syrian government and President al-Assad.

First of all, the government of Iraq, which is led by Prime Minister Nori al-Maliki and the ruling Shiite coalition, have not been affected by the influx of Syrian refugees as have other countries that border Syria such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, and which have been impacted economically, politically, as well as had increased security concerns and health issues.

For example, according to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, there are currently (as

⁶⁷⁶ Jack Shenker in Cairo and Peter Beaumont , The Observer, Arab League votes to suspend Syria if it doesn't end violence against protesters
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/12/syria-arab-league-bashar-assad> , The Guardian, Saturday 12 November 2011 14.07 EST

of August 1, 2014), 822,996 Syrian civilians who are registered with the office of UNHCR as refugees in Turkey and its urban areas. ⁶⁷⁷As result, Turkey has the second highest number of the Syrian refugees who have fled their homes to seek shelter and safety in other countries.

On the other hand, according to UNHCR and the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, there are, as of August 1, 2014, 233,987 Syrians who are registered with the office of UNHCR as refugees in the Republic of Iraq and reside throughout the country ⁶⁷⁸As a result, Iraq has the fourth highest number of the Syrian refugees.

Similarly, according to UNHCR and its statistics from the Syrian Regional Refugee Response, there are 158,997 Syrian civilians who are registered with the office of UNHCR as refugees in the country of the Arab Republic of the Egypt, as of August 1, 2014. ⁶⁷⁹ Therefore, Egypt would have the fifth highest number of the Syrians who have fled their home seeking shelter and refuge in other countries.

As illustrated by previous statistics, the number of Syrian refugees- who have fled to the Republic of Iraq, which is governed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the ruling Shiite coalition, has not been that high in comparison with other neighboring countries. In other words, Iraq has not been affected as much by the flow of the Syrian

⁶⁷⁷ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶⁷⁸ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

⁶⁷⁹ Official Website, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria Regional Refugees Response , <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

refugees as have other countries which border with Syria- such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

The issue of refugees' flow is a crucial factor in shaping the foreign policy, strategic, political, economic, health, geopolitical, and geo-economic stability of the country, in addition to maintaining the balance of power, retaining internal power and politics, political and economic stability of Iraq, and the ruling Shiite coalition forces. The reason behind the flow of most of the refugees to Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan rather than Iraq will be explained further in the section below, in addition to other crucial factors and elements that has shaped and has been shaping the foreign policy, strategic goals, political and economic stability of Iraq and the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the ruling Shiite coalition forces.

There are several reasons for Syrian refugees fleeing to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan rather than Iraq. First of all, Syrian people have more issues in common with the Lebanese people- culturally, socially, religiously, and linguistically speaking- than the people of Iraq. In addition, the majority of Iraqis are Shiite, and the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is a Shiite-led government, while majority of people in Syria are from the Sunni branch of Islam. The governments of Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, are also led by Sunni parties, along with some Christians parties, and majority of the people are Sunni. Secondly, escaping from the violence and civil war in Syria, to countries such as Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon is less difficult geographically in comparison fleeing to Iraq.⁶⁸⁰

The third reason behind the overwhelming majority of Syrian families fleeing to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon is the issue of socio-political, security, and socio-economic stability. The Republic of Iraq is itself perceived to be infected with sectarian conflict, suicide bombings and it is not generally viewed by Syrian people as a stable country with respect to the political, social, economic systems, and more fundamentally with respect to security and safety. Fourth, the government of Iraq is viewed as a closer ally to the Alawite-led government of Bashar al-Assad religiously, ideologically, strategically, geopolitically, and geo-economically in contrast to other countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.⁶⁸¹

In addition, the government of Iraq is viewed as being a closer ally to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Shiite groups which support President al-Assad, the Syrian government leadership, the Alawite (a religion which is an offshoot of Shiism) community, and various branches of the Syrian Armed Forces.⁶⁸²

Finally, and more significantly, the fifth reason is related to the geographic and demographic landscapes of the areas which were mostly impacted by the civil war-armed rebel activities (including secular, moderate, Islamists, Jihadist, Salafist, foreign

⁶⁸⁰ Rochelle Davis and Abbie Taylor
Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon: A Snapshot from Summer 2013
<http://ccas.georgetown.edu/document/1242799693627/Syrian+Refugee+Report+Sept+2013.pdf> , Summer 2013

⁶⁸¹ Maliki 'welcomes' Syrian airstrikes on Syria-Iraq border ,
, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/maliki-welcomes-syrian-airstrikes-syria-iraq-border-394897296> , The Middle Eye News, Thursday 26 June 2014 18:49 BST

⁶⁸² Bilga Duman, Where Are Iran-Iraq Relations Heading?
, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/04/iran-iraq-relations-possible-alliance.html> , Al Monitor, April 30, 2013

fighters, etc), bombing, shelling, and the Syrian government and the attacks from various branches of its armed forces. Most of these cities, villages and areas which have been impacted by the violence, are closer to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, rather than Iraq. Additionally, since approximately 72 percent of the Syrian population are Sunni Muslim, most of the people who have fled from Syria are Sunni, Christian, or other minority groups.

As a result, geographically speaking, it would be much more difficult and burdensome to escape to Iraq in comparison to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan which are closer to these areas where people have been impacted by the violence.⁶⁸³

Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that Syrian people fleeing to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have also encountered challenges such as repeatedly being attacked and targeted by several armed groups, mainly from sections of the Syrian Armed Forces, or being denied entrance to the neighboring country. More fundamentally, as the conflict became increasingly militarized, and as the flow of Syrian refugees to other countries increased, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have several times closed their borders to these refugees and families from Syria.⁶⁸⁴

The second reason behind the current diplomatic stance that the government of Iraq has taken, is for geopolitical, strategic, and economic reasons. The government of Iraq

⁶⁸³ Ref World, "Syria: Treatment of Sunni Muslims", Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad8838.html>

⁶⁸⁴ Humanitarian News and Analysis, IRIN News Agency, JORDAN-SYRIA: Refugees say it is becoming harder to leave <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95120/jordan-syria-refugees-say-it-is-becoming-harder-to-leave>

has taken a middle ground in the sense that it verbally and rhetorically condemns President al-Assad, the Syrian government, its political system and various branches of the Armed and security Forces - for the violence and crackdown on civilians, - but, on the other hand, Iraqi leaders have kept their diplomatic, political , economic, strategic, geopolitical relations with the Syrian government and they have not imposed any serious economic or political sanctions on the Syrian government , President al-Assad, or on various governmental apparatuses such different branches of the Syrian Armed Forces and the Security Forces, and on any of its financial sectors including the major banking systems of the Syrian government.

The reason behind this policy is that Iraq, is a close strategic, ideological, geopolitical, social and economic ally with the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Shiite government. As the Syrian conflict and civil war enters its fourth year, The Islamic Republic of Iran still backs the Syrian government, and various sectors of the Syrian Armed Forces and its Security Forces. Powerful and influential Shiite Clerics in the Islamic Republic of Iran have significant influence politically, socially, religiously, ideologically, strategically, geopolitically, and economically in the government of Iraq which is led by a Shiite Prime Minister and a Shiite coalition. ⁶⁸⁵

This close multi-faceted alliance between Iran and the powerful, and influential Shiite Clerics in the Iraq - as well as the government of Iraq - has led Iraq to balance political, strategic, geopolitical, diplomatic and economic factors in order to maintain its

⁶⁸⁵ By Kristina Wong , Iraq lets Iran fly arms to Syria despite U.S. protests , <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/mar/15/iraq-resists-us-prod-lets-iran-fly-arms-to-syria/?page=all> , The Washington Times , Thursday March 15, 2012

alliance with the Syrian government, so that it can achieve its own political strategic, geopolitical, diplomatic and economic goals, and to satisfy The Islamic Republic of Iran and its powerful and influential Shiite Clerics who have significant influence in all these spheres on the government of Iraq.⁶⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the government of Iraq also has strategic, geopolitical, economic, military, social, and political relationships with Western powers- particularly the United States and other Arab states, specifically, the Gulf Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait - which oppose the Syrian government, and have taken sides in favor of Syrian oppositional groups in exile. They have armed, funded, and provided training for some of the Syrian rebel groups, particularly the Free Syrian Army, which strongly opposes the Syrian Armed Forces and its Security Forces and their tactics of using force to crack down on Syrian opposition groups and Syrian civilians. They have also urged President al-Assad to step down from power due to his use of brutal force, and because of the belief that President Bashar Al Assad and his government have lost any legitimacy and credibility- domestically, regionally and in the international arena.⁶⁸⁷

Notwithstanding the policies of their allies and neighbors Iraqi leaders do not share the concerns of the Western powers, particularly the United States, and other Arab states which oppose the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad.

⁶⁸⁶ Michael R. Gordon, Eric Schmitt and Tim Arango, Flow of Arms to Syria Through Iraq Persists, to U.S. Dismay, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/world/middleeast/us-is-stumbling-in-effort-to-cut-syria-arms-flow.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0, The New York Times, Published: December 1, 2012

⁶⁸⁷ Press TV, Iran News Agency, <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2014/06/12/366635/us-to-send-hellfire-missiles-to-iraq/>, Thu Jun 12, 2014 12:58PM GMT

Nevertheless, the government of Iraq does not desire to negatively impact Baghdad's strategic, geopolitical, economic, military, social, and political relationships with Western powers particularly the United States and other Arab countries. For example, one of the crucial issues for the government of Iraq is to keep having access to advanced military equipments and technological tools Iraq can obtain from the United States and other W European powers. ^{688 689}

As a result, Iraqi leaders have taken a middle ground by, on the one hand condemning President al-Assad, and the Syrian government for the violence, but on the other hand keeping their economic, social, strategic and geopolitical alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Alawite government of Syria, Western countries, particularly the United States, and other Arab states, specifically Saudi Arabia and Qatar. By taking the middle ground, the government of Iraq aims at keeping the balance between two forces- the pro President al-Assad parties (the Islamic Republic of Iran) and the anti President al-Assad groups - Western powers particularly the United States and other Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait. Using this politically calculated approach, Iraqi leaders will also attempt to serve their own strategic, geopolitical, economic, military, social, and political interests by satisfying both sides of the conflict.

⁶⁸⁸ United States Institute of Peace, Iraq and the Gulf States, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr189.pdf> , Special Report 189, August 2007

⁶⁸⁹ Lawrence G. Potter , *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States* by Joseph A. Kechichian, Iranian Studies , Page 348 of 348-351

Finally, the fifth reason is that the government of Iraq has maintained its diplomatic relations with the Syrian government - and it has not imposed any serious economic or political sanctions on the Syrian government , or on branches of the Syrian Armed and Security Forces, or on any of the financial sectors, including the major Banking systems of the Syrian government- is ideological. The Syrian government, its governmental apparatuses, its leadership, and various branches of its Armed and Security Forces are dominated by the Alawite community. The Alawite religion is offshoot of the Shia religious branch of Islam. In addition, the government of Iraq led by the Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and a Shiite coalition is also is dominated by the Shiite political and social figures, who are concerned with, and fear the rise of Sunni groups. This fear and concern includes having a country bordering Iraq which is run by the Sunni majority and which is a closer ally-strategically, politically, socially, religiously, culturally, ideologically, diplomatically, and geopolitically to the other Arab states particularly, the Arab countries in the Gulf including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, rather than the Shiite ruling coalition of Iraq. Similarly, since the majority of the population in Iraq are Shiite, having a Sunni led country, such as Syria, on the border of Iraq might have significant impact on encouraging and empowering the Sunni population in Iraq against the Prime Minister, and the Shiite coalition in government of Iraq. ⁶⁹⁰

These aforementioned factors illustrate the reason that the government of Iraq has maintained its diplomatic, political, and economic relations with the Syrian government

⁶⁹⁰ Maliki 'welcomes' Syrian airstrikes on Syria-Iraq border ,
, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/maliki-welcomes-syrian-airstrikes-syria-iraq-border-394897296> , The Middle Eye News, Thursday 26 June 2014 18:49 BST

- and has not imposed any serious economic or political sanctions on Syria or on any governmental apparatus, is ideological.

Nevertheless, again, it is crucial to point out that the Iraqi foreign policy towards the conflict and civil war in Syria is aimed at keeping the balance of power, and satisfying both the pro President al-Assad Assad parties (the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia, China and Hezbollah) and the anti President al-Assad Assad groups (Western powers particularly the United States and other Arab states in the Gulf including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, etc). In addition, by this politically calculated approach, the government of Iraq will also attempt to serve its own strategic, geopolitical, economic, military, social, and political interests- domestically, regionally, and in international arena by satisfying both sides of the conflict.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis of the aforementioned study by Idean Salehyan is also applicable in the case of Syria because of the policies of the Syrian government and President al-Assad towards the conflict and civil war. In other words, the refugee sending state, Syria in this case, was the first to shell several cities in refugee receiving states and those which host Syrian rebels and opposition groups such as Turkey. Syria shelled several cities or villages in Turkey and shot down a Turkish airplane. As Salehyan points out, another significant reason which explains why the likelihood of “militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)”⁶⁹¹ might increase due to the flow of refugees, is related to the fact that refugee-receiving countries might start hosting and

⁶⁹¹ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas, <http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

providing resources to the opposition and rebel groups. This will occur in order to change the political structure of the regime of the refugee-sending state, and put other neighboring states on notice that the refugee-sending state is incapable of ceasing the violence and refugees flow. This will consequently increase the likelihood that the refugee-sending state will launch attacks against those states in order to push people out of the refugee camps.⁶⁹²

In the case of Turkey, Syrian leaders have repeatedly accused the Turkish government of sheltering, harboring, and assisting “terrorists” and armed groups.⁶⁹³ The Syrian military launched few rockets into Turkey, and recently hit a Mosque, injuring several Syrian refugees.⁶⁹⁴ According to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey shot down a Syrian fighter jet on Sunday.⁶⁹⁵ In another attack, five Turkish civilians were killed by Syrian mortar fire and Turkey struck back after this attack.⁶⁹⁶ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has characterized the cross-border shelling and

⁶⁹² Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan. *Civil War and Interstate Disputes. In Resources, Governance and Civil Conflict*, ed. Kaare Strøm and Magnus Oberg. London, 2007

⁶⁹³ Assad accuses Ankara of helping ‘terrorists’; Syrian general defects, flees to Turkey , <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/07/04/224405.html> , Al Arabiya kh News , Wednesday, 04 July 2012

⁶⁹⁴ The Associated Press, Syrian rocket hits Turkish mosque, injures refugee, <http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-rocket-hits-turkish-mosque-injures-refugee-143515255.html> , March 31, 2014 10:35 AM

⁶⁹⁵ From Gul Tuysuz, CNN, Turkey shoots down Syrian warplane, Prime Minister Erdogan says <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/23/world/meast/syria-civil-war/> , updated 2:27 PM EDT, Sun March 23, 2014

⁶⁹⁶ Liz Sly , Turkey strikes back at Syria after shell kills at least 5 Turkish civilians http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/aleppo-triple-bombing-kills-at-least-31/2012/10/03/616b0c8c-0d6d-11e2-ba6c-07bd866eb71a_story.html , The Washington Post , October 3 2013 .

bombing as "extremely dangerous" and has called on the Syrian government to carry out a unilateral ceasefire.⁶⁹⁷ Nevertheless, "Syrian foreign ministry spokesman Jihad Maqdisi said rebels would have to stop fighting first, and that Damascus had instead asked Mr Ban to send delegates to countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey who he said "finance, shelter, train and arm these armed groups" asking them to show "their commitment to stopping these acts"". ⁶⁹⁸ These marginally "militarized interstate disputes" demonstrate Salehyan's argument about the consequences of refugee flow.⁶⁹⁹⁷⁰⁰

On the other hand, the study reveals that another reason for the increase of the "militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)" ⁷⁰¹ – as a result of refugee flow- is that civil wars in one country and refugee flow from that particular state have a crucial negative consequences on GDP growth in the refugee-receiving states and neighboring states. ⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁷ The United Nations Official Website, The United Nations News Center , UN chief seeks unilateral ceasefire from Syria's Assad, with rebels following suit
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43243#.U9sOoohh7-Y> , 9 October 2012

⁶⁹⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19894110>

⁶⁹⁹ BBC World News, Turkey warns Syria of stronger response over shelling
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19894110> , 10 October 2012 Last updated at 14:10 ET

⁷⁰⁰ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas,
<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁷⁰¹ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife: Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas,
<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁷⁰² Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan. *Civil War and Interstate Disputes. In Resources, Governance and Civil Conflict*, ed. Kaare Strøm and Magnus Oberg. London, 2007

For example, in case of the flow of the Syrian refugees to other countries, although United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has helped the refugee receiving states, The United Nations and various charity organizations have barely been able to gather an adequate budget to provide the basic needs for these people.⁷⁰³ According to recent statistics, the majority of these people do not even have the most fundamental items needed for survival, such as blankets, food and water.⁷⁰⁴

The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out that although it has been, "Two months since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2139, none of the parties to the conflict have adhered to the demands of the council...The security situation is deteriorating and humanitarian access to those most in need is not improving," He added that, "Thousands of people are not getting the medical care, including life-saving medicines, that they need. Almost 3.5 million civilians remain largely without access to essential goods and services."⁷⁰⁵

By utilizing Salehyan's research, one can observe that these economic, health, and budgetary issues which have emerged as a result of the refugee flow, pattern are

⁷⁰³ The United Nations Official Website, The United Nations News Center, Humanitarian challenges continue to mount as Syrian crisis enters its third year - UN <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44395&Cr=syria&Cr1=#.U9sQfUhh7-Y> , 15 March 2013

⁷⁰⁴ The Associate Press Agency , UN: 3.5 million Syrians desperately need aid, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10784103/UN-3.5-million-Syrians-desperately-need-aid.html> , 3:28AM BST 24 Apr 2014

⁷⁰⁵ The Associate Press Agency , UN: 3.5 million Syrians desperately need aid, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10784103/UN-3.5-million-Syrians-desperately-need-aid.html> , 3:28AM BST 24 Apr 2014

among the main factors which have led to the militaristic tension between the refugee-sending country, Syria, and the refugee- receiving countries. These refugee spillovers, according to the research, can seriously jeopardize interstate relations.

Although Salehyan explains that the refugee flow- as a result of civil war, will increase the likelihood of “militarized interstate disputes” ⁷⁰⁶ and international conflict, he does not fully address the international dimension as well as other factors which might be important reasons behind “militarized interstate disputes”. ⁷⁰⁷ For example, although hundreds of thousands of refugees have fled Syria in the last two years and entered the neighboring countries of Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, a serious militarized interstate conflict between the refugee-sending state and the refugee-receiving states has not yet occurred. This is due to other significant factors such as the regional and international geopolitical facets of the conflict, the relationships of the bordering countries with other regional powers including the Sunni Gulf Arab States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the fear and concerns of the border countries, towards experiencing the spill over of the civil war and conflict, or to be a target of attacks; in this case from either the rebel groups or the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and the various branches of the Syrian government.

⁷⁰⁶ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife:
Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas,
<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

⁷⁰⁷ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife:
Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas,
<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

The political, diplomatic and militaristic stalemate on the two concentric levels of regional, and international relations also play a significant role. On the regional level, the so-called “cold war” of geopolitics, geostrategic and religiosity’s competition of Shiism versus Sunnism between Iran and other Arab gulf states is the second level of tension. On the international level, the vetoes of Russia, China in the UN Security Council and the rest of the Western countries project the third stalemate. Due to these geopolitical factors the intensity of “militarized interstate disputes” has not been high.⁷⁰⁸⁷⁰⁹

In several cases, unlike Salehyan’s research findings, countries which share a border with the Syria (particularly Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan) have been cautious and politically calculated about taking serious steps or changing positions. For example, when the Arab League held a meeting to vote on suspending the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad from the League, Iraq abstained from voting and Lebanon voted against suspending the Syrian government and President al-Assad. While the government of Turkey’s conflict and tensions with the Syrian government has been more intense in comparison to that of other neighboring countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq), nevertheless, all these neighboring countries have utilized several phases in dealing with the Syrian civil war, and the flow of refugees. They have used diplomatic

⁷⁰⁸ by Curtis Ryan, The New Arab Cold War and the Struggle for Syria
<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer262/new-arab-cold-war-struggle-syria> , The Middle east Research and the Information Project, published in MER262

⁷⁰⁹ Idean Salehyan , The Externalities of Civil Strife:
Refugees as a Source of International Conflict, University of North Texas,
<http://www.cas.unt.edu/~idean/RefugeesWar.pdf> , March 16-17, 2007.

initiatives at the beginning, then coercive diplomacy, and soft power - later political and economic sanctions followed balancing, threats, warning, and bandwagoning.

Chapter Eight

International Dimension: Global Powers and the United Nations Security Council

On the other hand, the other layer of complexity that shapes and defines the conflict and civil war in Syria is the third circle and force of tension, the international dimension of the Syrian conflict and civil war, which is occurring at the same time while the other domestic, regional, and global Jihad, are unfolding. Although some internal conflicts and civil wars in states remain a domestic conflict between revolutionaries, armed groups, oppositional groups and the government armed and security forces, some internal conflicts and civil wars can become internationalized due to the strategic, geopolitical, and geo economic effects on the balance of power, regional and international alliances, and the security significance of the state involved in conflict and internal war.

The internationalization of a domestic conflict can be further explained through the concept of political opportunism. Global powers might intervene in the conflicted state (through financial means, diplomatic avenues, political tools, or through training, funding, delivering arms and weapons to one side of the civil war, or sanctioning one particular party involved in the conflict.

The global powers intervention is contingent on the strategic, geopolitical and geo-economic significance of that particular state. This International and global intervention is served to, and aims to, direct the outcome of the civil war in a way that can serve the global powers geopolitical, national, alliance, economic, strategic, and military interests.

In the current era of globalization, the intervention from global powers can occur independently by each state carrying as well as directing a particular policy towards the affected state, or through alliances, and more fundamentally, through governmental international organizations such as the United Nations, and more specifically through political and economic sanctions, balancing, threats, warning, and bandwagoning.

The international dimension of the conflict and civil war can interact with the regional and domestic forces of tension simultaneously, as well as create contradictions and excesses regarding the conflict and civil war in Syria. The intervention and political stance of each global power adds the other layers of complexity to the conflict and civil war in Syria, which has made resolution of the dispute much more complicated, difficult and inaccessible.⁷¹⁰

⁷¹⁰ By Alan J Kuperman , Lessons from Libya: How Not to Intervene <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Kuperman%20policy%20brief%20published%20version%202.pdf> , Quarterly Journal: International Security , Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Policy brief, September 2013 .

8.1 Eastern Powers: Russia and China

When it comes to the global power Russia, Syria is the only Arab country in the Middle East that has developed a close strategic, geopolitical, and geo-economic alliance with Moscow, while most of the other Arab countries in the region are allied and lean more towards the United States and other Western powers. Strategically speaking, Syria is a crucial state for Russia since it has allowed the Russian navy to use the Syrian port in Tartus.

The port of Tartus is the second largest port in Syria and has provided a permanent military base for Russia. The Russian military and naval base in Tartus is the only avenue for Russia to have access to the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the Syrian government has allowed the Russian government to have an airbase in the city of Palmyra (Tadmor in original language), as well as to install an electronic surveillance facility in the city of Latakia.⁷¹¹

Secondly, the Syrian government has been an arms client of Russia since Hafez Al Assad and his Ba'ath part took power. Due to the tensions between Syria and the United States- Syria's stance towards Israel, its close alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran and other non-state actors in the region, its opposition to United States foreign policy in the region and its opposition to the United States geopolitical, strategic, and geo-economic ambitions in the region, etc- the Syrian government turned its reliance, with

⁷¹¹ Azuolas Bagdonas, Russia's Interests in the Syrian Conflict: Power, Prestige, and Profit , <http://ejeps.fatih.edu.tr/docs/articles/159.pdf> , European Journal of Economic and Political Studies

respect to arms and weapons purchases, to other world powers; particularly Russia. For example, the Syrian government's purchase of arms and weapons from the former Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s – including the SS-21 “Scarab” short-range missiles which can range to 70 kilometers - accounted for ninety percent of the Syrian government's total purchase of arms and weapons.⁷¹²

Likewise, the Syrian government sided with the Russian government during the Cold War, which led to the strengthening of strategic, geopolitical, and geo-economic relationships between Moscow and Damascus. Third, Russia views Syria as a crucial platform for balance of power struggles, and through countering the geopolitical and geo-economic interest of the United States and other Western powers in the region.⁷¹³⁷¹⁴

The fourth crucial factor is that, if the Syrian government is overthrown and President al-Assad loses power, most likely the opposition groups and a potential new government will ally with the United States and other Western powers. This occurrence would put at risk Russia's strategic, geopolitical and geo-economic interests in the region. Fifth, as the conflict and civil war in Syria became more militarized, and as the Islamist, radical, hard-line groups began emerging as powerful forces in Syria, Russia's concern about

⁷¹² Sharp, Jeremy M. "Syria: Background and U.S. Relations", *CRS Report for Congress*, Washington , DC, (2008-05-01)

⁷¹³ Dmitry Gorenburg, Harvard University, Why Russia Supports Repressive Regimes in Syria and the Middle East , <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm198.pdf> , PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo , No. 198 June 2012.

⁷¹⁴ Azuolas Bagdonas, Russia's Interests in the Syrian Conflict: Power, Prestige, and Profit , <http://ejeps.fatih.edu.tr/docs/articles/159.pdf> , European Journal of Economic and Political Studies

Islamists and fundamentalists groups prevailing- in case the Syrian government is overthrown and in case President Bashar al-Assad loses power- has increased. When it comes to Islamists, secular, moderate Islam, socialists, political parties and movements in the Middle East, Russia's policy is to favor the secular, socialist, or moderate Islamic movements and political parties over the fundamentalists and hard-line political parties. In addition, with regards to the Sunni and Shia political parties, Russian foreign policy in the Middle East indicates that Moscow leans towards the Shiite Islamic political parties, state actors, non-state actors and movements.⁷¹⁵

On the other hand, when it comes to Beijing, China views Syria as a bulwark against the geopolitical and economic influence of the United States and Western allies in the Middle East.⁷¹⁶ In addition, from the Chinese perspective if President Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government are overthrown, China's other strategic, geopolitical and geo economic ally in the region- the Islamic Republic of Iran- will be weakened by losing its formidable political ally. This might intensify pressure on Iran and ultimately lead to a change in the political structure of the government and the establishment of a pro Western and pro United States government. Approximately 10 percent of China's oil

⁷¹⁵ By Fiona Hill , The Real Reason Putin Supports Assad, Mistaking Syria for Chechnya , <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139079/fiona-hill/the-real-reason-putin-supports-assad> , Foreign Affairs Magazine, March 25, 2013

⁷¹⁶ Muriel Asseburg and Heiko Wimmen , Civil War in Syria , External Actors and Interests as Drivers of Conflict , http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2012C43_ass_wmm.pdf , summer 2012 .

imports are from the Islamic Republic of Iran and eighty percent of China's import from Iran is oil.⁷¹⁷

When it comes to foreign policy towards the conflict and civil war in Syria, China has primarily followed in the footsteps of Russian foreign policy. For example, when it comes to the United Nations Security Council Resolutions against the Syrian government or President al-Assad, and resolutions that recommend any condemnation against the Syrian government or might open the door for carrying out no fly zones, or foreign and military intervention by other state actors, China has vetoed the resolutions, as has Russia.

Finally, Chinese and Russian leaders oppose any military and foreign intervention in Syria to overthrow the Syrian government or President Bashar al-Assad because they do not desire to set a precedent for the United States and Western allies to intervene in countries where there exists domestic conflict and civil war, and change the direction of the conflict towards their own strategic, geopolitical, national and geo economic interests. For example, after the Libyan government of Muhammad Qaddafi was overthrown, Russia lost billions of dollars in arms sales. After the popular uprisings in the Middle East occurred, and after the United States and Western allies intervened in Libya and changed the regime, the message from Chinese leaders is clear that they do

⁷¹⁷ By Ankit Panda , China, India Diverge on Iran Oil Imports, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/china-india-diverge-on-iran-oil-imports/> , The Diplomat, July 23, 2014

not want the United States and Western allies to intervene in the Arab countries that they choose, and change governments for their own strategic, geopolitical, balance of power, ideological, and geo economic interests. This would lead to a shift against the Chinese political and strategic interests.

In addition, if this precedent of intervention through the United Nations Security Council or other platforms is allowed, it might have negative implications for the Chinese and Russian governments , in the event that widespread protests and demonstrations erupted in Beijing or Moscow. ⁷¹⁸

Since the uprising began in Syria on March 2011 in city of Dar'a, Russian foreign policy has been relative consistent with only minor shifts in supporting the status quo of the current political system, the Syrian government , the ruling Ba'th party, and the power of President Bashar al-Assad.

Although the Russian leaders deny that they have taken sides in favor of any particular party involved in the Syrian civil war, the Russian intervention in Syria, and the Russian leaders' influence in directing the conflict in Syria through one route or another, have been a crucial factor and have been implemented through various means - such as financial, military, diplomatic, political, and economic - in support of the Syrian government, and President Bashar al-Assad. This political, economic, social, military,

⁷¹⁸ By Jaime A. FlorCruz, Why China didn't back U.N. plan for Syria, CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/09/world/asia/syria-china-florcruz/> , updated 9:52 PM EST, Thu February 9, 2012

and diplomatic support has been carried out through bilateral strategic, geopolitical, and diplomatic relationships between the Syrian government and Russia, or through the Russian government's influence in the international community particularly the United Nations Security Council, by use of Moscow's veto power. ⁷¹⁹

On August 22 and 23, 2011, Russia and China opposed the 17th session which was aimed at addressing human rights violations in Syria. The session adopted a resolution which was aimed at setting up a mechanism for a fact finding mission by the United Nations Office for the High Commissioners of Human Rights (OHCHR) . ⁷²⁰ On September 12, 2011, the Russian government objected to the Western powers' calls to extend economic and political sanctions on the Syrian government. Russian Senators announced that they will use dialogue with the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad to resolve the conflict and crisis . On September 15, 2011, the members of the European Parliament called on Russia and China to condemn the violence and crack down on civilians by the Syrian government. ⁷²¹

Then on October 4 2011, Russia and China vetoed the first United Nations Security Council resolution-which aimed at condemning the Syrian government and warning the

⁷¹⁹ By Nicole Gaouette , Iran Adds Military Aid to Syria as Russia Gives Money
<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-07-18/iran-adds-military-aid-to-syria-as-russia-gives-money.html> , The Bloomberg News, Jul 18, 2013 11:00 AM ET

⁷²⁰ The World Federation of the United Nations Associations, 17th HRC special Session: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic , <http://www.wfuna.org/hrc-special-session-on-syria> .

⁷²¹ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria
<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

Syrian government about the prospective economic and political sanctions.⁷²² On October 5 2012, the leader of the major Syrian opposition group, the Syrian National Council, criticized the Western powers for not pressuring the Russian government to accept the United Nations Security Council resolution. On October 13, the UK Foreign Secretary William Hague, criticized the Russian and Chinese governments for being in support of a “brutal regime rather than the people of Syria.”⁷²³

Next on October 20 2011, the governor of the Syrian Central Bank disclosed that Syria will use the Russian currency- the Ruble, if the Western powers and European Union imposed economic and political sanctions on the Syrian government. On December 15, a draft of a resolution was introduced to the United Nations Security Council by the Russian government. On January 14, 2012, the Russian government claimed that a Russian ship, which was carrying a shipment of ammunition and arrived in Syria, was supposed to be shipped to Turkey, not Syria.^{724 725 726}

⁷²² The United Nations Official Website, Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution Condemning Syria’s Crackdown on Anti-Government Protestors, Owing to Veto by Russian Federation, China ,

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10403.doc.htm> , October 4 2011

⁷²³ Hélène Mulholland , political reporter , Hague accuses Russia and China of 'siding with brutal regime' in Syria

, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/oct/05/hague-russia-china-siding-syria> , The Guardian, Wednesday 5 October 2011 09.13 EDT

⁷²⁴ The Moscow Times, Syria May Switch From Euro to Ruble Banking

, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/syria-may-switch-from-euro-to-ruble-banking/445970.html> , The Moscow Times, · Oct. 21 2011 00:00 , Last edited 18:27

⁷²⁵ The Today Zaman, Russian ship carrying arms to Syria reappears near Turkish port,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-268608-russian-ship-carrying-arms-to-syria-reappears-near-turkish-port.html> , January 14, 2012, Saturday/ 18:55:00

On January 15, 2011, while the United Kingdom, France, and Germany began drafting a resolution for the United Nations Security Council – concerning the government of Syria, the conflict and civil war - the Russian government declared that it will reject any resolution from the United Nations Security Council which proposes economic and political sanctions on Syria, or suggests any military and foreign intervention in Syria. On February 2, 2012, the major Syrian opposition group in exile, the Syrian National Council, called on the Syrians in Russia to demonstrate and put pressure on the Russian government not to veto the United Nations Security Council Resolution.^{727 728}

The Syrian and Chinese governments, on February 4, 2012 used their veto power for the second resolution at the United Nations Security Council, which called for a “Syrian-led political transition to a democratic, plural political system.” The resolution also condemned the violence in Syria.⁷²⁹ On February 6, 2012, after Russia vetoed the United Nations resolution, the Kingdom of Jordan, Singapore, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Costa Rica ,(The Small 5 Group) encouraged Russia not to use its

⁷²⁶ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

⁷²⁷ *The United Nations Official Website, The United Nations News Center, Russia and China veto draft Security Council resolution on Syria*
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39935#.U9vO1Uhh5sM> , 4 October 2011

⁷²⁸ CNN World News, Russia, China veto U.N. action on Syria; opposition group calls for strike,
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/04/world/meast/syria-unrest/> , By the CNN Wire Staff,
updated 9:36 PM EST, Sat February 4, 2012

⁷²⁹ Carnegie Endowment Organization, The Coming Tests of the Syrian Opposition
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/19/coming-tests-of-syrian-opposition/ae96?reloadFlag=1> , Article April 19, 2012

veto power in the United Nations Security Council in such cases of brutally and atrocities.⁷³⁰

The President of the International Committee for the Red Cross travelled to Moscow on May 19, 2012, and met with Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, in order to urge him to back a temporary ceasefire in the Syrian conflict and civil war for the sake of the ICRC's plan to deliver humanitarian aid to those who are in need of it.⁷³¹ On June 3, 2011, Human Rights Watch asked Rosoboronexport, the Russian arms and weapons exporter to stop its arms deals with the Syrian government of President al-Assad, arguing that otherwise, Rosoboronexport could also be complicit in the crimes and atrocities occurring in the Syrian conflict and civil war.⁷³²

⁷³⁰ Global Solution , When the Security Council Refuses to Change, Who Pays the Price?, <http://globalsolutions.org/blog/2012/05/When-Security-Council-Refuses-Change-Who-Pays-Price#.U9vOCEhh5sM> , May 17 2012 .

⁷³¹ The International Committee of the Red Cross (IRCC) Official Website, Russian Federation: ICRC president in Moscow to discuss Syrian humanitarian situation , <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2012/russia-syria-news-2012-03-18.htm> , 18-03-2012 News Release 12/54

⁷³² *The Human Rights Watch Official Website, Isolate Syria's Arms Suppliers , Russian Arms Exporter Rosoboronexport Risks Complicity in Grave Abuses* <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/03/isolate-syria-s-arms-suppliers> , June 3, 2012

On June 14, 2013 via S. RES 494, seven United States senators condemned the delivery of arms and weapons to the Syrian government, and branches of the Syrian government's Armed Forces by the government of Russia.⁷³³

On June 17, 2013 JSE Annan held a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, in order to call for a unified action by the United Nations Security Council. Then on August 1 2012, the government of France, which was the chair of the United Nations Security Council in August 2012, called for an urgent meeting at the ministerial level at the United Nations Council in order to “maintain [a] high level for level engagement, reinforce dialogue with our partners, Russia and China in particular, and week progress in resolving this crisis [the crisis in Syria].”⁷³⁴

On September 9, 2013, when the United States was warning that it might carry out air strikes against the government of Syria- due to the repeated use of chemical weapons against the civilians in Syria, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov successfully averted these strikes by the United States government, through a proposal that he recommended. In his proposal, he asked that Syria give up all its chemical

⁷³³ The Library of Congress, Committee Reports, 113th Congress , Senate Report 113-008 , http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&sid=cp113D27x6&r_n=sr008.113&hd_count=50&item=7&&sel=TOC_73145& , (2013-2014) .

⁷³⁴ By Alexandria Sage, France to detail U.N. Security Council plan for Syria , <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE87013220120801?irpc=932> , The Reuters News Agency , Wed, Aug 01 14:47 PM EDT

weapons in order to prevent the strikes by the government of the United States.⁷³⁵ In late September 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin, urged the United- in an article that he wrote for the New York Times- not to carry out a unilateral military action against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.⁷³⁶

As the conflict and civil war in Syria enters its fourth year, the government of Russia has kept its foreign policy towards Syria relatively consistent by vetoing any resolution that might extend economic and political sanctions, or condemns the Syrian government, President al-Assad, and the violence in Syria – as well as objecting to any calls for foreign and military intervention. The government of Russia's financial, military (such as sending several S-300 missile batteries into Syria), political, economic and diplomatic assistance and support to the Syrian government, have been crucial in shaping the conflict and civil war in Syria, tipping the balance of power in favor of keeping President al-Assad in power, and maintaining the status quo of the Syrian political structure and its ruling Ba'ath party.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁵ The Russian TV, Russia urges Syria hand over chemical weapons to international control to avoid strike, <http://rt.com/news/lavrov-syria-chemical-weapons-handover-615/> , Published time: September 09, 2013 14:16
Edited time: September 10, 2013 08:39

⁷³⁶ By VLADIMIR V. PUTIN, A Plea for Caution From Russia, What Putin Has to Say to Americans About Syria
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 , Published: September 11, 2013

⁷³⁷ By Gil Ronen , Report: Russia Transferred S-300 Missiles into Syria
, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/171767#.U9vewEhh5sM> , Report: Russia Transferred S-300 Missiles into Syria , First Publish: 9/10/2013, 2:48 PM

As the conflict becomes more militarized and as the fundamentalists, Jihadis, Salafist and radical Islamist rebel groups have gained more and more power, as the death toll has reached over 150,000 according to the Syrian Observatory for the Human Rights, and more importantly, as the Russian image in the global arena and its legitimacy has been questioned due to continuing financial, political, military and economic support to the Syrian government and its President, Russian President Vladimir Putin has occasionally criticized President al-Assad for not handling the conflict and civil war in an efficient way. On June 11 2013, President Putin pointed out on a Russian media outlet that "Syria as a country was rife for some kind of change. And the government of Syria should have felt that in due time and should have undertaken some reform. Had they done that, what we're seeing in Syria today would have never happened." ⁷³⁸

Nevertheless, the strategic, geopolitical, and economic interests that Russia secures by having President al-Assad and the Ba'ath party in power, has kept Russian foreign policy towards the Syrian government remaining fundamentally the same. These strategic, geopolitical, balance of power, and geo economic interests for the government of Russia still outweigh any other factors. More significantly, this has led to a diplomatic impasse between the West and Russia as well created an international stalemate in the United Nations Security Council preventing the resolution of the conflict, violence, and civil war, which continues to rage in various cities inside Syria.

⁷³⁸ Putin on NSA leak: Government surveillance shouldn't break law, <http://rt.com/news/putin-rt-visit-broadcasting-center-530/> , Russian TV, Published time: June 11, 2013 14:53 , Edited time: June 25, 2013 12:28

These aforementioned strategic, geopolitical, balance of power, and geo economic interests have pushed the government of Russia to intervene in Syria militarily, politically, and economically, in order to direct the conflict and civil war in favor of the Syrian government and President al-Assad. This phenomenon illustrates one additional layer of complexity that defines the character and nature of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

8.2 International Stalemate: Western Powers (The United States, the United Kingdom, France)

The other force and circle of tension which interacts with the regional and domestic conflict, as well as sometimes contradicts and create excesses, is the position, stance and foreign policies of the United States and its Western allies, in contrast to, the Russian and Chinese position, and foreign policy towards the Syrian conflict, the legitimacy of the current government, political structure, and support of President al-Assad.

The position and foreign policy of the United States and its Western partners, which is contradicted by the Russian and Chinese stance, has led to the third significant stalemate: the international and global stalemate.

While the common perception about the United States' and its allies' position (the United Kingdom, France and other Western powers) towards the Syrian government, is that these Western and global powers push for military and foreign intervention in Syria, the nuances, policies, facts and realities on the ground appears to be more complicated and multilayered.

First of all, a distinction should be made between the United States position on President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian conflict, and the civil war in Syria, as well as the foreign policies and positions of other Western nations, primarily, the United Kingdom and France. Secondly, while Russian foreign policy towards Syria has been predominantly consistent – supporting President al-Assad, the Syrian government and the ruling Ba’ath party- the foreign policy and position of the United States and its Western allies towards Syria contains more ambiguities and it has gone through various phases.

United States foreign policy and position on the Syrian conflict has been characterized as a “wait and see” policy.⁷³⁹ While there was a considerable amount of political will, as well as significant political capital, spent to intervene in Libya, by the NATO forces and United State leadership in order to assist the Libyan oppositional groups overthrow the government of Muammar al-Gaddafi, the United States and its Western allies appear to be more reluctant to directly, and militarily intervene in Syria.^{740 741}

⁷³⁹ Ekaterina Stepanova, The Syrian Civil War TRANSITION WITHOUT INTERVENTION?, Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) (Moscow), September 2012, http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_228_Stepanova_Sept2012.pdf

⁷⁴⁰ Madelene Lindström, Kristina Zetterlund , Setting the Stage for the Military Intervention in Libya Decisions Made and Their Implications for the EU and NATO , <http://www.foi.se/Global/V%C3%A5r%20kunskap/S%C3%A4kerhetspolitiska%20studier/Europa%20och%20Nordamerika/foir3498.pdf> , FOI, 2012 .

⁷⁴¹ Obama, the reluctant warrior on Syria, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-mcmanus-column-obama-syria-speech-20130911-column.html> , The Los Angeles Times, September 11 2013 .

On the other hand, although the United States and its Western allies have been calling for regime change in Syria and for President al-Assad to step down, other Western and European allies, primarily the United Kingdom, and France - have been more to the right of the United States, pushing for a governmental change through various platforms.⁷⁴²

First of all, it is crucial to point out that when the uprising began in Syria in March 2011, in the city of Dar'a, the prospect of regime and political change was in the strategic, geopolitical and geo-economic interest of the United States and Western allies.

The first reason behind this issue is that a change in the Syrian government and loss of power for President al-Assad, and the ruling Alawite minority, would more likely tip the balance of power in the Middle East in favor of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies and against the government of Russia. Syria has been a crucial state actor for Russia- serving its strategic, geopolitical and geo economic interests in the Middle East, as well as countering the influence of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies.^{743 744 745}

⁷⁴² John Lichfield , François Hollande , Syria crisis: France is no longer shoulder-to-shoulder with US , The Independent UK, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/syria-crisis-france-is-no-longer-shouldertoshoulder-with-us-8790541.html> , Thursday 29 August 2013

⁷⁴³ by Hamoud Salhi , Strategic Insights -- Syria's Threat to America's National Interest <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Apr/salhiApr05.asp> (1 of 15)5/16/2005 7:37:44 AM
Syria's Threat to America's National Interest, Center for Contemporary Conflict, Strategic Insights, Volume IV, Issue 4 (April 2005)
<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=453716>

Secondly, and more fundamentally, if the current Syrian government- which is one of the United States, the United Kingdom's, France's and the Western allies' rivals- is overthrown, the Islamic Republic of Iran will lose its closest strategic, geopolitical, and geo-economic ally in the region and this will weaken the Islamic Republic. This will have a significant negative impact on the Islamic Republic of Iran's influence and power in the region, and its military and logistical connections with other non-state actors and proxies such as Hezbollah and Hamas. This will tip the regional balance of power against the Islamic Republic of Iran and in favor of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies.⁷⁴⁶

Third, at the beginning of the uprising and conflict, the prospect of a government and political change in Syria and its ruling leadership, would have more likely brought the Sunni majority into power. They are closer to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Western allies, and the Middle Eastern allies including the Arab states in the Gulf; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, than to the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Russian government which supports President al-Assad and the Syrian

⁷⁴⁴ Michael Doran , Pursue Regime Change in Syria ,
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/regime-change-syria-doran> , The
Brookings Institute, January 23, 2014

⁷⁴⁵ George Friedman , Consequences of the Fall of the Syrian Regime , The Stratfor
<http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/consequences-fall-syrian-regime#axzz39AWOsT8A> Global
Intelligence, Geopolitical Weekly, Tuesday, July 24, 2012 - 04:00

⁷⁴⁶ by Hamoud Salhi , Strategic Insights -- Syria's Threat to America's National Interest
<http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Apr/salhiApr05.asp> (1 of 15)5/16/2005 7:37:44 AM
Syria's Threat to America's National Interest, Center for Contemporary Conflict,
Strategic Insights, Volume IV, Issue 4 (April 2005)
<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=453716>

government financially, politically, diplomatically, militarily, and with intelligence, and training support.⁷⁴⁷

Fourth, as the Syria government and its regional state and non-state actors, have sometimes been successful at blocking and frustrating the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies' foreign policies and objectives in the Middle East, a regime change would more likely establish a Sunni majority state which would be a close strategic, geopolitical and geo-economic ally with the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies. Fifth, other non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas- which are considered rivals with the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies- will more likely to lose a close ally in case of regime change and more significantly this will negatively impact their logistical and military connections with the Islamic Republic of Iran through Syria. Sixth, and finally, a new government in Syria might be less of a rival and less hostile to Israel, one of the allies of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies in the Middle East.⁷⁴⁸

On the other hand, while the aforementioned strategic, geopolitical and geo economic interests might justify the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies' push to implement a Libyan style intervention, or other military and foreign

⁷⁴⁷ by Hamoud Salhi , Strategic Insights -- Syria's Threat to America's National Interest <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Apr/salhiApr05.asp> (1 of 15)5/16/2005 7:37:44 AM
Syria's Threat to America's National Interest, Center for Contemporary Conflict, Strategic Insights, Volume IV, Issue 4 (April 2005)
<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=453716>

⁷⁴⁸ Jubin Goodarzi , " Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East" , Library of Modern Middle East Studies, I. B. Tauris (July 7, 2009)

operation in Syria. The United States' foreign policy, and position has progressed through various phases, and is generally characterized as a "wait and see" approach. Several factors will illustrate the reasons behind such a "wait and see" type of foreign policy.

First of all, although the Syrian government, the ruling Ba'ath party and President Bashar al-Assad has been a rival to the regional ally (Israel) of the United States, and other Western nations, nevertheless, the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad have kept the peace with Israel- not engaging in any war with the state of Israel since his father, Hafez Al Assad rose to power.⁷⁴⁹

Secondly, at the beginning of the uprising, implementing a military intervention might have sparked a regional confrontation and civil war such as the one in Iraq, which would significantly affect the price of oil on the global market. This is due to the fact that several other regional and global powers, as well as state actors, have high strategic, geopolitical and geo economic stakes in Syria - such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia, Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, etc- and they

⁷⁴⁹ By Henry Siegman , Being Hafiz al-Assad: Syria's Chilly but Consistent Peace Strategy <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/56038/henry-siegman/being-hafiz-al-assad-syrias-chilly-but-consistent-peace-strategy> , The Foreign Affairs Magazine, May/ June 2000 .

would react to preserve their strategic, geopolitical, geo economic and political interests.⁷⁵⁰

Ken O’Keefe, a former United States Marine pointed out to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Press TV that any military intervention in Syria will mark the beginning of the World War III, “Russia has made [it] very, very clear that they would not sit by and allow yet another country to be bombarded and effectively raped and pillaged in terms with the empires’ designs. It will not allow this to happen...”. The former Marine added “even thinking [about] ... military intervention, whatever it is, whether it is using some high-tech weapons, secretly weapons and whatnot; the bottom line is that we are attempting the third world war... There are governments and outside players that believe that all means are appropriate [to be used] to overthrow the Syrian regime... At the end of the day, these people who are in power, the banksters in particular are the ones pulling the strings for the Third World War.” ⁷⁵¹

The third reason for this wait and see policy is that, the several vetoes of the United Nations Security Council by Russia and China, prevented the possibility of escalating threats, such as creating safe zones, no-fly zones, and carrying out foreign and military intervention or a Libyan style foreign intervention. Therefore, there was not an international consensus and legitimacy granted to the United States, the United

⁷⁵⁰ Press TV, The Islamic Republic of Iran, US military intervention in Syria can lead to WWII: Analyst , <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/08/25/320372/any-us-war-on-syria-can-spark-wwiii/> , Sun Aug 25, 2013 5:13AM GMT

⁷⁵¹ Press TV, The Islamic Republic of Iran , War on Syria will draw in Russia, trigger World War III: Analyst . <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2013/07/21/314820/attack-on-syria-will-instigate-wwiii/> , Sun Jul 21, 2013 5:30AM

Kingdom, France and the Western allies, by the United Nations to carry out these policies, including military intervention in Syria.

Unlike Libya, the Russian government, and other strategic, geopolitical and geo economic allies of the government of Syria, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah, have provided clear and vocal warnings to the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies against any foreign and military intervention. In particular, after the Russian leaders perceived that the NATO led intervention in Libya, with United States leadership, betrayed the resolution of the United Nations Security Council, Russian leaders became more determined to prevent this scenario from occurring again. The message and diplomatic signal that the government of Russia, and China as well, were attempting to send to the United States, and the Western allies, was that they can not intervene, or cherry pick, using military intervention in any country that encountered a domestic uprising, including Arab countries, and change the government and political structure the way they desire to serve their own strategic, geopolitical, security, balance of power, and national and geo economic interests.⁷⁵²

In addition, the Russian and Chinese governments did not want to set the NATO-led intervention as a precedent for the United States, and the Western allies, to intervene in countries where there might exist uprisings. Such a precedent might also be

⁷⁵² Patrick Goodenough , Russia, Angry About Libya, Won't Support Resolution on Syria
<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/russia-angry-about-libya-won-t-support-resolution-syria> ,
May 19, 2011 - 4:42 AM

a danger and threat to the political systems of the Russian and Chinese governments in case protests, riots and demonstrations erupts. Fourth, as the conflict and civil war in Syria became more militarized, and as the Islamist, Salafist, Jihadists, and radical groups have emerged as significant powers in various parts of Syria, there appear to be no reasonable alternatives for the United States, and its Western allies, to replace President al-Assad, the Syrian government, the ruling Alawite minority, and the Ba'ath party.⁷⁵³

Fifth, there was less popular support for foreign and military intervention in the United States, and with the Western allies, for launching another war in the Middle East, due to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the necessary spending on the military, in addition to being bogged down in a continuing conflict, and the economic crisis which followed. Nevertheless, in comparison to the other aforementioned reasons, this might be considered a trivial reason in the “wait and see” approach and foreign policy of the United States, and the Western allies, due to these countries previous histories in which wars were launched in spite of the low popular support, or political and economic manipulation of the domestic constituents.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵³ The Associated Press, Lack of alternatives to Assad helps explain US reluctance to intervene in Syria , <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/09/12/lack-alternatives-to-assad-helps-explain-us-reluctance-to-intervene-in-syria/> , Published September 12, 2013

⁷⁵⁴ Amelia Smith , Western public oppose military intervention in Syria <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/blogs/politics/7096-western-public-oppose-military-intervention-in-syria> , The Middle East Monitor, Tuesday, 27 August 2013 18:49

Sixth and finally, unlike the Libyan uprising, where there were a relatively coherent and unified opposition group which was mainly based inside the country, the Syrian rebels, and opposition groups have been fractured, lack unified organization and coordination- many are Islamists and radical Salafists, Jihadists groups, and more fundamentally, most of the opposition groups are based outside Syria with low level of control and connection to what is occurring on the ground, as well as having questionable legitimacy for being accepted as representative of the Syrian people. Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that the last three reasons will be considered trivial factors for carrying out and supporting foreign and Western intervention. This is due to the fact that even when there has not been a consensus in the United Nations Security Council, no legitimacy from the international community, and no considerable, unified, and coordinated oppositional group, the United States, and the Western allies have carried out military and foreign intervention if the strategic , geopolitical and geo economic stakes and interests is high for regime changes in countries such as in Iraq, Libya.⁷⁵⁵

Since the uprising started in Syria, in March 2011, the United States, and the Western allies went through several phases with respect to their foreign policy, position, and stance towards President al-Assad, the Syrian government, and the civil war.

⁷⁵⁵ Tim Lister, CNN, No Libya play for the West in Syria, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/07/world/meast/syria-analysis/> , CNN, updated 7:51 AM EST, Wed February 8, 2012

In the first phase, the United States, and its Western allies condemned the violence, President al-Assad and the Syrian armed and security forces. In the second phase, the United States, and the Western allies attempted to extend as well as impose economic and political sanctions. For the third phase, the United States, and the Western allies called for President Bashar al-Assad to step down from power, claiming that he has lost his legitimacy and credibility.

During the fourth phase, the United States, and the Western allies attempted to find a Syrian opposition group that qualified as a legitimate group, in order to support it for the purpose of replacing the Syrian government and becoming a transitional government. For the fifth and final phase, although the United States, and the Western allies have trained, funded and provided light weapons to some rebel groups, they are still contemplating whether to train, fund more extensively and provide heavy weapons to some Syrian rebel groups.

The common explanation for this hesitation has been attributed to their fears that heavy weapons might fall in the hands of the more extremist, Salafist and Jihadist groups. Nevertheless, it is critical to point out that the major reason behind this consideration of providing heavy weapons, as well as the reluctance to carry out foreign and military intervention, is rooted in the aforementioned strategic, geopolitical, and geo economic landscapes.

These phases can be illustrated in the following developments and policy memorandums. On April 21, 2011, through the Executive Order 13572 which was

signed by President Barack Obama, the United States Treasury Department froze the assets and property of three Syrian officials, the Syrian Intelligence Directorate (Mukhabart) as well as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. ⁷⁵⁶ Executive Order 13572 was based on human rights violations in various parts of Syria. On May 10, 2011, the European Union imposed economic and political sanctions on the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. In addition, the European Union banned the sale of arms and weapons, which could be deployed for use against, and repression of, domestic forces, by the Syrian government. In addition, the European Union, declared a travel ban on thirteen Syrian officials who are close to President Bashar al-Assad. ⁷⁵⁷

On May 18, 2011, through another Executive Order, 13573, which was signed by President Obama, the United States Treasury Department froze the assets and property of President al-Assad and six other Syrian officials due to the ongoing violence. ⁷⁵⁸ On

⁷⁵⁶ The Treasury Department of the United States Official Website, Blocking Property of Certain Persons With Respect to Human Rights Abuses in Syria
<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13572.pdf> , Executive Order 13572 of April 29, 2011

⁷⁵⁷ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Jeffrey J. Schott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Kimberly Ann Elliott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Julia Muir, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Case Studies in Economic Sanctions and Terrorism
Case 2011-2 , EU, US v. Syrian Arab Republic
<http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/sanctions-syria-2011.pdf> , (2011– : human rights, democracy), July 2011

⁷⁵⁸ The Treasury Department of the United States Official Website , Blocking Property of Senior Officials of the Government of Syria
<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13573.pdf> , Executive Order 13573 of May 18, 2011

May 23, 2011, President al-Assad and nine other Syrian senior officials were added to a list for restrictive measures, by the European Union.⁷⁵⁹

Then on August 17, 2011, Executive Order, 13582, was signed by President Obama, resulting in the United States Treasury Department halting some economic transactions and dealing with the Syrian government, and blocking the property of the government of Syria.⁷⁶⁰ On August 30, 2011, the European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton, condemned the violence and crack down on civilians in Syria.⁷⁶¹

On September 2, 2011, the European Union increased its economic and political sanctions on the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad by imposing an embargo on Syrian oil as well as issuing a travel ban. On September 6, 2011, the government of Norway announced that it will follow the European sanctions on the Syrian government. On September 23, 2011, the European Union added more Syrian

⁷⁵⁹ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Jeffrey J. Schott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Kimberly Ann Elliott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Julia Muir, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Case Studies in Economic Sanctions and Terrorism
Case 2011-2 , EU, US v. Syrian Arab Republic
<http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/sanctions-syria-2011.pdf> , (2011– : human rights, democracy), July 2011

⁷⁶⁰ The Treasury Department of the United States Official Website , Blocking Property of the Government of Syria and Prohib-iting Certain Transactions With Respect to Syria
http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/syria_eo_08182011.pdf , Executive Order 13582 of August 17, 2011

⁷⁶¹ The European Union Official Website , Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union on EU action following the escalation of violent repression in Syria
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/124393.pdf , Brussels, , 13488/1/11 REV 1 , PRESSE 282 , 18 August 2011

officials to the list of the travel ban, froze assets, discussed the possibility of the “prohibition on the delivery of banknotes to the Syrian Central Bank”, and the European Union imposed further economic and political sanctions including “an investment ban in the Syrian oil sector..”. ⁷⁶² ⁷⁶³

On September 26, 2011, the United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton discussed the Syrian conflict and civil war with Yang Jiechi, the Chinese Foreign Minister. She urged Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, to support the United Nations Security Council’s resolution against the Syrian government. ⁷⁶⁴ Then on October 13, 2011, the Commercial Bank of Syria (Bank al Tijarah) was added to the sanctions list, in addition to eighteen institutions which had been previously added, by the European Union. ⁷⁶⁵ On the same day, (October 13, 2011), the United Kingdom’s Foreign Secretary

⁷⁶² Aljazeera English News, EU tightens oil sanctions on Syria
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/09/2011924143411656287.html> , Aljazeera English News , Last Modified: 24 Sep 2011 15:09

⁷⁶³ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Jeffrey J. Schott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Kimberly Ann Elliott, Peterson Institute for International Economics Julia Muir, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Case Studies in Economic Sanctions and Terrorism
Case 2011-2 , EU, US v. Syrian Arab Republic
<http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/sanctions-syria-2011.pdf> , (2011– : human rights, democracy), July 2011

⁷⁶⁴ By Scott Stearns , China, US Discuss Differences over Syria
<http://www.voanews.com/content/china-us-discuss-differences-over-syria/1501904.html> , The Voice of America, September 05, 2012 6:31 AM

William Hague, criticized the Russian and Chinese governments for being in support of a “brutal regime rather than the people of Syria.” ⁷⁶⁶ On October 23, 2011, the European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton declared that if the violence and domestic repression by the Syrian government, and President Bashar al-Assad continued, the European Union will adopt “further and more comprehensive measures”.⁷⁶⁷

On October 23, 2011, United States Senator John McCain stated in Jordan at the World Economic Forum that, “Now that military operations in Libya are ending, there will be renewed focus on what practical military operations might be considered to protect civilian lives in Syria.” ⁷⁶⁸ Then on October 24, 2011, the United States withdrew its ambassador, Robert Ford, from Damascus. Following that on October 26, 2011, the United States ambassador, Ronald Goddard, criticized the human rights violations while

⁷⁶⁵ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Jeffrey J. Schott, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Kimberly Ann Elliott, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Julia Muir, Peterson Institute for International Economics, Case Studies in Economic Sanctions and Terrorism
Case 2011-2 , EU, US v. Syrian Arab Republic
<http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/sanctions-syria-2011.pdf> , (2011– : human rights, democracy), July 2011

⁷⁶⁶ Hélène Mulholland , political reporter , Hague accuses Russia and China of 'siding with brutal regime' in Syria
, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/oct/05/hague-russia-china-siding-syria> , The Guardian, Wednesday 5 October 2011 09.13 EDT

⁷⁶⁷ By David Brunnstrom, , EU leaders threaten Iran and Syria with more sanctions
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/23/us-eu-iran-syria-idUSTRE79M2RL2011023> , The Reuters News Agency , BRUSSELS Sun Oct 23, 2011 1:38pm EDT

⁷⁶⁸ The Agency France Press and Info Wars, McCain raises prospect of military option in Syria
<http://www.infowars.com/mccain-raises-prospect-of-military-option-in-syria/> , Monday, October 24, 2011

addressing the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee. On November 8, 2011, the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary William Hague called for more pressure on the Syrian government and President al-Assad and also for passing a resolution in the United Nations Security Council against the Syrian government.⁷⁶⁹

On November 9, 2011, the United States contended that the United Nations Security Council failed to protect the lives of Syrian people by failing to adopt the resolution at the Security Council. On the same day, the United States urged the Syrian people not to give up their weapons to the Syrian government for amnesty.⁷⁷⁰ Then on December 6 2011, the United States sent its ambassador, Robert Ford, back to Damascus in order to witness the continuing conflict. On November 9 2011, the government of France pointed out that the United Nations Security Council has failed to pass the resolution regarding the Syrian conflict and government repression.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁹ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria
<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

⁷⁷⁰ The Voice of America, U.S. Advises Syrian Protesters To Reject Government Amnesty Offer ,
<http://www.voanews.com/content/us-tells-syrians-to-reject-amnesty-offer-133568603/147934.html> , The Voice of America , November 08, 2011 7:00 PM

⁷⁷¹ Dan Murphy, Staff writer , As US Ambassador Ford returns, Syria deteriorates,
<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Backchannels/2011/1206/As-US-Ambassador-Ford-returns-Syria-deteriorates> , The Christian Monitor Science , December 6, 2011

On January 21, 2012, the United States threatened the Syrian government that it will shut its embassy in Damascus, or the Syrian government have to ensure the security of the embassy and its staff. ⁷⁷²

On January 23, 2012, the European Union called for a reaction from the United Nations Security Council on the violence in Syria. In addition, on the same day, the European Union added another eight institutions and twenty-two political figures to the sanctions list, issued travel bans, and froze further assets. On January 25, 2012, the government of France, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Germany began drafting a resolution for the United Nations Security Council enlarging the scope of the economic and political sanctions on the Syrian government, President al-Assad, and condemning the violence and repression. ⁷⁷³

Then on February 1, 2012, the European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton called for a robust action from the United Nations regarding the violence, crack down and repression in Syria, and she expressed her astonishment at the “campaign of repression against the Syrian people,” by the Syrian regime and President al-Assad. ⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷² Josh Rogin , U.S. considering shutting down its embassy in Syria,
http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/20/exclusive_us_considering_shutting_down_its_embassy_in_syria , The Foreign Policy The Middle East, The Cable, · JANUARY 20, 2012 - 11:23 AM

⁷⁷³ Security Council Report , Syria Chronology of Events
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/syria.php?page=all&print=true>

⁷⁷⁴ Relief Web , Originally from the European Union official website , Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton, on efforts to end the violence in Syria,
<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/statement-high-representative-catherine-ashton-efforts-end-violence> , Published on 01 Feb 2012

On February 7, 2012, the governments of France, Britain, and Italy recalled their ambassadors from Damascus.⁷⁷⁵

On February 9, 2012, the United States State Department announced that it was organizing “The Friends of Syria” group, by sending its envoy to other countries including Bahrain, Morocco, and France.⁷⁷⁶ On February 19, 2012, two United States Senators, John McCain and Lindsey Graham, called for arming the Syrian rebel groups in indirect way and pointing out that “people that are being massacred deserve to have the ability to defend themselves.”^{777 778}

On March 6 2012, The United States Department of State issued a travel warning to American citizens and asked those Americans in Syria to leave the country. On February 8, 2012, the European Union had also announced that it was considering imposing a ban on flights to and from various parts of Syria.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Michael Goldfarb , Syria: France, Britain and Italy recall ambassadors , , <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatches/globalpost-blogs/europe/syria-france-britain-and-italy-recall-ambassadors> , The Global Post , February 7, 2012 12:23

⁷⁷⁶ US working around United Nations to organize 'friends of Syria' meeting <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/02/09/us-working-around-united-nations-to-organize-friends-syria-meeting/> , The Fox News, Published February 09, 2012

⁷⁷⁷ By ALISSA J. RUBIN, Two Senators Say U.S. Should Arm Syrian Rebels http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/world/middleeast/mccain-and-graham-suggest-helping-syrian-rebels.html?_r=0 , The New York Times, Published: February 19, 2012

⁷⁷⁸ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

⁷⁷⁹ By Lee Keath, Europeans consider a flight ban for Syria, http://articles.philly.com/2012-02-09/news/31042344_1_assad-ally-flight-ban-president-bashar , Associated Press
Posted: February 09, 2012

On February 27, 2012, the European Union went ahead and issued a ban on cargo flights from European countries to Syria. It further froze the assets of the Syrian Central Bank (al-Bank al-Soury al-Markazi) as well as those of several Syrian officials. Furthermore, the EU prohibited the purchase of gold, diamond, and precious metals from the Syrian government.⁷⁸⁰

On March 1, 2012, the United Kingdom closed its embassy in Damascus and recalled all its diplomats.⁷⁸¹ Next on March 2, 2012, the French government stated that it will close the French embassy in Damascus. On March 12, 2012, in his address to the UN Security Council, the United Kingdom's ambassador William Hague, acknowledged that the UNSC has failed to protect the Syrian people. In addition, he added that the UNSC should back up the Arab League's attempts, plan and efforts.^{782 783}

⁷⁸⁰ The European Union Official Website, EU sanctions against the Syrian regime once more strengthened ,, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132847.pdf , The Council of the European Union, Luxembourg, 15 October 2012 14793/12 PRESSE 420

⁷⁸¹ The BBC World News, Hague: British Embassy in Damascus 'suspended' , <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17218554> , 1 March 2012 Last updated at 20:42

⁷⁸² Omar Karmi, Hague criticizes UN divisions over Syria, saying 'the world has failed', <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/hague-criticises-un-divisions-over-syria-saying-the-world-has-failed> , The National United Arab Emirates , April 12, 2013

⁷⁸³ The France 24 English International, , France to close embassy in Syria, says Sarkozy , <http://www.france24.com/en/20120302-syria-france-assad-homs-sarkozy-un-sanctions-embassy/> , The France 24 English International, Latest update : 2012-03-02

On March 30, 2012, the United States Treasury Department further sanctioned several additional Syrian officials including The Army Chief of Staff, the head of Presidential security, as well as Syria's defense minister.⁷⁸⁴

On April 2, 2012, the United States reported that it would set up an Accountability Clearinghouse, with the assistance of other countries, to promote accountability in Syria.⁷⁸⁵ Then on April 16, 2012, the European Union banned the sale of articles, technological tools, luxury products, and other products to the Syrian government which can be utilized for "... internal repression or for making and maintaining such products..", by the Syrian government and its branches of the military and security forces.^{786 787}

On April 19, 2012, through a resolution, eight United States Senators -Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), accompanied by Senators Collins (R-ME), Cardin (D-MD), Coats (R-IN), McCain (R-AZ), Klobuchar (D-MN), and Kirk (R-IL), urged President Obama to take measures to hold those officials in Syria

⁷⁸⁴ The United States Department of Treasury Official Website, Treasury Designates Syrian Government Officials
<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1517.aspx> , 3/30/2012

⁷⁸⁵ Al Arabiya News English, U.S. to fund Syrian abuse documentation,
<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/04/02/204948.html> , Monday, 02 April 2012

⁷⁸⁶ The European Union Official Website, , The Council of The European Union, Council strengthens EU sanctions against Syrian regime
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/129726.pdf , Luxembourg, 23 April 2012 , 8957/12 , PRESSE 163

⁷⁸⁷ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

accountable for crimes against humanity.⁷⁸⁸ On May first 2012, Executive Order 13608 was signed by President Obama prohibiting foreign transactions which are aimed at assisting the governments of Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran to evade the economic sanctions imposed on their governments.⁷⁸⁹

On May 7, 2012, the United States described the elections, which were held in Syria, as illegitimate for being held in the midst of violence and a governmental crack down and noting this action “borders on ludicrous”.⁷⁹⁰ On May 9 2012, the United States indicated that it will continue “the National Emergency with Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria”, and it condemned President al-Assad and the Syrian government pointing out, that “In addition, the United States condemns the Assad regime's use of brutal violence and human rights abuses and calls on the Assad regime to step aside and immediately begin a transition in Syria to a political process that will forge a credible path to a future of greater freedom, democracy, opportunity, and justice. The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the

⁷⁸⁸ Official Website of Richard Blumenthal, United States Senator for the State of Connecticut , Blumenthal, Graham Announce Resolution Condemning Syria For Crimes Against Humanity , <http://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/blumenthal-graham-announce-resolution-condemning-syria-for-crimes-against-humanity> , Thursday, April 19, 2012

⁷⁸⁹ The White House official website, Executive Order -- Prohibiting Certain Transactions with and Suspending Entry into the United States of Foreign Sanctions Evaders with Respect to Iran and Syria, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/01/executive-order-prohibiting-certain-transactions-and-suspending-entry-un> , May 01, 2012

⁷⁹⁰ By Julian Pecquet -, Administration official says Syrian election 'borders on ludicrous' <http://thehill.com/policy/international/225857-administration-official-says-syrian-election-borders-on-ludicrous> , The Hill, 05/07/12 09:57 PM EDT

Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future.”⁷⁹¹

On May 20, 2012 the United States ambassador to NATO admitted that there is no planning at that moment in NATO regarding the conflict and civil war in Syria. Nevertheless, the United States ambassador to NATO added that NATO will take any requests from its members seriously.⁷⁹² On May 25, 2012, the United States Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton declared that the violence and civil war in Syria was causing political instability in Lebanon and the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and its Armed Forces should halt the violence and use of hard power to crack down on civilians and opposition groups.⁷⁹³

On May 25, 2012, The Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2011 was published by the United States, stating that “The three most egregious human rights problems during the year were the regime’s denial of its citizens’ right to peacefully change the government; massive attacks and strategic use of citizen killings as a means

⁷⁹¹ The White House official website, Executive Order , Notice -- Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria, The White House , Office of the Press Secretary

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/09/notice-continuation-national-emergency-respect-actions-government-syria> , For Immediate Release
May 09, 2012

⁷⁹² By the CNN Wire Staff, U.S. ambassador: NATO has no plans for military intervention in Syria
<http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/21/world/meast/syria-unrest/> , CNN World News, updated 10:34 PM EDT, Mon May 21, 2012

⁷⁹³ The Naharnet News Desk , Clinton Concerned Syria Unrest Affecting Lebanon ,
<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/41414> , The Naharnet News Desk , 26 May 2012, 02:20

of intimidation and control; and denial of civil liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly, and association.

“Other serious problems included disappearances; torture and abuse; poor prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair public trial; arbitrary interference with privacy; and lack of press, Internet, and academic freedom. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) remained restricted in practice, especially those that attempted to work in the areas of civil society and democracy. The government restricted freedoms of religion and movement. Several groups in society, notably a portion of the Kurdish population, were denied citizenship. There was limited progress on laws combating trafficking in persons. Violence and societal discrimination against women and minorities continued, and workers’ rights remained restricted. Impunity was pervasive and deeply embedded, as the government made no attempt to punish, arrest, or prosecute officials who violated human rights. Corruption was rampant throughout the government, and the judiciary lacked independence.

“According to government controlled media, armed opposition groups committed numerous conflict related abuses. Given a lack of corroboration, the uncoordinated nature of armed groups, and the intensity of the conflict in many regions, it was extremely difficult to confirm whether opposition groups had committed human rights violations.”^{794 795}

⁷⁹⁴ The United States Department of the State official Website, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011/nea/186449.htm> , 2011 Human Rights Reports: Syria , May 24, 2012

On May 29, 2012, nine European countries- including France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Britain, Bulgaria, Spain , and the Netherlands- expelled the Syrian diplomats in their countries as a result of the Houla massacre and the violence.⁷⁹⁶ On the same day, May 29, 2012 as well as August 10, 2012, the United Kingdom increased its financial aid to the Syrian oppositional and civil society groups for better training, and communication.⁷⁹⁷

On June 25 2012, the European Union extended its economic and political sanctions on two additional Syrian financial institutions including the Syrian International Islamic Bank and Syria's national oil transport company.⁷⁹⁸ The EU also condemned the massacre and violence in the village of Houla.⁷⁹⁹ On June 30 2012, the Syria Action Group, which includes Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Foreign Ministers of the P5, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the Secretaries General of the UN and the organization of the Arab League was hosted by JSE Annan in order to discuss how to

⁷⁹⁵ The United States Department of the State official Website, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011/nea/186449.htm> , 2011 Human Rights Reports: Syria , May 24, 2012

⁷⁹⁶ Ian Black and Chris McGreal , Syrian diplomats expelled from countries around the world , Britain, France and the US join coordinated international action after massacre of more than 100 people in Houla, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/29/syrian-ambassadors-expelled-britain-france> , The Guardian , theguardian.com, Tuesday 29 May 2012 07.58 EDT

⁷⁹⁷ Julian Borger , diplomatic editor , Britain to give £5m aid to Syrian opposition groups , The Guardian the United Kingdom, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/10/britain-aid-syrian-opposition-groupstheguardian.com>, Friday 10 August 2012 11.42 EDT

⁷⁹⁸ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

⁷⁹⁹ The Reuters News Agency, EU targets Syrian bank, toughens sanctions <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/26/us-eu-syria-idUSBRE85PoE520120626> , The Reuters News Agency, BRUSSELS Tue Jun 26, 2012 6:20am EDT

halt the violence against the Syrian people and to discuss “steps and measures to secure full implementation of the six-point plan.”⁸⁰⁰

On July 23, 2012, the European Union further extended its economic and political sanctions by imposing an arms and weapons embargo on the Syrian government and freezing the assets of several other Syrian officials.⁸⁰¹ On August 1, 2012, the government of France, which was the chair of the United Nations Security Council in August 2012, called for an urgent meeting at the ministerial level of the UNSC in order to “maintain a high level for engagement, reinforce dialogue with our partners, Russia and China in particular, and make progress in resolving [the crisis in Syria].”⁸⁰²

On September 11, 2013, The European Union High Representative, Catherine Ashton, stated out that efforts should be made to resolve the deadlock in the United Nations Security Council.⁸⁰³ On June 14, 2012, through the Senate Resolution (S. RES 494), several United States Senators (including Cornyn, Durbin, Ayotte, Gillibrand,

⁸⁰⁰ Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, Timeline of International Response to the Situation in Syria
<http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline-of-international-response-to-syria-1.pdf>

⁸⁰¹ by Andrew Gardner , EU tightens sanctions on Syria , Foreign ministers condemn Syrian threat to use chemical weapons, add to sanctions, and increase aid to refugees ,
<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/eu-tightens-sanctions-on-syria/> The European Voice , on 23.07.2012 / 14:37 CET

⁸⁰² By Alexandria Sage, France to detail U.N. Security Council plan for Syria ,
<http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE87013220120801?irpc=932> , The Reuters News Agency , Wed, Aug 01 14:47 PM EDT

⁸⁰³ European External Action Service (EEAS) , Catherine Ashton - Statement on Syria (Part 1), European Parliament, 11 September 2013 , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gABSeMkCjMg> , 11 September 2013

Boxer, Risch, and Menendez) ⁸⁰⁴ condemned the government of Russia for delivering arms and weapons to the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad and branches of the Syrian government armed and security forces. ⁸⁰⁵

On July 18, 2012 the United States Department of the Treasury extended its economic and political sanctions to include twenty nine officials and five companies which were linked to manufacturing and developing non-conventional arms and weapons as well as connected to the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. ⁸⁰⁶

On August 10, 2012 , the United States Department of the Treasury added new economic and political sanctions on the Lebanese political party and paramilitary group, Hezbollah, for assisting the Syrian government, President Bashar al-Assad and various sectors of the Syrian government and its security forces. The economic and political sanctions were due to Hezbollah's "...integral role in the continued violence the Assad regime is inflicting on the Syrian population." ⁸⁰⁷

On August 15, 2012, the United States praised the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for adopting a resolution which was aimed at suspending the Syrian

⁸⁰⁴ http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/timeline_of_international_response_to_syria.pdf

⁸⁰⁵ Press Releases , James E Risch official website, the Unites States Senator for Idaho, Risch, Cornyn, Durbin, Boxer, Ayotte, Gillibrand, Menendez Condemn Russian Support of Assad Regime , <http://www.risch.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2012/6/risch-cornyn-durbin-boxer-ayotte-gillibrand-menendez-condemn-russian-support-of-assad-regime> , Jun 15 2012

⁸⁰⁶ The United States Department of Treasury official website , Resource Center, Syria Sanctions, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/syria.aspx>

⁸⁰⁷ The United States Department of Treasury official website , Treasury Targets Hizballah for Supporting the Assad Regime <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1676.aspx> , 8/10/2012 .

government and President Bashar al-Assad from its membership.⁸⁰⁸ On August 23, 2012, the United States threatened Syria with use of military intervention and setting up a no-fly zone in case the government of Syria used or transported the country's chemical weapons stockpile. This threat of military intervention and setting up a no-fly zone was backed by France and the United Kingdom.^{809 810}

On September 24 2012, a senior official of the United States Department of State acknowledged that assistance will be sent to the Syrian opposition groups in order to "protect themselves and defend themselves". Nevertheless, this assistance and aid from the United States would not include weapons, arms, or ammunition.⁸¹¹

On June 13, 2013, the United States authorized arming the Syrian rebel groups declaring that the Syrian government has crossed the "red line" for utilizing chemical weapons against civilians.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁸ The Voice of America, The Blog , US Praises OIC Suspension of Syria, <http://blogs.voanews.com/breaking-news/2012/08/16/us-praises-oic-suspension-of-syria-2/> , The Voice of America, The Blog, Posted August 16th, 2012

⁸⁰⁹ By FT reporters, The Financial Times, United States, France and Britain gear up for cruise missile strike on Syria <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4aba4736-0ef3-11e3-ae66-00144feabdc0.html> , The Financial Times, Last updated: August 27, 2013 11:37 pm

⁸¹⁰ The Al ahram News, The United States threatens Syria military action over chemicals - See more at: <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1561269#sthash.j96WX81d.dpuf> <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1561269> , The Al ahram News, Saturday, February 01, 2014 9:01 AM

⁸¹¹ Syria Real News - September 26 & 27 roundup, <http://worldmathaba.net/items/1726-syria-real-news-september-26-27-roundup> , World Mahaba , 2012-09-27

⁸¹² By MATTHEW LEE and JULIE PACE (The Associated Press Agency), Obama Authorizes Sending Weapons To Syrian Rebels

Then on August 31, 2013, the President of the United States addressed the Congress and asked for authorization to use military strikes against the Syrian government. The United States acknowledged that it considered carrying out limited strikes against Syria for using chemical weapons against civilians. Furthermore, on August 31, 2013, the United States stated that it has “high confidence” that the Syrian government under the leadership of President al-Assad has used chemical weapons.⁸¹³ Nevertheless, when the Russian government proposed that Syrian give up its chemical weapons in order to avert the United States strike, the United States agreed not to utilize air strikes against Syria. At the second round of the peace talks in Geneva on January 22, 2014, the United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, demanded that President Bashar al-Assad not be part of the Syrian transitional government under any circumstances.⁸¹⁴

As illustrated in the above details and nuances, since the uprising began in Syria, the United Kingdom, France and the other Western allies went through several phases with respect to their foreign policy, and position towards President al-Assad, the Syrian government, the conflict in Syria and the ensuing civil war. These developments, policies and the international stalemate - between the pro President al-Assad’s global

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/13/obama-syrian-rebels_n_3438625.html , The Huffington Post World News, 06/13/13 10:34 PM ET EDT

⁸¹³ By Jake Miller, CBS News, Obama seeks Syria strike with Congress' approval
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-seeks-syria-strike-with-congress-approval/> , The CBS News, August 31, 2013, 9:22 PM

⁸¹⁴ Dan Roberts in Washington and Julian Borger in London , The Guardian, Syria crisis: Obama welcomes Russia's chemical weapons proposal
Russia's suggestion for Syria to place weapons under international control made after apparent stumble by John Kerry
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/09/us-russian-proposal-syria-chemical-weapons> , The Guardian The United Kingdom, Monday 9 September 2013

powers (The Republic of China and Russia) on the one hand, and the pro Syrian oppositional groups (the United Kingdom, France and the Western allies) have played a role in defining the scope, intensity, and duration of the conflict and civil war in Syria as well as in shaping the character of the conflict and civil war.

More fundamentally, these developments, policies and the international stalemates interact with the other aforementioned concentric circles of tensions (domestic and regional dimensions) simultaneously, which adds more nuances, details, and complexity to the character, nature, scope, intensity and duration of the civil war, violence, and death toll in Syria.

Chapter Nine

Global Jihad, The Fourth Concentric Circle of Tension: The Emergence of Foreign Non State Actors (Foreign Salafi-Jihadist, Al Qaeda-affiliated and Islamist Groups)

The phenomenon, that makes the character of the civil war and conflict in Syria unique in the modern era of globalization, is the unrecognized notion of the emergence, diversity, various ideologies, and increasing power, organization, military capabilities, and coordination of non state actors from around the world focused on the civil war affected state. As a result, the Syrian conflict and civil war is not only limited to the regional and international state actors.

The other layer of complexity concerning the conflict and civil war is the unprecedented role of non-state actors which have entered in Syria from different countries. One of the major factors that is common about these foreign non-state actors is their mission, vision and objectives. The overwhelming majority of these powerful foreign non-state actors share Jihadist, Salafist and radical Islamist perspectives. They justify their presence in Syria as a duty to Allah (God), their ideology and religion of Islam, as well as global Jihad. As will be illustrated in the next section, although majority of these foreign Jihadist, Salafist, radical Islamist non-state actors and rebel groups assert that it is their religious duty is to assist and protect the Syrian Muslim

people from the secular, socialist, and Alawite regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, their goals and missions are predominantly to spread their radical interpretation of Islam to other countries, and establish an Islamic state in Syria and other nations.

Whenever there is political, economic instability- as well as a weak or failed state, conflict, or civil war - the social, political, cultural, and security environment becomes ripe for the infiltration, development, recruitment, organization, and coordinations of these foreign Jihadist, Salafist, radical Islamist non-state actors and rebel groups.

The following illustrates many of these foreign Jihadist, Salafist, radical Islamist non-state actors and rebel groups, as well as their mission, objectives, rivalries with other rebel groups, and Syrian opposition groups (secular, moderate Muslims, socialists, pro Syrian, and anti Syrian government rebel groups), the contradictions, interactions, excesses, and their impact on the domestic, regional and international balance of power.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Arabic: Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa as-Shams

The Arabic acronym is (داعش) or DAISH

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which has renamed itself to “the Islamic State”, is comprised of predominantly Sunni fighters and Jihadists. This group is also known as Al-Qa’ida of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, The Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia, Unity and Holy Struggle, Unity and Holy War, The Organization

Base of Jihad (Country of the Two Rivers), Al-Tawhid and al-Jihad, Brigades of Tawhid, and Islamic State of Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant originally emerged after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant gained significant power institutionally during the Syrian conflict and after the United States withdrew its forces from Iraq in late 2011. ⁸¹⁵ ⁸¹⁶

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant proclaimed itself as the Islamic Caliphate of all Muslims based on specific interpretation of Islam and Sharia law. Its mission is not restricted to establishing an Islamic state solely in Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant views itself as the sole religious and political authority of the Muslim world, and its mission and objective is to create an Islamic state in Syria and Iraq first, then moving to other countries in the Levant and beyond including Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel, Palestine, Turkey, Cyprus, etc. ⁸¹⁷

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's first leader was a Jordanian, Abu Muse al-Zarqawi. At the beginning of its emergence, Al-Qaeda leaders supported the group, nevertheless, later Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri criticized the group for its attacks on

⁸¹⁵ Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, House of Representative, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=pjcis/jabhat_al_nusra/subs/sub003.pdf.

⁸¹⁶ Profile: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24179084>, 16 June 2014

⁸¹⁷ Isis rebels declare 'Islamic state' in Iraq and Syria, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28082962>, 30 June 2014 Last updated at 05:35 ET

Muslims, believing that these attacks will diminish Al-Qaeda's popularity and support in the region.⁸¹⁸

After the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi by a U.S. air strike, the leadership transferred to the current Supreme Leader, Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri, also known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi or Abu Du'a, who is believed to be based in Syria. Subsequently, he appointed Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami as The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's Emir for Syria. He is also named the Caliph of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.⁸¹⁹

The organization and movement of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is hierarchical with a leadership council, senior leaders in various countries, and provincial governments. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is highly organized, in contrast to other rebel groups, with various sections addressing distinct issues. Emir is its highest rank, followed by Vice Emir, First minister, and other sections include Sharia Affairs, War affairs, security, information, oil, prisoners' affairs, health, education, agriculture, religious affairs, etc. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has approximately 6,000 fighters in Iraq and 5,000 fighters in Syria. The Islamic State of

⁸¹⁸ Zachary Laub, and Jonathan Masters, "Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria" <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state-iraq-greater-syria/p14811>, June 12, 2014

⁸¹⁹ Liz Sly, Islamic law comes to rebel-held Syria, "Islamic law comes to rebel-held Syria". *The Washington Post*. 23 July 2013

Iraq and the Levant has been listed as a terrorist organization by various Western countries, including United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, etc. ⁸²⁰ ⁸²¹

Jessica Lewis, who is an expert on The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant at the Institute for the Study of War and was a US Army intelligence officer in Iraq and Afghanistan, pointed out that "They have incredible command and control and they have a sophisticated reporting mechanism from the field that can relay tactics and directives up and down the line. They are well-financed, and they have big sources of manpower, not just the foreign fighters, but also prisoner escapees." She characterizes the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as "not a terrorism problem anymore", but she adds that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is "an army on the move in Iraq and Syria, and they are taking terrain. They have shadow governments in and around Baghdad, and they have an aspirational goal to govern. I don't know whether they want to control Baghdad, or if they want to destroy the functions of the Iraqi state, but either way the outcome will be disastrous for Iraq." ⁸²²

⁸²⁰ Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, House of Representative, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=pjcis/jabhat_al_nusra/subs/sub003.pdf.

⁸²¹ *The Economist*, Two Arab countries fall apart, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21604230-extreme-islamist-group-seeks-create-caliphate-and-spread-jihad-across> June 14, 2014.

⁸²² Aryn Baker and Karl Vick, Extremists in Iraq Continue March Toward Baghdad "Sunni Extremists in Iraq Take Tikrit, Move Toward Baghdad". <http://time.com/2859454/iraq-tikrit-isis-baghdad-mosul/>, TIME. 11 June 2014.

Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi pointed out that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is ".. highly skilled in urban guerrilla warfare while the new Iraqi Army simply lacks tactical competence."⁸²³

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has been significantly masterful and effective in using social media to spread their message and achieve their objectives, in contrast to other Jihadist and Islamist groups. The first media outlet that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant established and used to create CDs, DVDs, pamphlets, etc was al-Furqan Institute for Media Production.⁸²⁴

Afterwards, in early 2013, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant created other media outlets, called I'tisaam Media Foundation and Ajnad Media Foundation, which uses the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) for dissemination and distribution of its materials including Jihadist audio chants.⁸²⁵

In order to target Western audience, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant uses social media outlets such as Twitter and it has created a specific media outlet, which is

⁸²³ Aryn Baker and Karl Vick, Extremists in Iraq Continue March Toward Baghdad "Sunni Extremists in Iraq Take Tikrit, Move Toward Baghdad". <http://time.com/2859454/iraq-tikrit-isis-baghdad-mosul/> , TIME. 11 June 2014.

⁸²⁴ Stone, Jeff , *International Business Times* "ISIS Attacks Twitter Streams, Hacks Accounts To Make Jihadi Message Go Viral". <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-attacks-twitter-streams-hacks-accounts-make-jihadi-message-go-viral-1603842>, (17 June 2014).

⁸²⁵ *Jihadology*, "New statement from the Global Islamic Media Front: "Announcement on the Publishing of al-I'tisām Media Foundation – A Subsidiary of the Islamic State of Iraq – It Will Be Released Via GIMF". <http://jihadology.net/2013/03/08/new-statement-from-the-global-islamic-media-front-announcement-on-the-publishing-of-al-iti%E1%B9%A3am-media-foundation-a-subsidiary-of-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-it-will-be-released-via-gimf/> 8 March 2013

called Al Hayat Media Center, and broadcasts in different languages including English and German.⁸²⁶

The Slavic Corps: The Slavic Corps, are Russian mercenaries, who are in support of President Bashar Al Assad and his governmental apparatuses and they are fighting against the Syrian oppositional and rebel groups which attempted to topple the government of Bashar Al Assad. In October 2013, it was reported by a news agency based in St. Petersburg that there are approximately 267 contractors from Russia which are based in the province of Latakia. The objective and mission of the Slavic Corps, according to *Interpreter* magazine, is to “secure key regime assets, away from the front lines, in order for Assad forces to concentrate on removing ‘bandits’ in other areas.” The Slavic Corps has operated in several locations including Deir Al Zour where they clashed with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and they have intensive experience fighting in several countries including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Serbia, Northern Caucasus, etc. A senior official in Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) pointed out

⁸²⁶ *SITE Institute*. , Jihadist Threat, "ISIL Launches "Ajnad Media Foundation" to Specialize in Jihadi Chants". 15 January 2014.

that there are approximately 300 to 400 Russians are fighting in the Syrian civil war.⁸²⁷

828 829 830

Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar: Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar literally means Army of Emigrants and Helpers. This group originally emerged as Katibat al-Muhajireen (Muhajireen Brigade) in summer 2012, and it characterizes itself as an Islamist and Jihadist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda.⁸³¹

The fighters in this group are mainly from foreign countries including Chechnya, Georgia, Ukraine, Crimea, Central Asian countries and other Russian speaking areas. Some of the recruits are from local areas in Syria as well.⁸³²⁸³³

⁸²⁷ Alexander Bortnikov, "Hundreds of Russians Fighting as Mercenaries in Syria – FSB , <http://en.ria.ru/world/20130920/183614084.html> , http://en.ria.ru/trend/protests_syria_2011/ , Ria Novosti , 17:52 20/09/2013

⁸²⁸ Denis Korotkov , "The Last Battle of the "Slavonic Corps" , , <http://www.interpretermag.com/the-last-battle-of-the-slavonic-corps/> , The Interpreter, 14 November 2013 .

⁸²⁹ Mitch Swenson , There Are Russian Mercenaries Fighting In Syria, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/there-are-russian-mercenaries-fighting-in-syria-18ae26e885f7> , 18 November 213

⁸³⁰ Russia Fontanka in Russian language , <http://www.fontanka.ru/2013/11/14/060/> , 14 November 2013

⁸³¹ Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Syria crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader". *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25151104> 3 , December 2013.

⁸³² Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith "Syria: the foreign fighters joining the war against Bashar al-Assad", *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/23/syria-foreign-fighters-joining-war>, 23 September 2012.

⁸³³ Jacob Zenn , Increasing Numbers of Central Asian Jihadists in Syria "Increasing Numbers of Central Asian Jihadists in Syria". Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2 October 2012

The group gained the spotlight as well as media attention through several battles and victories against the Syrian army such as in battles of Aleppo, and in Latakia, playing a crucial offensive role in capturing Menagh airbase in August 2013. The first leader of Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar was Abu Omar al-Shisha also known as Abu Omar al-Chechen, who is an ethnic Chechen and he was a fighter in the Russia-Georgia War as well as the Second Chechen War. Later he was replaced by Salahuddin al-Shishani as leader of Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar.^{834 835}

Jund al-Sham (Army of the Levant, Soldiers of Greater Syria): There are three rebel groups with the name Jund al-Sham in Afghanistan, Lebanon (by extremist Salafist-influenced Sunni Palestinians), and their branch in Syria near the city of Homs. The first Jund al-Sham was originally formed in Afghanistan when Osama Bin-Laden provided funds to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. This group operated in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. The second Jund al-sham was created by the Sunni Islamist and Salafist Palestinian group in Lebanon, which opposed the Fatah party. This group established another branch in Syria fighting against the government of Bashar Al Assad and their objective is to create an Islamic state in Greater Syria.^{836 837}

⁸³⁴ Jacob Zenn, "Increasing Numbers of Central Asian Jihadists in Syria", http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/260929/374010_en.html Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. 2 October 2012. Retrieved 20 March 2014.

⁸³⁵ Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Syria crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader". *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25151104> 3, December 2013.

⁸³⁶ Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4503

The Syrian branch, near the city of Homs, was established under the leadership of the Lebanese Islamist figure, Khaled Mahmoud al-Dandashi, who is also known as Abu Suleiman and who proclaimed himself as Jund al Sham's emir (king) in Qalaat al Hosn (Castles of Hosn, also known as Krak des Chevaliers). Reportedly, the Syrian branch of Jund al-Sham, which has employed Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian fighters, has been accused of carrying out a massacre in the district of Wadi al-Nasara in Homs in August 2013 against Christians. The district of Wadi al-Nasara in Homs is predominantly Christian.^{838 839}

The Lebanese extremist leader of Jund al-Sham, emir Khaled Mahmoud, was killed in one of the battles against the Syrian Armed Forces, when the Syrian Armed Forces captured Jund al Sham's base in Krak des Chevaliers. Jund al Sham in Syria has collaborated with other radical Islamist groups such as Jubhat Al Nusra, fighting against the Syrian government Armed Forces.^{840 841}

Abdullah Azzam Brigade

⁸³⁷ Misbah al-Ali, "Fears as Islamist fighters flock to Lebanon". <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-22/251028-fears-as-islamist-fighters-flock-to-lebanon.ashx#ixzz2wgkKsBNy>, The Daily Star.

⁸³⁸ Al Hayat (Arabic language) <http://alhayat.com/Details/543791>, December/21/2013

⁸³⁹ Al Akhbar News (Arabic language), <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/189101>

⁸⁴⁰ Misbah al-Ali, "Fears as Islamist fighters flock to Lebanon". <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Mar-22/251028-fears-as-islamist-fighters-flock-to-lebanon.ashx#ixzz2wgkKsBNy>, The Daily Star.

⁸⁴¹ "A Look at the Terror Group Jund Al-Sham" . <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/12/AR2006091200844.html>, Associated Press and Washington Post. September 12, 2006

Abdullah Azzam Brigade is Al Qaeda affiliated and a Sunni radical Islamist militant group which was created in 2009. Abdullah Azzam Brigade was originally formed under the leadership of the Saudi citizen, Saleh Al-Qaraawi.⁸⁴²

Saleh Al-Qaraawi was injured in a drone attack in Pakistan and the leadership of Abdullah Azzam Brigades was transferred to another Saudi citizen called, Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid in June 2012, who was affiliated with Al Qaeda and is listed on the state department's list of designated terrorists. Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid has called for the use of car bombs and bomb belts as a military strategy. He died on 4 January 2014 due to health problems after being arrested by Lebanese authorities.⁸⁴³ Abdullah Azzam Brigade has branches in Syria, Jordan, Gaza Strip, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq.^{844 845 846 847}

⁸⁴² BBC World News, Profile: Abdullah Azzam Brigades, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25005417>, 19 November 2013 Last updated

⁸⁴³ "DNA tests confirm Majid's identity" . <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/528411-dna-tests-confirm-majids-identity,NOW>. 3 January 2014.

⁸⁴⁴ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center ,The Abdullah Azzam Brigades, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18033>, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center 1 September 2010

⁸⁴⁵ Bill Roggio , *Abdullah Azzam Brigades names leader, advises against attacks in Syria's cities*. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/abdullah_azzam_briga.php, The Long War Journal . 27 June 2012

⁸⁴⁶ BBC, "Al-Qaeda's chief in Lebanon Majid al-Majid dies in custody". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25603499>, BBC World News. 4 January 2014.

⁸⁴⁷ Bill Roggio , *Abdullah Azzam Brigades names leader, advises against attacks in Syria's cities*. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/abdullah_azzam_briga.php, The Long War Journal . 27 June 2012

Abdullah Azzam Brigades (AAB) has also been known by other names such as: The Martyr Abdullah Azzam Brigades, Abdullah Azzam Martyrs Brigades, Tanzim al-Qaida fi Balad ash-Sham wa Ard al-Kinanah, Al Qaeda in Levant, Brigades of Abdullah Azzam (BAA), Battalion of Yusuf al-'Uyayri", The Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin, Battalion of Ziad al-Jarrah, Kita'ib Shuhada 'Abullah Azzam, Al-Sham Spring, and Kata'ib Shahid Abdullah Azzam. Abdullah Azzam Brigades denies having any role in the suicide attack in the capital, Damascus which killed 40 civilians. Nevertheless, their strategies and military tactics- to use car bombs and bomb belts is not supported by all Islamist groups.^{848 849 850}

Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (Army of Emigrants and Supporters): Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar was originally called Muhajireen Brigade (or Katiba al-Muhajireen) and it was created in the summer of 2012. Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar is a hard-line Sunni rebel group which is made up of foreign Jihadist fighters as well as Syrian fighters. This Jihadist and hard-line Islamist rebel group is comprised mainly of Russian speaking foreign fighters, and Chechen fighters. However, it attracted fighters from Western countries including European countries, the United Kingdom, Sweden,

⁸⁴⁸ Abdullah Azzam Brigade, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/abdullah-azzam-brigades-aab>

⁸⁴⁹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START): Terrorist Organization Profile - Battalion of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam, <http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/>

⁸⁵⁰ Bill Roggio , *Abdullah Azzam Brigades names leader, advises against attacks in Syria's cities*. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/abdullah_azzam_briga.php, The Long War Journal . 27 June 2012

the United States, etc. Their objective is establishing an Islamist state and overthrowing the Ba’thist government of Bashar Al Assad.^{851 852 853}

Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar was affiliated with Islamic State of Iran and the Levant (ISIL) in the beginning. This Jihadist rebel group has hierarchical in military and organizational structure; some of its sections are a sharia committee, a shura council, a military leadership council, and a media section which is called, Liwa al-Mujahideen al-E’-lami. In comparison to other hard-line Islamist groups, such as Jubhat al Nusra, Islamic State of Iran and the Levant, and Ahrar ash-Sham which attracted foreign Jihadist fighters, Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar was originally formed by foreign fighters and later absorbed fighters from other countries including Syrians.^{854 855}

The leader of this Jihadist rebel groups have been Chechen; the first leader of Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar was Abu Omar al-Shishani from Summer 2012 till Winter 2013, and the current leader is Salahuddin al-Shishani, from December 2013 to the present time. The leader has taken oath of allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State of

⁸⁵¹ Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium
<http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/muhajireen-brigade>

⁸⁵² Murad Batal al-Shishani , BBC Arabic, Pankisi Valley, Georgia "Syria crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader". *BBC*. 3 December 2013

⁸⁵³ Aaron Zein, <http://jihadology.net/category/jaysh-al-muhajirin-wa-l-ansar/>, 2014

⁸⁵⁴ Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith , "Syria: the foreign fighters joining the war against Bashar al-Assad".
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/23/syria-foreign-fighters-joining-war>, *The Guardian*. 23 September 2012

⁸⁵⁵ Murad Batal al- Shishani , "Obligated to Unite under One Banner": A Profile of Syria’s Jaysh al-Muhajireen wa’l-Ansar".
[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40749&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=684&no_cache=1#.U8AnYKh6fQ](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40749&tx_ttnews[backPid]=684&no_cache=1#.U8AnYKh6fQ), Jamestown Foundation. 19 April 2013

Iraq and the Levant, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and they have fought against the government of Bashar Al Assad alongside other Islamist rebel groups namely Jubhat Al Nusra and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.^{856 857 858}

Fatah al-Islam: Fatah al Islam was originally formed in Lebanon by Palestinians, Lebanese, and Syrians, and it was led by Shaker al-Abssi, a militant and Palestinian refugee. Fatah al Islam is considered a militant Sunni Islamist group which split from Fatah al-Intifada or Fatah Uprising.⁸⁵⁹

The United States Department of State has listed Fatah al Islam as a terrorist organization. In spring 2012, they joined the rebel groups to fight against the government of Bashar Al Assad. Their mission and objective is to establish Islamic and Shari law in Palestine and Syria. Several of its influential leaders have been killed since joining the Syrian battle, including Nidal al-Asha- the chief of the Caliphate Brigades, its military section, who was killed in Aleppo in July 2012, and Abu Qaswara al-Qurashi- who was killed in the city of Homs. He was one of the founding members and the former

⁸⁵⁶ Thomas Joscelyn, "Chechen-led group swears allegiance to head of Islamic State of Iraq and Sham". http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/11/muhajireen_army_swea.php, Long War Journal. 27 November 2013.

⁸⁵⁷ Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front commanded Free Syrian Army unit, 'Chechen emigrants,' in assault on Syrian air defense base". http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/10/al_nusrah_front_comm.php, Long War Journal. 19 October 2012

⁸⁵⁸ Abdul-Ahad, Ghaith , "Syria: the foreign fighters joining the war against Bashar al-Assad". <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/23/syria-foreign-fighters-joining-war>, *The Guardian*. 23 September 2012

⁸⁵⁹ Rebecca Bloom , Fatah al-Islam, <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/fatah-al-islam/p13391>, Council on Foreign Relations, Updated: June 8, 2007

chief coordinator in North Lebanon. Abdelaziz al-Kourakli, also known as Abu Hussam al-Shami, died in September 2012 in an ambush on the Dera'a-Damascus road. Another powerful leader of Fatah al Islam, Abdel Ghani Jawhar, was killed when he was making a bomb and he inadvertently blow himself up in the city of Al-Qusair, Syria in April 2012.^{860 861 862 863}

Ansar al-Islam (Helpers of Islam): Ansar al-Islam was originally formed in the Kurdistan region of Iraq by radical Islamist members from the Kurdish and Arab communities. They are listed as a terrorist group and linked to the Al Qaeda organization by the United States Department of State. They espouse a hard-line interpretation of Islam and desire to establish an Islamic state. They are primarily made up of radical salafist and Sunni fighters and their ideology is Salafist Jihadism. Ansar Al Islam was created in September 2001. It was formed by the merger of two Islamist rebel groups: 1. Jund al-Islam (Soldiers of Islam), in which Abu Abdullah al-Shafi'I was its leader and 2. Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, whose leader was Mullah Krekar. Their current leader is Abu Hashim al Ibrahim and they are operating in Syria and Iraq

⁸⁶⁰ BBC World News, Profile: Fatah al-Islam , <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10979788>, 15 August 2010 Last updated at 15:32

⁸⁶¹ Aryn Baker, "Lebanon's Most Wanted Sunni Terrorist Blows Himself Up in Syria", Times, <http://world.time.com/2012/04/23/in-syria-lebanons-most-wanted-sunni-terrorist-blows-himself-up/> , April 23, 2012

⁸⁶² Lund, Aron , "Holy Warriors". http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/10/15/holy_warriors , Foreign Policy . 2012-10-05.

⁸⁶³ Rym Ghazal , "22 troops, 19 Fatah al-Islam fighters dead". <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2007/May-21/46071-22-troops-19-fatah-al-islam-fighters-dead.ashx#axzz37BbsynDV> , The Daily Star. 2007-05-21.

against the Iraqi Armed forces, Syrian Armed forces, and the Multi-National Force of Iraq .^{864 865 866 867}

Ansar Al Islam started operating during the Syrian civil war against the Syrian government in order to topple president Bashar Al Assad. This radical salafist and Islamist insurgent group has cooperated with other hardliner Islamist rebel groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra and the Islamic Front, against the Syrian government forces during the Battle of Aleppo. Ansar al Islam, has utilized various titles and it has also been known by different names in the media, including Ansar al Sunna, Defenders of Islam, , Ansar al-Sunnah (AS), Helpers of Islam, Ansar al Sunnah Partisans of Islam, Kurdish Taliban, AI, Ansar al-Sunna (AS)Partisans of Islam, , Supporters of Islam, Victors of Islam, Soldiers of Islam.^{868 869 870}

⁸⁶⁴ Stanford University, Mapping Militant Organizations, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/13>

⁸⁶⁵ Schanzer, Jonathan. *“Al-Qaeda's armies: Middle East affiliate groups & the next generation of terror.”* Specialist Press International. New York, 2005.

⁸⁶⁶ Federation of American Scientists, "Ansar al-Islam". <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/ansar.htm>, Fas.org

⁸⁶⁷ Thomas Joscelyn & Bill Roggio, "Ansar al Islam names new leader" . Long War Journal. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/01/ansar_al_islam_names.php, 2012-01-05

⁸⁶⁸ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , “Musings of an Iraqi Brasenostriil on Jihad: Comprehensive Reference Guide to Sunni Militant Groups in Iraq”. <https://jihadology.net/category/other-groups/an%E1%B9%A3ar-al-islam/feed/>, Jihadology.net . 23 January 2014.

⁸⁶⁹ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi (11 May 2014). "Key Updates on Iraq's Sunni Insurgent Groups" . <http://brown-moses.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/key-updates-on-iraqs-sunni-insurgent.html>, Brown Moses Blog

⁸⁷⁰ Ansar Al Islam , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, , <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ansar-al-islam-ai>

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan TTP (Taliban Movement of Pakistan): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan is an Islamist umbrella organization formed in December 2007 by the merger of thirteen Islamist groups, some of which are Pakistani Taliban groups, and united under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. He led the group from Dec. 2007 – Aug. 2009. Later it was led by Hakimullah Mehsud from August 22, 2009 – November 1, 2013, and it is currently led by Maulana Fazlullah, beginning November 7, 2013 – present. Their mission is to fight against the Pakistani government in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan, to engage in combat against US-led and NATO-led forces in Afghanistan, and to establish an Islamist state.^{871 872}

Taliban leaders in Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan started operating in the Syrian civil war in 2013 by establishing a Taliban base in Syria and sending fighters, experts in military warfare and information technology in Syria in order to assist their “Mujahedeen friends”, “Arab friends” : and to evaluate “the needs of the jihad”. One of the commanders of the Taliban pointed out to Reuters that, “We have established our own camps in Syria. Some of our people go and then return after spending some time fighting there.” Another Taliban commander pointed out to Reuters, “When our brothers needed our help, we sent hundreds of fighters along with our Arab friends.

⁸⁷¹ Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan , Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, TRAC, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/tehreek-e-taliban-islami-pakistan-ttip-ttp>

⁸⁷² National Counterterrorism Center, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan , Counter terrorism Calender 2014, <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/ttp.html>

Since our Arab brothers have come here for our support, we are bound to help them in their respective countries and that is what we did in Syria”. ^{873 874}

Junud al-Sham (Soldiers of the Levant): Junud al-Sham is an Islamist rebel group which is comprised of entirely of Chechen fighters. It is based and operates mainly in the north of the coastal province of Latakia , near the Turkish border. Chechens have obtained the reputation for being experienced in warfare, well-trained in guerrilla warfare, and are respected among the Jihadist movements as being elite forces . ^{875 876}

Junud al Asham is organized under the leadership of the Chechen Muslim al-Chichani, known as Muslim Margoshvili, or Muslim Abu Walid. Due to his previous fighting in the Caucasus and Afghanistan, he is considered to be very experienced and competent in military warfare, and has been capable of retaining the independence of

⁸⁷³ Maria Golovnina and Jibran Ahmad, Pakistan Taliban set up camps in Syria, join anti-Assad war

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/07/14/uk-pakistan-syria-taliban-idUKBRE96Do3C20130714> , Sun Jul 14, 2013 11:40am BST

⁸⁷⁴ Wali, Ahmed, BBC World News URDU "BBC News - Pakistan Taliban 'sets up a base in Syria'". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-23285245>, Bbc.co.uk, 12 July 2013.

⁸⁷⁵ Guido Steinberg, “A Chechen alQaeda? Caucasian Groups Further Internationalise the Syrian Struggle”, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2014C31_sbg.pdf , SWP Comments , 31, June 2014

⁸⁷⁶ Jessica Lewis, Institute for the Study of War Syria Updates , <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2014/04/rebels-reopen-latakia-front.html> , July 11 2014

Junud Al Sham though he has cooperated with other hard-line Islamist groups in Syria such as Jabhat Al Nusra and Islamic Front.^{877 878}

Liwa al-Asifa (Translation: the Storm Brigade): Liwa al Asifa is made up Palestinian fighters and originated in late 2012, in Damascus. Their mission and objective is to be in charge of the Yarmouk Palestinian camp in Damascus and support Palestinians. A rebel commander from the Suqour al-Golan , Golan Falcons Brigade, told Reuters that "We've been arming Palestinians who are willing to fight...We have formed the Liwa al-Asifah (the Storm Brigade) which is made up of Palestinian fighters only... Its task is to be in charge of the Yarmouk camp. We all support it and back it". Liwa Al Asifa is fighting primarily with fighters loyal to PFLP-GC chief Ahmed Jibril.

Fighters loyal to PFLP-GC chief Ahmed Jibril have been accused by other rebel groups in assisting the government of Bashar Al Assad and harassing civilians. Another commander pointed out to the Reuter News Agency that "Now they (the PFLP-GC

⁸⁷⁷ Alaa Halabi, Syrian opposition groups fail to capture Aleppo prison <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/02/syria-aleppo-prison-attack-armed-opposition.html#> , February 7, 2014, original article in Arabic: <http://www.assafir.com/Channel/5/%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%20%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A/TopMenu#!/ArticleWindow.aspx?ChannelID=5&ArticleID=337054>

⁸⁷⁸ Guido Steinberg, "A Chechen alQaeda? Caucasian Groups Further Internationalise the Syrian Struggle", Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2014C31_sbg.pdf , SWP Comments , 31, June 2014

fighters) are targets for us, targets for all the FSA. All of them with no exceptions".

Yarmouk camp is home to approximately 150,000 Palestinians.^{879 880}

The Green Battalion (*al Katiba al Khadra*): Several Saudi veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars formed the Green Battalion. The ideology of this rebel group is anchored in Jihadism, Salafism, and hard-line interpretation of Islam. The Green Battalion was created in August 2013, it is still operating in the Syrian civil war, with its mission to topple the government of Bashar Al Assad. The Green Battalion has been involved in fighting alongside other hardliner Islamist groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat Al Nusra, and Suqour al-Ezz. The current leader of the Green Battalion is Abu Muhjin al-Omani. This Jihadist rebel group has been engaged in several battles including the Battle of Aleppo and the Battle of Qalamoun. The Green Battalion has been operating in several provinces including the capital Damascus, Homs and Aleppo, fighting against the Syrian Armed Forces and Hezbollah.^{881 882 883}

⁸⁷⁹ Mariam Karouny , "Syrian rebels arm Palestinians against Assad " <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCABRE89U1I320121031?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0> , Wed Oct 31, 2012 4:50pm EDT

⁸⁸⁰ JOANNA PARASZCZUK , 'Capturing Yarmouk camp another Syrian rebel gain' , <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Capturing-Yarmouk-camp-another-Syrian-rebel-gain> , 12/19/2012 01:29

⁸⁸¹ Mitchell Prothero, "ISIS joins other rebels to thwart Syria regime push near Lebanon" , <http://www.sacbee.com/2014/03/04/6207631/isis-joins-other-rebels-to-thwart.html#storylink=cpy> , McClatchy Foreign Staff , Published: Tuesday, Mar. 4, 2014 - 10:08 am

⁸⁸² Cedric Labrousse , "The new face of the Syrian rebellion". <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#> , The Arab Chronicle. 5 March 2014.

Harakat Sham al-Islam (Translation : Islamic Movement of the Levant): Harakat Sham al-Islam is one of the most recently formed Islamist rebel groups operating in the Syrian civil war. Mohammed Alami, Ibrahim bin Shakran, and Ahmed Mizouz-Moroccan citizens and detainees of Guantanamo Bay detention camp who were released, created the Harakat Sham al-Islam in August 2013. Most of the fighters are from foreign and other Arab countries. The leader of Harakat Sham al-Islam was Ibrahim bin Shakaran and the ideology of this Islamist rebel group is Salafist Jihadism. Harakat Sham al-Islam operates mainly in the governorates of Aleppo and Latakia.⁸⁸⁴⁸⁸⁵

In April 2014, the Syrian government armed forces killed Ibrahim bin Shakaran , the leader of Harakat Sham al-Islam as well as Safiya Al-Masri Harakat, Sham al-Islam's military commander. Abu Harakat Sham al-Islam gained fame during the 2013 and 2014 Latakia offensive against the Syrian government armed forces as well as in some of the battles in the province of Aleppo including in the battles for the Aleppo Central Prison and Kindi Hospital . Harakat Sham al-Islam's ideology is allied with other

⁸⁸³ Zaman Alwsl , "Military commander of 'Green Battalion', al-Qaeda affiliate killed in Qalamoun". <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/en/news/2628.html> , 25 November 2013.

⁸⁸⁴ Maria Abi-Habib , "After Guantanamo, Freed Detainees Returned to Violence in Syria Battlefields". <http://online.wsj.com/articles/after-guantanamo-freed-detainees-return-to-violence-in-syria-battlefields-1401839291> , The Wall Street Journal. 3 June 2014.

⁸⁸⁵ Aljazeera America , "Ex-Guantanamo prisoner killed in Syria". <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/18/ex-guantanamo-prisonerkilledinsyria.html> , *Al Jazeera English*. 18 September 2013 8:16PM ET

radical Islamist and Jihadist rebel groups including Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant , Al-Nusra Front, Ahrar ash-Sham , and Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar . ^{886 887 888}

Suqour al-Ezz (*Suqour al-Izz*): Suqour al-Ezz, a Jihadist rebel group, which is primarily comprised of Saudi Jihadists and Islamists, has joined the hardline Islamist and Al Qaeda affiliated rebel group, Jabhat Al Nusra, in January 2014. Suqour al-Ezz was created in February 2013, and it has cooperated with other hardline Islamist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Nusra Front. Suqour al-Ezz' fighters were involved in several crucial domestic battles including the Latakia offensive in 2013, and the Battle of Aleppo against the Syrian government armed forces. Due to its ideology and combat objectives, this rebel group can be viewed as being allied with other Islamist groups including Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Ahrar ash-Sham Green Battalion, Harakat Sham al-Islam, etc. This Jihadist rebel group operates in several cities including Latakia and Aleppo, and it is led by Saqr al-Jihad. ^{889 890 891 892}

⁸⁸⁶ Bill Roggio , "Former Guantanamo detainee killed while leading jihadist group in Syria". http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/04/former_guantanamo_de_2.php# , Long War Journal. 4 April 2014.

⁸⁸⁷ Aljazeera America , "[Ex-Guantanamo prisoner killed in Syria](http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/18/ex-guantanamo-prisoner-killed-in-syria.html)". <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/18/ex-guantanamo-prisoner-killed-in-syria.html> , *Al Jazeera English*. 18 September 2013 8:16PM ET

⁸⁸⁸ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , "[Muhajireen Battalions in Syria](http://www.aymennjawad.org/14144/muhajireen-battalions-in-syria)". <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14144/muhajireen-battalions-in-syria> , *Jihadology* , 13 December 2013.

⁸⁸⁹ *Isabel Nassief and Charlie Caris* , "[Rebels Reopen the Latakia Front](http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2014/04/rebels-reopen-latakia-front.html)". <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2014/04/rebels-reopen-latakia-front.html> , Institute for the Study of War. 10 April 2014.

Jund al-Aqsa (*Soldiers of al-Aqsa*): Jund Al Aqsa is a hard-line Islamist rebel group made up non-Syrian fighters from other countries including other Arab nations. Jund al Aqsa later joined Muhajirin wa-Ansar Alliance and previously was allied with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Jund al Aqsa has had two leaders: Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari and currently Abu Musab al-Ansari. Jund al Aqsa's fighters have engaged in combat with the Syrian government Armed Forces and Syrian Revolutionizes Front in several cities including Homs and Idlib. Based on its ideology and combat objectives, Jund Al Aqsa is in alliance with other hardliner Islamist groups including Jabhat Al Nusra, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant , Liwaa al-Umma, Liwa al-Haqq, Ahrar ash-Sham, etc.⁸⁹³⁸⁹⁴⁸⁹⁵⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹⁰ Cedric Labrousse , *"The new face of the Syrian rebellion"*. <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#>, *The Arab Chronicle*. 5 March 2014.

⁸⁹¹ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , *"The Syrian rebel groups pulling in foreign fighters"*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25460397> , BBC World News. 24 December 2013. Last updated at 03:17 ET

⁸⁹² Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi , *"Muhajireen Battalions in Syria"*. <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14144/muhajireen-battalions-in-syria> , Jihadology , 13 December 2013.

⁸⁹³ Cedric Labrousse , *"The new face of the Syrian rebellion"*. <http://the-arab-chronicle.com/new-face-syrian-rebellion/#> , *The Arab Chronicle*. 5 March 2014.

⁸⁹⁴ Zaman Alawsat, *"Another Split Among Chechen Jihadists over Fight with ISIS"*. <https://zamanalwsl.net/en/news/3995.html> , Zaman Alwsl. 5 March 2014

⁸⁹⁵ Agence France Presse , *"34 jihadists dead after rebel clashes in Syria's Idlib: activists"*. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Jan-07/243312-34-jihadists-dead-after-rebel-clashes-in-syrias-idlib-activists.ashx#axzz2pdWJiZa1> , AFP. 7 January 2014

⁸⁹⁶ Aymenn Al-Tamimi , *"The Assad Regime and Jihadis: Collaborators and Allies?"*. <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/assad-regime-jihadis-collaborators-allies/> , Syria Comment. 11 February 2014

9.1 Interactions, Contradictions and Excesses: Moderate Islamists vs. Radical, Hard-line Islamists, and Salafi-Jihadists Armed Groups

The clashes between the moderate Islamic rebel groups and the more extremist rebel and armed groups are primarily anchored in their ideology and vision, their objectives and missions for the future of Syria, the region, or beyond, as well as their foreign policy objectives. While both the moderate Islamists and the Salafi-Jihadists groups' mission and objective is to overthrow President al- Assad, and the Syrian government, as well as to establish an Islamic-based state- in which Islam and the strict interpretation of Shari'a law play a crucial role in the socio-political and socio-economic landscapes of the country.

The moderate Islamists and the Salafi-Jihadists groups differ in the level of democracy and secularist political system that they endorse and accept within their vision and mission.

The Salafi-Jihadist rebel and armed groups are primarily opposed to any kind of Western democratic system, free elections, and a democratic parliamentary system.⁸⁹⁷

Radical Islamist armed groups such as Ahara Al Sham, Jabhat Al Nusra, the Islamic State of Iraq and The Levant, or the Islamic Front are completely opposed to any

⁸⁹⁷ Antoun Issa , "Syria's moderate rebels still losing ground to extremists" , <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/syria-moderates-kassab-jabhat-nusra-rebels-war.html#> , Al Monitor, April 4, 2014

elements of secularism or a democratic system of governance within the state they would desire to establish.

The Salafi-Jihadist rebel and armed groups are mainly concentrating on establishing an Islamist state with a strict interpretation of Sharia law and Islamic law, which can be modeled after the Prophet Muhammad's rule. Some Salafi-Jihadist rebel groups, such as The Islamic state of Iraq and The Levant, have a broader mission and objective as they attempt to establish a caliphate Islamic system beyond Syria.⁸⁹⁸

On the other hand, the moderate Islamists armed groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, point out that although Islam is the main tenet of the socio-political platform of the nation, democracy should play a crucial and significant role. As a result they claim to believe in endorsing constitutional law, accepting free elections, freedom of speech and the press, etc.⁸⁹⁹⁹⁰⁰

However, for the moderate Islamist groups, these freedoms (speech, press, assembly, etc) should not violate Islamic laws. The second tension between these groups is linked to being Syrian or foreign. Since many of the radical and Salafi-Jihadist groups have

⁸⁹⁸ Irfan Al Alawi , "Sunni Muslims Must Reject ISIS "Caliphate""
<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4461/sunni-muslims-isis-caliphate> , Gate Stone Institute, July 20, 2014 at 4:00 am

⁸⁹⁹ By Oliver Holmes and Alexander Dziadosz , "Special Report: Syria's Islamists seize control as moderates dither" , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/19/us-syria-rebels-islamists-specialreport-idUSBRE95IoBC20130619> , Reuters, Wed Jun 19, 2013 6:10am EDT

⁹⁰⁰ Antoun Issa , "Syria's moderate rebels still losing ground to extremists" ,
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/syria-moderates-kassab-jabhat-nusra-rebels-war.html#> , Al Monitor, April 4, 2014

fighters from foreign countries, the moderate Islamists groups viewed these groups as non-Syrian and non-indigenous groups with particular political, social and economic interests not linked to the aspirations of the Syrian people.

The radical and Salafi-Jihadist groups and the moderate Islamist groups have fought several battles in Syria attempting to gain control of territories. However, as the conflict has escalated the radical and Salafi-Jihadist groups appear to be gaining ground, defeating the moderate Islamist groups and killing several of their crucial figures and commanders.⁹⁰¹

9.2 Salafi Jihadist Groups Versus Salfi-Jihadist Groups

It worth noting that even within the Salafi-Jihadist rebel groups there have been fighting, battles, some tensions and differences in their objectives and mission as well. One of the differences within the Salafi-Jihadist groups is their broader mission. Some radical Islamist groups, particularly the ones which are Syrian, limit their scope to establishing an Islamist state in Syria. Other Salafi-Jihadist rebel and armed groups, such as Jaish al-Mujahedeen or the Islamic state of Iraq and The Levant, call for global Jihad and desire to establish a caliphate in Iraq, Syria, and other Arab countries, by going back to the pre Sykes-Picot agreement of the French and British, and the artificially-made borders of the Middle Eastern and Islamic countries.⁹⁰²

⁹⁰¹ By Oliver Holmes and Alexander Dziadosz , “Special Report: Syria's Islamists seize control as moderates dither” , <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/19/us-syria-rebels-islamists-specialreport-idUSBRE95IoBC20130619> , Reuters, Wed Jun 19, 2013 6:10am EDT

⁹⁰² The Hindustan Times, “ISIS' join-jihad call: Cops to keep eye on missing youths” <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/isis-join-jihad-call-cops-to-keep-eye-on-missing->

The second area of disagreement between Salafi-Jihadist Groups and other extreme Islamists armed groups comes from whether they act in cooperation with other Islamists Salafi-Jihadist groups, such as Al Qaeda, or not. The third conflict comes from these Salafi-Jihadists use of brutal tactics such as beheading which can ultimately turn the Syrian people against them and benefit the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. One of the major areas of tension between Salafi-Jihadist Groups and other extreme Islamists armed groups emerged as Al Qaeda disagreed with the Islamic State of Iraq and The Levant. Al-Qaeda's General Command declared that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant "is not a branch of the al-Qaeda group does not have an organizational relationship with it and [al-Qaeda] is not the group responsible for their actions".⁹⁰³

Al Qaeda broke its affiliation with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant due to tactics of fighting, coordination and consultation. Al Qaeda viewed the ISIL as fighting independently without consulting the senior members of Al Qaeda, as well as utilizing brutal tactics against civilians which turned the conflict in favor of the government of Bashar al-Assad, his governmental military apparatuses, and improved their legitimacy.

[youths/article1-1240466.aspx](#) , Mumbai, First Published: 11:43 IST(15/7/2014) | Last Updated: 11:45 IST(15/7/2014)

⁹⁰³ Liz Sly , "Al-Qaeda disavows any ties with radical Islamist ISIS group in Syria, Iraq" , http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-disavows-any-ties-with-radical-islamist-isis-group-in-syria-iraq/2014/02/03/2c9afc3a-8cef-11e3-98ab-fe5228217bd1_story.html , The Washington Post, February 3 2014 .

Additionally, there have been clashes and fighting between some Al-Qaeda affiliated armed groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. ⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰⁴ Middle East Monitor , “Al-Nusra and ISIS fight over border city” , <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/12437-al-nusra-and-isis-fight-over-border-city> , Middle East Monitor , Sunday, 29 June 2014 13:09

Chapter Ten

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Although some conflict theories concentrate on the domestic dimension of an intrastate conflict and civil war – such as the rebels and armed groups capabilities, the government's military power, the domestic balance of power, territories, geography - it is crucial to study, examine more details, and study meticulously by analyzing other aspects and dimensions of domestic conflicts and civil wars in order to better comprehend the character of conflict, internal war, civil war, the complexities, intensity, scope, duration as well as the underlying nuances which become crucial for finding a resolution to the conflict and civil war of a particular state.⁹⁰⁵

This research offers an examination of four layers (domestic, regional, global, and foreign non-state actors- global Jihad), an expanded model, to analyze some particular intrastate conflicts and civil wars.

⁹⁰⁵ Kristian Skrede Gleditsch , Transnational Dimensions of Civil War, Journal of Peace Research , <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/44/3/293.full.pdf+html> , DOI: 10.1177/0022343307076637 , 2007 44: 293



Figure 4. Four Concentric Circles of Tensions

Secondly, this research concludes that states, which are significant from geostrategic and geopolitical landscapes, tend to have protracted internal conflict and civil war in case a domestic tension emerges. Third, in case of domestic conflicts and civil wars, states, which bear a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural population, tend to have a longer intrastate conflict. As a result, finding a resolution for such internal conflict would be more difficult due to the considerable amount of stakes which are involved in the civil war and domestic conflict.

This study provide an empirical as well as theoretical lens for studying the destiny and direction on intrastate conflicts and civil war in prospective states which might experience domestic conflict. In other words, at the outset of any domestic conflict, intrastate conflict and civil war, it is critical to observe the geostrategic, geopolitical significance of the conflict inflicted state, as well as, its mutli-ethnic, multi-religious and authoritarian political structure. These kind of domestic conflicts needs to be resolved from the outset before it spiral out of control as well as turn into several concentric circles of conflicts.

In addition, this study reveals that what defines and shapes the Syrian civil war is the interactions, overlaps, interplays among the aforementioned four concentric circles of tensions.

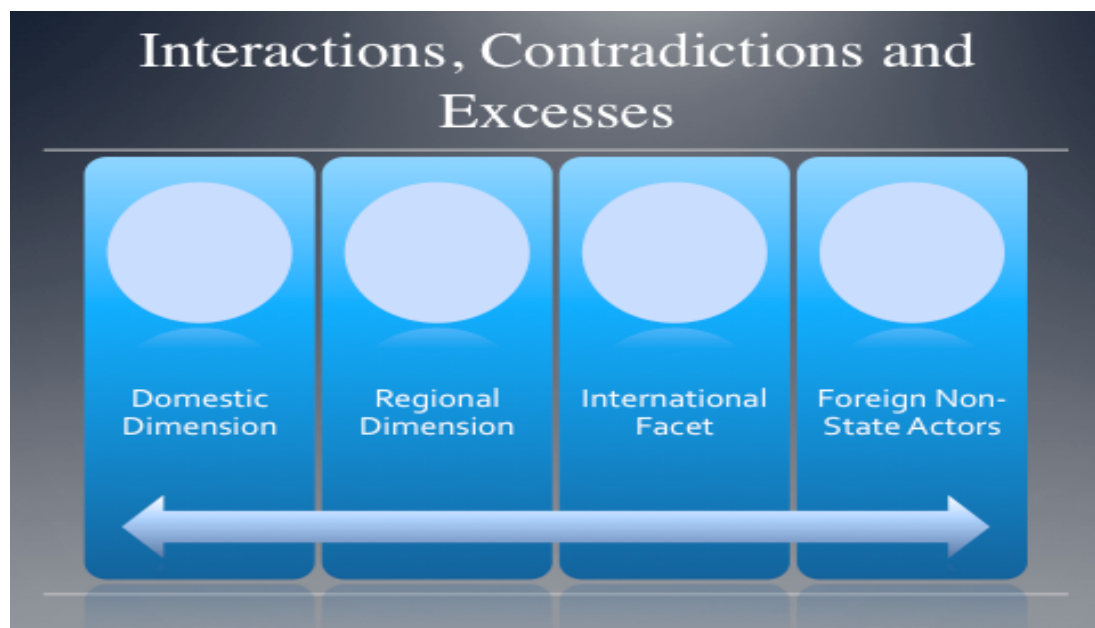


Figure 5. Interactions, Interplays and Overlaps

These interplays create excesses and contradictions which have led to further expansion of the scope, duration, intensity of the Syrian civil war as well as further militarization and radicalization of the internal conflict.

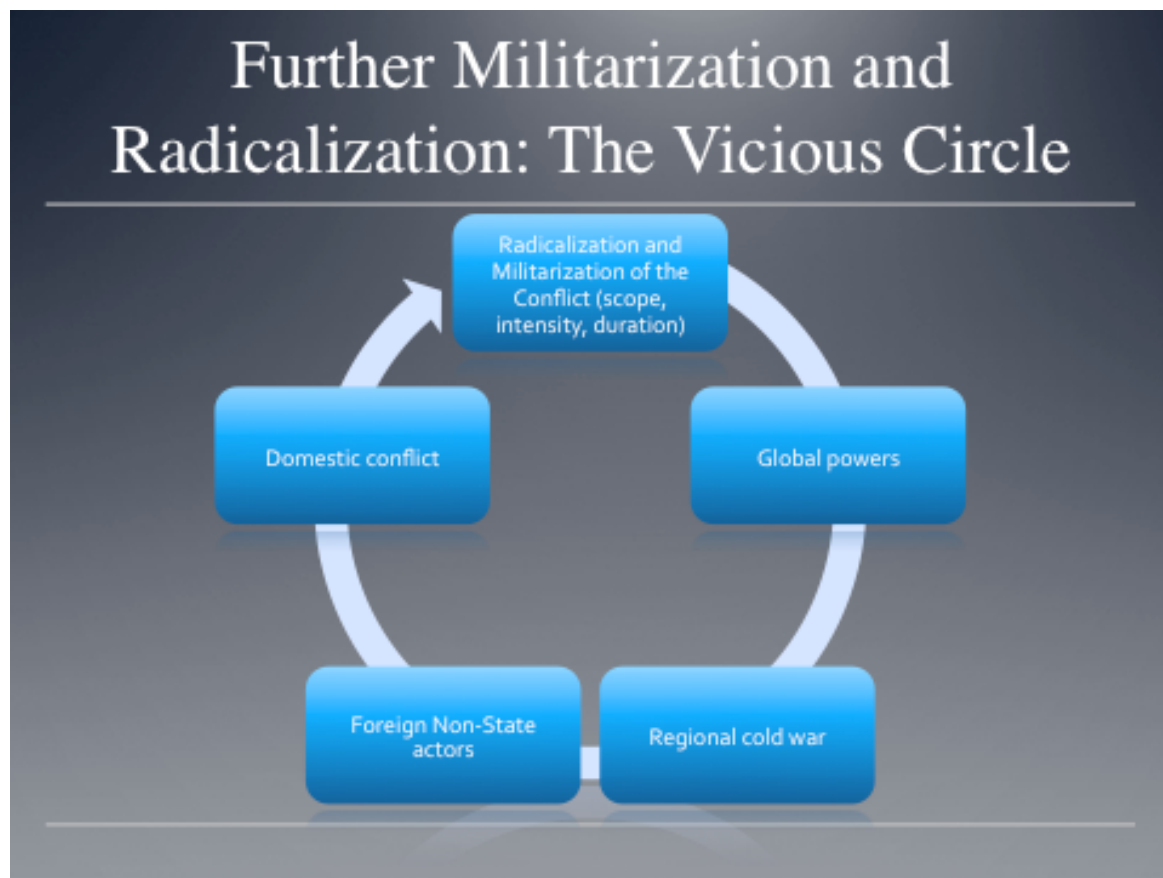


Figure 6. Contradictions, Excesses, Radicalization, and Militarization: The Vicious Circle

While it is accurate to argue that some intrastate domestic conflicts and civil wars remain within the realm of its borders, other conflicts and civil war can be regionalized,

or internationalized, and involve foreign non-state actors and armed rebel groups. This case study of the Syrian conflict and civil war reveals the unique character of the involvement of foreign non state Salafist Jihadist groups as well as the nature of this intrastate and domestic conflict. The strategic, geopolitical, and geo economic significance of the conflict affected the state, as well as its role in tipping the regional or global balance of power- in case the rebel groups or the government armed and security forces scored a victory- can be a political, strategic, geopolitical and geo economic incentive for other regional and global powers to influence or intervene in the conflict in order to direct the conflict and civil war and tip the balance of power in favor of their own national interests. On the other hand, other states, specifically countries which border the conflict plagued state, might use different policies and have different objectives such as preventing the spill over of the violence, and militarization to their country, in addition to preventing the flow of the refugees which can cause security, political, health and economic instability, as well as utilizing political opportunism simultaneously.

When a conflict and civil war erupts in a state, other state and non-state actors will attempt to A. carry out “political opportunism” or B. avert the spill over of the conflict (mainly the countries which share a border with the conflict impacted state), or C. simultaneously balancing between political opportunism and avoiding the spill over of the conflict to their own state.

Nevertheless, with respect to the non-state actors, particularly the role of the Salafist, Jihadist, and radical Islamist armed opposition groups, there exist other incentives besides political opportunism. These include ideological and religious objectives.

The case study of the Syrian civil war reveals the unrecognized and unique character and nature of this conflict in the modern era of globalization and interconnectedness. In addition, this case study of the Syrian conflict and civil war illustrates that in order to better comprehend the complexity and character of the conflict, it is crucial not only to examine and analyze the domestic dimension of the civil war and the conflict, but also to study the roles of the other regional, global state actors and non-state actors.

Syria can be regarded as a lynchpin having many strategic, geopolitical, ideological and geo economic ties in the Middle East -for example Iran-Arab relations, intra-Arab relations, Russia-US relationships in the Middle East, Chinese-Western relationships in the Middle East, and Iranian relations with Hezbollah and Hamas. This suggests that any fundamental shift in the Syrian government and its political structure, and system of governance would bring resounding strategic, geopolitical, balance of power, ideological and geo economic implications for all the above ties and interests. In this case the conflict affected state turns into a regional, international, and ideological proxy battleground. One can make the argument that the Syrian conflict and civil war has turned into one the largest regional and international proxy battleground.

In other words, the strategic, geopolitical and geo economic significance of Syria has contributed to the involvement of many state and non-state actors in the Syrian conflict,

through military, intelligence, financial, arms acquisition, training, advisory assistance and support.

As illustrated in this dissertation and case study of the civil war in Syria, the unrecognized unique character and nature of this conflict is that there are four concentric forces and circles of tension, stalemates, and confrontations which are occurring simultaneously in the conflict and civil war.

In addition, it is crucial to point out that each one of these forces and circles of tension (domestic, regional, international forces and global Salafist Jihadist non state actors), contains its own complexities, nuances, character, tensions, confrontations and attributes. Furthermore, all these concentric forces of tensions and confrontations interact with each other, contradict each other and create excesses which ultimately shape and define the character, nature, scope, intensity, violence, death toll, and duration of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

The first dimension and force of tension and stalemate is the domestic facet which exists between various anti-government rebel groups on the one hand, and the Syrian government, various branches of its armed and security forces, and pro government armed groups on the other hand. Up until now, both sides appear to be determined to continue the conflict and civil war till they score a total victory, and neither side appears to be willing to give up or surrender anytime in the near future. The second dimension and tension is between the fractured Syrian rebel groups.

Within the anti government rebel groups- the Jihadists, moderate Islamists, secularists, socialists, etc- there has been tension, fighting, and combat as well. What is different about the conflict and civil war in Syria is the third dimension. Besides the ideological, religious, strategic, geopolitical, issues, the conflict and civil war in Syria has a significant ethnic aspect. Various ethnic rebel groups (Kurds, Assyrians, etc) add other layer of complexity to the character of this war.

The second dimension of the conflict and civil war in Syria is linked to the role of the regional forces and the so-called cold war between the pro President al-Assad forces- such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah- and the pro Syrian opposition and rebel groups- including the Arab states in the gulf; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates. Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that the regional countries which share a border with Syria (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey) should not only be examined from strategic, geopolitical, alliance with other regional powers, balance of power, and geo economic perspectives, but also through their reactions and foreign policies to the flow of refugees into their own states from the conflict impacted state; Syria.

These neighboring countries have been attempting to utilize political opportunism, while at the same time trying to avoid the flow of the refugees, avoid becoming a target of attacks by anti government rebel groups, or government military and security forces, as well as to halt the spill over of the conflict, sectarianism, violence, political, economic instability, and the flow of hundreds of thousands Syrian refugees to their own countries.

This regional dimension, which closely interacts with the domestic forces, sometimes contradicts and create excesses, illustrates the second facet of the stalemate in the Syrian civil war and defines the character, scope, intensity, duration, flow of Syrian refugees and displaced people, and violence of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

The third force of tension, stalemate, and confrontation in the Syrian civil war- which shapes and defines the character, intensity, scope, duration, and violence of the conflict in Syria- is the international facet of the war. The economic, political, financial, and indirect military interventions of the pro Assad governments – primarily Russia and China- as well as the role of the anti Assad government global state actors – predominately, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and their Western allies- are crucial factors in shaping the character and configuring the scope, duration and intensity of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the international stalemate and confrontation, it is crucial to point out that two distinctions should be clarified in this international dimension. There is a slightly minor difference within the Western policies on the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. For example, as it was illustrated and explained in chapter nine, European countries such as France and the United Kingdom appear to be much more assertive and to the right of the United States, as well as other Western and European countries, when it comes for pushing for a regime and political structure change in Syria.

The second distinction is that, Russia seems to be more determined to prevent any drastic change in the Syrian political structure, in comparison to the determination of the opposite forces of the equation - the United States, the United Kingdom, France and their Western allies- to change the government and force President al-Assad to step down from power.

This comparison is anchored in the spending of political capital, on military, and economic issues which contribute to a preventing a change in the Syrian government. As illustrated and explained in detail in chapter nine, for reasons of national interest, strategy, geopolitical, geo economic, and security, there has been some reluctance by the United States, and their Western allies' foreign policies towards intervening in Syria as they did when the uprising occurred in Libya.

Finally, the unique and unrecognized character and nature of the conflict and civil war in Syria is the engagement, rising power, and involvement of hundreds of different foreign non-state actors and foreign rebel groups, the global Salafi Jihadists, and the ideological religious war. These foreign rebel groups which are predominantly from the Salafist, Jihadist, and radical Islamists parties, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and they call for global Jihad.

As illustrated and manifested in chapter twelve, the mission, objective, goal and vision of many of these foreign Salafi Jihadist groups, is not only limited to establishing an Islamist state in Syria, but includes spreading that Islamist state to other countries, particularly the predominantly Muslim nations.

In addition, to add more complexity to the character and nature of the conflict and civil war in Syria, there have been tension, fighting and combat between these foreign Salafi Jihadist and Islamist groups, and other Syrian rebel groups including secular groups (such as the Free Syrian Army), moderate Islam groups, the socialists, the ethnic groups, and the domestic Islamist groups. In addition, even within the foreign rebel groups - the Salafist, Jihadist, and radical Islamists parties- there have been clashes and disagreements as well.

One example included the clash as well as dispute between Al Qaeda, led by Ayman Al Zawaheri and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - which is operating in Syria, and has become more organized, coordinated, empowered, recruited more people, and utilized the porous border between Iraq and Syria to capture territories in Iraq as well, such as the city of Mosul with over one million people.

More fundamentally, it is critical to point out that these four concentric circles of tensions, stalemates and confrontations – which are simultaneously shaping and defining the character, nature, scope, intensity, duration, and violence, of the conflict and civil war in Syria – should not be studied, and perceived from an isolationistic perspective. The domestic, regional, global Jihad threat, and international dimension ought not be analyzed as being separate from each other.

These four concentric forces of tensions, stalemates and confrontations – including the state actors and non state actors - do interact and interplay with each other, and create unintended consequences and excesses such as radicalization and militarization

of the conflict. As a result, these interactions, contradictions and excesses between these four concentric forces of tensions - direct and shape the character, the nature, the scope, the intensity, violence and duration of the conflict and civil war in Syria.

While it appears that it would have been easier to resolve the conflict, in Syria at the beginning of its inception- due to the fact that there were less state and non state actors involved in the fighting, and it's financing, and less antagonism between groups due to the lower level of violence, death toll, and flow of refugees- the resolution of the conflict and civil war in Syria appears to be unfeasible and impractical at this time. Based on the case study of the conflict and its unique character, and complexity, the civil war will more likely to continue for years to come unless several developments occur.

Currently, the most feasible resolution is to conduct a joint military intervention- under the United Nations banner- to significantly shift the balance of power in Syria in favor of the Assad's government or the rebels. Secondly, the forces need to remain in Syria for a while to stabilize the country and eliminate excesses of militant or government forces in the post-conflict era. This development should be part of a comprehensive plan for nation-state rebuilding in Syria. If the conflict is not halted by this approach, the rise of extremists groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant would ratchet up destabilizing the whole region and turning it into a conflagration. There is no wait and see policy for such a complicated domestic conflict.

Other less feasible resolutions are the following. The second potential development is that all the aforementioned powerful and influential forces in the four concentric circles

of tensions (including the state and domestic and regional, and foreign non state actors) are brought to the negotiating table. If this happens, their strategic, geopolitical, geo economic, as well as their ideological interests, objectives, missions, and visions will be addressed with the possibility of compromises from the various groups. This possibility is also likely to occur because the level of antagonism between the rebel groups which are fighting with each other is high, and many parties do not recognize the other ones, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, their Western allies on the one hand, and the Salafist Jihadist armed rebel groups on the other hand, in addition to the Syrian government and some rebel groups as well as Syrian opposition groups in exile.

On the regional level, an example would be the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the one hand, and Arab states in the Gulf on the other hand, (the Arab states protested the United Nations' Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon's invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Geneva peace talks and conference). The United Nations' Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon had to ultimately withdraw the invitation due to the pressure from the United States, the Western allies and Arab states in the Gulf particularly, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Nevertheless, the first option is more practical, realistic and pragmatic: a robust direct military intervention which would tip the balance of power domestically in favor of one party – either President al-Assad and the Syrian government or the various Syrian and foreign rebel groups which are attempting to overthrow the Syrian government. In addition, and more importantly, this formidable direct military intervention should be followed by complete control of the whole country and have the capability of quelling

any violence or rebel groups. Based on the case study of the civil war in Syria, this option is also less likely to occur anytime soon unless a dramatic development – such a massacre of 100,000 people occur in an single incident – or illegal tools such as chemical weapons are imported to Syria and used on a very large scale.

In addition, there is currently no player or alliance of states that would take such a commitment (economically, security, morally and politically) to carry out direct military intervention and take control of the country until security and peace is completely established. Furthermore, such direct military intervention should be based on legitimate tools, platforms and international consensus, which makes it less likely to occur any time in the near future. Failure could risk larger regional and international confrontation leading to a potential regional war and possibly affecting the global economy and oil market.

The conflict and civil war in Syria is more likely to persist – while the death toll will continue to grow, the killings and slaughter of innocent men, women, children, the violence, rapes, tortures, and the tragic human rights violations of our generation will continue to escalate. This might lead to years and years of civil war, violence, and suffering. If direct military intervention is not carried out, other options for the outcome might be the creation of smaller statelets, where various ethnic and religious groups (the Alawites, Christians, Druze, Kurds, etc) will take control of their territories; such as the Alawite community and President al-Assad, and the ruling Alawite political party setting up a state in the port city of Latakia where majority of the population are from the Alawite religion.

Nevertheless, the other complexity is that many religious and ethnic groups such as the Assyrians are scattered and dispersed through several parts of Syria. This makes it more challenging to establish a small state for these scattered and dispersed religious communities. In addition, the regional, international, foreign Jihadist Salfist rebel groups might resist the creation of smaller autonomous states, and some will continue to resort to violence even if smaller states are established.

The final scenario is that a coup d'état occurs in the political structure, of the ruling political party, and the old Syrian guard of Hafez al-Assad, father of Bashar al-Assad, in particular, believe that they are on the verge of collapse and will encounter severe repercussions. Nevertheless, this will not halt the violence, and civil war, and the multilayered, multi faceted dimension and activities of thousands of rebel groups along with regional and international state actors who are intervening in Syria politically, economically, and financially, in order to preserve their own strategic, geopolitical, geo economic, security, and national interests.

The last option from a humanitarian and moral perspective would be to establish more humanitarian corridors. However, the international community and the United Nations are already encountering budget shortcomings to address the sufferings of the Syrian refugees. In addition, as long as the conflict persists, the number of refugees and displaced people will continue making it much more difficult to manage and control. Other humanitarian approach is that various state and non state actors avoid exacerbating the scope, intensity, violence, and lengthening the duration of the civil war in Syria by halting their financial, political, diplomatic, training, intelligence, and

security assistance to any party in the civil war which resorts to violence to achieve its political, ideological, power, economic, geopolitical, and religious objectives. This scenario is less likely to happen due to the character of the nation state system and due to the reality that governments around the world are rational actors, realistically goal oriented, and invested in preserving their own national, strategic, geopolitical, geo economic, security, intelligence and national interests. Unfortunately, the issues of human rights cannot be found in the top agenda of the any nation-state's foreign policy; instead strategic, geopolitical, economic, balance of power, security, intelligence and national interests continue to supersede the human rights.

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