Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

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Proxy Conflict Turned Civil Crisis: Understanding Syrian Political Movements to United States Foreign Policy

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Abstract

The Syrian crisis in terms of its crimes against humanity has surpassed most politicians' wildest expectations: it seems that with every passing news cycle the west is informed of new atrocities commited against innocent Syrian civilians, in addition to violence perpetrated by Syrian Islamists themselves against westerners in ill-advised cries for help. The extent of bloodshed can be both horrifying and mystifying to the average American. How is it possible that the international community allows these crimes to proliferate and self-perpetuate in this modern day-in-age? Hearts sink with every image of a child in dire straights as a result of this man-made catastrophe, with more organizations donating to the Syrian plight than ever before; however, westerners to a very valid extent are starting to believe that they are throwing pennies down an endless abyss of despair and irrepaiable damage to the Syrian people, political system and urban fabric. Even relatively uninformed Americans are becoming more engaged in political proceses as a result of the terror and destruction witnessed in left and right-leaning media alike. We now find ourselves in a place where we identify with each other through an intersectional humanity: a deep and unrelenting search for answers and relief in an impossible crisis. What possibly could have caused such deep distress between Syrians, their government, Islamist organizations and international actors alike that caused the situation to devolve to such bloodshed? To what extent are superpowers really contributing to the reparation of the Syrian quandary, and perhaps more importantly, to what extent are superpowers responsible for this state of affairs?

In a sense, it can be difficult to objectively point a finger at one's self for another human's pain, let alone an entire nationality. For this reason, this capstone will employ a strict methodology of historical, case study analysis to understand varying view-points in what epitomizes a mutli-faceted conflict. Through the collection of these various threads of research, from Arab and American authors alike, we begin to decipher overlapping historical narratives that share a story of unique, complex interconnections in policy applications of the United States towards the Arab world as a result of dogmatic developments that determine a web of superpower diplomacy applied with respect to one another, as well as various political pawns throughout the developing world. In the case of Syria as a case study, we see that the dogmatic developments between the United States and the French, Soviets and Saudis not only dictated their own relations, but truly molded political discourse with respect to Syria and their own domestic revalations.

Since the fall of the Ottoman era and the conception of Syria, the United States has formed Syrian international and domestic policies through its proxy relationships with France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia. These relations, categorized by three eras of American foreign policy, correspond closely with the development of the Syrian crisis in a narrative that depicts it as a situation over a century in the making. The various evidence, either in the form of testimonials, policy decisions and legislation alike, can begin to offer Americans some insight into the way the United States has failed the Syrian people, and more optimistically, point to opportunities for productive engagement. As painful as these stories may be, they are crucial to the development of superpower diplomacy towards Syria, as well as developing nations in the Arab world and developing nations alike to prevent a crisis like this from forming again as a result of short-sighted strategy.

Executive Summary

One of the blaring difficulties of the Syrian civil crisis is the complex nature of its various interwoven proxy-relationships with respect to world powers and developing nations alike. This can paint a convoluted picture for non-expert and expert audiences alike, and for this reason the capstone includes an executive summary to define the project in terms that work towards clarifying the problem, variables, description, methods, argument and significance of the project.

The problem we witness today with respect to the Syrian civil crisis is that we struggle to identify an objective set of variables that explain the unusual extent of complexity and suffering on the part of Syrians as a result of proxy superpower conflict. In this case, we will identify superpowers as the former Soviet Union (Russia), United States, France, Britain, Saudi Arabia, etc. In many cases the author will reference western nations, which will not include the Soviet Union for the sake of clarity, as the Soviet Union mainly stood at odds with other broadly defined western nations during the Cold War period, as well as the decades immediately preceeding and proceeding this era encapsulated by the first and third constructed historical narratives. In order to construct the three narratives, we will distill our analysis to include the comparison of one superpower with repsect to its counterparts: in this case, the United States. The United State's foreign relationships with superpowers will be described with respect to three dogmatic periods, relating to theories of [1] Wilsonian initiative with respect to democratizing nations, [2] Cold War Policy, more specitifically anti-communist proliferation rising out of the Soviet Union, and [3] the self-described war on globalizing terror perpetrated by Islamist groups. The United States narratives will be described with respect to the revelations of Syrian politics, notably periods that correspond very closely with the three foreign policy initiatives employed by the United States. The description of the application of these three theories with respect to

Syrian domestic and international politics will help us understand how Syria came to witness a cycle of [1] the rise of nationalist (Wilsonian) sentiment, [2] the rise of (anti-communist) Islamic policy and Islamist movements within Syria, and [3] the fall of and branded Islamic regime and fight against Islamist movements that would tear the country apart. Readers will begin to understand how the connections between American dogmatic movements and its reprecussions on Syria do not simply cancel each other out; they work to tear down the developing country with every practical development they seem to accomplish.

Understanding these entanglements allows readers to understand the various missteps that world powers, in this case the United States with respect to its peers, took to rectify various western political ailments at the expense of developing nations, particularly Syria. Debate surrounding the causes of the Syrian crisis is relatively polarized and defined by democratic and republican rhetoric in the American media; however, Americans are beginning to identify with the idea that the destruction of Syria was not self-inflicted, but rather the working of various international forces at odds with one another on a proxy platform that happened to be identified as the underdeveloped, and therefore politically malleable Arab country. The issue of understanding the roots of Syrian conflict is not at its heart a democratic or republican issue: it finds its roots in decades' and even centuries' old political missteps that came to define the unapproachable and devolving state of United States diplomacy with respect to Syria. In order to understand the ways in which the United States can move forward to mediate the situation and begin true reparations, we must find it within our superiority complex to seize the opportunity to self-reflect on our destructive proxy policies and open new pathways towards peaceful negotiation and resolution. Innocent Syrians will not have the opportunity to look towards a brighter future until we take it upon ourselves to identify the missteps crushing their future.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

The inhumanity we are witnessing in the Syrian civil war is not only appalling, but arguably perplexing; it is easily the deadliest conflict witnessed of the 21ˢᵗ century thus far, resulting in more than 250,000 Syrian deaths and the largest humanitarian crisis in recent memory. Aleppo, headlining with images of daily destruction and bombardment, has become symbolic of the Syrian plight. To the children born at the war's conception, war has molded and reduced formative playtime to games of taking strategic shelter among the debris of decimated city blocks. The images leave citizens of all nationalities and creeds wondering how such violence-reminiscent of an arcane, barbaric warfare- came to be in a global political climate which promises to prosecute such brazen human rights violations.

As the problem grows with multiplying death tolls and displacement statistics, we are facing growing questions regarding the proper political approaches to housing, educating, and putting Syrian immigrants back to work in foreign nations. Despite the severity of these political, economic and social ramifications of the civil war, we seem to be creeping increasingly further away from brokering a political deal between all sides. Between complex relations Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United States, Turkey, Iran, The Syrian Government, Russia, ISIS, Rebel groups and the Kurds, we are witnessing a complex net of political conflict ranging from support, territorial interests, defense, avoidance of conflicts, and fighting terrorism (Peck). With the plethora of political groups and actors all fighting for different goals and stakes in the region, it is becoming increasingly difficult to operationalize a diplomatic solution appropriately for all parties involved. Considering all the suffering this impasse has caused, we as major foreign actors can begin to question: how has the United States impacted the trajectory and ultimate political instability of the Syrian State? How can we correlate the rise, evolution and eventual decay of the Syrian State to our own policy objectives? Taking a fresh look at these episodes in the

historical narrative of foreign policy can begin to uncover these evolving entanglements, and provide glimpses into how policy can begin to repair the Syrian humanity that has been so violently taken away from these civilians.

Argument and Theory

Existing references cover three broad time periods of international policy with respect to Syria. These may be defined as [1] The rise of the state, hereafter described as the Wilsonian era, wherein every nation is entitled to have its own state helped which effectively facilitated the independent state of Syria, [2] the fight against communism and the effective transition of Syria to a more plural polity, and [3] the fight against terror, including the global war against terrorism leading to the decay and collapse of the Syrian state.

The rise of the Wilsonian era describes the United States foreign policy claiming that every country is entitled to having its own state, in this case referencing the various ways the west has helped and facilitated the independent state of Syria. This project will explore whether the United States pressured France to get out of Syria, and whether the United States supported the Syrian independence movement through diplomatic engagement with the French.

The fight against communism, more specifically referencing the United States' attempt to prevent the transition of Syria to a more plural polity, describes the rise and containment of the Ba'athist regime. It also describes a Strong authoritarian stance that was not necessarily present in Wilsonian foreign policy with respect to Syria, which rails against the idea of a democratic Left leaning state. This notably also references the era in which the United States evolved its stance to support a nationalist, rather than Pan Arabist, state of Syria in stark contrast with the United Arab Republic. The era is capstoned by the 1961 coup, ending the United Arab republic through supplying arms and countering the allure of Syria maintaining economic relations with Egypt and Russia as a strategy for combating communist proliferation in the region.

This period has also historically been described as the democratization and secularization of Syria, marked by the conception of the Truman Doctrine, first announced to congress by the president on March 12th, 1947. This milestone of US foreign policy is traditionally referred to as the end of Truman's hallmark isolationist doctrine, as it pledged American support for nations threatened by Soviet communism (Beschloss). This period also marks the approximate time of Syria's rise to the global stage of foreign policy. Though official United States-Syrian relations

began in 1835 when the United States first appointed the US consuls to Aleppo which was then a part of the Ottoman Empire, we may consider the United States recognition of an independent Syria on September 7, 1946 (Syrian Embassy) to be the onset of significant foreign interest for the purposes of this project. Shortly after the conception of these relations the United States would engage in what would come to be coined the "revolving door" governments of 1949-1958. Through a series of covert operations, the United States would effectively remove pro-Soviet or otherwise moderate governments and replace them with pro-US figures. This series of events would lead to a politically unstable Syria for a nine-year duration. After this tumultuous series of political turnover, the Ba'ath party rose to power and Hafez al-Assad secured his dominion over Syria. The Hafez al Assad presidency, hallmarked by the secularized nature of his rein, would remain among the most important figures in Syrian history in securing an Arab Nationalist identity and unifying Syria despite years of political turnover instigated by the west.

As Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union would rise between the years of 1957 and the early years of Bashar al-Assad's rein, we come to observe the western reintroduction of theocratic aspirations in the Arab world, as Islam would become a combative force against Soviet communist aggression in this region. During these years, United States policy with respect to Syria would devolve from covert militaristic movements to a more overt militarism and diplomacy. On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower would promise military or economic aid to any Middle Eastern country needing help in resisting communist aggression. Although this represents no real change in diplomacy, as Truman had pledged the same support to Greece and Turkey ten years prior, it would mark the status of the United States response to the Soviet infiltration of arms through Egypt and increasingly strong communist support among the Arab states against an Israeli, French and British attack on Egypt in October 1956 (Britannica). This additional proclamation would state that, with the approval of Congress, President Eisenhower would use military forces to protect the independence of any Middle Eastern country seeking American help. While the ultimate goal of containing or resisting any extension of the Soviet sphere of influence would come to be regarded as a failure, president Eisenhower would also take non-militaristic measures to grow and Islamist revival through the Omega Memorandum. This document, a secret initiative drafted by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles for President Eisenhower, aimed to reduce the influence in the Middle East of Nasser, who at the time seemed to be leaning towards favoring the Soviet Union. It is also seen

as an opportunity to promote King Saud as the dominant Arab Leader (Kyle). By taking steps to promote Islamism through the means of setting up massive networks of charity and good works, the installation of the World Muslim League, uniting various regional powers under the Organization of Islamic Conference, and creating an Islamic financial system that tied several Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries to the oil rich nations (Kumar), King Saud was to be seen as the "Islamic Pope" who would combat a growing subscription to Marxist values through an anti-secular lens. After the death of Hafez al Assad and his older brother, Bashar would begin to adopt Islamism as a primary characteristic of his rein, and though himself an Alawite, would use pro-Islamic propaganda to attempt to unite a religiously diverse country around the wave of newfound theocratic aspirations established by the United States. However, we will find that as this pseudo-Islamic identity failed to gain traction as a unifying identity under Bashar's rein, the country would begin to devolve into a series of factionalist conflicts and demonstrations.

In referencing the current state of affairs, coined by politicians as "the global war against terrorism," characterizes Syria as a decaying and failing, though not entirely obliterated, state of the Syrian regime. The broadcast purpose of these transgressions has been to prevent a safe haven for terrorist groups in the Levant region, though in doing this the United States has tacitly allowed the Syrian state to survive, though perhaps more meaningfully, erode while avoiding complete collapse.

Syria's modern civil strife can be traced back to these short-sighted United States foreign policy missteps with respect to the region. Today, we witness a divided Syrian public that would grow both increasingly anti-Bashar and anti-American, and as these competing interests grow increasingly destructive and violent in their demonstration, we see movements towards radical Islamist groups that promise to remedy this devolved state of affairs perpetrated by foreign interests. We may even begin to link the interest in Islamist political groups to the positive frameworks they have to offer Syrians and the greater Arab region in order to understand the foreign pathways that have caused this dissolution of Syrian domestic politics.

Within each of these chronological eras of Syrian political discourse we can begin to frame research according to the following proposed theory, as a way to pinpoint the ways that we might begin to link foreign factors to civil war. This argument may be summed up in the arrow

diagram below, theorizing the mechanisms causing domestic civil unrest in the country as a result of foreign interventionism, leading to the "proxy state" status we see today:

The observed Proxy State Status Theory:

The United Stated global foreign policy, especially with respect to Middle Eastern relations and Syria → The mechanisms the United States has used to both directly and indirectly influence the trajectory of Syria, in both diplomatic and covert fashions → Eras of Syrian state issues that deeply coincide with the United States' and other global power foreign policy initiatives

It is useful to outline critical points and events described in the theory, to guide the study of existing scholarship on these events:

Independent variable: United States global foreign policy, especially with respect to Middle Eastern relations and Syria

The independent variable can be described in terms of the three eras of United States foreign policy aforementioned, including [1] The Rise of the State, referred to as Wilsonian foreign policy, in which the United States supported Syrian independent statehood, [2] The fight against communist proliferation, especially in susceptible Middle Eastern states like Syria, and [3] The fight against global terror, including the global war against terrorism in Levant and specifically Syria.

Mechanisms, or pathways, linking the independent variable to the dependent variable described below: The mechanisms the United States has used to both directly and indirectly influence the trajectory of Syria, in both diplomatic and covert fashions

This term includes pressuring France into recognizing an independent state of Syria, the revolving door governments of 1949-1955 continuously displaced by United States and Soviet governments, Cold War and Eisenhower doctrine with respect to Syrian relations, the Omega Memorandum with respect to Syria, US involvement in democratic uprisings, and 21st century diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia with respect to Syria.

Dependent Variable: Eras of Syrian state issues that deeply coincide with United States and other global power foreign policy initiatives

This is including [1] Syrian claiming its independence from France, [2] The prevention of the transition of Syria to a more plural policy despite regional forces supporting a natural transition to a more leftist state, causing a teetering state and an excessive number of political transitions within short periods of time, and [3] the Syrian state's erosion, though barely avoiding a collapse thus far.

Foreign interventionism fundamentally changed the social and political structure of Syria, causing economic dependencies on faltering Soviet markets, a distrust of western foreign policy and a social identity crisis. As a result of these factors acting in tandem, we see mass mobilization tendencies towards Islamist political movements, providing economic relief, independence from a questionable western agenda, and a renewed cultural identity for Syrians.

Three Historical Narratives

It is useful to understand existing scholarship on the topic through studying these texts in terms of the frameworks outlined above, while chronologically following the conception foreign relations between the United States and Syria and focusing study on the political eras, outlined as [1] Wilsonian diplomacy era, [2] Fight against communist proliferation and, [3] the fight against global terror. Though there lacks an academic discourse unifying historical tendency towards understanding the ramifications of short-sighted foreign policy on civil war, we can use existing literature to begin to string together domestic political mobilization forces in opposition to one or more domestic Syrian political groups.

Chapter 2

Historical Narrative I: Wilsonian Diplomacy in Syria

Wilsonian diplomacy describes a period of United States foreign relations and tactical diplomacy, introduced by American President Wilson, which supports the theory of every nation's entitlement to self-proclaimed statehood. The Wilsonian era corresponds with the demise and partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, with Greater Syrian territories falling under French command. Despite their attempts at appeasing Syrian calls for independence from the French, the state proved to be a bear beyond its logistical value of maintaining and controlling the colony as an unsubmissive entity. To understand what role Wilsonian diplomacy would take to combat French colonialist amibtions, we need to understand the fine line the American took between supporting Syria's nationalist ambitions without outwardly meddling in the Franco-British disputes that took place over the importance of retaining dominance over Syrian grounds. Although this period would typically be characterized by relative isolationism on the part of United States foreign policies, there is narrative evidence to show American dipomats did have, at the very least, a role in the theoretical dealings that took place during the French emancipation of Syria.

<u>**French Divide and Rule**</u>

Our first narrative positions itself immediately proceeding World War One, where Syrian territories, for the first time in over 400 years, were forced to acknowledge their instability with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The fall of the Ottoman Empire would have dire consequences for the Middle East as it were, as it had now lost any kind of protection against European rule. When the Allied powers advanced into Syria, they lacked any definitive territorial boarder, and would for some time adopt the title of "Greater Syria" as it adopted a number of Ottoman administrative divisions. However, closely following the Allied Powers' initial occupation, the state began to settle on a final arrangement, which would come to be

defined by a boundary running approximately midway through Syria from east to west, dividing the rectangular settlement into two halves. Great Britain would be assigned the southern part, called Palestine, while the northern part, called Syria and Lebanon, would be assigned to France. Syria would further be further subdivided into five parts, [1] Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, and Tripoli, [2] The State of Syria, including Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus, [3] The mountainous region of the Jabal al-Druze, with Suaida as the principal town, [5] The Sanjak of Latakia, with Latakia as its principal down, and [5] Sanjak of Alexandretta, in theory part of Syria, but in practice separate and subject to a special autonomous form of government. The ramifications of these divisions, drawn arbitrarily based on geographical markers rather than socially conscious design, would be analyzed and disputed for the next century. Ayse Tekdal Fildis, writing for the Middle East Policy Council, writes extensively about the ramifications of these divisions in her Journal Essay, "The Troubles in Syria: Spawned by French Divide and Rule," priming us for understanding the various philosophical contradictions that would ensue after this series of these Euro-centric-colonialist, haphazard decisions.

These former Ottoman provinces would be split into sections referred to as mandates, where new mandates would be granted conditionally directly supervised by a third party, the League of Nations. In subsequent years, these peoples would be further subjectively and artificially divided, and the mandatory powers of Britain and France would delineate the desert borderlines and common boundaries. In the case of Syria, the French pushed even more by establishing semi-autonomous local governments within the greater Syrian national polity. The author describes, "While the Allied Powers gathered in Paris to sort out their conflicting interests, Amir Faysal Ibn Husayni, field commander of the Arab revolt, was forming an independent Arab government in Damascus, General Sir Edmund Allenby, supreme commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, had allowed Faysal to administer Syrian affairs from Damascus," (Fildis). Amir Faysal would claim an "independent Arab constitutional government with authority over all Syria" and instated a Damascus Syrian Congress which would enact his legitimate kingship over united Syria. Britain and France both were threatened by the proclamation of Faysal as king, France faced with the decision to either bring Faysal's government under French control or break it militarily, while Britain was faced with Faysal's claims to Palestine and Lebanon, in addition to demanding independence from Mesopotamia. To the British, Syrian nationalism could not be allowed to disorder British control over Palestine

and Mesopotamia, and therefore British Foreign Secretary Lord George Nathaniel Curzon and Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, Philippe Berthelot agreed on terms of a joint declaration condemning Faysal's action. Fildis writes, "In October, Faysal was called to London and told to settle with France on the best terms he could obtain. To make sure he did so, the British government cut his month subsidy by half, leaving France to pay the other half. Under pressure from the British, Faysal arrived in Paris on October 20 for a discussion with Premier Goerge Clemenceau," (Fildis). Despite this initiative, on January 6, 1920, it was secretly agreed that France would recognize the partial independence of Syria and Faysal as king if Syria remained under French control and influence. This agreement, defined by the Paris Peace Conference, would be established at the San Remo Conference (Fildis). The author describes, "Syria was to accept the French mandate, thus relying entirely on French military and economic help; furthermore, France would control Syria's foreign policy. Additionally, Syria had to recognize the independence of Lebanon under the French mandate. Their agreement allowed Amir Faysal to rule an independent Syria over which France would exercise only a loose trusteeship. From the point of view of Clemenceau, these were generous terms: "No other French politician would have agreed to let Arab Syria retain a certain measure of independence or offered to let the pro-British Faysal remain in Damascus, let alone as Syria's monarch,'" (Fildis). These terms would leave Syria pacified, albeit for a brief moment until a far more interventionist government of Alexandre Millerand replaced Clemenceau. Millerand stood in stark contrast with his predecessor in that he would dedicate careful consideration to French policy in the Levant and would be directly involved in its design. The friendly relations between Faysal and France would come to a screeching stand-still, and the king was forced to abandon his confidential deal. Faysal's followers were mostly members of the Party of Arab Independence, Hizb al-istiqlal al-Arabi, set up by al-Fatat and by then in control of the Syrian Congress (Fildis). At this point, Faysal was no longer in a position to resolve Syria's destiny by himself, where Al-Fatat demanded he call back the Syrian Congress. "On March 7, 1920, the congress declared the unconditional independence of Syria. The following day Faysal was reluctantly declared king of the "United Syrian Kingdom," which was to include Palestine and Lebanon and reject a Jewish national home in Palestine. An official Syrian government was immediately set up in Damascus.The convocation of the Syrian Congress in Damascus and the coronation of Faysal began a new phase in the deteriorating relations between France and the king. Millerand declared

the congressional resolution to be "null and void" and refused to recognize Faysal as king of Syria," (Fildis). This would mark a pivotal moment in the Middle Eastern history, as shortly after in the San Remo Conference of April 1920, the content of the mandates was jointly decided by France and Britain, awarding France the mandate for Lebanon and Syria, and Great Britain the mandate for Palestine and Iraq. France would relinquish Palestine and Mosul to the British, acquiring just 25 percent share of Mosul's oil. This way, France could now contemplate war against Faysal without having to worry about British intervention. "For the French, the most important result of San Remo was to clear the way for a final settlement with Faysal. France now had the diplomatic, if not yet the military, means to impose terms on Faysal. The unilateral British decision to evacuate their army from Syria at the end of 1919 had already undermined Faysal's position. Once the mandates had been assigned, Britain had to accept that the French were free to act in their zone, as the British were in theirs. Planning for the campaign against Faysal could now begin. On June 29, the British government was told of the coming offensive and warned not to meddle," (Fildis). It is to no surprise that the pronouncement of San Remo would anger Arab nationalists, who would support defiance of the Allied Powers and would pressure Faysal to do the same. However, others advised him to find a way to compromise with the French and meet their demands while still preserving the Syrian kingdom. Uncertain about which of these two strategies to follow, he would open negotiations with the French commander-in-chief, which lead to an ultimatum that included five demands to be accepted or rejected as a whole within four days. These five demands listed as follows:

(1) Unconditional acceptance of the French mandate (Fildis)

(2) Acceptance of the French Syrian paper money based on the franc (Fildis)

(3) Abolition of conscription and reduction of the army to the numbers on December 1, 1919 (Fildis)

(4) French military occupation of the railway and stations from Riyaq to Aleppo (Fildis)

(5) Punishment of persons implicated in hostile acts against the French (Fildis)

Despite Faysal's principled and unconditional acceptance, commander-in-chief Gouraud was ordered not to negotiate and disregard this coming to terms. The French went ahead with their decision to acquire Syria, and on July 26, 1920, they seized Damascus, toppling Faysa's nationalist government. Despite being sent to exile, he was reinstated in the British mandate of Iraq just one short year later. The author explains that this act was out of a nagging sense of

responsibility toward Faysal on the part of British officials who felt Faysal should be compensated for his wartime activities, and felt that he had learned a valuable lesson in Syria that would make him the ideal candidate for ruling Iraq. This lesson was understanding the limits of Arab nationalism and Europe's superior strength.

France would continue to follow a policy of divide and rule, arbitrarily dividing territories along regional and ethnic lines, causing an increasingly hostile native resistance. Arab nationalism, developed mainly by the Sunni Muslim community, was seen by the French as a threat to their authority, as well as to the Christian and heterodox Muslim communities. "In stressing communal differences and aspirations, they claimed to be bowing to political reality and popular feeling. However, their perception of political reality conveniently fit the French desire to weaken pan-Syrian reaction and Arab nationalism and to reinforce their rule by courting potentially Francophile minorities. The only cordial welcome extended to the French from the Muslim community was from those urban notables who had been pushed aside by nationalist forces during the Faysal period," (Fildis). This was, however, a predicable consequence. Robert de Caix, principal designer of French strategy in Syria preceding and throughout World War I, was famously against the formation of a united Syrian state in the area that endured subsequent the conception of an isolated Lebanese state. He believed it would have Muslim and Arab alignment that would be antagonistic to the French and would venture a risky influence on French North Africa. "He advocated the creation of small states, reflecting the country's regional and ethnic diversity. The territory of Geographical Syria was predominantly Arab, and among the Arabs pan-Arab nationalism held sway. General Gouraud, the first high commissioner, and his influential aide de Caix sought to take advantage of the local and communal particularisms in order to break Syria up and reshape it gradually to their liking," (Fildis). Despite this warning, in 1920, France carved out a series of separate political unites, designed to obstruct the progress of the Syrian national identity. The two separate states of Aleppo and Damascus took shape, including the districts of Homs and Hama. These states were ruled by a local governor supported by a French Advisor. France would further its efforts towards political fragmentation by stressing the distinctiveness of Syria's two regionally compact minority groups, the Alawites and the Druze. These two groups were governmentally separate from Syria until 1942, and despite the variety of administration in Syria's outlying areas, Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo enjoyed consistency under a single government. However, nationalist pressure and expenses forced

France to unite Damascus and Aleppo, and the French would continue to hold onto their policy of political isolationism to combat any nationalist proliferation taking place. "The Alawite and Jabal al-Druze territories were kept in shifting degrees of administrative isolation and political insulation from these centers for the better part of France's tenure in Syria. "French policy was clear: if the mandate authority could not break the back of the nationalist movement, the next best alternative was to contain it in its heartland," (Fildis). This strategy would help define the extent of the nationalist movement during much of the mandate era. The French managed this by hindering the nationalist movement from contaminating the minority-inhabited areas and to cut its ties to the urban nationalist opposition to the peripheral regions. Through this strategy, the Syrian nationalist movement encountered great difficulties in expanding the core of its activities beyond its home bases of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs.

The mandate system in itself would prove to be little more than nineteenth-century imperialism sporting the façade of self-determination, which at this point in time was the philosophically correct channel through which to engage in foreign affairs. Fildis offers an interesting perspective on this repackaged form of colonialism. The author describes, "According to the principle of the mandate, an "advanced" state was going to tutor a less-advanced state in the complexities of democratic self-government until it was ready to rule itself. Imperial domination was formally qualified to provide for eventual full independence. It was perceived as a liberal concept that covered and "legitimized" outright imperial control. In contrast to a colony or protectorate, the mandate was officially a provisional arrangement, although its length was unspecified," (Fildis). In order to achieve this, the Ottoman empire would be carved up into mandates, where the mandatory powers of Britain in Iraq and Palestine, and France in Syria and Lebanon, would merely provide "administrative advice and assistance" to the peoples soon to be granted self-government in theory. However, these mandates in the Middle Easter were established in spite of the local populations' clear preference for independence, and in the cases of Syria and Lebanon, their deep-rooted objection to the assignment of the mandate to France. The author cites Article I of the Mandate Act for Syria and Lebanon, which states, "The Mandatory shall frame, within a period of three years from the coming into force of this mandate, an organic law for Syria and Lebanon. This organic law shall be framed in agreement with the native authorities and shall take into account the rights, interests and wishes of all the population inhabiting the said territory. The mandatory shall further enact measures to facilitate

the progressive development of Syria and Lebanon as independent states. Pending the coming into effect of the organic law, the Government of Syria and the Lebanon shall be conducted in accordance with the spirit of this mandate. The Mandatory shall, as far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy," (Fildis). Despite the clear altruistic framing of this article, Millerand makes it clear that the reality was different from the theory. He describes, "In assuming the mandate in Syria, France has not attempted to create a new colony but to maintain a century-old situation necessary for her place in the Mediterranean; she [France] wishes to ensure her influence there...," (Fildis). This reality was made possible because the obligations of the mandate outlined in this article meant very little in practice. The French would continue to regard Middle Eastern mandates as imperial positions, and did so without the observing the spirit of Article I. In fact, no organic law was established within the allotted three-year period from the initiation of the mandate on September 29, 1923, and in September 1926, the Supreme Council of the League of nations had, for the third time, agreed to France's request for a further six-month delay. After this period passed, France officially asked the council to grant a further delay of unspecified length, alleging the antagonism among diverse communities who wished to be political autonomous made fulfillment of this obligation impossible for the time being.

The author concludes by reinforcing the position that the arrangements imposed by the French under the mandate went wrong from the start. Beginning with the policy of division, it had become an integral competent to the original French approach to the mandate. Not only was France there for the sole strategic, economic and ideological purposes of colonialism, the French made relatively limited efforts to endorse or advance the formal liberation of Syria. In reality, they bargained for years over the terms of an independence treaty and ultimately had to be required by the British to relinquish without a treaty in 1946. France did little to train native representatives with secondary custodies and forced an artificial and idealistic separation between the diverse components of Syria, and above all, failed to give Syria appropriate training for responsible self-government. The many re-divisions of Syria over a quarter century would hinder the progress of a united organizational elite, where the product was that Syria arose after 1945 as a unitary state with very limited practice in unity. The legacy of the French mandate would therefore almost guarantee Syria's future political instability for decades to come.

The French Mandate in American Politics

The United States was, at best, perplexed by France's seemingly misguided focus on holding Syrian territory as it struggles to ward off more significant political issues on a domestic front and abroad; a newspaper article entitled, "French Mandate in Syria is not Popular, Declares Earle at Radcliffe Conference," from 1926 begins to capture some of this confused, at times even aggravated sentiment as Americans struggle to understand why France continues to insist on maintaining their hold on a region that has repeatedly revolted against their colonialist paternity. According to the author's reporting, Americans, whether intellectuals, students or otherwise, were aware of the Syrian civilian upheavals, to the extent that they were concerned enough to speak to these issues. They write, "France is having trouble with the administration of her mandatory in Syria solely because the Syrians do not want the French in their country,' declared Professor Edward Mead Earle, head of the Department of History at Barnard college, in his address before the second meeting of the conference of the Massachusetts League of Women Voters' School of Politics, on Foreign affairs held in Agassiz House yesterday," (Crimson, 1926). Professor Earle, he explains, was also formerly Professor of History at Columbia University, and at the time maintained his position as one of the youngest authoritative students in the United States of the Near East. By spending several months traveling in the region, he had become thoroughly aware of the popular situation arising in the country. He describes, "The results of a recent plebiscite taken after the Damascus bombardment during which the French army drove out the Syrian government…showed that 85 percent of the people wished an independent government. Their second choice was for a United States mandate and third choice was for the British," (Crimson, 1926). These polls would come to reflect an unparalleled level of trust for the United States, despite its first choice in maintaining an independent government weighing in at an impressive 85 percent. Despite the near unanimity in opposition to the French mandate, the League held no power to change it. The only remedy for the situation would be a voluntary French withdrawal or its forceful expulsion of the country occupied.

This article again begins to address an important question that arises from these issues: where does this steadfast interest in Syrian occupation come from, despite the Syrian civilian populations consistent and bloody revolts against their presence? The author explains that the interest is hardly tactless or commercialistic, but rather the result of a long existing and sentimental tradition. In short, the interest is a cultural one. The author writes, "Now that the

French are in Syria they can find hundreds of reasons for not leaving. The saying is often heard nowadays, 'we can not scuttle' not only by the French but by the Americans and British as well. The French attachment to Syria is largely a cultural one that extends back beyond Napoleon's empire. French is the cultural language of Syria, the greatest universities and schools are French, and there is the additional religious interest which French Roman Catholics have in their many Syrian churches and schools which holds France in a country where she is obviously not wanted," (Crimson, 1926). The apparent interest in maintaining this cultural legacy as a French one has been deeply important to the French since their occupation in 1919, which has sustained in part because of the right of conquest but more importantly due the right of treaty. The author explains that the French had never kept a very large army in Syria and that the majority of the army was composed of native Syrians. The conquest was involved in the bombardment of Damascus, in which the commander of the French army issued an ultimatum to the Syrian government which was answered and given to the French representative in Damascus, who delayed it until the time had expired and the army marched on the city.

As the French have yet to withdraw their forces, the Syrians have taken it upon themselves to invoke the other option: driving out French forces through their own limited military capabilities. Earle reports that since the act, there have been six armed Syrian insurrections, but only one of these received any mention in American newspapers. He describes, "This notice was confined to a small piece in a New York paper saying that American property was endangered and that United States destroyers had sailed to protect it. Three successive French military governors have been sent to Syria, each one worse than his predecessor. Recently the home government realizing its mistake established a civil government," (Crimson, 1926). The author goes on to explain that Professor Earle believes that France is unable to take Syria seriously, and is less able now than any time in her modern history to handle the situation due to having their hands full with their own problems, finance and Riffian troubles which continue to be a living disturbance. In response to this blaring issue, professor Earle would close with two proposed remedies for this situation. "The first is that the League send a Commission of Investigation to Syria to find out the complete details of the Damascus bombardment. Secondly, that a League Commissioner be placed in every mandate to see that the spirit as well as the letter of mandate be observed," (Crimson, 1926). It was made clear to the American people that the significance of these decisions, specifically how the situation evolves after the Locarno treaties,

is of growing importance to domestic prosperity in the post war climate. Professor Hodges, another expert in Near East foreign relations, describes, "The European stabilization crystallizing from the treaties of Locarno…guarantees American prosperity for a generation. These pacts might well be looked upon by the American people as a European insurance policy underwriting the prosperity of the United States: It is the best international promise that the war debts will be liquidated we have, almost as important as the debt settlements themselves to us, and the agreements reached by the seven nations of Europe at Locarno put the political relations of our best customers upon a friendly basis which has not existed since 1914," (Crimson, 1926). Americans have clear economic interests in ending conflict among the allied powers, though France with its colonialist influences in Syria stood in bleak opposition to these contracts of peace. The pacts of Locarno would be known to constitute the close of the era of the great war, including its effects on demobilizing the hates and suspicions of the war itself, the peace of Versailles, and the unhappy post-war days mistakenly called the reconstruction period. Professor Hodges agrees. He writes, "'Any idea that a United Europe is a menace to America….is grotesquely at variance with realities. If the Old World did not get together at Locarno, we would soon be confronted with debt settlements of no value: the collapsing of the most valuable markets open to American business; and the wiping out of the hundreds of millions of dollars our bankers have staked in European stability,'" (Crimson, 1926). Americans clearly had every interest in closing out World War I with the allied powers in financial settlement, and French infringement on Syrian independence was a resounding threat to this balance.

WWI and its Aftermath

Wilson's policies of self-determination have been a common thread of discourse since the conception of the Sykes-Picot agreement, and as the French continued to exploit their Syrian mandate as a colonial possession rather than a project of altruistic self-determination. In preparation for the 1918 peace conference, the main topic of discussion among the British was how to void the Sykes-Picot agreement, that "unfortunate Agreement, which has been hanging like a millstone round our necks," as Curzon put it, and to which "the French seem disposed to adhere most tenaciously," (Lieshout, 330). Robert Lieshout, author of "Britain and the Arab Middle East, World War I and its Aftermath," writes extensively on the ramifications of the

Syke-Picot Agreement and the messy negotiations funneled into the pact to keep it afloat. He describes the opinion of Lord Robert, who claimed that "the French are in an unassailable position. If we cannot induce them in any way to abandon the Agreement, we cannot go back on our signatures," and that this is the only way to make the French change their minds was to get the Americans in on the side of the British (Lieshout, 330). However, the Americans had little incentive to throw their support behind this unless the British had the Ottomans behind them, as "the Americans will only support us if they think we are going in for something in the nature of a native government," (Lieshout, 330). Despite this setback, experts agreed that the United States was the only avenue for getting us out of this impossible situation, and that the best way to achieve this was "to get the Arabs behind us," while General Macdonogh emphasized that he had already suggested in a paper that "the only way in which we could get out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was by a combination of President Wilson and the policy of self-determination.

> During the December 5th discussion of the Eastern Committee on Syria, Curzon declared in his opening statement that "…if we consult our own feelings we should all of us like to get the French out of Syria altogether." Although he did not fail to mention Hirtzel's position that Britain should "back the Frnech at the expense of Feisal; after all, the French are a great Power, and you have to be on good terms with the rest of her in different parts of the world […] see her through the best of your ability, and do not be too much concerned about the Arabs," Curzon clearly favored the opposite policy. He would also question Balfour on whether the proposed policy of backing self-determination in order to get the Americans to put pressure on the French would work.
> "Is it possible that, when we sit down to the Peace Conference, President Wilson might say, and might get us out of a great difficulty by saying, 'Here we are inaugurating a new era of free and open diplomacy; the various States of Europe have bound themselves by all sorts of unscrupulous secret engagements in the earlier years of the war; before we enter into any anangements for the future let us sweep all those off the board; let the Sykes—Pico Agreement go, let the Agreement with the Italians go, and let us staff Mith a clean slate?' If that is impossible, may I suggest that our line of action probably should be this, to back Feisal and the Arabs as far as we can, up to the point of not alienating the French [...] Ought we not to play the policy of self-determination for all it is worth? We ought to play self-determination for all it is wolth wherever we are involved in difficulties with the French, the Arabs, or anybody else, and leave the case to be settled by that final argument knowing in the bottom of our healts that we are more likely to benefit from it than anybody else.

While Balfour on one hand confirmed that the broad principle of self-determination in the one that they should work for, but warned against the eagerness with which Curzon appeared to be ready to play the card for self-determination. He claimed that the British, "Ought to be most careful not to give either the French or the Italians the impression that we are frying to get out of our bargains with them made at an earlier and different stage of the war. If the Americans get us out well and good […] But it is all-important that we should not only not do it ourselves, but that we should not either appear to do it or really do it," (Lieshout, 332). Now that the war had just ended, "the price in both cases, so far as we are concerned, must be paid without chicanery. If the Americans choose to step in and cut the knot, that is their affair, but we must

not put the knife into their hand." Others also cautioned against pressuring self-determination, including Cecil, who echoed Hirtzel's sentiment that however much the British might wish to get the French out of Syria, it would:

> "Be an awful mistake if we think we can get rid of the French out of Syria […] you Mill never get the French to give up the whole of Syria Mithout the most tremendous convulsion. They would rather give up anything in the world than give up that claim to Syria; they are mad about it, and Cambon is quite insane if you suggest it. I am sure you will never get them out of Syria, and we ought to make up our mind to go for some settlement which will give them some position in Syria, however unpleasant it may be to have them there."

Despite these warnings, the resolution on Syria adopted by the Eastern Committee just one week later completely disregarded Cecil. The program was of an extremist nature, wich envisaged British predominance in Syria, and expected the French to give up the rights under the Sykes-Picot agreement in area A, and even the Syrian parts of the blue zone, in order that Syria would have access to the sea. In exchange, the British prepared to "support the French claims to a special position in the Lebanon and Beiruit […] and at Alexandretta, keeping in mind that it was essential that no foreign influence other than that of Great Britain should be predominant in areas A and B (Lieshout, 333).

During the next Eastern Committee meeting on December 18th, Lord Robert seemed to have set aside his principles stance against pushing self-determination at the expense of the French, but this time only Balfour urged that the French and Italians, who would never accept this. He claimed that a policy based on self-determination was "the most admirable and logical, and wholly consistant…It fits in with all theories, and with the fourteen points of Presdient Wilson, but it does not fit in with the Powers we have to deal with-the French and the Italians. They are not in the least out for self-determination, they are out for getting whatever they can," (Lieshout, 333). When Cecil took issue and argued that the French and the Italians had colonialist ambitions, Balfour agreed "exactly. They are Imperialistic and quite frankly so. The French may not be quite so frank [as the Italians], but that is exactly what they are thinking of," (Lieshout, 333). In this case Balfour would repeat the sentiments of Hirtzel, when he argued that the French would say, "By all your arrangements, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1915 [sic], and all the rest of it, equality is what we look to do," (Lieshout, 333). Cecil had to admit that "the French have a good contractual claim", but if the French insisted on equal treatment then they had no other option than to make it their business that the native populations liked them and, if they failed, "we cannot help that". To which Curzon gleefully added that the French were bound to fail, as "none of these nations in any circumstances would ever consent to be protected by the

French," (Lieshout, 333). At this point Britain's policy on the Syrian question was becoming quite clear to the Eastern Committee. Cecil had of course advocated for this policy for months, though had proven unsuccessful until now. On one hand, the Sykes-Picot agreement was obsolete and had to be cancelled, but because the French refuse to contemplate this and Britain was bound by her signature, it should be left to the Americans to bring pressure on the French to give up their Syrian claims. On the other hand, the Americans would only be prepared to do so if Britain was seen to embrace the principle of self-determination. Moreover, taking a stand on self-determination not only promised a smooth departure from the Sykes-Picot issue without Britain having to break her word, but also clearly served the British in that, if left the choice, the Syrian population would certainly vote for a British mandate.

Though brief, this first narrative only begins to detail the conversations that took place among foreign diplomats regarding the significance and influence of Wilsonian foreign policy on the development of Syria, even as it barely existed as a colonial extension of France. As the Sykes-Picot agreement degenerated into the international quagmire and embarrassment for which it came to be known-with affiliated parties pointing to one another in resentment- these international powers often turned to Wilsonian diplomatic policy of independent statehood as a pathway in line with prevailing political theory. While the United States, in this case, was avoiding any direct meddling in the complex affairs of other nations, its individualist dogma became the prevailing political discourse to touch its very conception.

Chapter 3

Historical Narrative II: Fight Against Communist Proliferation in Syria

The fight against communism, more specifically referencing the United States' attempt to prevent the transition of Syria to a more plural polity, describes the rise and containment of the Ba'athist regime. It also describes a Strong authoritarian stance that was not necessarily present in Wilsonian foreign policy with respect to Syria, which rails against the idea of a democratic Left leaning state. This notably also references the era in which the United States evolved its stance to support a nationalist, rather than Pan Arabist, state of Syria in stark contrast with the United Arab Republic. The era is capstoned by the 1961 coup, ending the United Arab Republic through supplying arms and countering the allure of Syria maintaining economic relations with Egypt and Russia as a strategy for combating communist proliferation in the region. It is important to to consider the way that the United States formally and informally engaged with Syrian politics in this era, as it would have a direct effect on the turnover of Syrian leadership and resulting instability that comes with these revolving door governments. Although the United States acted in what it saw as a global necessity to prevent the rise of communist proliferation in developing Middle Eastern Nations, especially with respect to such malleable platforms as Syria and Iraq, the conclusions of these coups were largely destructive to the sovereignty of Syrian nationhood. This destabilization prefaces the development of Islamist groups that would prove to be particularly potent political forces during the third narrative of Syria's poltical discourse.

Cold War and Covert Action

Douglas Little, author of *Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958*, has written extensively on US-Syria relations directly proceeding World War II Truman-era isolationism in American foreign policy. His writing is indicative of the paradoxical nature of President Truman's doctrine of containment; while outwardly, the United States had every intention of preventing the proliferation of Soviet Communism, its belittling policy blunders

gave Syrians every reason to distrust American politics. He explains how Syria's strategic location and chronic political instability held ominous implications for broader US interests in the Middle East during the late 1940s. Little explains, "Because Turkey lay to the north and Israel to the south an unfriendly Syria could easily undermine President Harry Truman's doctrine of containment or complicate his special relationship with Tel Aviv," (Little, 52). Syria's location between Turkey and Israel opens up a host off strategic issues for Truman's containment policies. Little more specifically explains two scenarios in which Syria's location could prove hostile to Truman's doctrine, one of which described as, "Because it stood athwart the pipelines carrying Persian Gulf oil to the Mediterranean, an unpredictable Syria could suddenly halt the flow of petroleum upon which Western European economic recovery depended," (Little, 52). Although Truman's concern for strategic oil resource management in relationship to Turkey is understandable, there seemed to be larger issues at stake with Syria's particular vulnerability to succumbing to the proliferating Marxist political doctrine of the Soviet Union. Little describes, "In addition, because it hosted a surprising array of left-wing political organizations, including the Arab world's most active communist party, an unstable Syria seemed especially vulnerable to Soviet influence," (Little, 52). It was becoming increasingly clear to the Truman administration that the faltering state of Syria was quickly becoming a threat to regional peace and stability, and as a result, the CIA secretly encouraged the right-wing military coup in March 1949. Little describes the the repercussions of this first critical military movement in Syria since the conception of United States-Syrian relations. He states, "In the short run, this seemed the perfect way to create a stable pro-Western regime without resorting to armed intervention that might draw the United States directly into the Arab-Israeli conflict, or, even worse, into a superpower showdown with the Soviets. Repeated CIA covert action during the following decade, however, merely stimulated Arab anti-Americanism, drove the Syrian left closer to the Kremlin, and, ironically, made overt military involvement more, not less, likely," (Little, 51). Though the use of covert action was intended to install pro-American sentiment among Syrian leadership, and effectively, its population, the perpetration of covert military action did little to contain Soviet proliferation, and as Little argues, drove Syria closer to pro-Soviet sentiment.

He goes on to argue that on the surface, the US infiltration in Syrian politics was broadly sold as a fight against a communist take-over, while in the back of their minds, politicians were largely distrustful in Syria's desire to follow through on various western policy initiatives. It has

now become clear that the growing animosity between Syria and the United States intived speculation at the State Department in the late 1940s that Syrians might gravitate towards Soviet sympathies. Little argues, however, "The real danger, however, was not a Bolshevik-style takeover by Communist Party leader Khalid Bakdash and his 2,000 followers, but rather a Syro-Soviet marriage of convenience based on Quwatly's need for arms and Stalin's desire to fish in troubled waters," (Little, 54). The Russian-Syrian relationship the State Department witnessed blossoming before their eyes was more than a repercussion of Soviet imperialist ambitions; it becomes an opportunity for both Syrians and Russians to gain what they needed most from their symbiotic relationship. Unfortunately for the United States, while Russia and Syria grew fonder of one another in their foreign relations, American relations with Syria deteriorated still further during the fall. Little explains, "Washington's frustration mounted when Quwatly refused to accept UN media- tor Count Folke Bernadotte's truce proposal. CIA speculation that 'nationalistic elements in Syria' were readying a fresh campaign to wrest Alexandretta from Turkey deepened State Department gloom as did a less than positive report on the status of TAPLINE. ARAMCO's quest for a right-of-way across Syria remained stalled in parliament, and James Keeley, the US ambassador, doubted whether even "baksheesh in the right place could carry the day," (Little, 55). The purpose of encouraging the military coup of of 1949 is becoming increasingly convoluted with the pipeline on the line, and the United States feels the opportunity to change Syria's course is running short.

When President Truman and Miles Copeland made the joint decision to act in Syria, they scrapped an open-diplomacy option for a number of covert operations, inducing military coups against "soviet sympathizing" regimes and replacing them with leaders that would operate in-sync with western interests. The severe instability induced by such frequent transitions would be remembered by Syrians as a period of revolving door governments. Between the years of 1949-1955, Syria would experience fluctuations in leadership outlined by Little below:

Political Changes in Syria, 1949-1955

March 30, 1949	Army Chief of Staff Husni Zaim overthrows President Shukri Quqatly
August 14, 1949	Zaim is overthrown and executed by officers group headed by Colonel Sami Hinnawi
December 19, 1949	Colonel Adib Shishakli ousts Hinnawi and heads seven civilian cabinets in the next 23 months
November 29, 1951	Shishakli dissolves parliament and establishes a military dictatorship
February 25, 1954	Colonel Adnan Malki overthrows Shishakli
April 22, 1955	Pro-Shishakli members of the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party assassinate Malki
August 18, 1955	Quwatly is elected president

Little describes Miles Copeland, a former CIA Middle East specialist, when he first disclosed 20 years ago that he and Meade had engineered the March 1949 coup in which Chief of Staff Husni Zaim overthrew Quwatly and Azm. The author explains that while most observers dismissed his claims as tall tales, recently declassified records confirm that beginning on November 30, 1948, Meade met secretly with Colonel Zaim at least six times to discuss the "possibility [of an] army supported dictatorship" (Little). Little quotes, "'US officials apparently realized from the start that Zaim was a " 'Banana Republic' dictator type' who 'did not have the competence of a French corporal,' but they were also well aware of his 'strong anti-Soviet attitude,' his willingness to//talk peace with Israel, and his desire for American military assistance," (Little, 55-56). While Zaim may not have been the ideal pick in the eyes of the United States, his anti-Soviet sentiment was enough to overcome these weaknesses. To the surprise of the State Department, Ziam's performance over the next three months would far exceed their expectations. Among his accomplishments were resuming peace talks with Israel and that Syria would consider resettling as many as 250,000 Palestinian refugees in the Jazirah Valley along the Iraqi frontier (Little). He would also approve the long-delayed TAPLINE concession, removing the final obstacle to ARAM- CO's plan to pipe Saudi oil to the Mediterranean (Little). Shortly after, he would have broadened his anti-Soviet campaign by banning the Communist Party and jailing dozens of left-wing dissidents (Little). Finally, Ziam would withdraw all Syrian claims against Turkey over Alexandretta and then by signing the long-awaited Syro-Israeli armistice. Little lists these

accomplishments and further contextualizes these progressive movements by explaining, "Having done so much so quickly to improve relations between Syria and the United States, Zaim not unreasonably anticipated equally swift American approval for the $100 million military and economic aid package he requested in late July," (Little, 57-58). Little explains, however, before the generous proposal could grow beyond its preliminary exploratory stages, the virtuoso ruler would be overthrown and execute by Colonel Sami Hinnawi and other officers unhappy with his increasingly personalistic rule and his friendly policies towards Israel (Little). Little further explains how the Truman was caught off guard and fearful that Hinnawi might undo Zaim's pro-American policies, and agreed to recognize the new regime only after receiving assurances that "free elections" would be held later that fall. Despite this initiative, Little describes, "… the frictions that had bedeviled Syro-American relations prior to Zaim's takeover reappeared. As early as 5 October, Hinnawi warned that continued Israeli violations of the armistice would necessitate Syrian retaliation unless the United States could persuade Israel to live up to its obligations," (Little, 58). Just a week after the news surfaced, Truman also received debilitating news regarding the status of the pipeline. Little writes, "A week later ARAMCO officials asked for US help in overcoming a "succession of minor delays which threatened a new crisis in Tapline-Syrian relations.'" (Little, 58). As the November 15 elections drew closer, the US military intelligence reported that, "'Commies [were] attempting [to] assure increased influence in [the] new parliament by offering to support numerous non-Commie candidates throughout country.' The balloting produced not a swing to the left, but rather a victory for Hinnawi's Populist Party, which announced plans in December for a Syrian union with Iraq's Hashemite dynasty," (Little, 58). With the prospects of a free Syria now breached, civilians would begin to take matters into their own hands. "Appalled by the prospect of domination from Baghdad, on December 19, 1949, Colonel Adib Shishakli ousted Hinnawi in Syria's third coup in nine months and scuttled plans for the Syro-Iraqi federation. Shishakli's power play, however, did little to curb the political chaos, largely because he aimed merely to preserve Syrian independence, not to establish a strong central government, military or otherwise," (Little, 58). As a result of his failed leadership, this coup commenced what would become seven revolving-door civilian cabinets in 23 months. Now, with Syria again tending towards leftward policies in mid-1951, the United States again would initiate a military fix, and this time with a veteran of Syrian affairs. Little explains, "Shishakli had approached US officials as early as March 1950

seeking "military aid for army modernization the better 'to maintain order in Syria,' but American commitment to the Tripartite Declaration limiting Middle East arms sales as well as American interest in such regional defense plans as Britain's proposed Middle East Command (MEC) sidetracked his request. Nevertheless, US officials realized that Shishakli and like-minded officers had "by default emerged as . . . one of the strongest anti-Communist forces in the country." As a result, Washington hinted in early 1951 that Syria might soon receive US weapons under the recently created Mutual Security Program," (Little, 59). This marking the end of Truman's leadership in 1953, Truman had intended to leave Syria relatively unscathed and uncommitted; however, he had set a precedent of interventionist foreign policy that would inevitably carry over to his predecessor, President Eisenhower.

Eisenhower and Dulles clearly inherited a pattern of interventionist Syria that was making very little leeway in establishing a stable, pro-American ally in the Middle East; and yet, they continued on his predecessor's course of covert apprehension of pro-Soviet leaders. Although it remains unclear to what extent the Shishakli coup was triggered by an American intervention, the United States certainly welcomed the coup. Little describes, "Charge d'affaires Harlan Clark cabled Washington on 30 November that "if US is to profit from new sit[uatio]n, it will be more than ever necessary for us to be able to show Shishakli how and when we can help him,'" (Little, 60). The statement was followed by a deal to deliver selected military material on a cash-reimbursable basis, contingent upon Syrian agreement to the provisions of the Tripartite Declaration. Shortly thereafter Shishakli was encouraged to come to the West to discuss proposals for additional aid. (Little). Though Shishakli continued to impress the State Department through his short tenure, Little explains that his popularity had started to recede since December 1953 when antigovernment and anti-American riots had rocked Aleppo and Damascus. Though US officials hoped he would weather the storm, he faced insurmountable discontent between both inside the army and among political rivals. Little explains that the Communist Party, half of what it was prior to being driven underground by Shishakli, saw the coup as the first step toward a national front with the Ba'athists and others opposed to Western influence. He describes, "Washington reluctantly recognized the new regime on 8 March after receiving assurances that it would hold elections as soon as possible. With the approach of summer, however, American diplomats were deeply troubled by mounting evidence of "considerable Communist infiltration in the ASRP [Ba'ath party]" and other telltale signs that

"Soviet influence is growing," (Little, 62). There were other signs of Russia's position in Middle Eastern affairs growing, notably after Stalin's death in March 1953. Nikita Khrushchev made himself busy courting the anti-Western nationalism growing in Cairo and Damascus. The Eisenhower administration, growing increasingly weary of Soviet influence in the region, quietly encouraged "'responsible political elements' to 'remain united and pursue constructive policies,'" (Little, 62). Among the most innovative attempts to foil Communist rise in Syria took place at the Damascus International Fair. Little Describes, "…where the CIA, ARAMCO, and the US Information Agency (USIA) financed an American pavilion whose chief exhibit was to be an outdoor film event called Cinerama. As expected, thousands more Damascenes flocked to watch This is America on the wide screen than visited the dreary pavilions of the Soviet bloc," (Little, 62). However, the showmanship came to no avail when on September 24th, the Ba'ath party was again favored in Parliamentary elections and Khalid Bakdash became the first freely elected Communist Party deputy in the Arab World (Little). By this time it was becoming increasingly clear to US that Syria was slipping through their fingers, as anti-Western and anti-American rhetoric became increasingly bitter, especially among the Communist-controlled segments of the Syrian Press. Little describes the increasingly negative situation, stating, "Although American officials did what they could to get "Syrian conservatives [to] organize to combat left-wingers," by the end of the year Secretary Dulles would complain that "from the way Syria acts at the UN she is a Soviet satellite." CIA director Allen Dulles, John Foster's brother, agreed that "the situation in that country is the worst of all the countries in that area,'" (Little, 62-63). Taking immediate action, the United States approved Britain and Iraq's announcement in 1955 for the Baghdad Pact, and urged Syria, among other Arab states, to join. While moderate politicians were generally leaning towards an agreement, the "Progressive Front," an organization led by Ba'athist Salah al-Din Bitar and backed by Colonel Adnan Malki was opposed to Syrian participation. Instead, when Iraq and Turkey concluded a bilateral accord on February 25th, Syria would join with Egypt in calling for Arab nonalighment. The Eisenhower administration understandably grew increasingly uneasy about Syria's dismissal of the accord, and more importantly, their anti-western alignment with Egypt. Little describes, "On 7 April, Eisenhower's Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), an interagency group that monitored covert actions, protested that "the increasing influence of leftists and a few communists" inside the Syrian army was impeding American plans for Middle East Defense. Should Malki or other left-

wing officers actually seize power and conclude a formal alliance with Nasir's Egypt, Secretary Dulles remarked gravely a week later, Syria's "anti-Western policies" could easily // trigger "Iraqi military intervention" or, even worse, "Israeli military action against one or several Arab states," (Little, 63-64). The ramifications were seemingly percolating out of control in front of their eyes until April 22, 1955 when Malki was assassinated by an assailant aligned with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, a right-wing group that had supported Shishakli and even alleged to have connections to the United States Central Intelligence Agency (Little). While Malki was removed, the SSNP relationship with the CIA sparked intrigue among Syrians and anti-Americanism flooded social-political thought in unprecedented levels. Ambassador James Moose warned of Syria's impending fall to Ba'athist control unless pro-Western civilians and military leaders were mobilized. Eveland and Moose would agree that an introduction of "pro-West" army officers would be a reasonable course of action to counter leftist rise, but after reviewing the situation the OCB concluded that the army had already been infiltrated by the Syrian Communist Party, now growing at an alarming rate. With this in mind, the OCB argued that rather than strengthening internal Syrian security forces, "Washington should focus on other unspecified "courses of action . . . designed to affect the situation in Syria,"' (Little, 64). To whatever extent we can praise Eisenhower's diplomatic initiative until July, we may still reach the conclusion that an "unspecified" course of action is a codified term for a militaristic intervention, during a time when the Syrian populous had quickly transformed from somewhat pro-Western (or otherwise indifferent to our foreign affairs in the region) to strongly pro-Ba'athist, a secularist Pan-Arab identity for Syrians. At this point the history of Syrian political discourse had devolved from a somewhat diplomatic approach to proxy Russo-American affairs to a hot proxy war of politics trickling down to the very identity-politics of the Syrian people. At its face, the future of Syrian leadership was at stake; perhaps more importantly, the Syrian people themselves were about to reach a crossroads being unknowingly manipulated by a foreign crisis.

In the next portion of his thesis, the author extensively discusses Operation Straggle, a capstone to this series of covert American intervention in Syria, attempting to isolate Nasir and remove him from power by pitting him and his Syrian supporters against regional Islamist rivals. We can objectively begin to dissect the policy failures to follow as a result of a proxy war between the United States and Soviets on the theoretical grounds of Islamism versus Marxism. While the Kremlin would be busy dealing with an increasingly fruitful arms trade with Egypt

and Syria, the Eisenhower administration would try to counter the inroads Soviets were making among Arabs with an economic offensive of their own. Little describes the offer to help finance Egypt's Aswan Dam as the center of that plan, but Washington was also willing to subsidize construction of a Syrian oil refinery at Homs. When this plan was met with little to no diplomatic progress, Eisenhower concluded that, "'…we will have to serve some notice on certain Middle Eastern countries." On 28 March, he approved a State Department plan, code-named Project Omega, which called for scuttling the Aswan Dam, shoring up Nasir's conservative Arab rivals, and overthrowing the increasingly pro-Nasir regime in Syria," (Little, 65). This operation overthrow would differ from the previous missions of Zaim and Shishakli in that, for the first time, the United States had agreed to cooperate with Great Britain. Ambassador Moose claimed that the United States had exhausted orthodox diplomatic procedures to revive the failing relationship between the United States and Syria, and suggested additional approaches such as an "anti-Communist coup" contrived by the SSNP (Little). Various other plans were discussed among British and United States, with Secretary Dulles notably claiming that Syria was behaving much like, "'a Soviet satellite'" and additionally, "'if it should be decided to move against Nasser, it might be wise to consider Syria as well,'" (Little, 66). Little explains, "By mid-March, Eden and Lloyd had developed a covert strategy for the Middle East that sought, among other things, "'to establish in Syria a Government more friendly to the West.' British Ambassador Roger Makins advised Secretary Dulles on 23 March that Whitehall was still "interested in the Syria situation." A week later, Allen Dulles and CIA Middle East chief Kermit Roosevelt flew to London, where they worked out the details for the Syrian coup with their counterparts in Britain's Secret Intelligence (SIS)," (Little, 66). While many key documents of Operation Straggle remain classified, we know little regarding the evolution of the document, though some sources suggest Turkey was originally responsible for staging border incidents, British operatives for stirring up the desert tribes, and American agents to mobilize SSNP guerrillas, all of which would have triggered a pro-Western coup by Syrian anticommunist elements (Little). These initial plans were disrupted by Nasir's seizure of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, but Dulles remarked that contracting dissatisfied elements indigenous to Syria would remain the course of action. Little quotes, "'The United States has increased its efforts to counter- act leftist influence in Syria,' Foster Dulles remarked elliptically on 21 September, 'and will continue to do so 'through contacts with 'conservative elements in Syria, dissatisfied with the present situation,

[who] are considering steps which might be taken to bring about an improvement," (Little, 67). Although few details remain released regarding Operation Straggle's development since Little's work was published, the premise of contracting Syrian opposition groups dissatisfied with the leftist government remains divisive; a secret proxy war has been waged at the expense of domestic Syrian economic, political and social stability. While the outcomes and effectiveness of Operation Straggle are debatable in terms of their ability to achieve the foreign policy initiatives the United States desperately attempted to achieve, its repercussions on Syrian civil stability deserve both close study and measurement.

Eisenhower Doctrine in Syria

Though often overlooked, the Eisenhower Doctrine was a significant stepping stone in incorporating the Middle East into the United States scope of influence; though Syria did not display a concrete tendency toward succumbing to Soviet expansionism, Eisenhower sought to protect the west's relationship with conservative Arab regimes. Salim Yaqub, prominent scholar of the Eisenhower Doctrine specializing in the United States foreign relations with respect to the Middle East at UCSB Department of History and author of publication, "Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East," writes extensively about the various ways Eisenhower attempted to curb the proliferation of communism in the Middle East in less-than-transparent ways. On January 5, 1957, the president would address Congress, speaking of a grave crisis in the region which may soon succumb to the Soviet Union, and his stance that America must do all that it could to assist these nations retain their freedom. He describes, "Eisenhower asked Congress to pass a resolution authorizing him to pledge increased economic and military aid and even direct US protection to any Middle Eastern nation willing to acknowledge the threat posed by international communism. Two months later Congress passed the requested resolution in slightly modified form," (Yaqub). He describes, however, that at this point the policy embodied in the legislation was coined the Eisenhower doctrine, marking America's emergence as the dominant Western power in the Middle East, and this role would continue to be imposed by the United States even after the policy would become obsolete (Yaqub).

While there is no clear catalyst for this new policy outlined by Eisenhower's

announcement, Yaqub argues that this resolution immediately proceeds the Suez war of late 1956, in which, "Britain, France, and Israel had spectacularly failed to reverse Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. Because of the fiasco, Britain was widely regarded as having forfeited its status as the preeminent Western power of the Middle East," (Yaqub). Thus, both the president and his secretary state, John Foster Dulles, argued that Britain's failure resulted in a vacuum in the region that the Soviets would capitalize on unless the United States intervened (Yaqub). The author describes, "One way the Soviets could conceivably fill the vacuum, though US officials agreed this was improbable, was by direct military intervention in a neighboring country like Turkey or Iran. A far more likely scenario was that the Soviets would increase economic and military aid and develop closer political ties to Arab states. Already Egypt and Syria had concluded military and economic agreements with the Soviet bloc. With Britain's Arab allies now facing overwhelming political pressure to shun their discredited patron, there was a danger that other Arab countries would soon follow Egypt's and Syria's example," (Yaqub). Therefore, it would seem that the official purpose of the Eisenhower Doctrine would be designed to defend the Middle East from Soviet infringement, largely within the realm of deepening economic relations between the two countries as a result of Syria's need for military aid and weaponry. Therefore, this would act as no more than a more precise application of the general containment doctrine which the United States had waged the Cold War for a decade. However, Yaqub argues that it would also seek to contain the radical Arab nationalism of the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and would discredit his policy of positive neutrality in the Cold War, which held that Arab nations were entitled to enjoy profitable relations with both Cold War blocs (Yaqub). In fact, Eisenhower and Dulles would formally denounce both the "positive" and the "neutrality" aspects of the plan; they argued that Nasser was rather becoming increasingly hostile to the West and even a tool to Soviet expansionism. He illustrates, "'In July 1958 Eisenhower privately remarked that Nasser "is a puppet of the Soviets, even though he probably doesn't think so.' Rather than cooperate with Egypt, as it had done until recently, the United States would now try to strengthen conservative Arab regimes- like those of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Libya- and reinforce their pro-Western tendencies," (Yaqub). The Eisenhower Doctrine was thus an attempt through economic and military aid to encourage the governments to side openly with the West in the Cold War, therefore swinging away from the Leftist Nasser regime and his regional allies, including the Syrian government and the Nasserist

opposition parties in other Arab countries. While Eisenhower would continue to push this strategy until 1958, the administration would then reluctantly conclude that Nasserism was too politically powerful to be successfully opposed and that the United States would instead seek an accommodation with that movement (Yaqub). Yaqub further describes the events that transpired between 1957 and 1958 as the competing struggle between the United States and the Nasserist movement over the acceptable limits to mainstream Arab politics versus what would be identified as extremism. "For the United States the cardinal issue was international communism. If a critical mass of Arab states could be induced to declare their opposition to international communism- to 'stand up and be counted,' as the phrase went at the time- then those Arab government advocated positive neutrality in the Cold War could be marginalized," (Yaqub). This western idea of extremism stands in stark contrast with the Nasserist movement's identification of extremism, which identifies more strongly with an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist policy. "The Nasserist movement stressed "Western imperialism" and Zionism, insisting that those Arab governments with close ties to Britain or France (or, increasingly, the United States itself) where themselves outside the mainstream of Arab politics, discredited by their association with the great power's "imperialist" policies and support for Israel," (Yaqub). The Nasser ideology would prove to draw much stronger regional alliances; however, this made little difference in terms of achieving the end goal of preventing communist proliferation in the Arab states.

Though the Eisenhower doctrine did succeed at warding off whatever threat it perceived the Middle East may be subject to by Soviet expansionism, the means through which he attempted to accomplish this was largely a strategic failure. In order to evaluate the overall success of the Eisenhower Doctrine, Yaqub argues it is best practice to distinguish between the policy's ultimate objective and the strategy employed to achieve that objective. Yaqub explains, "the ultimate objective was to prevent a Soviet takeover of the Middle East, and since such a takeover never occurred, it has to be said that the objective was achieved. But the strategy behind the policy-discrediting Arab figures deemed "soft on communism" by promoting other Arab figures who were conspicuously anticommunist-failed miserably," (Yaqub). He further explains that because the strategy was so poorly chosen that its failure did not compromise the ultimate objective. Yaqub cites two main reasons for the failure of the anti-Nasserist strategy. The first of which is Eisenhower and Dulles' extreme overestimation of America's political strength in the Arab world while underestimating that of Nasserism. Yaqub writes, "…The United States had

no intention of repudiating its alliance with Britain and France or its support for Israel's existence and security- stubborn realities that prevent the United States from gaining the wholehearted support of the Arab public opinion. Nasser's own regional popularity, by contrast, soared in the aftermath of Suez," (Yaqub). It is because of this that any Arab figure seeking to align himself with US Cold War Policies, or to oppose Nasserist policies at US instigation, could be considered an enemy of Arabism by Nasserist propagandists. The second strategic failure cited by Yaqub is that the conservative Arab leaders were unable or unwilling to play their assigned roles. These leaders were either too fearful of domestic or regional opinion to take a strong stand in favor of the United States or against Nasserism. "Even when they were prepared to take such a stand, they were too suspicious of one another to do so as a bloc. The most celebrated case in point was the long-standing feud between Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Iraq, but there were other rivalries-between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, between the Iraqi and Jordanian branches of the Hashemite dynasty, and within the Saudi and Iraqi governments-that also obstructed conservative unity," (Yaqub). On a related note, many conservative leaders, among them notably, King Hussein of Jordan and King Saud of Saudi Arabia, claimed supporting the Eisenhower Doctrine would come at too great a political cost. However, each of them convinced the Eisenhower administration that his general orientation was sufficiently pro-Western to warrant major US political support for him (Yaqub). In sum, the political weakness of the United States, the strength of Nasserism, and the independent proclivities of the conservative Arab regimes meant that the Eisenhower administration was unable to achieve Nasser's regional isolation. Although superficially the doctrine seemed to succeed during its early months shortly proceeding implementation, issues arose during the summer of 1957, and just a year later the strategy had fallen apart. Yaqub explains, "Egypt had merged with Syria to form the United Arab Republic (UAR), vastly increasing Nasser's power and terrifying the conservative Arab regimes….the Iraqi regime had been overthrown by army officers who appeared to be Nasserist in orientation…throughout the Arab world, the forces of radical nationalism seemed to be running rampant. Eisenhower and his advisers could do little more than gape in disbelief at the magnitude of the apparent disaster," (Yaqub). This transgression was not only a deep embarrassment for the United States themselves, but so ill advised that Nasser would come to brand the Eisenhower doctrine as an ultimate example of the amateur blunders that had come to characterize United States foreign policy with respect to the United States.

The failure of the Eisenhower doctrine may have been seen as a major learning-curve for Western government in previously unchartered political territory. However, its naivete and missteps against the teetering regime of Syria added ammunition to Islamist and anti-American sentiment, making future relations increasingly precarious. Yaqub explains, "Scholars have recently questioned the extent to which American policymakers in the 1950s were bound by Cold War thinking their dealings with the Third World. In those regions, the argument goes, US policymakers were equally preoccupied with racial and cultural issues and with "North-South" concerns such as population growth, famine, drought, and modernization. For this reason, the thesis of this paper begins to encapsulate not only US-Syrian relations with respect to politics and policy, but also socio-cultural issues not previously confronted for which it needed to confront an unchartered dogmatic stance on not only Syria, but also concepts of Arabism and Arabism on the fringes of normal political doctrinal concerns during the 1950s and prior. Yaqub argues that this new frame not only existed in Syria, but the Third World at large. He writes, "In the Middle East, however, preoccupation with the Cold War was pervasive, crowding out or co-opting most other concerns. To be sure, Eisenhower and his top advisers occasionally fretted over the threat of resurgent Islam or responded favorably to the optimistic projections of modernization theorists. But not only were such remarks vastly outnumbered by direct references to the communist challenge; they were themselves usually couched, implicitly or explicitly, in Cold War terms," (Yaqub). Not only was this theoretical with respect to Islam and Arabism telling, but actions themselves as well: only after Nasser began publicly feuding with the Soviets in 1959 did US relations with the UAR markedly improve (Yaqub). Although each side identified with competing forces, Yaqub argues that each of these sides were propelled by two competing sets of values. The first of which he identifies as the "vanquishing of evil: honor, sacrifice, solidarity, steadfastness, simplicity, and moral absolutism." The second of which he identifies as "deal making: patience, pragmatism, empathy, compromise, subtlety, and moral relativism." While the politics behind each of these values is presented in competing form, each party could also find in its history positive precedents for either approach. "Americans could invoke the wars they had fought against tyranny and aggression, but also the cautioning spirit of George Washington's Farewell Address and the historical commitment of the United States to the freedom of the seas and to the arbitration of foreign conflicts. Nasserists could look back on the impressive military performance of the Prophet Muhammad's early successors and of the

Salah al-Din, but also on the commercial heritage of the region and on the long experience of Arab leaders in manipulating and maneuvering among the great powers," (Yaqub). During the Cold War era these movements applied their shared values inversely, each of them urging a compromise where the other demanded commitment. On one hand, the United States wished that the region be conciliatory toward Zionism and European imperialism but partisan in the Cold War. On the other hand, the Nasserists stood steadfast in their defense of the right to make deals with the communist bloc even as they demanded United States support for the Arab positions against Zionism and imperialism. Yaqub further explains, "Dulles explicitly rejected the proposition that America's friends could engage in rational bargaining with both Cold War blocs, warning an Egyptian diplomat in 1957 that 'if a country came and indicated that it was in a good bargaining position and if we did not give them what they wanted, they could get it from the Soviet Union, we were not interested in that sort of relationship,'" (Yaqub). On the other hand, the Nasserist movement would defend positive neutrality with pragmatic arguments. By maintaining positive relations with both Cold blocs, Arab countries would be able to develop their economic and military strength more fully than they could through exclusive relations with either bloc. Yaqub explains, "A policy of nonalignment was also 'the best way to serve the cause of peace and bring an end to the Cold War," as Nasser put in a 1957 interview. At the same time, Nasserists criticized the United States for urging Arabs to compromise in their struggles against European imperialism and Zionism. How could one split the difference between independence and foreign domination? How could one allow an interloper even part of the land he had seized?" (Yaqub). In concealed conversations, the majority of Arab leaders acknowledged the impracticality of dismantling Israel, but held their extremely defiant views in public discourse in an attempt to secure moral high ground. The duality of these views- those communicated in public versus private expression- were, as Yaqub writes, a recurrent theme in United States-Arab relations during this period. While behind closed doors, Arab leaders often expressed sympathy for each other's positions, they simultaneously insisted that they could not communicate these sympathies to their constituencies. Yaqub cites several examples of this political difficulty in his work. One of the most important to understanding Syria's situation in this context is Nasser's admission of concern over the accelerating proliferation of communist views in Egypt. He describes, "Speaking to a U.S. diplomat in January 1957, Nasser admitted that he was concerned about the "growing strength [of the] Communist movement in Egypt…. [But w]hat would

happen if he stood up and said [the] Soviets were [the] greatest threat when the Egyptian people saw them as helpful and sympathetic[?] People can be led but only up to a point,'" (Yaqub). The understanding of Nasser's duality was critical in working with Egypt, and Dulles himself even acknowledged the multifaceted nature of their outwardly hardline stance against a communist Middle East. "Urged by an Arab League official "to support the Arab position in the debate on Algeria in the [United Nations] General Assembly," Dulles demurred, remarking "that the public position we might find it necessary to take would probably not reflect exactly our private position…. We could do more effective work privately and quietly rather than having the issue become even more involved and complex through public debate."[46] There was a time and place for moral clarity, and a time and place for creative ambiguity," (Yaqub). In this regard, the United States and the Nasserist movement were often able to find common ground in private negotiations, but felt obliged to put on their stark adversarial facades in public. Yaqub elaborates, "This dualism was primarily expressed in attitudes toward third parties, be they Soviet, Israeli, British, or French. There was, however, an additional tension that Americans and Nasserists experienced concerning their dealings with one another. From early 1956 on, each of the two antagonists was under enormous compulsion to press its advantage against the other. Doing so was not only psychologically satisfying but potentially reassuring to pugnacious regional allies. The United States faced constant pressure from the Iraqi and Lebanese governments to toughen its line against Egypt and Syria. Nasser privately grumbled about "Egyptian and Syrian hotheads" who urged him to ratchet up his rhetoric against conservative Arab regimes—pressure to which Nasser all too often succumbed," (Yaqub). However, the adversarial rhetoric exhibited in the public eye was not always beneficial, and at times either figure would see the wisdom of conciliation. In fact, a U.S. Department policy study in March 1958 recommended that the United States avoid public controversy with Nasser, due to his popular position with citizenry of the greater Middle East region. After each major crisis associated with the Eisenhower doctrine, which unfortunately were not far and few in between, Eisenhower himself would consider strategies for improved relations with Nasser, although he lacked the conviction to change the general course of U.S. foreign policy. "The struggle over the Eisenhower Doctrine was largely a moral conflict, but one that occurred within a shared moral framework. The United States and the Nasserist movement each proclaimed the virtues of national liberation, political independence, economic empowerment, and international harmony, but they disagreed over

when and where those values were at stake. Both parties were willing to consider conciliation with each other, provided it did not compromise their own security, alliances, or basic sense of fairness," (Yaqub). While politicians may have shared stark differences in values in the public eye, they at heart shared the values of rational, resourceful, and principled leaders, moved less by the need fo cultural vindication than by a common desire for justice and advantage. The clash of civilizations theory certainly holds its merits, though the failure of the United States to contain communist proliferation and negotiate with Arab leaders more importantly stemmed from a clash of interests and priorities, as opposed to civilizations.

1957 Syrian Crisis

Perhaps the callous and ill-advised missteps of the United States could have been excusable if taken on their own right; however, Eisenhower had already set a dangerous precedent of using covert operations to achieve his foreign policy goals, predisposing himself to a greater distrust to Syrians and the greater Middle East region. Brown describes, "By the time of the Syrian Crisis, the United States had an established record of using covert operations to support achievement of foreign policy goals. The overthrow of al-Quwatli in Syria in 1949, the success of the coup in Iran in 1953 to depose Mohammed Mossadeq, and the plot to overthrow the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacabo Arbenz, in 1954 reinforced the growing ease with which the U.S. used the threat of the Soviet influence to justify interventions that, theoretically, went against the broader message of non-imperialism," (Brown, 12). This overt conflict of interest was not unfounded, and the Eisenhower could have been seen by United States diplomats as a way to achieve the objective of containing communist proliferation while achieving democratic agency for Middle Eastern countries struggling with their position in politics with respect to regional superpowers. Brown further elaborates, "With the pronouncement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, military and economic resources could be committed to this effort in the name of bolstering the individual security of Middle Eastern nations and regional security as a whole, all the while operating under the true objective of containing communism," (Brown, 12-13). Unfortunately, Arab states did not see the objectives of the Eisenhower doctrine through a mutual lens. Instead, its proclamation was met with immense suspicion and resistance, and the execution of the doctrine only served to push Syria

further from the United States' orbit, and create a sense of American imperialist behavior among enemies and allies, an unfortunate progression given the early understanding by administration officials of the importance of getting ahead of this bow wave of international perception (Brown). The reprecussions of this response were predictable. "In an attempt to avoid U.S. direct involvement in an Arab-Israeli conflict or open warfare with the Soviet Union, the United States instead resorted to undercover operations. On April 7, 1955 the OCB, charged with oversight of ongoing covert activities, complained that "the increasing influence of leftists and few communists" inside the Syrian Army was impeding American plans for Middle East defense," (Brown, 13). Despite prior word from US diplomats assessing the situation claiming that the Communist threat was overinflated, and the warning by the Foreign Service Officers that this situation could be defused by simple diplomatic engagement, the United States pursued these covert operations. Brown describes, "When the Syrian Government alleged that the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) had ties with the CIA, it generated polemic public statements in Syrian newspapers, stirring anti-Western sentiment and paranoia as to the true intentions of the United States in the Middle East, and generated "a torrent of Arab anti-Americanism." History was repeating, as the warnings of appointed diplomats repeatedly went unheeded resulting in the ill effect of poorly placed and poorly executed covert operations," (Brown, 13).

President Eisenhower was faced with the opportunity-and even encouraged by local stakeholders- to take a transparent, diplomatic approach. Unfortunately, Eisenhower chose to ignore calls for talks and instead strengthened Syria's speculations of a covert American policy of western imperialism. With this sentiment, regarded historians seem to concur. "…there were significant strategic opportunities for diplomatic engagement that indicate a different approach was possible if only the Eisenhower Administration had followed its stated aims and taken those opportunities more seriously," (Brown, 13). This is evidenced by the intitiatives taken by foreign leaders, incuding the late January 1957 meeting with Saudi Arabia's King Saud, who impressed upon Eisenhower that the Cairo meeting of the Arab League earlier that month had urged associates to look upon American efforts in the region as motivated by genuine friendship and desire to help, as opposed to the general sentiment that spoke to a desire to conquer. "As the meeting closed, King Saud strongly recommended a face-to-face talk with the leaders of Egypt and Syria, calling such a move "very valuable." During this personal one on one meeting, the details of which Eisenhower recorded in his diary, King Saud suggested the President ask

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and the King of Syria to visit the White House, stating that "he believed great good could come of such visits," and was quick to assert that "he was certain these people did not lean nearly so much toward the Soviets as we had thought and they would like to re-establish their ties with the West,'" (Brown, 14). The King of Saudi Arabia, referred to by David Lesch as the "counterpoise to Nasser" and critical corollary to the Eisenhower Doctrine, encouraged open diplomatic negotiations with Nasser and Syria despite his Arab perspective. Brown describes, "When Eisenhower balked and informed the King that he did not feel he could do so without risking difficulty in the U.S. relationship with Israel, the King suggested that an invitation for the "head of the Jewish State ... would be quite all right and satisfactory," (Brown, 14). Despite this initiative, this diplomatic tripartite never occurred in the months leading up to the crisis due to the lack of encouragement from his Secretary of State to pursue this course of action. Dulles' dealings with independent states from the third world were described by Richard Immerman as "foundering in an alien sea," suffering form "frequent confusion of nationalism and communism," and unable to grasp the cultural and post-colonial perspective that King Saud was attempting to offer (Brown). After the proclamation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, James Richards was appointed to Special Ambassador status by Eisenhower and specifically tasked to embark on a fifteen-nation fact-finding mission through the Middle East in the spring of 1957 to determined how the mutual security approach resonated with the region (Brown). "While his approach to meeting with Syria is treated differently in a number of secondary sources, they all conclude he purposely did not engage directly with Syrian officials, but not by virtue of his own inclinations. An approach that avoided engagement with Syria seems, once again, in direct contravention of the prescribed policy of the administration to wield the diplomacy and moral position of the United States. In fact, the political director of the Syrian Foreign Office, Ghazi Al-Kayyali suggested that the U.S. should have directly sought out a meeting with the Syrian regime rather than having expected Syrian leaders to take the initiative," (Brown, 15). Recommendations by Syrian and Saudi Arabian leadership were not exclusively representing the interests of the Arab states, as their desire for a balanced diplomatic approach that included Syria were seconded by the U.S. special ambassador to the region. Ambassador Richards cabled back to Washington before finishing his trip, admitting that he, himself, was uncomfortable visiting Israel without having also visited Syria (Brown). "If directed to visit Israel, Richards stated he would do so only under formal protest as he deemed such an

action would represent an undeniable image of anti-Arab sentiment in the eyes of the Syrians. Richards was ordered to return to the U.S. after first stopping in Israel, and as a result, relations with Syria took a turn for the worse and reified perceptions of the Eisenhower Doctrine as a furtherance of American imperialism in the Arab world. This turn of events also provided strategic fodder for similar Soviet claims about American intentions and supported their regional efforts at extending their influence," (Brown, 15). Shortly after it became known to the Syrians that there was a plot to initiate a coup on August 12th, the United States engaged once again in aggressive shuttle diplomacy sending Loy Henderson, Under Secretary of State with a long history of foreign service in the Middle East, throughout the region again, this time to secure support for belligerent action against a Soviet support of Syria. However, despite advice from Saudi leadership, the United States did not have their lead statesman engage directly with Syrian leadership. "The Syrian government informed the U.S. Embassy that Richards was welcome to visit Syria if he so desired—rather than use this open door, the U.S. countered that Henderson would only do so if formally invited. As it played out, the Richards trip resulted in the promise of $68 million in economic aid and $50 million in military aid to Syria's neighbors, yet lacked the inclusion of as much as a simple diplomatic engagement with Syria," (Brown, 16). Visiting neighboring countries but neglecting to include Syria generated ill-feeling among Syrian officials, who had already claimed that the Eisenhower Doctrine was an advancement of selfish aims of the United States, "..Without taking into account the national aspirations of the people of the region." Egyptian President Gamal Nasser's recommendation in this situation "was that [the U.S. Government] should go in for bit of 'psychiatry' and deal gently with Syrians in such a way as to relieve their fears,'" (Brown, 16). Similarly, the Saudi Foreign Minister to Pakistan reported to his American counterpart James Langley that "Syrians were Arabs [and] that Arabs could not possibly be Communists, therefore nobody should be concerned about recent events in Syria." (Brown). Unfortunately, Langley characterized this view as unsophisticated, while Dulles considered it hardly believable that the Saudi's could see Israel as a greater danger to the Middle East than the Soviets.

While some details of the August 12, 1957 operation remain concealed, United States objectives became clear: The U.S. was prepared to secretly intervene in the internal affairs of another nation, while openly stating otherwise, and the United States was fully committed to aggressive action against Syria. "In a Syrian government press conference on August 23, in a

declaration of allegiance to the positive neutralism of the Bandung Conference, Syrian officials declared they wanted nothing to do with the "paternalism of the so-called great powers." Despite a warning to the NSC by Ambassador Richards not to move too fast in a situation which might well change character and ease off in a few days or weeks, the months that followed and the actions taken were focused on preparing the region for war," (Brown, 17). At this point, Eisenhower seems ill-informed on the facts that Syria had had enough of its interference in its internal affairs, and as a result, in a full implementation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the President took the position that the US should "start shipping material at once, making use of the emergency fund" because it was essential to "do everything possible to bring up the strength of the nations in the area quickly," (Brown, 17). In a difficult turn of events, on August 28, 1957, two weeks after the Syrian government called for the expulsion of American diplomats in the wake of the alleged coup attempt, the President expressed his concern to the NSC over messages received from King Saud regarding tensions in Syria. In these messages, the King felt that he could not avoid blaming the United States for much of the difficulty there. This escalation of tensions needed to be quelled, and Secretary Dulles recognized this by suggesting to the President that the cooling of relations occurred sometime in 1955 when offers of costly US military assistance were turned down in lieu of Soviet bids. Brown describes, "While accurate, this assessment seems a bit disingenuous and in denial of the stream of intelligence estimates over the previous two years, the missed diplomatic opportunities that were foregone, and the impact on the Syrian psyche of recent covert operations that were turned out by Syrian intelligence two weeks prior. In answering the President regarding Kind Saud's assertion that the U.S. was to blame for the tensions in Syria, the Secretary suggested simply that the King was difficult to manage because he was insulated from receiving U.S. information, and that despite previously successful engagements, "those results [had] six months to wear off." In response, the President noted that he felt that King Saud was "the key to the Middle East," suggesting a realization that an Arabization of the approach to the Middle East was missing," (Brown, 18). King Saud represented a key diplomatic engagement for the future of Middle Eastern affairs, that direct personal engagement with Egypt and Syria were in order, and if the United States had simply followed its own objectives as stipulated three years prior and leveraged personal relationships in the region, Eisenhower might have been able to champion the United States

foreign diplomatic success and forego the clumsy handling of the covert operations in Syria (Brown).

Ultimately, Eisenhower's handling of Syria in 1956 may have in fact lead to a disastrous Soviet take-over; however, through mediated diplomacy on the part of the Saudis, Syria and the United States were able to finally reach an agreement that satisfied the international objectives of both nations. Unfortunately, the inexcusable covert nature of United States action in Syria will leave a large blemish on foreign relations to come. "In November of 1957, shortly after al-Bitar and Rountree had commenced rapprochement between the United States and Syria, Eisenhower penned an "eyes only" note to Dulles asking if it might be worthwhile to "bring Nasser back to our side," suggesting perhaps a latent recognition of a missed opportunity for direct engagement with key Arab influencers, as opposed to the failed covert approaches chosen to achieve an American solution," (Brown, 25). This interest in engaging the Syrians diplomatically came as a result of Saudi mediation, Syrian and Soviet engagement in the United Nations, and the ultimately point-to-point diplomatic engagements between the cabinet and ministry officials of the two nations that took far too long to begin and come to fruition. These engagements arose from the purpose of insuring international, regional, national and cultural objectives were taken into account, but the crisis came to a more formal conclusion with the unification of Syria and Egypt as the United Arab Republic (UAR) in February 1958. "It was Nasser and al-Bitar who ultimately decided that unification would help deter communist takeover and protect their national and regional ambitions. In an example of learning the lessons of the past, Eisenhower and Dulles recognized that opposition to the merger would only earn Arab resentment, and further recognized that the existence of the UAR would provide certain gains toward limiting the spread of communism in Damascus and a means for absorbing Nasser's political energy," (Brown, 25). By recognizing the UAR on February 25, 1958 the United States-Syrian crisis had come to a close, as Arab nations had begun imploring the United States to recognize their pursuit of Arab nationalism and neutralism as a barrier to Communism. "That time had finally come and would, ironically, become a point of leverage in United States foreign policy in the Middle East as the Kennedy administration saw Nasser and other Third World nationalists as "potential bulwarks against Soviet communism rather than as communist stooges," and successfully used nationalism to preserve U.S. interests in the Middle East," (Brown, 25). Though recognized early in the administration as critical, the importance of aggressive diplomacy was inhibited by

inconsistent integration in foreign policy efforts through the decade. If, in fact, effective communication of American intentions was the desired goal of the administration, then the advice of C.D. Jackson in a speech to members of the National Security Council in 1953 was certainly not heeded the four years later: If men and women in other countries are to believe that American objectives and their own aspirations have much in common, this is to be brought about not merely by telling them so. It is to be done by our acts, explained and interpreted by our words (Brown). A more effective diplomacy-both public and traditional-would have insured a more consistent application of the Eisenhower administrations ultimate goals of stability in the Middle East. "With the Syrian Crisis in the annals of history, Eisenhower reflected on problems across the Arab world in July of 1958, shortly after the United States landed 10,000 Marines in Lebanon, stating that "the problem is that we have a campaign of hatred against us, not by governments but by the people [who] are on Nasser's side." Odd that a decade which began with a Syrian and greater Arab population that was pro-American would end in this way, but it comes as no surprise given the post-colonial nationalist attitude of Arab nations, their intense desire for self-determination, and the head-on collision with an uninformed, cavalier and bullish U.S. doctrine," (Brown, 26). The hardline anticommunist approach had created an implicit ultimatum, coined by brown "you are either with us or against us," and should be no less surprising when overlaid on the mid-1957 Syrian Crisis when applied to the contemporary Arab response to a similar ultimatum issued by the United States following the historical attacks on September 11. Unfortunately, the history of the Syrian crisis and a lesson on maintaining open diplomatic channels in a crisis are lost in the annals of Cold War standoffs with international communism.

Omega Doctrine and Islamism

It is during this period that, perhaps operating on a more subvert level, the omega doctrine is a recognition by Eisenhower that the Islamist doctrine may act as a foil to Marxist intentions of the Soviet Union. Deepa Kumar, associate professor of Media Studies and Middle East Studies at Rutgers University, grapples with this concept in her article, "Political Islam: A Marxist Analysis," in the International Socialist Review. She writes, "The turn by the United States toward promoting Islam on the political stage began in the 1950s. "We wanted to explore the possibilities of building up King Saud as a counterweight to Nasser," Eisenhower wrote to a confidante. "The king was a logical choice in this regard; he at least professed anti-Communism,

and he enjoyed, on religious grounds, a high standing among all Arab nations." In this, Eisenhower was influenced by the prevailing ideas among leading scholars who argued that Islam had been disrupted by Western influences, and therefore had to be brought back.." (Kumar). While this is an arguably simplistic understanding of the role of religion and politics in the Middle East, it acted upon it in a joint operation with Britain called "Omega," in which the United States sought to isolate Nasser and create an alternate pole of attraction in King Saud. Some administrators even began developing the notion of the Islamic Pope around Saud, but Saud failed to be such a pole of attraction for a number of reasons. Meanwhile, his successor, King Faisal, would make significant strides towards Islamizing the region, and since then Saudi Arabia has been one of the most powerful behind-the-scenes promoters of Islamism.

Even though Saudi Arabia holds the greatest natural supply of oil reserves in the world, it held little political legitimacy in the Middle East during the era of progressive secular nationalism; in this respect, Nasserism was the widely accepted regional model, and Egypt acted as the dominant political force until the end of the 1960s (Kumar). However, as Kumar explains, after 1973 this dynamic would change. "The oil embargo raised Saudi Arabia's prestige, so much so that it was able to seize the initiative and put Wahhabism on the map. The Saudi ruling elite then used their vast oil resources to promote Islamism in the following ways:

- They set up a massive network of charity and good works, which allowed Islamist groups to provide solutions to the economic crises gripping various countries.
- They used the World Muslim League, which was set up in 1962 to counter secularism.
- They brought together a number of countries in the region under the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1969 to set an agenda consistent with the Saudi outlook.
- They created an Islamic financial system that tied various African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries to the oil rich nations," (Kumar)

As Kumar further elaborates, if the World Muslim League and the Organization for the Islamic Conference were the political means of establishing Saudi hegemony, it is the Islamic financial system that laid the economic basis for its growth. The Saudis would ensure that vast amounts of money pouring into Arab oil exporting countries in the early 1970s were directed into a network of banks that were under the control of the Islamic Right and the Muslim Brotherhood. "These banks then funded sympathetic politicians, parties and media companies as well as the business ventures of the devout middle class— a group consisting of the descendants of the mercantile

classes of the bazaars and souks, and of the newly wealthy professionals, flush with money from jobs held in various oil-producing countries. The Muslim Brotherhood also financed their operations in Egypt, Kuwait, Pakistan, Turkey, and Jordan through these banks," (Kumar). The West would appreciate this banking system whole-heartedly, and even pitched in providing expertise, training and technological know-how in order to now be left out of the vast amounts of petrodollars that were now flowing through these banks. These players included, but were not limited to the United States giants of Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Price Waterhouse and Goldman Sachs. "Additionally, the rise of the Islamic banking system coincided with the development of the neoliberal model in the West. Close ties were forged between neoliberal guru Milton Friedman and his disciples at the University of Chicago and the Islamists. As Robert Dreyfuss states, "Islamic finance repeatedly relied on right-wing economists and Islamist politicians who advocated the privatizing, free-market views of the Chicago school." Once in power, it is not surprising that the Islamists adopted neoliberal measures such as in Algeria and the Sudan," (Kumar). In sum, through the Omega Doctrine, Saudi Arabia would rise to fame as a key player in promoting political Islam as a foil to Marxist values. This initiative was reciprocated by the tacit approval of the United States, and its role was accentuated even more over time, notably after 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution deposed of the Shah.
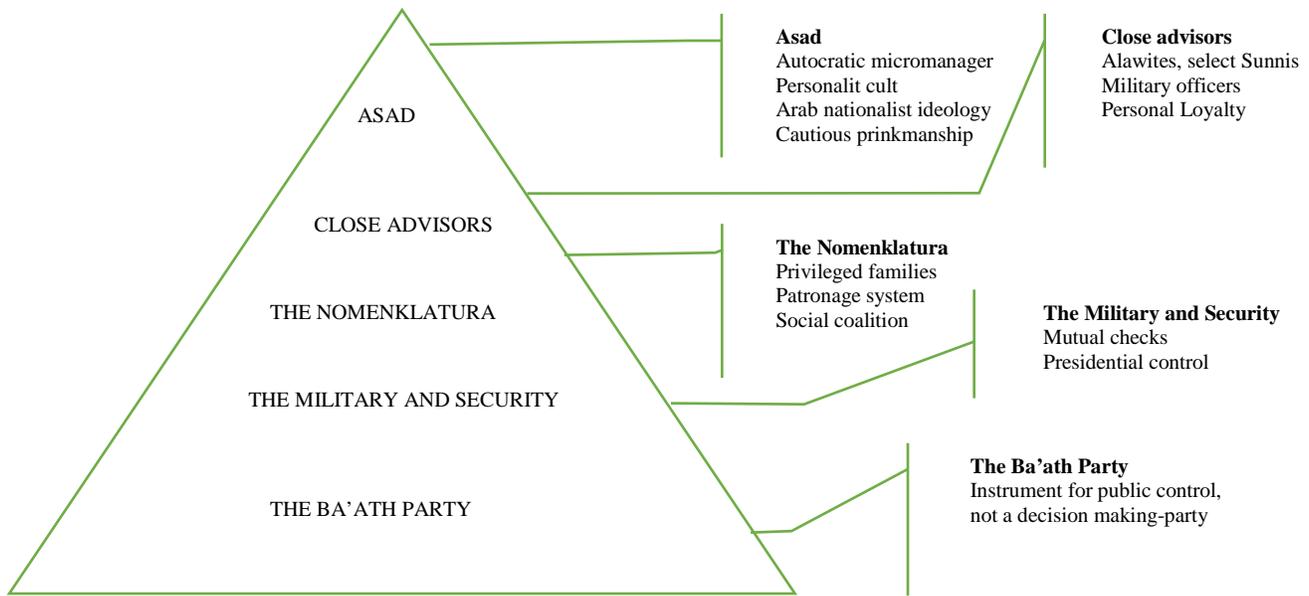
Rise of the Syrian Ba'ath Party

The next chapter of diplomacy in the saga of American-Syrian relations during the anti-communist phase of American history brings us to the Hafez al-Assad Presidency. Although Hafez al-Assad branded his presidency with ties to Islamic values, the unwavering strength and stability of his regime is tied more closely to the political savvy of his autocratic model. His connections to the Ba'ath party may have been marketed as his primary source for consultation; however, subordinates acted primarily as instruments for government control and gatherers of information rather than true participants in decision making processes. Doctor Schmuel Bar, Director of Studies at the Institute of Policy and Strategy in Herzliya, Israel and steering team of the annual "Herzliya Conference," writes extensively on the various undertones steering the Hafez al-Asad presidency and how his unique political model would serve as a foundation for

the far less successful Bashar al-Asad presidency. In his introductory remarks on the regime, he writes, "The hallmark of the Asad regime, which set it apart from its predecessors, was its strong hold on power and stability in a country which set it apart from its predecessors, was its strong hold on power and stability in a country which in the twenty years prior to its rise had experienced numerous coup d'etats and a constant sense of instability," (Bar, 353). Even without the context of constant overthrow prior to his presidency, Hafez al-Asad's work in stabilizing Syria may be well regarded in its own merit. Bar further elaborates, "Since the triple crisis of the early 1980s (rebellion of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hafez al-Asad's health crisis and the challenge to the regime by his brother, Rif'at), the regime has been stable: domestic opposition was rare and was dealt with summarily; global and regional events such as the fall of the Soviet bloc, the first Gulf war, and the Israeli-Arab peace process did not seem to affect the country's stability," (Bar, 353). This unique stability is often attributed to Hafez al-Asad's style of rule; while his processes were not outwardly autocratic, he kept his staff in a closely centralized state without relinquishing his own political might. Bar explains, "Ex officio, the president controls all the pillars of power: he Is the secretary general of the Ba'ath party, (which controls the parliament), commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the authority of all the intelligence services. His informal power goes even further. The models of Asad's regime were the autocratic Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, particularly the Ceausecu regime in Rumania," (Bar, 354). This model was not only influenced European autocratic rulers, but even took on a self-proclaimed interpretation of North Korean regime of Kim Il Sung. Not only was his structured political model influenced by these precedents, but even the rhetoric itself can be likened to Stalinist terminology and customary Islamic sycophancy (Bar). Hafez was not shy about this interpretation of his rule either, almost to a comical degree. "He likened himself to the Muslim hero Salah a-Din al-Ayoubi (Saladin)," (Bar, 354). At the time, Asad was portrayed as a quintessentially Islamic leader, in spite of being an Alawite and, in the eyes of most Sunnis, not even a Muslim. Despite this conflict, he clearly described himself as a Muslim and was branded by others as a "believing Muslim" who loved Allah and his people and the relationship between him and the people was presented in terms of baya' (Islamic oath of allegiance). "One of the highlights of this can be seen in the inscription from the Qur'an adorning the building around Hafez al-Asad's tomb: "Oh Ye who Believe! Obey Allah and Obey is Prophet and those who are in authority among you!" This verse has been used by Muslim regimes and their Islamic

establishments for centuries to legitimize their rule and delegitimize rebellion against them,"
(Bar, 354). Clearly, despite his being an official Alawite, he did not allow this discrepancy to get
in the way of a unified front with an Islamic electorate.

Returning to the structure of his autocratic model, Bar cites Hafez al-Asad's aversion to
"groupthink"; in fact, he preferred to access opinions and information from his subordinates in
the format of direct one-on-one reporting of the latter to the president. Bar offers more insight
into this strategy of making himself the chief strategist and decision maker. "During the Hafez
al-Asad era the Ba'ath party lost the internal decision making mechanisms that existed in the pre-
regime Ba'ath. The party became an instrument for collecting information on the domestic
theatre and mobilizing support for the decisions that the leader took, but was not a real
participant in the decision-making process itself. True, all of the President's inner circle were
senior members of the party (almost always members of the Regional Command), but their input
in the decision-making process was not related to their formal party status, but due to their
membership in the president's "gang" (*jama'a)* fellow officers who were part of the original
junta that brought Asad to power, a bond stronger than Asad's ties with his brothers," (Bar, 355).
Despite strong ties with the jama'a officers that allowed Asad to wield such great power, their
ties to each other were relatively nominal. This centralization of power affected other formal
branches of power as well. Bar explains, "The Syrian regime maintains a powerless legislative
branch dominated by the Ba'ath party as part of the nominal "National Progressive Front." The
technocratic executive also is not a vehicle of power: those ministers who wield formal power
(for example, the minister of defense and the prime minister) do so not by dint of their
membership in the formal executive, but of their belonging to the informal inner circle, a *de facto*
"cabinet" of the president's main political, military and security advisers)," (Bar, 356). In order
understand the practical hierarchies created by Hafez Al-Asad's ruling, we may reference the
diagram below:

Diagram labels (top to bottom within triangle): ASAD, CLOSE ADVISORS, THE NOMENKLATURA, THE MILITARY AND SECURITY, THE BA'ATH PARTY

Asad
Autocratic micromanager
Personalit cult
Arab nationalist ideology
Cautious prinkmanship

Close advisors
Alawites, select Sunnis
Military officers
Personal Loyalty

The Nomenklatura
Privileged families
Patronage system
Social coalition

The Military and Security
Mutual checks
Presidential control

The Ba'ath Party
Instrument for public control,
not a decision making-party

Content published in Bar, 356

Despite the nominal nature of the legislative branch, Hafez al-Asad continued to regard the Syrian military as one of the primary mainstays of the regime. This rose out of the integrity of its various functions under the Ba'ath regime, including not only defense of the country in the face of Israeli, Turkish and, to a certain extent, Iraqi threats, but also domestic duties of counterterrorism and gathering intelligence on potential subversion (Bar). Bar again references the practical applications of this branch in the above diagram, "The Ba'ath party apparatus in the military and the civilian organs do not interact below the level of the Regional Congress, where the military has a number of seats, and, of course, in the Regional Command. This, however, is on a purely formal level. On the practical level, Syria has been under martial law since 1963. The military and the "civilian" *mukhabarat* have extensive powers in the civilian sector," (Bar, 357). The level to which Hafez al-Asad controlled the operations of the mokhabarat in relation to the party is impressive, as was the level to which he expected all heads of various apparatuses to answer to the president directly in all matter. Bar explains that this acted as a safeguard to the regime and prevented dissident activity. "In this context, any activity that calls for "de-Ba'athification" of the regime is viewed as subversive. There is, however, no indication that the policy of the apparatuses toward various expressions of dissident voices is officially determined in consultation with party bodies. Rather, there are indications that different agencies act on their own, according to their own reading of the threats to the regime implicit in a certain activity, and

according to their own interests," (Bar, 357). Not only did this require Hafez al-Asad to extend his powers beyond the typical powers of the presidency, but it also forced the president to gain close connections to people outside of societal hierarchies organizing peoples based on religion, politics or other status. "… the Syrian regime is the regime of a well-defined Syrian nomeklatura which is not exclusively Ba'athist, Alawite, or military. The description of an "Alawite" regime imposed on a Sunni country, for example, does not do justice to the complex relationship of the regime to the Alawite and the other communities (Sunni, Druze, Christian, Yazidis, and the Isma'ilis). The term Ba'athist regime implies party control of the state (along the lines of the Communist party in the former Soviet Union), which was not the case in Syria. A more accurate description of the Syrian regime would be a "confessional coalitionism," (Bar, 357). This system held Hafez al-Asad directly accountable not only to a Muslim majority, but also made him personally aware of the various contingencies among minority groups and strengthened his political relationships with these other realms as well. Within this complex web of relationships that Hafez aimed to establish, the Syrian regime was also arguably based on a complex patronage system that allowed Hafez to organize and prioritize issues. These patronage line may derive from a variety of relationships, and can include any of the following as outlined per Bar's essay:

1. Family power bases: These are particularly strong in the Alawite, Druze, and Isma'ili communities and in the rural Sunni milieu. They include extended family members, at least cousins and occasionally more distant relations. Frequently, these power bases are at odds with competing families (very frequently distant relatives) in the same area (Bar, 358)

2. Party/bureaucracy power bases: These include branches of the party. "popular organizations," bureaus, and so forth (Bar, 358)

3. Communal or region-based power bases: members of the "old guard" built their own power bases within their communities. This was done by channeling funds to their home areas or tribes and providing perks to those close to them. From the point of view of the leadership, the most important of these power bases are in Alawite areas, since they provide access to senior figures in the military and security forces

4. Military protégées: The members of the old guard, who headed the Syrian military and security services for years, still have former subordinates of high rank through whom they can wield influence (Bar, 358)

5. Economic power bases: almost all of the "old guard" have amassed fortunes, and they control different sectors of the Syrian economy. This form of influence is particularly significant in the case of Sunni nonmilitary leaders, who lack the two former channels of influence (Bar, 358)

6. Foreign relations: relationships with countries with leverage over the present leadership, such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, and France (Bar, 358)

Despite the immense range and complexity of these relationships, the predominant elements in the Syrian regime remain the inner circle of advisors surrounding the president. The inner circle usually included all the heads of security services and the military, a few political figures with personal experience, diplomatic abilities, or other personal traits that accord them added value in the eyes of the president (Bar). The members of the president's junta were in no way a surprise, as inner circle members correlated heavily with the president's "old boy's club"- fellow officers who were part of the original gang that brought Asad to power. "The strength of this bond was greater than that of Asad's family ties. The brothers Rifaat and Jamil al-Asad (the latter died in December 2004) were pushed aside at an early stage, while old comrades such as Mustafa Tlas and 'Abd al-Halim Khadam remained in power to supervise the transfer of authority to Bashar. These persons were both the main source of advice for the president and his main source of information on the issues under study," (Bar, 358). However, Hafez al-Asad held his allegiances close for calculated reasons. While the system prioritized his gang through political appointments, he felt that the system was indispensable for the wellbeing of the nation: to control the country, the president needed to guarantee the loyalty of various power brokers.

While the Syrian Ba'ath party represents a primarily Islamic electorate of Syria, its foundations are rooted an intellectually-deft branch devoted to Syrian nationalism. The secularism of the party is an important source of legitimacy for a diverse body of Islamic factions and non-Muslim Syrians. It can be argued that Asad himself subscribed to the philosophies of the Ba'ath party because it's apolitical and areligious nature gives him full control of Syrian politics as he sees fit. "The Ba'ath party portrays itself as the true representative of the masses in Syria. From the point of view of its presence among those masses, there is some justification for this claim. The number of members of the party in Syria is approximately 1.8 million, which accounts for about 18 percent of the adult population. Here the party is a vehicle for the maintenance of the nomenklatura. But it has not succeeded (or even made a serious effort) in

inculcating the Ba'ath ideology to wide strata of society," (Bar, 359). The Ba'ath party in fact originally arose as a middle-class movement, but was taken over by the military who viewed the middle class with suspicion. However, throughout years of the Ba'athis rule, a new middle class emerged, incorporating art of the old Syrian middle class and a new bourgeoisie, which grew under the Ba'ath regime and shared with the regime a vested interest in continued stability (Bar). Bar explains, "On a social level, the Ba'ath party is essentially a vehicle for social mobility and a patronage network for achieving perquisites form the regime. Since not all members of extended families are party members, this number can also be viewed as representing a larger number of citizens who enjoy privileges by dint of their party-member relatives. While this network is based on the party, it is actually a transformation of the model of the traditional "*zaïm*," networks prevalent in much of the Arab world and specifically in Syria and Lebanon- the old-style village boss or leader. The *zu'ama* play an intermediate role between the citizens and the state, taking their share of concessions, controlling monopolies, and blocking any competition. They respect each other's areas of control and have a common interest in preserving the system, (Bar, 359). However, more importantly, the secularism of the party truly acted as an important source of legitimacy. With about 25 percent of Syria's population identifying as non-Sunni Muslims (this including the Alawites, Druze and Isma'ilis) or non muslims (Christians), and another portion of the population identifying as Sunni non-Arabs (Kurds, Circassians, and Turkomans) who are traditionally less orthodox than Sunni Arabs, the Ba'ath secularism is a bulwark against Sunni domination and Islamic fundamentalism. This message was exploited by the regime domestically and in messages to foreign audiences to support its legitimacy, as the lesser of two evils (Bar). The party gained its footing in Syria in the 1940s as an Arab nationalist party advocating Arab unity, socialism and secular nonsectarianism. Bar explains, "The "nonsectarianism" of the party derived from French cultural influences, the preponderance of non-Muslims (Christians, Alawites and Druze) among the founders of the party, and the division into confessional communities of the population in Syria and Lebanon. The party grew in popularity and spread outside of the Levant during the heyday of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and the 1960s. The idealism of the early Ba'ath was demonstrated when it willingly dismantled itself to be part of the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) which merged Egypt and Syria with Egyptian President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser at the helm," (Bar, 360). The organizational principles of the Syrian Ba'ath party are based on the 'internal statue" (*nizam dakhili)* that was approved by the last

"national Congress" in July 1980. These principles closely resemble those of communist parties of the mid twentieth century. Bar describes these principles as:

1. A transnational superstructure, the "National Command" (analogous to the Comintern of the Communist Party);

2. Strict mechanisms for control of membership and stages of achieving full membership in the party;

3. A hierarchal structure, which duplicates itself in each level of the party (national, regional, and local);

4. Formal electoral mechanisms for representation of the roots of the party with checks and balances to guarantee the predominance of the party leadership; and

5. Committees and popular organizations for mobilization of the party membership, and mechanisms of "criticism" and "self criticism" to preserve ideological conformity (Bar, 360)

However, the pan-Arab elements of the party structure, like the revolutionarism of Ba'ath ideology have fallen into desuetude. "The party in Syria is typical of a ruling one-party regime. Its organs reflect organizational concepts of a small revolutionary party and of a transnational pa-Arab party. In fact, it is a Syrian party par excellence with only vestiges of atrophied formal bodies that maintain the "pan-Arab" character of the party," (Bar). Bar offers a more accurate reflection of the constituent bodies of the Syrian Ba'ath party as:

1. the National (Arab) Command
2. The Regional Secretary
3. The Regional command
4. Bureaus and Committees of the Regional Command
5. The central Committee
6. The regional Congress
7. Popular Organizations
8. Workers and professional Associations
9. Branches, Sub-Branches, Sections and Cells, and
10. The party in the military and security services (Bar, 360)

Much like the diagram of powers within the Hafez al-Asad regime presented earlier, the relationships between these various bodies is largely vertical and hierarchical with very few

perceptible horizontal relationships. In this same vein, there is no evidence of interministerial bodies composed of different bureaus or of ad hoc bodies dealing with a specific problem (Bar). Despite the rigidity of the structure Hafez al-Asad had surrounded himself with, the erosion of the fundamental ideologies of the Ba'ath pan-Arabism was evident early on in its split between the Syrian and Iraqi parties, and in the decline of the National Command. "In both the Syrian and the Iraqi 'Ba'ath' parties the ideological dimension became secondary and either country has there been any real intellectual activity for further development of Ba'ath ideology," (Bar, 361). Although the regime would still consider themselves to be subscribers to the Ba'ath doctrine, it was in fact a 'sloganized ideology, consisting of a limited number of dictums, most of which reflected the subordination of the doctrine to the particular leadership cult in each country and did not express real political doctrines. "Intellectual activity on ideological issues, to the extent that it continued to exist, was the territory of elder Ba'athists who eventually died out and the supporters of the party outside of Syria and Iraq, such as the proxy Ba'ath parties in Jordan and Lebanon," (Bar, 361). The rise to power of the Ba'ath in Syria (1963) and of Hafez al-Assad (1970) would bring about a transformation of the Syrian Ba'ath's view of the role of the party: from an elite "leading the masses" to an instrument for mass mobilization. This transformation would be reflected in the drive for mass recruitment of members, without the cautious balances that the party had established in its clandestine years, and in a marginalization of the ideology of the party. The latter trend towards a utilitarian and non-ideological party is evident in the neglect, during the decades of the Ba'ath rule in Damascus, of any real development of ideological texts of theories based in Ba'ath ideology (Bar). "This dearth of ideological activity stands in stark contrast to the importance that other ostensibly ideological regimes-particularly the Communist regimes of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the PRC-ascribed to study of ideological texts of Marxism-Leninism and the developing contemporary theories that could explain current affairs in a manner compatible with the ideology," (Bar, 361). However, this trend again can be linked to the pragmatic and Machiavellian autrocracy of Hafez al-Asad, and his desire to be as unfettered as possible by constraints outside of his control. This allowed the regime to maneuver freely, without ideological contradictions (Bar). "Prime examples are Syria's rejection of an almost total consensus among Arab states in the Iran-Iraq war: Ba'ath secular ideology and Arab identity notwithstanding, Damascus was almost alone among the Arabs in supporting Iran," (361). Bar also argues that the marginalization of the ideology allowed for a de facto

legitimization of Syrian nationalism as well. The Syrian Ba'ath was always more substantially rooted in "Syrianism" rather than "Arabism." Therefore. Syria's regional policies accord top priority to Syria's political interests, and the regime has promoted Syrian nationalism to the Arab Nation. Bar is able to further explain this concept through his contextualization, "The legacy of the Umayyads (661-750) and Salah ad-Din (d. 1193) is invoked to justify Syrian leadership, at least in the territory considered *Bilad al-sham* (the country of Syria) or *Suriya al-Kubra* (Greater Syria). Consequently, the Syrian regime has never reconciled itself to complete independence of its neighbors-Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine," (Bar, 361). While outwardly, the "pan-Arabist" term remained engrained in the rhetoric of the Ba'ath party, the word "Arab would become more and more of a code word for Syria. The overt-emphasis would also serve in the regime's interests, as outlined by Bar:

1. Domestically- to discourage signs of localism and sectarianism, on one hand, and to obfuscate the sectarian nature of the Alawite-led regime, as the other.

2. Outwards to the Arab world- the implicit message is that Syria is willing to sacrifice its own local interests for those of the Arab nation," and it will prefer the interests of other Arabs over any other circle of association that Syria may be in (Islamic, nonaligned). However, it expects other countries to do the same. This the ideology is translated into a demand that Arab countries respect Syria's vital interests as defined by Damascus. When these encompass such wide ranging issues such as Lebanon and Israeli-arab conflict, this position, when accepted, provided Syria with disproportional regional status. In practical terms, this allowed Syria to demand and receive across-the-board Arab recognition of its own vested interests in Lebanon and vis-à-vis Israel. This was expressed in Arab League summits and Syria's leverage over other Arabs in the international arena," (Bar, 362).

It is no surprise that Ba'ath ideology did not adapt to a primarily Muslim electorate due to its philosophical origins of quintessential secularism; Islam is, rather than a source of contingency of Arabism, a force that woke the latent potential of Arabs, and having fulfilled its role, is no longer necessary as a driving force-that role having been taken over by secular nationalism. Bar describes, "The ideology of the Syrian Ba'ath is a mélange of nineteenth-century nationalism and twentieth-century humanistic idealism. The main tenets of this ideology were forged by its founders Michel Aflaq, Zaki al-Arsuzi, and the Salah al-Bitar during the 1940s in the heyday of nationalism, anticolonialism, and socialism," (Bar, 363). While Hafez al-

Assad branded his leadership with a unique unity that would never surface in Syrian government again, it is clear in this respect how there grew a disjointed unity among ba'athist rule and Islamists during the rule of the less politically-savvy Bashar. Bar details the slogan of the Ba'ath party for our further analysis, stating, "The slogan of the Ba'ath is 'Unity, Freedom, Socialism.' This slogan encapsulates the main tenets of the party (to be detailed below):

1. Arab Unity- the belief in the natural unity of the Arab nation
2. Freedom from 'imperialist' and 'colonialist' yokes, implying not only political but also cultural emancipation from western influences (as liberally defined by the party so as to purge only those influences that they object to) and economic self-reliance
3. Socialism-a tenet which should be interpreted according to a particular brand of Ba'ath socialism, based ostensibly on "Arab" traditions
4. Other tenets include modernism, equality of the sexes, and human rights (albeit honored in all Ba'ath regimes more in the breach than in the observance)" (Bar, 363).

This unique wave of democratic style politics in the Middle East was undeniably deeply at odds with the conservative Islamic cultures that it would fail to assimilate with, even at such superficial levels as the party slogan, especially at the third and fourth point of Bar's analysis. Socialism, while based on Arab traditions, is fundamentally at odds with the fundamental Islamic idea of government, and by extension, political economy, would grow out of Islamic teachings, rather than adopting a foreign economic system. The fourth point, including modernist beliefs, though adopted by many Islamic cultures, would prove at odds with modern Islamist movements, preaching a combative brand of Islamist political values that grew out of the Medinan half of the Quran, citing the success of medieval Islamic conquest through the ruthlessness of its political and social rule. To further expand on this notion, Bar cites Michel Aflaq, who tended to equate religion in general with the traditional social and economic order that the party had vowed to topple, and with oppression of the weak and wide-scaled corruption. "In his words: '…the oppressed who see religion in this era a weapon that the oppressors rely upon…those who exploit the corrupt situation exploit this corruption (ie religion) because it drugs the people and because it prevents the people from a revolution against its oppressors and its enslavers.' This secularism was evident in the 'Declaration of Principles' that the party published when it assumed power in 1960; it determined that "the educational policy of the party is to create a new power in 1960; it

determined that 'the educational policy of the party is to create a new generation of Arabs that believes in the unity of the nation and eternity of its mission.' The secularism of the Ba'ath was even more emphasized in the ideological//pre-Asad era," (Bar, 364-365). This secularization did not come as a surprise, taking into account the fact that the ideological founder, Michel Aflaq- was not a Muslim but Greek Orthodox. The only way that non-Muslim Arabs would be able to integrate into an ideal of the united Arab world would be under a secular ideology. By this logic, Ba'athism would have to be born a quintessentially secular movement. "Arabism" is not contingent on, or the result of, Islam, but rather was inherent in the Arabs before Islam. Islam was a force that woke the latent potential of the Arabs, and having fulfilled its role, is no longer necessary as a driving force-that role having been taken over by secular nationalism," (Bar). Understanding this transition is integral to understanding the Ba'ath concept of freedom, which refers not to individual freedoms or civil rights, as is often interpreted by the West, but rather the liberation of the Arab nation as a collective from the domination of the West (including that of Zionism and the State of Israel) and the constraints that have been imposed upon its self-determination and self-expression by Western colonialism, as a pre-requisite for fulfilling its national potential and unity. Bar also argues that the third element in the Ba'athist slogan, "socialism," is the economic conclusion of the two former elements. However, as stated prior, the economic doctrine of the Ba'ath in practice eschewed private enterprise and called for a state directed economy, much like the USSR. Bar further elaborates on this contingency. "The attitude of the Ba'ath to Islam is complex. Islam is viewed as an instrument for providing legitimacy to the regime, but rejected as a core identity in lieu of the Arab one. This is expressed in the efforts that the regime invested in achieving Islamic legitimacy for the Alawites; demonstrated observance by Hafez Al-Asadof orthodox Islamic rituals such as the lesser pilgrimate (*'umrah*, the pilgrimage to Mecca not in the *haj* season) to Mecca; participation in prayers in Sunni mosques and fasting during Ramadan; promotion of Islamic culture such as Qur'an reading and building of mosques; and the use of Islamic terminology to mobilize public support of the leader, (Bar, 366). Despite these initiatives to allow the Ba'athist regime to remain malleable and mold to the values of the Islamic electorate, the Ba'ath regime also clearly distanced itself from the populist radical interpretation of Islam. Bar further explains this complex connection in terms of its political realities. "Obviously, the option of aligning with

the radical Muslim Brotherhood was never an option, since the fundamentalist movement would never accept an Alawite as a bona fide Muslim. The party position on Islamic issues attempted to reconcile the political need for Islamic legitimacy on one hand with its secular ideology, the impracticality of an Alawite leader representing the orthodox Islamic mores, and the leader's secular and modernist bent on the other hand. The result is a unique Syrian Ba'ath interpretation of Islam tailored to legitimize a non-Sunni leader of a Sunni state and to delegitimize the radical Islamist opposition," (Bar, 366). Despite these various oppositions, Hafez al-Asad branded his Syrian leadership with a unity that has not been successfully replicated. By acknowledging these inconsistencies, Hafez may have been able to reach a broader electorate by speaking to its constituency in terms of their core values, rather than plaguing the nation with demagoguery. "Hafez al-Asad is quoted in an official Ba'ath text as supporting a "universalistic interpretation of religion: 'Even if we disagree about the road that leads to Allah, the important thing is (that this is) Allah and that we all worship him. It is not the right of anyone to impose on the other his path to Allah…Allah is for all and he regards all men as equal…every human is free how he prays, how he worships and how he sees Allah," (Bar, 366). The unique secular nationalism was perhaps not the most condusive to Islam, but as long as Hafez was able to communicate his objectives in line with the majority Islamic electorate, his policies would be regarded with unparalleled success.

Chapter 4

Historical Narrative III: The Fight Against Terror in Syria

In this third and final historical narrative, we may begin to examine the recent transgressions of Syrian politics in relation to modern American diplomacy. The modern condition of Syria's fall to global terror networks was undoubtedly primed by several destabilizing actions taken by the United States in its proxy wars against the Soviet Union in the 1950s, as witnessed in the second historical narrative. Since this period, however, American politics and ambitions for the Middle East have evolved tremendously, with an increasing interest in maintaining a balance of powers in the region and battling Islamist groups, both peaceful and violent, that are becoming increasingly hostile towards the West. While undeniably the United States has set itself up for a distrustful relationship with Syria and the greater Middle East region, this does not mean we have exhausted all diplomatic strategies for dealing with the escalating situation. Learning from the repercussions of our past misconduct in the region, the West, and the larger international community, can now begin to address strategies for putting democratic governments back into the hands of Syrians.

Bashar Al-Asad Courts Islamism

Relying largely on the help of his father's inner circle, Bashar's first initiative after the inheritance of his father's reign is a controlled democratization process; however, Bashar's definition of Syrian democratization lies in encouraged involvement of people in promoting the country's growth according to the plans of the regime, not in defining the very identity or nature of the regime. At the first signs of dissemblance of unity during this period of "civil society," Bashar cracks down on political dissent in fear of Syria's potential fall to the hands of Islamic extremist groups. Bar recounts that over six years after his death, Hafez al-Asad's legacy is still plainly evident in the structure and workings of the regime he founded. Between the Assad family, the "old guard" of military officers and party bureaucrats, and the checks and balances of

various security services, the role of the Alawite community, and the involvement of the portions of the Sunni elite, much of his legacy endured. Despite these similarities, there were also a number of fundamental decades. Bar describes, "Over the decades, the regime's apparatus served more as an instrument for the implementation of policy than a mechanism for policy formation. Under Bashar, however, this apparatus has taken an increasingly pivotal role in the formulation of decisions," (Bar, 367). This transition from the president operating as point person in all respects to one that delegated the right to come to their own decisions shook the Syrian administration to its core. Bar would argue that his stature as president would come to be handicapped by factors inherent in the process that brought him to power. First, "His arrival at power not by his own manipulation of power within the regime but by the will of his dead father (in a country in which all previous leaders since independence have come to power by coups of one sort or another;" Second, "The fact that he was not his father's original choice for succession," (his deceased older brother, the more inherently charismatic and politically savvy of the two, was indisposed); Third, "the relatively limited-in time and scope- period of political apprenticeship, particularly the lack of real military training or experience;" and finally, The presence within the regime of a formidable "old guard" which, by virtue of having been privy to the wills and ways of the late father and president for a longer period than Bashar himself had, wields 'moral weight,'" (Bar, 368). These four points worked not only to delegitimize Bashar's reign in the eyes of his father's structure of close advisors- these being the same men that worked closely to bring Hafez himself to power- but also in the eyes of the public as the weakening of the president's stronghold on policy decisions reflected a weakening in the status of the presidency itself. A new staff would also shake the public's confidence in young Bashar's teetering presidency. "Since Bashar took power, the majority (over sixty percent) of the officials of the regime, party, and local government and members of Parliament had been replaced by younger figures. This was implemented primarily through imposed retirement of officials over the age of sixty. This turnover stood in stark contrast to the three decades of stagnant stability under Hafez al-Asad. This process was particularly evident in the Ba'ath party, where the majority of representatives to the Tenth Party Congress were new faces," (Bar, 371). Rejuvinating the cabinet in order to achieve Bashar's own policy objectives, which arguably could have been more in tune with the trajectory of Syrian politics than Hafez's aging institution, would have been a political strategy worth investigating in its merits; however, his detractors

point out that these changes were aimed more at appointing people who would owe their positions to Bashar than facilitating real reform by rejuvenation of the regime. They were not people from outside the *acien regime*, but rather younger members of the regime who had climbed the ladders of hierarchy but been blocked by the lack of mobility at the top (Bar). However, Bashar did project a genuine desire for governmental reform. Bar explains, "Unlike his father, who saw the economy as secondary to national political goals, Bashar subscribes to an "economo-centric" view of politics. He recognizes he priority of modernizing Syria's economy and is aware that to do so he must gain the goodwill of the West. This entails creating a functional bureaucracy to replace of the feudal system that thrived under his father," (Bar, 371). Putting the goodwill of the west in the forefront of his policy objectives would again radically shape his presidency in different ways than the rein that his father had established. Perhaps even more radical was his choice to go on record formally supporting a "democratization process" in Syria and frequently has mentioned 2007 elections as key to the next major stage in this process. Bar explains, "Bashar's accession therefore raised expectations both inside Syria and in the international community for a "white revolution" of democratization and liberalization in the country, Once the intelligentsia felt that there was a chink in the ideological uniformity of the regime and that the regime had lost its will, undercurrents of diversity came to the fore," (Bar, 371). This idea would give birth to what was popularly known as the "Damascus Spring" of 2001- an outburst of the hitherto suppressed intellectual and civil society circles, particularly in Damascus, and the founding of a large number of "clubs" for political debate (Bar). However, there were also a number of indications that Bashar's concept of a Syrian democracy would lack many of the essential elements of the Western paradigm of democracy. "Bashar's 'Syrian // democracy' must be founded on Syrian history, culture and 'personality.' In Bashar's eyes, 'Freedom and democracy are only instruments, just like stability. The goal is progress and growth.' Along with this definition of the 'proactive' goal of the regime, the 'defensive' goal is preservation of 'unity' and 'stability.' Popular participation is manifested in the involvement of the people in promoting the country's growth according to the plans of the regime, not in defining the very identity or nature of the regime. The instruments for popular participation are the same ones that the regime used for decades for effecting social control," (Bar, 371-372). This fascinating dichotomy would further inform Bashar's apparent view that Syria is much too fragile for an "instant democracy," and opening the door wide for freedom of speech would be

tantamount to permitting intercommunal conflict and chaos. "Since the 'unity' and 'cohesion' of the people and the stability of the nation are the loftiest of national values and goals, the charge against members of the opposition is that they impinge on these very values in the service of foreign enemies of Syria," (Bar, 372). Bashar would come to struggle with this simultaneous interest in modernizing Syria and delegating many historically presidential decisions to the Old Guard. With much of his power slipping between his fingers, his policies would begin to be seen as intellectually suppressive rather than modern. This awkward process of pseudo democratization would result in a civil unrest that Islamist political groups could come to capitalize on. Bar explains, "Western sponsorship of a Syrian 'civil society' is presented as an attempt to replace the indigenous Syrian 'civil society,' based on government-regulated clubs and charities and tribal institutions, with a foreign concept. The result of such chaos will not be a victory of liberal forces that the West is trying to sponsor, but of radical Islamic forces that are lying in wait to take advantage of a breakdown of the regime. The decades of Algeria since the early 1990s and the civil war in Lebanon and Iraq after the fall of the Ba'ath regime are cited to prove the folly of uncontrolled democratization," (Bar, 372). This undercurrent of disobedience, though nowhere near the chaotic state we may observe today, could be seen as the cataclysmic beginnings of what would be dubbed a political disaster by United States officials, though these actors would be in no way unaware of the struggles beginning to overtake Bashar's reign. The Damascus Spring would draw to a close in less than a year, though it would soon be followed by what would be known as the Damascus Winter of January 2002, with the arrest of Syrian intellectuals and parliamentary backbenchers (Bar). However, Bar would argue that the nature of the renewed suppression was different from that which Syria knew in the past. "…Instead of summary arrest and disappearances of dissidents the regime initiated public trials, albeit with forged evidence and predetermined verdicts, but open and with ostensible legal defense and media cover. In doing so it appears that the regime felt that it could ward off some of the international criticism of its actions," (Bar, 373). Although Bashar may have seen these forged trials as a way to control his public relations among influential global powers, this crackdown on his father's "civil society" would come accompanied by a declared "reactivation" of the Ba'ath party, where members of the regional command council were sent to mobilize support for the regime's actions. This reactivation of the party would be come to seen as a fairly transparent cry for help; it was no less a central instrument for augmenting his legitimacy. "Unlike his father,

Bashar relies on party and needs to coopt it. Moreover, the party plays an important role in Bashar's sociopolitical worldview; he perceives it as occupying the societal space that the civil-society movement claims for itself. Therefore, revitalization of the party is not a mere propaganda ploy but an attempt to replace the civil-society movement with a government-controlled "civil society," (Bar, 372). This government controlled Civil Society movement may be seen as an abrupt half liberalization process, which analysis sympathetic to Bashar and his reformist credentials have linked to four main explanations. One of these is the pressures the president receives from the "old guard" and the Ba'ath party, who feared a Gorbachev syndrome and demanded an immediate halt to the growing threat. Many of the analysis who cite this pressure as an important explanation for the half liberalization process refer to ultimatums that the old guard has issued to the president. Another major argument is unilateral and unauthorized action on the part of security forces, which forced a fait accompli on the president without first obtaining his consent. Third, Bashar himself initiated steps against the reformists in order to ingratiate himself with the old guard, hoping to win its support and consolidate his power and then implement further reforms. Finally, the rise of Ariel Sharon to power in Israel, which strengthened the hardliners in Damascus, who Bashar then had to accommodate (Bar). Bar argues, however, that these versions do not do justice to Bashar's own vested interest in the survival and continuity of the regime in its existing form. He offers an alternate version which has become more and more accepted by most Syria waters and opposition, including, "(1) Bashar believed he could open the door to incremental reforms and did not expect the groundswell of demands for full civil liberties. Bashar had understood the need for instruments of political expression as means for "letting off steam," but not as a form of popular participation in government. Neither Bashar nor the rest of the elite were prepared for the rapid spread of demands for increasing freedom and the growing willingness to criticize the regime, enabled by breaking of the 'Complex of Fear," (Bar, 373). This lack of understanding of what opening the floodgates would provoke in terms of the dismantling of the regime by the populace would become a common characteristic cited in American literature citing reasons for the devolution of Syria. Bashar cites his second reason, "(2) The crackdown reflected Bashar's core believes that the direction that civil society took was incompatible with the vital interests of the regime and its survival," (Bar, 373). American literature is also beginning to commonly cite this reason for the decay of the Bashar regime. While Bashar attempted to use government controlled Civil Society

as a means for uniting a populace in increasing disarray and dissent, the fundamental issue was still present; despite the steps that Bashar took after the fact in order to quell increasing political opposition, he had, for a brief moment, allowed an undercurrent of reality to surface and become a part of public political discourse, despite his attempts to shut it down afterwards. Bar also explains, "(3) The revitalization of the party at this stage also is commensurate with Bashar's own statements that the public desire for participation, which was manifested in the breakout of the civil-society movement, could be satisfied by adjustments in the political structure of the Ba'ath party and the PNF," (Bar, 373). Again, this retroactive work would do little in terms of addressing the reality of a rising undercurrent of dissent. The author also cites, "(4) The attempts to create as semblance of due process of law in arrests and indictment of oppositionist figures does not represent an acceptance of the principle of separation of branches of government, but rather a shift from openly arbitrary authoritarianism to institutionalized authoritarianism," (Bar, 373). Not only was semblance of due process blatantly superficial to the public that instigated this rise of oppositional framework, but it represented a reality about their government that was far more incriminating than the trials themselves: Bashar's meddling in criminal charges against these protests was symbolic of a shift from Hafez al-Asad's point-person policies to a more formalized form of authoritarianism that would further provoke participants of the Damascus Spring. Finally, Bar describes, "(5) the slogans of the Bashar al-Asad period in Syria, 'change within the framework of continuity' and and 'reform and development,'-are indicative of these domestic priorities," (Bar, 373). The shift away from Hafez al-Asad's fundamental domestic policies was not only an opportunity to reinvigorate the regime and introduce young players that would prove more loyal to Bashar than the old guard: it was a fundamental movement that Bashar had created but rarely grasped himself. In conclusion, Bar explains, "…he is not a 'closet reformer' held hostage in the hands of an 'old guard,' but views political liberalization (as opposed to economic 'opening) as foreign, if not an existential threat to the regime," (Bar, 374). Shortly after taking control of his late father's regime, it was made clear to the Syrian population that Bashar had made several fundamental mistakes in his judgement of how his policies would impact the public relations of the regime; what is more telling, however, is that the United States allowed Bashar to slowly sink, as opposed to removing him all together by another covert operation. The initiatives of liberalization, though largely failed as described through Bar's major points, was in-line with America's republican vision of freeing Middle Eastern States from

dictatorial rule. It would become a common pattern that while the United States did not allow the Bashar al-Asad regime to collapse completely (which would at times surface as a costly endeavor), Bashar was largely sympathetic to American values of democratization and would continue to fight for those values as whatever cost to the public relations of his own regime.

Despite Bashar's failure at a controlled democratization of Syria upon seizing power, he surrounded himself with fresh, young faces of the Ba'ath party; unfortunately, these leaders have demonstrated very little in common with the reformist identities of revolutionary youths This evolution of persons in power in Syria would falsely be perceived by the United States as an opportunity to reinvigorate the regime with liberal and democratic values; however, they would serve as little more than pawns in Bashar's complex, failing regime structure. Hafez al-Asad's old guard was subsequently pushed aside, and the regime witnessed a gradual coming of age of a young guard. While in the eyes of the West this would work as a positive step forward towards liberalization of the regime, the shift from the old guard to the new elite surrounding Bashar al-Asad disrupted the traditional patronage networks. Bar explains, "The younger generation of those same families, however, feel and demonstrate much less of an affinity to their ancestral homes or even their 'Alawite' identity; Bashar and Maher are both married to Sunni women, as are the sons of Msutafa Tlas and other 'sons of bosses,'" (Bar, 383). Within this young guard, the author comes to define four main groups. These main groups could be defined as, first, "Sons and daughters of the 'old guard.' These 'princelings' were born into privilege and learned from their fathers the arts of wielding power in order to gain further privilege," (Bar, 384). While intrinsically connected to the old guard regime, this offered an opportunity for Bashar to reinvigorate the regime with new members without completely losing the political savvy of the old guard that Bashar took so much stock in. Secondly, "The 'second generation' within the military and security apparatuses. Prominent among these are Alawite officers who came under Bashar's command in the Republican Guard, along with various senior officers in the military who were promoted by Bashar," (Bar, 384). This would again provide Bashar with new allegiances without compromising the integrity of the Old Guard military apparatus. Another group defined by Bar is defined as, "The young generation of the civilian branch of the Ba'ath party. These are party members who owe the rapid advance in their position to their association with Bashar. Many of them were educated in the West and support measured change in the party in order to guarantee the survival of the regime," (Bar, 384). This would again come to the great

approval of Western powers seeking to replace Hafez al-Asad authorities with Western-and specifically American-sympathies to achieve Middle Eastern liberalization and democratization. In fact, many of these western-educated academics would become associated with Bashar before he became president. Many of them came into Bashar's orbit during the last decade after he became 'heir apparent,' and would be classified, largely, as western-mainly American and British educated academicians with postgraduate degrees and an academic track record in institutions abroad, many of them in areas of economy and social sciences. Particularly, many of them would also stem from Bashar's association with the Syrian Computer Society and would be counted among his circle of friends (Bar). Bar summarizes the main differences between the two "guards" below:

Old Guard	New Guard
First generation forught for power	Second generation, born into privilege
Personal loyalty to Hafez al-Asad	Less personal loyalty, vested interests
Used to an autocratic micromanager	Used to consultation and consensus
Centralist decision making	De-centralization of decision making
Clear definition of authority	Ambiguity of authority
Little familiarity with Western culture	Educated in the US and UK
Socialist-Arab Nationalists	Ideological Pragmatists
Support state controlled economy	Support wider private economy
Military Technocrats, experienced war and defeat	Academic technocrats; no experiences with war

Table content published in Bar, 384

Bar further claims that the middle ranks of the Ba'ath party face also undergo a massive "face lift" since Bashar Al-Assad came to power. The author explains, "This process is evident from the composition of the institutions on a national level (…the use of the word 'national' refers to Syria and not the Ba'athist use of 'National' to signify Pan-Arab institutions of the party: The Regional Command, the Central Committee, and the Regional Congress). Many of these are 'second generation' Ba'athists who grew up with the privileges of belonging to families with close links to the centers of power," (Bar, 384). Bar uses the following data to break down Bashar al-Asad's associates into these groups:

THE ASAD FAMILY	MILITARY	(NON FAMILY) BUSINESS SECTOR	YOUNG BA'ATHISTS	THE SYRIAN COMPUTER SOCIETY	WESTERN EDUCATED ACADEMICIANS
Maher Al-Asad	Fouad Nassif Kheir-Bek	Firas Tias	Haytham Satayhi	Sami al-Khiyami	Abdallah Daradari
Asef Shawkat	Manaf Tias	Ayman 'Abd al-Nur	Ayman 'abd al-Nur	Imad Mustafa	Nabil Sukkar
Bushra al-Asad	Mohamad Mansoura	Samir Seifan	Butheina Sha'aban	Mahir al-Mujahid	Riad al-Abrash
Assma al-Asad		Jihad & Jamai Khaddam	Iyad Ghazai	Sa'adallah Awa al-Kallah	Ghasan al-Rifa'l
Rami & Makhluf			Majed Shadoud	Hasan Risha	Sa'adallah al-Qala
Dhu al-Himma & Asef Shaleesh			Ghiyab Barakat	Muhammad Bashir al-Munaijad	Buthaina Sha'aban
Numeir al-Asad			Balid al-Bouz		Muhammad al-Hussein

Table content published in Bar, 384

The repercussions of introducing the new guard on formal changes in ideological axioms or traditional slogans have until recently been rarely discussed. Bar attributes this to the ideological conservatism and a sense of irrelevance of the ideology. Therefore, the debate regarding reform focused not on the credo of the party, but rather on its practical application. He would also claim that practical reforms in the party itself have been marginal. "They include more freedom in elections on the local level of the party, instructions (July 2004) to the media to refer to party members as "Mr." and not as "comrade" (*rafiq*) and so forth. Open discussion of ideological reform has increased since Bashar al-Asad came to power, and was particularly explicit during the period leading up to the 10th Regional Congress (June 2005). Since then, the demands for reform within the party have died down, or at least are not voiced in official party organs," (Bar, 385). This reformist trend within the Ba'ath party is on one hand clearly identified with the younger generation, but most of those who are identified as reformists belong to the young guard, and not all of those identified as members of the young guard are in favor of those reforms. Bar explains, "There is no indication that the younger members of the Ba'ath

nomeklatura- the Asad family or the second generation of the original leaders of the regime-favor reforms that would divest them of their privileges and economic monopolies they control. The young generation of the military and the *mokhabarat* also has shown no evidence that they are in favor of true economic or political reform," (Bar, 385). In fact, the author would argue that the reformist trend within the party is represented mainly by the second-tier younger party members who have recently climbed the ladders of the hierarchy (branch heads and members of the Central Committee and of the Regional Congress), but have been blocked by the lack of mobility at the top. Also, in many cases, the reformists within the party are transitive political actors of senior and powerful party members and enjoy political latitude by virtue of their protection (Bar). Bar cites several of these cases, including, "Iyad Ghazal, the reformist-minded director of Syria Rail, is the son of the governor of Deraa and apparently enjoys his protection; Bilal Hasan Turkemani is the son of Defense Minister Hasan Turkemani; Nabil "amran is the son of the powerful Alawite "Amran clan of the Haddadin tribe; and Ayman 'Abd al-Nur is also a second generation Ba'ath member, who became active in the party thanks to his father," (Bar, 386). The author would argue that these Ba'ath reformists do not represent an internal party phenomenon alone but rather should be seen in the context of the mushrooming Civil Society movement (harakat al-mujtama' al-madani), which emerged very shortly after Bashar came to power (the Damascus Spring that began in early 2001) and was suppressed in the winter of 2001 (the Damascus Winter). Bar notes, "on one hand there is no doubt that Bashar is close to many of the reformists, particularly those affiliated with the Syrian Computer Society. Many of these, though, are academicians who are not active in the part or even are not party members. Even those reformists who are party activists are mid-level members without large constituencies and without patronage networks of their own. So even if Bashar likes their ideas, many of them are impractical on a political level. This is because, at the end of the day, implementation of ideas in the Syrian regime requires the support of the bureaucracy, which believes it will be damaged by reforms and modernization," (Bar, 387). While the United States allowed apparent devolution of Syrian politics to take place under their watch, it clearly held high hopes from reform within which would come to be widely impractical. This allowed for Bashar's government to disintegrate into chaos despite his efforts, and United States did little to prop-up this failure in hopes that it would recover on its own merits of liberalizing the government elites.

Syria may present itself as a monolithic state and society; however, the image of stability belies reality, where identifications with ethnic or religious communities hold stronger than ties to an Arab-Syrian Nationalism. Bar aptly illustrates that Syria presents to the world, but less convincingly to the Syrian public, the image of monolithic state and society. He writes, "The refrain of "national unity" and references to the citizens of the country as "brothers" or "family" are ubiquitous. They appear in speeches, in official slogans, and in the daily press. The regime does not allow expressions of communal identity to find their way into the media; the people of Syria are the "Syrian Arab People." However, despite decades of enforced unity, Syria remain a country divided according to communal lines. The stability that the country enjoyed for decades has been along an "equality of misery." That is, citizens within Syria knew that they were all equally oppressed by the regime and that such suppression was the lot of citizens of other neighboring countries (Iraq)- or alternatively, the citizens of other countries, such as Lebanon, suffering from endemic instability" (Bar, 391). While the Syrian government attempts to propagate this image of stability, the reality of increasing instability is known to all Syrians. The author refers to this reality through the term "communalism" (ta-ifraya) or the primary (or even exclusive) identification of the individual with his ethnic or religious community. This schism is made evident in a number of social indicators, such as the low rate of intermarriages and intermingling-even within the cities- and in a general sense of acrimony among different communities. This sense of hostility among cultural lines is a serious threat to stability against the regime. Although it is not accompanied by widespread violence, there is a general sense in the country of decay of the regime and disintegration of authority (Bar). Bar is able to point to specific indicators of these threats to stability within several ethnic groups. With respect to Sunnis, he writes, "In its early days the Ba'ath regime formed a coalition with the rural Sunni elites, deposing the urban Sunni elites from their traditional predominance in Syrian society. This however has changed. First, many of the "rural elites" have become the party of the new urban elite; second, the regime gradually widened its base among the Sunnis and coopted many of the rich Sunni families," (Bar, 396). In addition to this shift of loyalties, the Sunni tribes of Eastern Syria have been sidelined during the decades of the Hafez al-Asad regime, but Bashar has stood in sharp contrast to this policy. Bashar is reputed to have made an attempt to cultivate their loyalty. "This policy began even before the US occupation of Iraq, but has accelerated since then. The prospects of a breakup of Iraq into Shi'ite Kurdish, and Sunni areas would leave the

Iraqi tribes with a stronger dependence on the Syrian tribes. The Syrian tribes participated in the monthly meetings of the Iraqi tribes and Ba'athists in Damascus from October 2003 and on, and in December 2004 Bashar himself honored the meeting with his presence," (Bar, 396). The Druze, Isma'ilis, Christians and Kurds, although a minority group as compared to a Sunni majority, enjoy a special status under the Ba'ath Alawite regime. The Druse and Isma'ilis are particularly noted as being well-integrated into the military and bureaucracy, whereas the Christians and Kurds play a pivotal role in the economy. Bar describes that all of these communities have something to lose by the fall of the regime, particularly if the alternative is a Sunni-possibly Islamist-regime that would not safeguard their status and would impose Sunni Islam on the heterodox Islamic sects of relegate them to second class citizenship. "The Druze and the Isma'ilis are, like the Alawaites, a heterodox Shi'ite sect which has been coopted into the regime. The Druze of Syria mainly hail from the Golan and the Lebanese border and have no history of clashes with the Alawite neighbors in the northwestern part of the country. The rivalry was manifested in bloody clashes between Isma'ilis and Alawites in the towns of Qadmous and Misyaf in mid-2005, which resulted in attacks on Alawite houses and stores," (Bar, 396). With respect to Islam and Islamic opposition, the twenty years after the suppression of rebellion of the Muslim Brotherhood in northern Syria has indicated a discernable dift of Syria towards Islam. Bar writes, "This trend is characterized by a return to the mosque, both as a reaction to the regime and as way to deal with the difficult//economic situation. The return to Islam is manifest in the wearing of traditional dress, in the plethora of Islamic book stores that have cropped up in Damascus and other cities, and in the growth of Islamic Institutes (600 new institutes for memorizing Quran and madrasas) founded under the auspices of the regime in the time of Hafez al-Asad as a counterbalance to the Muslim Brotherhood. Another salient phenomenon is the large number of Syrian families that receive charity from Islamic NGOs (estimated at about seventy-five thousands)," (Bar, 400-401). The author also describes that although it is at times difficult to distinguish between the warnings of the Syrian regime that its downfall would bring to power radical Islamic governments and the real threat that Islamism poses to Syria, but is seems that one of the main modivators of Islamic radicalism in Syria is the legitimacy crisis that stems from the Alawite nature of the regime. "Whereas radical Islamists in other Muslim countries had to prove the individual deviation of their rulers or regimes in order to warrant declaring them as infidels (and hence, legitimizing rebellion), viewing the Alawites as non-

Muslims provides adequate justification for rebellion. Therefore, from an early stage the Asad regime set as one of its primary objectives boosting its Islamic credentials and the Islamic legitimacy of the Alawites in general," (Bar, 401). Overwhelmingly, the main Islamist force in Syria has historically been the Muslim Brotherhood, whose movement was involved in a blood uprising against the regime in the late 1980s and early 1980s, which resulted in the regimes crackdown in the north of the country and the total destruction of large parts of the city of Ham'ah in Gebruary 1982, with estimated tens of thousands of civilians killed. In fact, the ideolog y of the Brotherhood has at the time based its rejection of the regime on the grounds of being takfir (declaring as heretics). Years after it was totally uprooted in Syria, the movement began to reach an accommodation with the regime and many of its exiled leaders returned to Syria, while others drifted away from the focus on Syria (Bar). "Today, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood officially has renounced the use of violence against the regime and is attempting to create a public image that may facilitate its integration in the political process of the country, either in the course of 'democratization' of the present regime, or in the wake of its fall and the rise of a coalition of opposition forces. After Bashar took office the MB made efforts to reach out to him. In May 2001, the group prepared a "National Honour Pact," accepting the democratic process and, for the first time, recognizing the regime's legitimacy," (Bar, 401). While attempting to project a moderate image, the Muslim Brotherhood focuses on four main issues, including violence (the Muslim Brotherhood leadership reiterates that it has renounced violence), willingness to accept a democratic regime in Syria, retraction of the takfir of the Alawites, willingness to accept the Islamic legitimacy of the Sufi trends, which are relatively strong in Syria, and refraining from calling for the destruction of Israel or taking anti-Semitic positions. However, the author describes that it is not clear to what extent these positions, which are expressed in the Political Program of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and in interviews with the exiled leader of the movement, 'Ali Sader a-Din Bayanouni, are widely accepted by the rank and file of the movement or to what extent the mainstream of the Muslim Brotherhood represents the majority of the Islamic tendency inside Syria. Additionally, the Islamist trend is not solely domestically grown in Syria. Bar points out the unique double standard of the regime by openly supporting Palestinian Hamas and Jihad and Lebanese Hezbollah, while suppressing its own Islamist forces and by identification with the al Qaeda attacks on the United States. Meanwhile, since the fall of Hafez al-Asad, and increasingly wince the fall of the Iraqi regime, the infiltration

of anti-Alawite and anti-Shi'ite Wahhabi elements into Syria has intensified. Bar describes, "These elements find resonance in the north of the country, which was the heart of the Muslim Brotherhood rebellion of the 1980s. The weakening of the regime will contribute to the ascendancy of these elements. At the same time, the traditional Muslim Brotherhood of Syria remains a potential force, both as claimants for national leadership-if and when the regime falls-as rivals of the even more radical Wahhabis," (Bar, 402). Despite these apparent biases and disunities among the internal elements of the regime, the United States has shifted its stance on Islamist policies. While the rise of Wahhabi networks was no less encouraged in Saudi Arabia-in addition to other aforementioned Islamist networks that functioned in opposition to Marxist ideals in the past- the United States began to take an anti-Islamist stance as these networks began to flourish in Syria, effectively undermining the Asad regime.

It appears that Bashar seems to subscribe to a foreign policy strategy that supports Islamic terror networks for the sake of survival, rather than supporting the objectives of Islamists themselves. Through its nimble approach to organized terror, Syria has proved that its agenda only supports Islamism until it would precipitate an extreme reaction on the part of the West or Israel. In many ways this may begin to contribute to the complex relationship between the United States and Syria in this respect. While the United States would prefer the pro-American regime to stay in place, it also cannot outwardly support Islamist policies. However, Syria's need to maintain ties to Islamist networks is seen as indispensable, in that Syria's geography and history have been pivotal factors in forming the regime's strategy. Bar outlines the main elements of these and their effects in his work, listing "[1] Absence if a tradition of national unity (the regions that today comprise modern Syria were completely separate provinces of the Ottoman Empire, with little in common, [2] Strong neighbors (Israel and Turkey) allied with the United States with whom Syria has ongoing territorial disputes, and [3] lack of natural riches," (Bar, 402). Despite these geographical limitations, Syria's regional role is regarded as the greatest achievement of Hafez al-Asad, who played a part on the Arab stage that transcended Syria's objective geographical and economic significance. Rather than deriving from a dictatorial megalomania, as was the case with Saddam Hussein, it rose from an ideological attachment to the ideal of "Arabism" and anticolonialism, and from the belief that only through representation of Arabism in general could Syria play a role in the region (Bar). One of the major components of Syria's regional strategic policy is calculated use, with relative impunity, of terrorist

organizations. Bar describes, "Syria is almost a "founding father" of the US list of state sponsors of international terrorism, providing Hezbollah, HAMAS, PFLP-GC, the PIJ, and other terrorist organizations refuge and basing privileges. Its use of terror, though, has usually been measured and with a clear view not to act in a manner that would precipitate an extreme reaction on the part of the West or Israel," (Bar, 402). Bar explains that while Syria has encouraged and even provided material and planning support to Palestinian terrorist organizations, it consistently has prohibited any terrorist attacks from the Golan Heights into Israel. Bar also explains that Syria was cautious in its use of terrorism against Turkey. "It provided support through hosting of the PKK (and in the past the Armenian terrorist organization, ASALA) in Lebanon. However, when finally severally challenged by Turkey, Syria cut off its support of the PKK and ASALA and occasionally, under American pressure, has lowered the profile of its hosting certain Palestinian organizations. Syria also took care never to allow the "tail to wag on the dog"; when necessary Syrian intelligence clamped down on recalcitrant terrorist organizations and reduced the level of Iranian Revolutionary Guard activity in Lebanon," (Bar, 402). This relationship with Turkey begins to increasingly highlight how Syria calibrated its moves with respect to western foreign policy pressures. Some researchers even goes so far as to label Syria as a remarkable anomaly in terms of its relationship to Islamism.

Islamism Without Islamists

Though a nominally secular regime controlled by non-Muslims, Syria has become the leading sponsor of Islamism in the Arab-speaking world and in some ways seemingly at home as well. In his work *The Truth About Syria,* scholar Barry Rubin, Washington Institute visiting fellow describes this phenomenon as "Islamism without Islamists." The Syrian regime becomes what is no longer a secular government fighting Islamism but rather the main Arab state promoting it. Rubin explains, "Within Syria, the courting of Islamism helps reconcile the 60 percent Sunni Arab majority to the rule of a regime dominated by Alawites, whose numbers are only one-fifth that size of the population. It undermines the appeal of opposition Islamist groups, notably the Muslim Brotherhood, and also of liberal movements that Sunnis might otherwise support. Abroad, promoting Islamism benefits the regimes foreign policy interests," (Rubin, 385). Before these efforts began and even thereafter, the Muslim Brotherhood, the principal independent Islamist group in Syria, would call the regime an infidel one, and during the 1980s it

raised a serious revolt which was systematically put down. Since then, it has primarily functioned in exile and as an underground grouping. The author further explains that the regime largely neutralized this threat by courting the Sunni religious establishment, which had never shown much involvement in the Brotherhood. "The Sunni hierarchy must be made to accept the Alawites as perfectly good Shi'a Muslims. Accoriding to the constitution, Syria's president has to be Muslim; thus Syria's successive presidents, Hafiz and Bashar al-Asad, had to be recognized as proper Muslims," (Rubin, 385). Due to this issue of legitimacy, Hafez introduced a campaign to win over Sunni muslims, making a pilgrimage in 1974, raising clerics' salaries, and convincing the respected (though totally politicized and relatively junior) Lebanese Shi'a cleric Musa al-Sadr to certify that Alawites were really Shi'a Muslims (Rubin). Hafez al-Asad's government would also control the religious establishment, the education and ordination of ulama (Islamic scholars), the building of mosques, and so forth, with the goal of using Islam for four purposes: to combat liberalism by upholding tradition; to discredit the radical Islamists as misinterpreting their religion; to curse its own foreign enemies as anti-Muslim; and to legitimize the regime as the embodiment of piety (Rubin). The author describes, "Under Bashar's reign, the government has taken on an even more active role as promoter of Islam. It has recognized that religion offers a rare outlet for Syrians otherwise frustrated by their lives and society but is determined that this not be channeled into support for its Islamist enemies," (Rubin, 386). To illustrate this point, one of Bashar's first acts as president was to repeal his father's decree forbidding girls from wearing headscarves in school. In June 2003 a decree permitted soldiers to pray in military camps despite regulations that mandated that career soldiers suspected of being religious were to be dismissed from the army. Bashar himself would go on his own minor pilgrimages, and larger mosques were built, and schools became more religious in their instruction. In these ways the regime would portray itself as a friend of religion, and therefore a government that any good Sunni Muslim would be proud to support. Bashar also became a champion of Islamism in an international realm. Rubin explains, "He is allied with Islamist Iran, the patron of Islamist Hizbollah and Hamas, and the sponsor of the Sunni Islamist insurgency in Iraq," (Rubin, 386). In contrast, Hafez al-Asad's strategic foreign policy had several clear goals. These were, "…to enhance Syria's regional status; to prevent a separate peace between Israel and Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinians; to cultivate good relations with external powers (Russia, Europe, and the Gulf Arabs); // and to challenge, when necessary, the designs of the

United States in the region," (Bar, 403). In both of these instances, in the short run, domestic Islamist forces have been tamed, even transformed into regime supporters. Rubin describes that Bashar had effectively invented a new ideology, which can be called the "Islamist-Arab nationalist synthesis." This is unique hybrid ideology can be best described as follows, "Islamists and nationalists can work in perfect harmony if they and focus on fighting the evil external enemies of Arabs and Muslims, America, the West, and Israel. Moreover, of course, their cooperation in this effort requires that both sides// enthusiastically support the regime, which champions their common causes," (Rubin, 386-387). In order to accomplish this, Bashar would embark on what would be coined the three-prong offensive. He would first encourage non-political Islam at home so that Syrian Sunni Muslims would be grateful to the regime. Following this, Bashar would sponsor radical Islamism abroad so that Islamist groups in other countries would ally with the Syrian government and not support counterparts who wanted to overthrow it. In fact, according to the author, Syria would do more to sponsor Islamist revolution abroad than all other Arab governments put together. In addition to the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Bashar hosted leaders of militant Islamist opposition groups from Algeria, Jordan, Sudan and Tunisia. Next, Bashar persuaded liberal-minded Syrians that if they challenged the regime, the ultimate winders would be Islamist. Bashar claimed that for reformist intellectuals and women who wanted more rights, as well as Christians and Druze, a continuation of the Asad dictatorship would be by far the lesser of two evils. To some extent, this strategy was effective in achieving its purpose. "This strategy worked in pushing the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood opposition to the margins on both the domestic and international fronts. For example, at a 1998 conference in Amman called by the Syrian Brotherhood to mobilize support, a Jordanian participant reportedly scolded that 'Syria is the only Arab state standing up to Israel, granting support to every opposition to the Zionist occupation. Therefore it is impossible for an Arab or a Muslim to attack it and try to harm it and its leadership,'" (Rubin, 387). To some extent this ideological overlap would mean Syria had to recalibrate its defense and determine its enemies. While Syria's "anti imperialist" rhetoric had been couched in Marxist terms, Deputy Minister of Waqf Muhammad Abd al-Satter Sayyid declared on state television, "'Jihad is not incumbent upon each and every Muslim, Arab and Christian. The time has come for the duty of jihad.' The enemy was the Jews who had 'killed the prophets,' allegedly depicted in the Koran "in a very sinister and dark way' and cursed by Allah," (Rubin, 387). It was definitely a strange

sight to see a Muslim cleric calling on Christians to fulfill the duty of jihad, which is, clearly, only an Islamic tenet. However, this was much in line with the Syrian ideological approach. Rubin explains, "On one hand, the idea was to show this as a 'nationalist' rather than 'religious' holy war, the perfect example of blending the two doctrines. On the other hand, the regime has upheld Syria's multiethnic character. Making distinctions between religious communities would heighten not only Muslim-Christian tensions but also Muslim-Alawite ones. At any rate, the Syrian regime has invented non-Muslim Jihad," (Rubin, 387). With these revelations, scholars would also come to determine three distinct groups of Islamists. One of which was a small, shadowy radical Islamist group (which as Rubin explains, could only conceivably be a government front), who occasionally launched terrorist attacks. This group, however, did not pose much of a threat to the regime, and the validity of the group often came into question as captured terrorists would tend to conveniently die before they could be questioned thoroughly. The second of which was the Muslim Brotherhood, whose dozens of members remain in prison. The author explains, "However, this is largely an exile group, led by Ali Sadr al-Dina al-Baya-nuni rom his base in London. It formed the National Salvation Front as a broad coalition with other opposition groups, including some liberals, Communists, and Kurdish nationalists. Seeking international support against the regime, Bayanuni visited Washington, DC, where he met secretly with US officials. Ironically, and this also shows the success of the regime's Islamist strategy, Bayanuni cited as his role model Hamas, itself a Syrian client," (Rubin, 389). The third and final group potentially holds the most important position with respect to the regime, this being the Sunni Muslim preachers and pious practitioners who have been gaining support with the regime's blessing. While the author describes the difficultly to quantify or define this "pro-regime" Islamism, but it could one day turn against the patron that promoted such ideas and activists. With this information in hand, it becomes abundantly clear that while the regime has its own reasons to promote Islamism on a domestic and international front, it will only do this to the extent that United States forces allow it to keep in check as measure of self-preservation rather than a true commitment to international Islamism or an Islamist State condition.

Introduction of Bush-Era Rhetoric

Syrian foreign policy on Iraq changed fundamentally as a result of American action in the military action in the Middle East; Bashar, inheriting neighboring instability as a result of the

US-Iraq war, was obliged to transition from policies of pro-Iraqi rhetoric to policies in line with Bush's doctrinal animosity against 'The Axis of Evil' in the interest of keeping radical Islamist organizations at bay. The Ba'ath parties of Iraq and Syria are often misinterpreted as one in the same; however, not only are the two unique and separate entities, but the Ba'ath party of Iraq had been the nemesis of the Asad regime for decades. Bar explains that the animosity between the two regimes had been a significant factor in Syria's support for Iran during the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s and its support for the Coalition in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. However, Bashar reversed Hafez al-Asad's policy soon after he came to power and began a policy of rapprochement with Baghdad. Bar explains, "Bashar's support of Iraq included: pro-Iraqi rhetoric such as his referral to Iraq as Syria's 'strategic depth'; political support for Iraq in the United Nations Security Council…; economic support through illicit trade, and opening of the oil pipeline; and military support through smuggling of military components from Syria to Iraq. The regime, and Bashar himself, did not stop at pro-Iraqi statements, but escalated into direct anti-American rhetoric as well. Bashar accused the US of a policy directed toward 'gaining control over Iraqi oil and redrawing the map of the region in keeping with its worldview'…" (Bar, 413). Bashar's reversal in pro-American sentiment to vehemently anti-American policy towards Iraq is at odds with much of his previous ideology. Bar suggests that although the logic is not overtly clear, the deterioration of the Syrian policy regarding the Iraqi situation and the Syrian support for the Iraqi insurgency can provide some insight into the decision-making process of the regime. Bar's analysis comes to acknowledging several factors that might influence Bashar's behavior in this regard. The first factor is identified as Syria's close relations with Iran and their clear influence on Syrian assessment. "The Iranian regime regarded a stabilized oil-rich pro-American Iraq as a clear and imminent threat to its own existence. Like Syria, it assessed that it would be next on the American agenda if Iraq were to be stabilized," (Bar, 414). Bar explains that immediately after the first stage of 'Iraqi Freedom,' a number of of high-level consultations occurred between Syria and Iran. Bashar was clearly receptive of the Iranian arguments that Syria and Iran should cooperate to avert the danger. Bar's second factor would be identified as the domestic consideration that allowed radical Islamists to act against the American presence in Iraq that would shift the focus of local Islamists away from acting against the regime. The final factor would be the logic of the Hafez al-Asad regime in providing safe haven to terrorist organizations acting against neighboring countries, including the

PKK and ASALA against Turkey, the Japanese Red Army, and various Palestinian organizations, and allowing them to operate from Syrian soil adopted by Bashar. Bar argues that according to this logic, such support served as a valuable bargaining chip for future negotiations with the challenged country (Bar). While the Syrian regime was clearly not acting in line with American interests in Iraq, however ambiguous those interests may be, the Syrians undoubtedly made fundamental changes to their foreign strategy as a tactic for survival in response to the United States meddling in these foreign affairs.

Though foreign policy has generally attempted to remain positive with respect to the United States, the Bashar administration has grown less trusting since the beginning of the Iraq war, among its concerns the irrefutable intentions on the part of the US to dethrone Bashar as a result of his ties to global terror. The United States undoubtedly had a mixed relationship with Syria, in seeing it as both an adversary, given its role in Israel's most important strategic ally, as well as a necessary actor in Middle Eastern political discourse. As a result, even as tensions rose between the two countries, Hafez al-Asad did not abandon dialogue with Washington, and channels of communication remained open. President Bush chose not to include Syria in his proclaimed "Axis of Evil," and this decision stood as undeniable evidence that the Syrian regime, in stark contrast to that of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, was essentially legitimate in the eyes of the United States administration. However, after the Saddam Hussein regime was toppled, this sense of assurance eroded substantially. Bar would argue that at this point, Syria would now see Washington as moving inexorably toward delegitimizing the Syrian Ba'ath regime as well. He bases this argument on several points. The first of these points reads, "The US position on democratization as a major balm for the plague of terrorism places change of nondemocratic regimes-particularly those which are traditionally hostile to the US and supporters of terrorism-high on the American political agenda. The identification of the Syrian regime as "Ba'athist," like the former Iraqi regime, only exacerbates this feeling," (Bar, 418). The undeniable ambiguity of referencing both regimes as one in the same ("Ba'ath," as opposed to their nation-specific sects) is at its surface a nominal incongruence; however, in an increasingly hostile discourse of anti-Islamist sentiment on the part of the United States, a feeling of uncertainty as a result of being labeled with this nomenclature is not only understandable, but arguably expected. As a second point, Bar cites, "Developments in Lebanon make Syria 'low hanging fruit' in regard to regime change. Positive regime change in Damascus can be used by

the administration to show an achievement and to balance the lack of success in the Iraqi theater," (Bar, 418). Bashar's increasing instability would make him increasingly self-conscious as a target in the eyes of the imperialist United States, whose pro-democratization initiative in Iraq fell flat on its face in an almost embarrassing turn of events, and may be seeking redemption in the eyes of the American people. On a third note, Bar points to the following: "The desertion of France, which had been a traditional friend of Syria and supported Bashar in his first days as president, leaves Syria without support from a strong European ally," (Bar, 418). Here, again, Syria finds itself in a position of global weakness, in which it may find itself pray to a vying anti-Syrian American initiative to reclaim its position of dominance in the Arab world after a failed Iraqi program. Finally, Bar cites, "Syria fears that American delegitimization of the Syrian regime will harden Israeli stance toward it and give it free run to react to Hezbollah attacks and terrorist attacks in Israel perpetrated by Syrian-based organizations. Under these circumstances, Syria believes that Israel will not enter into negotiations with Syria on the Golan. Negotiations with Israel or even willingness to hold them has always been a significant lever for Syria to achieve international acceptance, in spite of its support of terrorism, lack of democracy, etc," (Bar, 418). Despite these many reasons for hesitation and suspicion of United States intentions towards, Syria, there is no doubt that the Bashar administration would like to reach out to the United States. Bar would even go so far as to say that he is eager for any contact with the administration with which he can mitigate the American hostility toward him. He writes, "Recognizing the priority of the war on terror for the US, Bashar hoped immediately after 9/11 to acquire the good will of the administration through cooperation on intelligence on al Qaeda. However, his perception that the administration is intent on toppling his regime limits his ability to enter into any real 'give and take' dialogue over the few//strategic cards he regains: (1) support of the Iraqi insurgency; (2) support of Hezbollah; (3) hosting of Palestinian terrorist organizations; (4) opposition to Abu Mazen and to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; and (5) willingness to revive the peace negotiations with Israel without reference to the 'deposit' or to taking up the negotiations at the point where they ended," (Bar, 418-419). Due to these limits, Bashar had to formulate his policy priority vis a vis the United States to convince it that the Syrian regime is still strong and resilient, and therefore the United States cannot count on its falling, and the consequences of toppling the regime would be catastrophic as they would bring about the disintegration of the country into rival communities similar to Iraq, and may even bring

the Jihadi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood to power, and that Syria will continue to be nuisance to American interests in the region as long as its own interests are not addressed. However, even this idea fell short. "Bashar's failure to convince the US of the resilience of his regime and of the inadvisability of toppling it leaves him only one option, namely, trying to prove that Syria's nuisance value warrants changing policy towards it. As Bashar's hopes for a substantial dialogue with the US diminishes, he may be tempted to step up his 'nuisance value' by threatening US interests in various ways (such as escalating terrorism and support of Iraqi insurgency," (419). With this onset of negative reinforcement, the newly concocted adversarial nature of the regime with respect to the United States would shape foreign relations not only with mainly Syrian Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, but also newly forming Islamist groups vying to take advantage of an increasingly precarious regime.

<u>Resurrection of the Ba'ath</u>

In recent years we have witnessed the extraordinary phenomenon of the seemingly arbitrary rise of the incredibly savvy 21st century Islamist terrorist group in Syria known as the Islamic State in Levant (or, more commonly referred to as ISIS/ISIL); however, experts would argue that the jihadist group is quietly utilizing a network of former members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party to help militarize a fighting force that has effectively erased the border between both nations and left roughly six million people under its rule. Jason Breslow, digital editor at FRONTLINE PBS, writes extensively on the issue of the extent to which Saddam's former soldiers are fueling the rise of ISIS. The author explains that the extent of this seemingly mismatched alliance is detailed in a new report by the New York-based intelligence firm, the Soufan Group. Despite the deep philosophical divide between the Islamic State and the Ba'ath Party, the two sides have found "sufficient coincidence of interest to overcome any ideological disagreement." Richard Barrett, the report's author, has termed this a "marriage of convenience," and can be seen throughout the Islamic State hierarchy. The author describes, "The current head of the group's military council, for example, is believed to be Abu Ahmad al Alwani, an ex-member of Saddam Hussein's army. So too was al Alwani's predecessor. Another member of the military council, Abu Muhanad al Sweidawi, was once a lieutenant colonel in Hussein's air defense intelligence, but by early 2014 was heading ISIS operations in western Syria, according to the report," (Breslow). Even beyond this analysis there is evidence of the organizations'

overlaps. The two deputies to the Islamic State's self-promoted caliph, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, are former Ba'athists: Abu Muslim al Afari and Turkmani is believed to have been a senior special forces officer and a member of military intelligence in Hussein's army. Currently he serves as Baghdadi's number two by supervising ISIS operations in Iraq. Abu Ali al Anbari, acting as second deputy, oversees operations in Syria. Both of these men are also suspected of serving in the Islamic State's main governing body, titled the "Shura Council," (Breslow). The connections between these two groups grows even deeper after comprehensive analysis. The author explains, "Even the appointment of al Baghdadi to lead the Islamic State of Iraq in 2010 is reported by an ISIS defector to have been engineered by a former Baathist: Haji Bakr, an ex-colonel from the Iraqi Revolutionary Guard. Bakr "initially attracted criticism from fellow members of the group for his lack of a proper beard and lax observance of other dictates of their religious practice," the report notes, "But his organizational skills, knowledge of the Iraqi Army and network of fellow ex-Baathists made him a valuable resource," (Breslow). This type of expertise and network of connections has made former Ba'athists valuable to the Islamic State, according to Barret. Barret cites the long-term planning and preparation seen in the Islamic State's capture of Nineveh Province and its capital, Mosul, in June 2014. Although typically painted by western media as the work of neophyte enthusiasts inspired by their imagined rewards of martyrdom, it is clearly the result of detailed planning by people who know Iraq well, have prior experience and training, and are able to manage an organization with discipline and secrecy. All of these characteristics qualify as characteristics of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist supporters. However, the author points out that the incentives for even ex-Ba'athists may be equally opportunistic. The author quotes, "'What the Baathists probably get out of it is a way back into Iraq," says Brian Fishman, a counterterrorism research fellow at the New America Foundation. Before the Islamic State's emergence, Fishman notes, many Baathists had been effectively forced out of Iraq to neighboring Syria. Today, they're back home, slowly acquiring influence and territory,'" (Breslow). It becomes clear that the Ba'athists have a stake in this marriage of convenience; however, upon further analysis of their motivations, the more pressing question emerges: how long can this alliance last? Analysists agree that one of the few points the two groups agree on is restoring Sunni rule in Iraq. However, at its core, the Islamic state focuses on expanding the Islamic caliphate that it declared in June 29. 2014, while the Ba'ath Party in Iraq has been a largely secular, nationalist movement. However, as the author explains, some

fissures have begun to surface. "In July, for example, Reuters reported that Sunni militants that helped ISIS capture Mosul rounded up as many as 60 senior ex-military officers and other onetime members of the Baath Party. That same month, a rival Sunni group made up of many former Baathists issued a statement denouncing the Islamic State's persecution of Iraq's religious minorities," (Breslow). However, as the author points out, how deep any split may go is hard to tell. The author again cites Barrett, who claims that ex-Ba'athists may decide it's in their interest to continue harnessing the energy of ISIS in order to regain prominence in Iraq. "Barrett says its easy to see ex-Baathists then tell themselves, 'Once we achieve our objectives, our political objectives, then we'll sort out all this business about these crazies who believe in a caliphate.' On the other hand, Baathists may simply come to the conclusion that there is nowhere else for them to go. 'They're going to make the best of a bad job in a way,' Barrett says," (Breslow). Similarly, Fishman sees a mirrored decision facing former Ba'athists, though he warns against assuming the block which act in concert. He notes that it is important to remembered that in late 2006, Ba'athists faced a comparable scenario, and while some opted to continue their involvement in the Iraqi insurgency, others chose to align themselves with the United States against the Sunni militants. On the other hand, Islamists viewed the alliances as being guided more by politics than it is by ideology. The author claims, "ISIS at the end of the day is a political actor, and they have this sort of extreme, even ideological perspective, but that is all framed through who is helping us on the battlefield and who's not," he says. "If you're helping them on the battlefield, they're going to find a reason to think you're a good guy. If you are not helping them on the battlefield, they're going to find a reason to think you're a bad guy," (Breslow). With this evidence, we can hardly proclaim the rise of the Islamic State in Syria as arbitrary; the submission of the Ba'ath party and its resurrection can be directly related to United States foreign policy towards the Syrian regime that caused its destabilization and eventual rise of a far more systematized political party.

2011 Democratic Uprising

On this note this brings our narrative to the ever-memorable 2011 democratic uprising, priming the Syrian political position of recent memory. At its surface, the State Department has poured billions of dollars into anti-Islamist and anti-terrorist campaigns; on a more informal level, however, NGOs and government-financed organizations has been promoting democratic

change in Syria and the greater Middle East region. Ron Nixon, New York Times contributor to the World report describes how even as the United States poured billions of dollars into foreign military programs and anti-terrorism campaigns, a small core of American government-financed organizations was promoting democracy in authoritarian Arab states. He writes, "The money spent on these programs was minute compared with efforts led by the Pentagon. But as American officials and others look back at the uprisings of the Arab Spring, they are seeing that the United States' democracy-building campaigns played a bigger role in fomenting protests than was previously known, with key leaders of the movements having been trained by the Americans in campaigning, organizing through new media tools and monitoring elections," (Nixon). Nixon articulates these key leaders as a number of groups and individuals who would come to be directly involved in the revolts and reforms spurred across the region, such as the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and grass-roots activists like Entsar Qadhi, a youth leader in Yemen, received training and financing from groups like the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House, a nonprofit human rights organization based in Washington, according to interviews in recent weeks and American diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks (Nixon). The work of these groups often provoked tensions between the Middle Eastern and United states leaders, who both would complain that their leadership was being undermined. The ties between these groups and the United States administration are relatively transparent. "The Republican and Democratic institutes are loosely affiliated with the Republican and Democratic Parties. They were created by Congress and are financed through the National Endowment for Democracy, which was set up in 1983 to channel grants for promoting democracy in developing nations. The National Endowment receives about $100 million annually from Congress. Freedom House also gets the bulk of its money from the American government, mainly from the State Department," (Nixon). Nixon goes on to clarify that there are no doubts that the Arab uprisings grew out of domestic grievances, rather than "foreign influence" as stipulated by some theories perpetuated by Middle Eastern leaders, and though the United States did not fund them to start the protests, they did help support their development of skills and networking. Stephen McInerney, executive director of the Project on Middle East Democracy, a Washington-based advocacy and research group, attests to this fact. He claims, "That training did play a role in what ultimately happened, but it was their revolution. We didn't start it,'" (Nixon). One of these initiatives is the 2008 technology

meeting in New York, where Egyptian youth leaders were taught to use social networking and mobile technologies to promote democracy. Several private enterprises sponsored this event, including Facebook, Google, MTV, and Columbia Law School, as well as the State Department. "'We learned how to organize and build coalitions,' said Bashem Fathy, a founder of the youth movement that ultimately drove the Egyptian uprisings. Mr. Fathy, who attended training with Freedom House, said, 'This certainly helped during the revolution,'" (Nixon). Testimonials like these are innumerable. Ms. Qadhi, Yemeni youth activist, attended American training sessions in Yemen. She describes, "It helped me very much because I used to think that change only takes place by force and by weapons,' she said. 'But now, she said, it is clear that results can be achieved with peaceful protests and other nonviolent means,'" (Simon). Despite the glowing popularity of these initiatives among many activists, some members of activist groups complained in interviews that the United States was hypocritical for helping them at the same time that it was supporting the governments they sought to change. Mr. Fathy, the Egyptian activist. He explains, "'While we appreciated the training we received through the NGOs sponsored by the U.S. government, and it did help us in our struggles, we are also aware that the same government also trained the state security investigative service, which was responsible for the harassment and jailing of many of us,'" (Nixon). Nixon explains that interviews with officials of the nongovernmental groups and a review of diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks show that the democracy programs were constant sources of tension between the United States and many Arab governments. The cables, in particular, show how leaders in the Middle East and North Africa viewed these groups with deep suspicion, and tried to weaken them. Today the work of these groups is among the reasons that governments in turmoil claim that Western meddling was behind the uprisings, with some officials noting that leaders like Ms. Qadhi were trained and financed by the United States (Nixon). The author claims, "Diplomatic cables report how American officials frequently assured skeptical governments that the training was aimed at reform, not promoting revolutions," (Nixon). One example the author cites is from 2010, a few months before national elections in Bahrain, where officials barred a representative of the National Democratic Institute from entering the country. Bahraini officials worried that the group's political training disproportionately benefited the opposition, according to a January 2010 cable. Another one of these examples takes place in Yemen, where the United States has been spending millions on an anti-terrorism program, officials complained that American efforts

to promote democracy amounted to interference in internal Yemeni affairs. Additionally, the author cites the case of Egypt, where the opposition to American groups was second to none. "Egypt, whose government receives $1.5 billion annually in military and economic aid from the United States, viewed efforts to promote political change with deep suspicion, even outrage. Hosni Mubarak, then Egypt's president, was "deeply skeptical of the U.S. role in democracy promotion," said a diplomatic cable from the United States Embassy in Cairo dated Oct. 9, 2007," (Nixon). Additionally, at one time the United State financed political reform groups by channeling money through the Egyptian government. However, in 2005, under a Bush administration initiative, local groups were given direct grants, much the chagrin of Egyptian officials (Nixon). Nixon cites a September 2006 cable, where Mahmoud Nayel, an official with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, complained to American Embassy officials about the United States government's "arrogant tactics in promoting reform in Egypt," (Nixon). The Republican and Democratic institutes were the main targets of Egyptian complaints. Egyptian officials complained that the United States was providing support for "illegal organizations," per diplomatic cables. Nixon specifically cites, "Gamal Mubarak, the former president's son, is described in an Oct. 20, 2008, cable as 'irritable about direct U.S. democracy and governance funding of Egyptian NGOs,'" (Nixon). The transparency of these relationships especially surfaced when the Egyptian government even appealed to groups like Freedom House to stop working with local political activists and human rights groups. The author writes, "They were constantly saying: 'Why are you working with those groups, they are nothing. All they have are slogans,'" said Sherif Mansour, an Egyptian activist and a senior program officer for the Middle East and North Africa at Freedom House," (Nixon). However, when their appeals to the United States government failed, the Egyptian authorities reacted by restricting the activities of the American nonprofit organizations. Nixon lists examples of hotels that were to host training sessions were closed for renovations, staff members of the groups were followed, local activists were intimidated and jailed, and state-owned newspapers accused activists of receiving money from American intelligence agencies. However, affiliating themselves with the American organizations may have tainted leaders within their own groups. "According to one diplomatic cable, leaders of the April 6 Youth Movement in Egypt told the American Embassy in 2009 that some members of the group had accused Ahmed Maher, a leader of the January uprising, and other leaders of "treason" in a mock trial related to their association with Freedom House, which

more militant members of the movement described as a "Zionist organization," (Nixon). As a result of the overwhelming government opposition, some groups moved their training sessions to friendlier countries like Jordan or Morocco, and sent activists to the United States for training. In fact, the conception of democratic demonstration in Syria was largely peaceful, as Asad chose to maintain a political message of unity and intellectual compromise as opposed to violent civilian-government clash. However, the Syrian dictatorship made no attempt to conceal the revolts in Tunisia and Egypt from its people, and indeed spoke of them openly. Anderson, a New York Times contributor, explores this difficult contingency. "'We have more difficult circumstances than most of the Arab countries,' President Bashar al- Assad grandly informed The Wall Street Journal on Jan. 31, 'but in spite of that, Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people,'" (Anderson). Despite this initial outward commentary, Syria's state-controlled media went silent on the topic. There was a brief mention when in early March, demonstators took to the streets of southern Syrian city Dara'a to protest the arrest and reported torture of a group of high-school students for writing anti-government graffiti on the walls. Anderson reports, "'I heard about what happened in Dara'a through social media,' Majd said, 'from Facebook and YouTube.' It was from the same venues that Majd learned of a solidarity protest, called the Day of Dignity, that was to take place in front of the Khaled bin al- Waleed Mosque in downtown Homs on March 18. Heeding the admonitions of his parents, Majd stayed well away from that rally, but he heard through friends that hundreds of demonstrators had shown up, watched over by a nearly equal number of police officers and state security personnel. It was a shocking story to the 18- year-old college student; Homs had simply never experienced anything like it," (Anderson). This demonstration was reportedly tiny in comparison with the following, occurring just one week later. In this instance, thousands of protesters assembled. Anderson describes Majd's experience among the onlookers, who managed to get close enough to hear their demands, among them reform, greater civil rights, a repeal of state – of – emergency edict that had been in place in Syria for the previous 48 years. Asad delivered a speech to the Syrian Parliament on March 30, which was carried live by state television and radio outlets. He writes, "While protests had spread to a number of Syrian cities, they were still largely peaceful, with dissenters calling for changes in the regime rather than for its overthrow. As a result — and with the assumption that the regime had learned something from the recent collapse of the Tunisian and Egyptian governments and the widening chaos in

Libya — many expected Assad to take a conciliatory approach," (Anderson). Anderson explains, however, that this expectation was also in part passed on Asad's personality. He describes that in the 11 years he had ruled the nation since the death of his father, the unassuming ophthalmologist had adopted many trappings of reform. Aside from this, the author also describes his attractive young wife, Asma, who had put a pleasing, modern face on the Syrian autocracy. However, behind this charm, little had truly changed; Syria's secret police were still everywhere, and the 'deep state'- the country's permanent ruling class of bureaucrats and military figures-remained firmly in the hands of the Alawite minority. The Alawites feared that any compromise with the protesters was to invite a Sunni revolution and, with it, their demise (Anderson). Anderson writes, "Assad soon realized that this conciliatory approach did not stand strong against western-trained rebels; as a result, Assad began to reform his message to take a more hard-line approach to the dissent threatening the stability of the regime," (Anderson). After providing vague rhetoric about future reform, Assad instead used his parliamentary speech to accuse the protesters of aiding the Israeli enemy and to issue a stern warning. "'Burying sedition is a national, moral and religious duty, and all those who can contribute to burying it and do not are part of it,' he declared. 'There is no compromise or middle way in this.' In keeping with a tradition begun during his father's reign, Assad's speech was repeatedly interrupted by members of Parliament leaping to their feet to shout out their undying love and gratitude to the president," (Anderson). Anderson recounts an uneasiness that fell over Homs after Asad's address. While he describes a state of protests sprinkled across town, supervised by heavily armed security forces, but it was as if no one was quite sure what to do next. He speculates that each side was fearful of leading the nation into the kind of open warfare then agitating Libya. As Anderson describes, there was a brief interlude that would come to precede the moment that would trigger what we know today as the Syrian Civil War. The Syrian Government, a loose alliance of Syrian Arab rebel groups, the Syrian Democratic Forces, Salafi jihadist groups (al-Nusra Front) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), all receiving substantial support from foreign actors, would become a proxy war waged by both regional and global powers. The author describes, "The interlude ended abruptly on April 17, 2011. That evening, as reported by Al Jazeera, a small group of demonstrators, maybe 40 in all, were protesting outside a mosque in Homs when several cars stopped alongside them. A number of men clambered out of the cars - presumably either local plainclothes police officers or members of the largely Alawite shabiha and

proceeded to shoot at least 25 protesters at point-blank range," (Anderson). Anderson interviews Majd, who recounts these events in a brilliant narrative that describes the tens of thousands of demonstrators that gathered at the Clock Tower Square downtown, and this time, the police and shabiha took to the roofs and upper floors of the surrounding buildings to shoot down at them. "'That is when everything changed…Where before it was protests, from April 17 it was an uprising." As protesters started to be killed almost every day, their funerals the next day became rallying points for more protesters to take to the streets; the evermore brutal response of the security forces at these gatherings then created a new round of shaheeds, or martyrs, ensuring greater crowds — and more killing — at the next funerals. By early May, the cycle of violence had escalated so swiftly that the Syrian Army came into Homs en masse, effectively shutting down the city. "Nobody trusted the local security forces," Majd recalled, referring to the vast apparatus of mukhabarat and uniformed police who traditionally held sway in Syrian towns," (Anderson). In addition to this turn of events, Anderson describes what he would argue to be one of the more baffling features of the Syrian civil war: the fantastic tangle of tacit ceasefires or temporary alliances that are often forged between various militias and the regime, or even with just a local army commander. He describes how these can organize themselves in various ways, with specific examples including radical Islamist political groups aligning with an Alawite shabiha gang, who pose a horrifying puzzle to anyone trying to navigate the battlefield, because it that no one is necessarily who they seem and that death can come from anywhere. He writes, "But this pattern of secret deal- making also served to long inoculate the Waer district from the scorched- earth tactics the Assad regime was employing elsewhere in Homs because, at any given time, at least some of the myriad rebel militias roaming the neighborhood were apt to be in secret concord with the state," (Anderson). However, this dynamic of innumerable permutations ended in May 2013, capstoned by the Free Syrian Army moving back into the devastated Baba Amr neighborhood, and there had been surrounded and slaughtered. The few that escaped would run to Waer and nearly took total control of the enclave. In fact, the Syrian army artillery shells soon began raining down on Majd's neighborhood. "While the scale of shelling was nothing like what befell Baba Amr or Khalidiya, it was enough to keep the Ibrahim family in their fourth-floor apartment, forever trying to guess where safety lay," (Anderson). While, again, it could hardly be argued that the events leading up to this catastrophe were directly prompted through

United States intervention, the connections between Syrian upheaval and United States meddling are clear. In this light, we see the United States has few to blame other than themselves.

Chapter 5

Strategies for Diplomatic Engagement with Syria in the 21st Century

After outlining all three of these narratives in a historical discourse that highlights the United States' short sighted policies towards the crucial future of Syria, and the way that these policies have fueled an inevitable rise of the Islamic State and similar Islamist political groups, our options for a civil engagement with Syria seem to be narrowing by the minute. Understanding the harrowing demise of Syria as a result of its close correlation with United States foreign policy is a brutal, yet necessary step towards understanding what is left to be done. Brown, author for the USC Center for Public Diplomacy (CPD), takes on the unique challenge of scholarly research examining what we may learn as academics from our political faux pas in a way that informs discourse regarding Syrian relations for the better. Much like the previous literatures examined by this project, Brown believes that, "…The current crisis in Syria, initiated by a March 2011 uprising to oust President Bashar al-Assad and his Ba'athist regime, is descending into the valley of "the choice of the lesser of two evils," but without a clear answer as to which evil United States policy makers should pursue," (Brown, 27). He claims that in the beginning of the conflict, the choice was clear- supporting rebel groups would force al-Asad to step down from power and remove a key Iranian ally, thereby providing a counter balance to the arc of Iranian induced instability in the Levant, which was then a containment of Iran. "While it seemed that the removal of al-Assad would insure a limiting effect on Iran, the picture is now complicated by the gains of Islamist rebel groups with ties to al Qaeda. It is perhaps ironic that the Ba'athist regimes birthed by U.S. alienation of Syria in the early Cold War era, would have been responsible for repression of Islamist organizations that now threaten both the al- Assad government as well as U.S. interests in Syria and the greater Middle East region," (27). He writes that while it is a stretch to consider the containment of Iran as anything close to an actual doctrinal component of United States policy, it is somewhat reflective of the overarching policy toward the Soviet Union that drove military and diplomatic decisions in 1957 and created

a similar sense of volatility in Syria, falling just short of open conflict. The author also describes that much of that uncertainty was driven by failure to adapt diplomatic efforts to counter the general attitude in the Cold War period in Syria, as he describes, "the throbbing heart of Arabism," that there was no room for compromise on "what, in Syrian eyes, was the post-colonial monstrosity known as Israel," (Brown). He writes, "It was 'The Arabists,' as Robert Kaplan calls them, that were the appointed expert diplomats in Syria assigned to report on what was going on in their parcel of the world in order to inform policy choices. But history shows that the perceptions and opinions of these experts did not manifest in the policies of the United States, making it difficult if not impossible for the U.S. to communicate effectively in Syria in one-on-one diplomatic fashion or in a broader public diplomatic engagement," (Brown, 28). It is here again that Brown shores up an oral history collected in 1978 by Charles Yost, a career diplomat who serviced in Syria, who explains that while the policy aimed at increasing opposition to Soviet influence in Arab nations, it was instead received with suspicion and hostility because it created a fear of United States covert interference exercised at will and all across the Middle East. Brown cites Yost's expert opinion on the matter, which states that the doctrine was a mistake, and contended that even if it was not, it was at least not well messaged to Syrian leaders or their population. "He reflected on driving in his sedan through Syrian streets where people, upon seeing American flags on the car, would yell 'Down with Eisenhower Doctrine.' Yet Yost contends, they wouldn't have really known what it was they were actually protesting. And with regard to an attempted CIA coup in August of 1957, Yost shared that the local station chief actually advised against it, yet nevertheless was told to execute it. The result was, as history has recorded in Yost's explicit description, an ill-advised attempt at "clumsily getting into their domestic affairs" and conducting "more Cold War hanky panky than was justified and more than Ike would have preferred to initiate," (Brown, 28). It is clear that so much of the animosity and turmoil we witness today in the Middle East is a result of the intrusion of United States foreign policy on Arab, and in this case study particularly Syrian affairs. While the situation is increasingly dire, Brown does offer some advice for United States policy with respect to Syria going forward in response to what relatively brief historical narrative we have as empirical evidence for policy formulation in the future.

While we have relatively little evidence of any foreign policy towards Syria as being positively received in the past by the Syrian people or its administration, we can glean a few

important points from the historical narratives explored within the last sixty years of active engagement in Syrian foreign relations. One of the most important of these lessons is to heed advice of area experts. "Current U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford is described by Kaplan as "straight out of the mold of Arabists going back decades: dealing with a new situation as he has found it, basing his judgments on considerable area and linguistic expertise." Ford believes the U.S. strategic goals are to deny safe haven and access to chemical weapons for terrorist groups, and assure Syria is a source of stability in the region, and believes the only way to achieve this is through a politically negotiated transition," (Brown). This type of initiative would, of course, require game-changing diplomatic engagement, though it would arguably save the United States years of armed conflict in the process and gain respect of regional allies lost during the Eisenhower era and beyond. The Obama and now Trump administration both navigate difficult choices, in dealing with the onset of a post-war period for the nation that has guided security strategies focused on more fiscally attainable and less active National Security Strategy, which may be likened to the New Look approach Eisenhower instituted in his first term in office. However, we are now dealing with a region that is much more unstable than it has been before, even with respect to the post-World War II Middle East, and this state is further complicated by the complexity of a non-state threat in al-Qaeda that Eisenhower did not have to consider. In acknowledging these factors, Brown outlines a few conventional paths. He defines these paths as [1] dealing with "the devil we know" and attempt to keep al-Asad in power, or [2] continue to adhere to a Middle East doctrine that would suggest a continued concern for the security of Israel in an Iranian influenced, Alawite run Syria. However, if we follow neither of these conventions, a new opportunity presents itself. Rather than relying solely in supporting the rebels in order to limit Iranian influence through al-Asad, or solely support the stability of al-Asad to counter al Qaeda influence, we instead rely on dialogue with the leaders of the region in a more holistic sense as suggested by Ambassador Ford. "Instability post-Arab Spring and increasing turmoil in neighboring Iraq suggest that there is no place for unilateral or thin-sliced approaches to the current Syrian conflict. A regional solution is in order that, while supportive of U.S. objectives, is not solely framed around U.S. objectives," (Brown, 29). It seems as though there has already been some initiative taken by the United States in this new form of diplomacy. For example, throughout April 2013, the Obama administration held talks with leaders of Turkey, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. "It seems that the historical lesson learned from the 1957

crisis in Syria is that those talks should not solely concentrate on security approaches to ending conflict and should not include only those four nations aligned with the United States. Instead, diplomatic outreach to Bashar al-Assad and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should be part of a grand strategic approach addressing not only the optimal way to end conflict and re-establish a stable and reformed Syrian government, but also the security of Israel and the influence of al Qaeda in the region," (Brown, 29). The Trump administration, in contrast, has yet to outline any particular diplomatic initiative in the region with respect to Syria, but time will tell whether he heeds similar foreign policy advice, or chooses to follow one of the more conventional paths that fall short of a holistic approach to Syrian affairs.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

With these three narratives and their criticisms behind us, it is now time to look forward in the state of urgency Syria therein has found itself. The three narratives speak to a fascinating chapter of American history we seem reluctant to acknowledge: allowing Syria to become submissive to three waves of United States foreign policy with respect to the Arab world, these three chapters again outlined as [1] a Wilsonian state of state independence, [2] Soviet alienation and anti-communist proliferation, and [3] the war on terror, specifically radical Islamist violence, has led to its destabilization and ultimate deterioration as opposed to the prosperous state it discovered under the guidance of its Arab partners when the United States was able to take a step back from Syrian affairs. Finding this stability of course is a difficult task that grows increasingly difficult as Syria seems to be spiraling into a particularly dark and horrific abyss of violence and pain; however, the key in this case may truly lie in the opportunity to use the immense powers of the United States to be guided by our trusted regional allies. While the Syrian Crisis cannot be solved overnight or by any singular policy, we hold the potential to facilitate a mediated recovery if we allow ourselves to accept regional actors as an untapped potential in unlocking regional stability.

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