

Peace and Conflict Monitor

ANALYSIS

Causes and catalysts of the civil war in Syria

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The causes and catalysts of the current civil war in Syria are many and varied, including narratives that range across religion, poverty, past repression, and ideology. Understanding why the conflict began is only possible when these causes are considered together as a holistic whole rather than as stand-alone explanations. However, this is not to deny that some causes and catalysts have been more significant than others. Whilst early triumphs of civil society movements in Tunisia and Egypt greatly helped to catalyse opposition to the government in Syria, they only serve to mask the critical and much more important underlying change in the social dynamic created by the ideological drift of the Ba'ath Party. Under Bashar al-Assad's Presidency, the Ba'ath Party increasingly disengaged and decoupled itself from its original political constituency, creating a broad and deep-seated disillusionment with the government within Syrian society. It is this schism that can be identified as the greatest of the causes of the current conflict.

Introduction

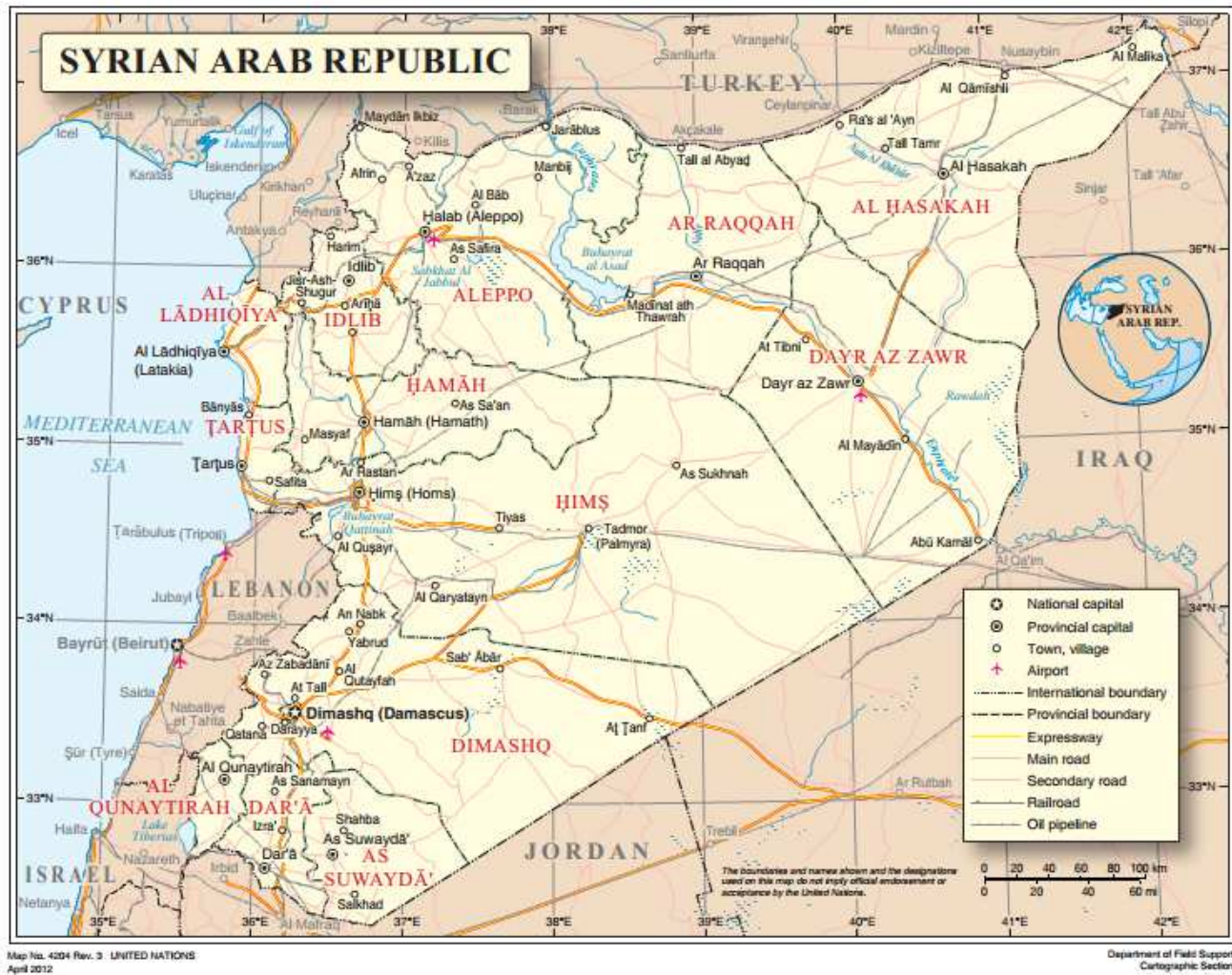
The speed and number of revolutions that swept the Arab world in recent times is historically unprecedented. Long considered a totalitarian stronghold, the greater Middle East is finally surprising the world, overturning the myths that the Arab national psyche eschews democratic representation and can be forever content with stagnation and autocracy.

Even as protests began to spread to the Syrian Arab Republic, President Bashar al-Assad and his administration clung foolishly and then desperately to the erroneous perception that Syrian exceptionalism, grounded in Syria's unique historical experience, would insulate the regime from confrontation.

Championed by the Ba'ath party, Syria's historically strong socialist roots and resulting character of the state's social contract with its people helps to explain some of this complacency. On the other hand, the regime had been far from free of social unrest in the past; the spectre of harsh and swift repression still lingered persistently in the social consciousness. Also, given the melting pot of overlapping ethnicities and religions found in Syria – Alawites, Sunnis, Shi-ites, Druze, Christians, Alevis, Yezidi, Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, and more besides – a heightened level of community tension has long been the norm. With the Alawite minority dominating the ranks of both the administration and the internal security forces, and with several minorities disenfranchised, the threat of sectarian division has also lurked in the background as an ominous possible source of violent conflict.

At first peaceful, protests that began in January 2011 against the regime have since evolved into an outright insurgency, with violence and deadly force disastrously being established as the norm on both sides. Whilst the revolutions that have been sweeping the Arab world have well and truly come to Syria, after almost a year of ongoing violence, it still remains to be seen whether the lasting legacy in the country will be an Arab Spring or an Arab Winter.

The conflict in Syria is not a phenomenon ripe for simple explanations, as the historical, political and social conditions that catalyse the current state of unrest are highly complex and inextricably intertwined. However, an attempt to unpick the contributing causes is absolutely necessary to gain a holistic understanding.



Map of Modern-day Syria^[1]

Historical Background

The history of Syria in modern times has been a tumultuous one. In the pre-modern era, Syria had long been under the control of the Ottomans, ever since Sultan Selim I wrested control of the region in 1516 from the Mamluks. Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, religious pluralism was adopted, with a degree of self-administration eventually being granted to religious communities or 'millets'. To the surprise of many outsiders, a tendency towards religious tolerance and co-existence has long been a rarely remitting trend in Syria, reinforced by historical legacy and continued throughout the rule of the modern-day, secularist Ba'athist regime.

After the Ottoman's slow decline and eventual collapse at the end of World War I, the British and the French partitioned the Arab lands between them in the Treaty of Sevres in 1920^[2], in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. With the inception of the League of Nations, British and French territorial control came in the form of a League mandate, with the British being assigned administrative control over Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, and France over Syria and Lebanon. Like so many borders drawn by Europeans during the colonial era, they did not perfectly reflect the ethnic and religious fault-lines in existence on the ground. The Kurdish peoples, for example, found themselves split between the new Turkish republic, Iraq and Syria. Similarly, the Yezidis found their traditional homelands straddled across the Iraqi-Syrian border. However, on the other hand, the French carved Lebanon from Greater Syria to ensure that the Maronite Christians were in the majority in that country.

Whilst the League of Nations mandate prescribed an eventual transition to full autonomy, the French were not forthcoming in confirming the date that this transition period would end. Discontent with European rule, Sultan al-Atrash led a revolt against the French that took the better part of three years to put down. During this period, fighting broke out in the key cities of Damascus, Homs, and Hama, which – bar Damascus – seems strangely prescient of the current Arab Spring uprisings.

With the outbreak of World War II and the fall of France, the French administration in Syria aligned their loyalties to the Nazi client state of Vichy France. Just over a year later in July 1941, the British and Free-French occupied Syria, with a coalition of Syrian nationalists declaring independence that same year. However, it was not until 1944 that their independence gained broad international recognition.

Between independence and the ascendancy of the Ba'ath Party, Syria was dogged by continual instability and upheaval; during this period there was war with the new state of Israel, a contest of power between the civilian polity and the military that resulted at various times in military dictatorship, a short-lived union with Egypt, and multiple coups. Eventually, however, the current regime under the Ba'ath Party was installed during the '8 March' Revolution in 1963.

The Ba'ath Party was a nationalistic, pan-Arabist movement with a socialist and anti-imperialist agenda, originally based in both Iraq and Syria. However, factional conflict between the old guard and 'regionalists'^[3] of the Syrian party eventuated in a successful intra-party coup by the 'regionalists' in 1966, creating a permanent schism between the Syrian and Iraqi branches of the party. In 1970, Hafez al-Assad consolidated control of Syria and the Ba'ath Party by ousting his rival – Salah Jadid – from his positions of power, in a move labelled euphemistically by al-Assad's new regime as a 'Corrective Movement'.

Hafez al-Assad continued to consolidate his power base, and a new Syrian constitution was adopted in March 1973, entrenching the Ba'ath Party as the ruling party in the infamous 'Article 8', as well as the Ba'athist socialist, anti-Zionist and pro-regionalist agenda. Later that year, the Yom-Kippur War of October 1973 helped to confirm al-Assad's anti-Zionist and pan-Arabist credentials.

However, Hafez al-Assad's regime was not without opposition. After the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976, Islamist opposition to the secular Ba'athist regime

escalated into violence, with the conservative Sunni-dominated Muslim Brotherhood increasingly mounting violent attacks from 1979. The Brotherhood's insurgency culminated in the notoriously bloody Hama Massacre in February 1982, with Assad forces brutally repressing their revolt in an action that "killed up to 20,000 people"[4].

After Hafez's death in June 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad assumed the Presidency. Educated in the United Kingdom, it was hoped that Bashar would be more tolerant of criticism of the regime, and would usher in a new era of political and economic reform. Indeed, there was a brief relaxation of control by the regime, which came to be known as the Damascus Spring. However, the reprieve granted under Bashar's leadership proved to be short-lived, and once again political activism became repressed, although limited economic reforms *were* implemented. Later, under intense international pressure, Bashar al-Assad withdrew the country's troops from Lebanon in 2005, ending over thirty years of Syrian military occupation.

After Tunisian street-vendor Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in December 2010, a series of revolutions swept the Arab world in North Africa and the Middle East. Syria experienced protests from January 2011, and the intensity of the opposition to the Ba'athist regime increased steadily in the following months, with major rallies starting with the 'Day of Dignity' on 15 March 2011[5]. Since the official formation of the Free Syrian Army – the main armed and militant opposition group – on 29 July 2011, violence in Syria has also steadily escalated in intensity and bloodiness. Bashar al-Assad and the Ba'ath Party have been widely criticised for handling the crisis exceptionally badly. From an internationalist perspective, the Arab League has condemned the violence perpetrated by the al-Assad Ba'ath regime, and international pressure has mounted more generally for a transition in the Syrian government. Unfortunately, however, the United Nations Security Council remains deadlocked on a comprehensive resolution to the conflict due to differences in approach and policy between the Western permanent members on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other. In the meantime, the violence continues unabated.

Catalysts of the Arab Spring in Syria

This historical background frames the context of the social and political factors at play that catalysed the Arab Spring's arrival in Syria.

Sectarianism

Outside commentators are quick to point to sectarianism as a critical source of social division in Syria. Syria is far from religiously homogenous, although there is an overwhelmingly large Sunni majority that accounts for over two thirds – about 70% – of the population. The ruling elite – including Bashar al-Assad himself – are drawn disproportionately from adherents to the Alawite sect, a branch of Shia Islam, which accounts for approximately 13% of the population. Most Alawites are concentrated in the north-west of the country, in the coastal strip north of Lebanon. The administrative class and, importantly, the security apparatus, are also strongly drawn from this Alawite sect. Other sizeable religious minorities are the Christians, at 9% of the population, and the Druze and mainstream Shia adherents, at approximately 3% apiece[6].

Certainly, strong sectarian divisions do exist within Syria. The Muslim Brotherhood insurrection, which culminated in the catastrophic Hama Massacre, was a Sunni-led, sectarian insurgency, and the resulting 'bad-blood' between the remnants of this movement and the regime remains. As the Arab Spring has gained pace and fervour in Syria, multiple sources have purported that Sunni protesters have variously shouted or scrawled the slogan: "*Christians to Beirut, Alawites to the grave*"[7]. Taking many forms, radical Islam certainly remains a feature on the Syrian religious landscape, with higher concentrations within the impoverished and disenfranchised sections of society[8]. However, the question is not whether sectarianism exists in Syria – as indubitably it does – but whether it is seriously contributing to the current insurgency.

Firstly, it is simplistic to assume that the Alawites have a monopoly on power within the state, as there is a fair representation of all other sizeable religious groups within the regime, including installing Sunnis in critical positions of power, including – for example – the head of the police force and the head of the intelligence services[9]. Unlike his father, Bashar al-Assad has made a concerted and largely successful effort to co-opt the city-based Sunni elite – the clergy and the merchant class – into supporting the regime[10].

In particular, Bashar allowed Sunni Islamic civil society – and all Islamic civil society for that matter – to expand significantly under his rule, including support for Islamic schools and charities[11]. However, this is not to say that the regime tolerated all forms of Islam:

Even as it was willing to promote mainstream Sunni Islam, the regime sought to control what it saw as more threatening Islamist strands. The growing influence of Salafism, in a country traditionally dominated by Sufi schools of thought, was deemed to present a long-term menace.[12]

But even with fundamental Islamists, the regime appears to have taken a pragmatic, if readily changeable posture. As per a Syrian security official in 2009:

There is an implicit message being sent to the Islamists which I interpret as follows: when you act against us, we crush you; when you are supportive, we will respond to some of your demands.[13]

It is important to remember that the Ba'ath Party is a highly secular organisation. Being able to preach religious tolerance and pluralism from a platform of irreligiousness – not to be confused with *anti-religiousness* – has been part of the Party's success at maintaining stability within Syria, and thus control over the country. It does not want to give the impression that Alawites – or any other minority – enjoy positions of relative privilege, for fear of provoking resentment. It thus does not serve their long-term interests to exacerbate the natural sectarian divisions that exist in the country.

Indeed, this view holds up to some scrutiny. A local journalist from Damascus highlighted an important distinction: "This is a regime dominated by some Alawites, not an Alawite regime." [14]

Furthermore, it is clear that for most Alawites, their religion does not automatically confer upon them a position of economic privilege in Syrian society:

Not every Alawite is a buddy of Bashar al-Assad. Not every Alawite has become a billionaire under Assad. There's a clique, a mafia that is associated with him and his family, siblings and cousins. It radiates out from there.[15]

Further: "Even Alawites [...] long have had reason to complain, chafing at the sight of an ever-narrowing elite that does not even bother to redistribute wealth to its own community." [16]

And yet the regime has "*relentlessly stoked*" [17] the sectarian character of the insurgency. Whilst this does not explain why the Arab Spring first arrived in Syria, it does help us to understand why the insurgency has continued, and has been so fraught and protracted.

Alawites and the other religious minorities fear that the insurgency is increasingly taking on a sectarian character, and that if the Alawite-led regime collapses, there will be fierce reprisals by the Sunni majority. This has not only restrained the broad-based participation of religious minorities in the uprising, but also encouraged the Alawite-dominated security apparatus to dig in. Paradoxically, the more Alawites are perceived to be agents or supporters of the regime, the greater the risk that the conflict will devolve into a bloody sectarian civil war. Furthermore:

The security forces... have closed ranks behind the regime, though it has been less out of loyalty than a result of the sectarian prism through which they view the protest movement and of an ensuing communal defence mechanism. The brutality to which many among them have resorted arguably further encourages them to stand behind the regime for fear of likely retaliation were it to collapse.[18]

In conclusion, whilst sectarianism does not appear to have been a primary driver of the Arab Spring, it does appear to be an increasingly dominant narrative within the Sunni protest movement. It is fair to characterise sectarianism as more a creation of the Arab Spring movement – a catalyst for its continuation despite government opposition – rather than a key instigating catalyst.

Ethnic Minorities

The vast majority of the people in Syria are Arabs – approximately 90% – with the only other sizeable ethnic group being the Kurds, who comprise approximately 9% of the population[19].

With an estimated 30 million Kurds worldwide, the Kurdish people are the largest national group in the world without their own state[20]. The largest contiguous region is grouped together on the intersection of the Iraqi, Syrian, Turkish and Iranian borders, and is nominally known by some as 'Kurdistan'.

Since independence, Syrian regimes have historically deprived the Kurds of the freedoms enjoyed by the Arab majority. For example, in 1962, approximately 150,000 Kurds were deprived of Syrian citizenship in a 'special census', with many being registered as *ajanib* ('foreign') or as *maktumin* ('stateless')[21]. Now there are some 300,000 Kurds – both original victims and their descendants – still denied full citizenship[22].

To neutralise the threat of Kurdish separatism in his own country, Hafez al-Assad's regime channelled funds and domestic Kurdish attentions towards support for the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK)[23], the separatist Kurdish movement in Turkey. This support continued until intense pressure from Turkey led to abandonment of the policy in the late 1990s, leading in turn to a resurgence of Kurdish nationalism within Syria.

However, despite legitimate grievances, the Kurds were slow to join Arabs in opposing the regime during the Arab Spring. The Syrian government too had – originally – "*shrewdly decided not to attack majority Kurdish areas*"[24], not wanting to provoke the minority during the regime's time of weakness. Similarly, the Kurds seem to be content not to be seen as leaders of the insurgency, in case they provoke a government narrative of ethnic division that could lead to heavy-handed government crackdown. Younger Kurds, however, have been fairly represented in the broader protest movement[25].

It would seem – prima facie – that Kurdish nationalism has not been a critical catalyst of the Arab Spring, nor, at this stage, contributing significantly to its continued momentum, with the majority of the community adopting more of a 'wait and see' approach.

Refugee Groups

The refugee communities in Syria also constitute relatively disenfranchised social groups. The three major groups are: refugees from the Golan Heights – the *nazihin*; Palestinian refugees; and Iraqi refugees who fled the invasion of Iraq and its subsequent sectarian conflict. Despite the al-Assad regime's periodic, provocative anti-Zionist rhetoric, it appears to many of the *nazihin* that the regime prefers to maintain its enmity with Israel rather than make any serious attempt to reclaim their land from occupation.

However, both Palestinian and Iraqi refugees have been relatively well-treated by the Syrian regime. For example, apart from Jordan, Syria is the only country that grants Palestinians who sought refuge in Syria with ostensibly the same rights and freedom of movement as ordinary Syrians. Indeed, research foundation Fafo found that "*living conditions of Palestinian refugees are basically on a par with those of Syrian citizens*"[26]. Similarly, Amnesty International found the situation of Iraqi refugees to be comparatively good although, as of 2007, "*the situation remains acutely difficult and the need for greater international assistance is undiminished*"[27].

Any grievances held by the Palestinian and Iraqi refugees must surely be dulled by their relatively good treatment by the regime. In addition, these groups face a similar conundrum as the Kurds – not willing to align themselves as a group to the opposition movement for fear of provoking an ethnic-based narrative to the government's counterinsurgency, which could result in targeted reprisals; for example, the government could drum up antagonism by highlighting that "*the refugees place a large burden on Syria's public services and institutions*"[28].

However, one would think that the *nazihin* communities, being 'authentic' Syrians, face no such concerns of being 'singled out' for retaliation, or at least, no more than any other group. However, there is little current indication to support this hypothesis one way or the other.

The Hama Massacre

The Ba'athist regime has engaged in repressive political and social measures too great in number to document them in their entirety here. However, surely the most brutal repression of dissent and human rights violation occurred during the reign of Hafez al-Assad with the massacre in Hama in 1982[29]. As documented above, the regime's annihilation of an estimated 20,000 lives cannot help but be an event that echoes through the consciousness of the nation; but particularly, of course, in Hama. As per the words of an intellectual from Hama in 2007:

The events are still taboo. No one mentions them, neither in Hama nor within the regime. But no one has forgotten. They are waiting and know there will be a second round.[30]

However, the International Crisis Group poignantly goes on:

The central city of Hama had every motive to rise up and serious reasons not to [...] the regime has made virtually no effort at reconciliation, which has meant that the tragedy continues to shape local feelings. However, that same defining experience probably explains why residents held back until the regime's repression in neighbouring Homs climaxed, in May.

However, it cannot be doubted that those feelings have now well and truly reawakened, with Hama being a centre of opposition struggle.

The Damascus Spring Effect

After Bashar al-Assad's ascension to the Presidency, there was a brief window – from approximately June 2000 until September 2001 – in which political repression was relaxed. During this 'Spring', the formation of *muntadats*, or 'political discussions groups'[31], was encouraged; the infamous Mezze political prison was closed; and the 'Manifesto of the 99' was released, a pro-democracy declaration by 99 prominent intellectuals and civil society leaders.

Whilst this 'relaxation' did not unleash an uncontrollable deluge of criticism of the regime, it did create a small space in which it could be publicly and legitimately discussed. Arguably, once opened, shutting off this avenue of criticism did more to build critical pressure and resentment against the regime.

Alternatively, to the regime's benefit, the Damascus Spring did 'smoke out' some of the vocal critics for identification or imprisonment by the regime, which could have blunted the eventual impetus of the Arab Spring that we see now. In addition, the most critical social media websites became blocked until January 2011.

Economic Catalysts

The average Syrian citizen is not remotely wealthy by OECD[32] standards. The World Bank classifies it as a lower middle income country with an average gross national income of approximately USD 2,800[33]. Unemployment is high at over 8%[34], and GDP per capita growth is at 3.3%[35] – seemingly solid by developed country standards, but strictly below-par when starting from a low, developing-country base.

From his extensive empirical work, economist Paul Collier concludes that the greatest determinants of civil conflict are low incomes and low growth because, as he puts it: "*...low income means poverty, and low growth means hopelessness.*"[36] Whilst this is a somewhat too simplistic reduction of the social and political catalysts of the Arab Spring, the contribution of poverty and economic malaise to the discontent of the Syrian people is considerable, and an exceptionally important consideration. Also, whilst Syrian incomes may be low by OECD standards, they are still considerably better than much of the Arab world. As the International Crisis Group noted:

The absence of abject poverty of the kind that exists in Egypt or Yemen was perceived by some as yet another advantage for the regime.[37]

However, the 'low income, low growth' hypothesis conceals a broader economic analysis. In particular, the average gross national income figures mask a critical aspect of Syria's current state of development – namely, the level of income inequality in society. Whilst the most recent data puts Syria's income distribution as

only modestly unequal[38], there is a "widespread perception that the state had been hijacked by a small circle of individuals chiefly focused on self-enrichment." [39] Bashar al-Assad has implemented a modest agenda of economic reforms. However, the reforms have – or at least, were perceived to have – predominantly benefitted the rich. In addition, as with most trade liberalisation agendas, even though the benefits outweigh the costs, the benefits are thinly spread whilst the costs are heavily concentrated in particular economic sectors.

As elsewhere in the Arab world, the youth have been strongly represented in Syria's Arab Spring movement. Whilst the youth are often at the vanguard of combative social movements – often merely a function of having less assets and dependents at risk – Syria's is characterised as possessing "the unpredictability of an overeducated, underemployed and bulging youth population." [40] Indeed, recent youth unemployment figures show that over 13% of young males – and considerably more young females – were unemployed before the insurgency [41].

The Arab Spring Effect

The great success of the Arab Spring in other countries – particularly in Tunisia and Egypt, where the dictatorial regimes were replaced by pro-democratic elements – cannot and should not be underestimated. The people protesting in these countries were people of largely the same ethnicity, speaking the same language, and facing a highly similar social, political and economic malaise presided over by a seemingly self-serving or indifferent – at best inattentive – autocrat. Unsurprisingly, with cultural ties throughout the Arab world being so deep-seated, when some of these movements met success, it greatly encouraged the rest to push for reforms even more fervently.

When the Tunisian regime was toppled and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ousted, a spark of hope was ignited throughout the Arab world. Once President Mubarak too was removed from office in Egypt – the most populous Arab state – those sparks became flames. It is said that 'success breeds success'; undeniably the successes of the Arab Spring inspired yet more Arabs to combat the despotism of their governments, and often the governments themselves.

The Ideological Drift of the Ba'ath Party

Lastly, the biggest catalyst for the Arab Spring movement in Syria is that the Ba'ath Party, over time, eroded the broad social base it originally championed and relied upon to support its position in power, namely, regional Syria. Ever since the 'regionalists' gained dominance over the Syrian branch of the Ba'ath Party, they advocated socialist measures that protected but also enfranchised the regional periphery – the land-based peasantry and regional petit bourgeoisie – in favour over the city-based elite. Agrarian reform was carried out on a broad scale and also entrenched in Article 16 of the Constitution, with land distributed from the landlords to the peasantry. This buttressed their ongoing support, as did genuine attempts by the regional administrators to address the real needs of the people.

However, Bashar al-Assad's Presidency marked the beginning of a slow but nonetheless seismic shift back in favour of the city-based elites. Bashar, himself a product of cosmopolitanism, his world centred on the administrative hub of Damascus, is not a natural champion of these traditional Ba'athist roots. However, the decay and political kleptocracy spreads further than merely Bashar or even his close relatives; it is in fact now endemic in the entire party structure. As the International Crisis Group decries:

Local administrative bodies, rather than addressing popular needs, became the embodiment of a predatory culture in which resources were not redistributed but skimmed off for the benefit of the few. [42]

The Party has made inroads into co-opting the conservative Sunni leadership, especially through economic liberalisation and crony capitalism; it has done so at the price of its original and forgotten regional support base, abandoning it to an alternative social space that, to the most neglected or radical, includes extreme forms of Islamism. Hardship in the rural hinterlands encouraged rural-urban migration, but many of these low-skilled workers found themselves with limited or low-paying employment opportunities. This was further compounded by an inadequate access to government services and employment opportunities. Most of these migrants had traded rural poverty for its urban cousin, but were now in concentrated groups, able and willing to mobilise when the Arab Spring presented itself in Syria as a real opportunity for change: "Syrian authorities claim they are fighting a foreign-sponsored, Islamist conspiracy, when for the most part they have been waging war against their original social constituency." [43]

Conclusion

The political and social catalysts for the Arab Spring in Syria are many and varied, and deeply rooted in the country's unique historical context. This article has variously considered the roles of sectarianism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic minority groups, regionalism, the policies of the Ba'ath party, and perhaps most importantly, the opportunity for political change presented by the successes of the Arab Spring in neighbouring countries. In part, Syria's Arab Spring is a youth bulge seeking generational change, but predominantly, it is a broad-based section of Syrian society that is profoundly frustrated with the piteous and repressive status quo. However, even now, it is slowly attempting to build the momentum to overturn it.

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[1] p20, *Engaging Syria? U.S. Constraints and Opportunities*, International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No.83, 11 February 2009

[2] With some further adjustments made to borders by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923

[3] Pro-regional, pro-rural hinterlands members of the Ba'athist, who generally favour the cause of the rural classes over that of the city elites

[4] Robert Fisk, 'Freedom, democracy and human rights in Syria', *The Independent*, , accessed 17/3/2012; a previous estimate by Fisk put the estimated deaths at approximately 10,000

[5] 'Interactive: Timeline of Syria unrest', *Al Jazeera* website, , accessed 17/3/2012

[6] All figures in this paragraph from: Michael Izady, *The Levant: Religious Composition*, Columbia University (Gulf/2000 Project), 2012, , accessed 17/3/2012

[7] Tim Arango, 'Syria's Sectarian Fears Keep Region on Edge', *New York Times*, 28 February 2012, , accessed 18/3/2012; also: Aryn Baker, 'Eyewitness from Homs: An Alawite Refugee Warns of Sectarian War in Syria', *Time Magazine*, 1 March 2012, , accessed 18/3/2012; and others.

[8] *Popular protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VI): The Syrian people's slow motion revolution*, International Crisis Group, Middle East/North Africa Report No.108, 6 July 2011

[9] p18, *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Reshuffling the Cards? (I): Syria's Evolving Strategy*, International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No.92, 14 December 2009

[12] p19, above n8

[13] p19, *Ibid.*

[14] p25, *Ibid.*

[15] Elliot Abrams, Robert M. Danin, Robert McMahon, *Media Conference Call: Violence in Syria*, Council on Foreign Relations, 4 August 2011, , accessed 18/3/2012

[16] pii, above n8

[17] p25, *Ibid.*

[18] pii, above n8

[19] Sonia Roy, 'The Kurdish Issue', *Foreign Policy Journal*, 22 April 2011, , accessed 18/3/2012

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] p20, above n8

[22] Reese Erlich, 'In Syria, Kurdish Groups Divided Over Taking Up Arms Against Assad', *The Atlantic*, 20 October 2011, , accessed 18/3/2012

[23] The Kurdistan Workers Party

[24] Above n22

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] p8, Åge A. Tiltnes, *Keeping Up: A Brief on the Living Conditions of Palestinian Refugees in Syria*, Fafo, Norway, 2007

[27] p13, Iraq: The situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria, Amnesty International, 26 July 2007

[28] p25, above n1

[29] Not to be confused with the massacre in Hama in April 1981, which, whilst a mass atrocity, did not result in deaths on anywhere near the same scale

[30] p17, above n8

[31] Some translations describe *muntdats* as political 'salons'

[32] The Organisation for Economic Cooperation

[33] 2010 figures, in current (2012) USD terms, using the most recent (at time of writing) World Bank data-set for the Syrian Arab Republic: *World Bank*, , accessed 18/3/2012

[34] Most recent World Bank data is 8.4% in 2007; Ibid.

[35] Gross Domestic Product, calculated in constant 2000 USD terms; Ibid.

[36] p20, Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, New York, 2008

[37] p3, above n8

[38] Most recent World Bank data from 2004 puts the Syrian Gini coefficient at 0.34; by comparison, the most recent international measure of Australia's Gini coefficient (CIA Factbook) was recorded as 0.305, and the World Bank's last measurement in 1994 puts it as 0.352 [the coefficient can take any value from 0 to 1, with perfect income inequality found at 1 and perfect equality found at 0]

[39] p4, above n8

[40] p4, Ibid.

[41] World Bank data from 2007 lists the percentage of male youth unemployed as 13.1%, and female youth unemployment as 49.1% (as a percentage of the labour force, ages 15 to 24); above n33

[42] p14, above n8

[43] pi – ii, above n8

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