

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Plan B and other Reports

Graduate Studies

5-2017

Same Revolution, Different Outcome: Why Did the Syrian Regime Survive the Arab Spring?

Adam Alrowaiti
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports>



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Other Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alrowaiti, Adam, "Same Revolution, Different Outcome: Why Did the Syrian Regime Survive the Arab Spring?" (2017). *All Graduate Plan B and other Reports*. 895.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/895>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Plan B and other Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



Same Revolution, Different Outcome: Why Did the Syrian
Regime Survive the Arab Spring?

by

Adam Alrowaiti

A thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Political Science

Approved:

Prof. Colin Flint

Prof. Robert Nalbandov

Prof. Abdulkafi Albirini

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

Fall 2016

Same Revolution, Different Outcome: Why Did the
Syrian Regime Survive the Arab Spring?

Adam Alrowaiti

Table of contents

1. Abstract.....	3
2. Introduction.....	4
3. The Puzzle.....	5
4. Literature Review.....	8
5. Research Questions.....	21
6. Research Design.....	26
6.1 Summary of Variables.....	30
6.2 Data Collection.....	30
7. Analysis.....	33
7.1 The character of the dictator.....	33
7.2 The role of the military.....	39
7.3 The structure of Syrian society.....	45
7.4 Foreign intervention.....	55
8. Summary of Results.....	61
9. Conclusion.....	64
10. References.....	68

ABSTRACT

The Arab Region faced a wave of massive public demonstrations in 2011. People across the region demanded freedom, justice, and equality. That movement overthrew some of the region's dictatorship regimes that had been in power since decades. In Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen the regimes collapsed in the face of the people's revolution. However, public demonstrations and opposition could not overcome the Al-Assad regime in Syria. This thesis seeks the reasons behind the survival of the Syrian regime when other regimes collapsed. The thesis analyzes the case of Syria by comparing it to the case of Libya, since Libya went through almost the same features during its revolution, using the case-by-case methodology. The main data of the thesis are newspaper and TV statements of individuals who had roles in the conflict. The dogmatic conflict between Sunni and Shia, the Syrian regime's alliances, and the role of Al-Gaddafi and Al-Assad are among the variables of analysis. The thesis evaluates four main reasons that allowed the Syrian regime to resist the revolution: the character of the Syrian dictator, the role of the Syrian military institution, the structure of the Syrian society, and the role of foreign intervention. The thesis explains why, in the case of Syria, a people's movement became a civil war.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab world witnessed an unusual phenomenon in 2011, “The Arab Spring.” Waves of massive demonstrations occurred in many Arab capitals and major cities with the public demanding freedom, justice, and equality. The protests began in late December 2010 in Tunisia and inspired equally large demonstrations in Arab countries such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria, as well as smaller scale demonstrations in countries such as Jordan and Morocco. The ruling class across the whole Arab world were shocked by this uprising: dictatorships, monarchs and presidents were all exposed to the impact of public demands. For the first time since the end of the period of colonization regular people in Arab countries were able to gather together and unify around political goals. After decades under the oppression of their regimes, the people of Arab countries were now in the streets demanding regime change. Their voices were also heard all over the world through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The power of technology made it possible for the Arab people to share their revolution as well as support each other all the way from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.

In the Arab world, where dictators had a tradition of ruling in an authoritarian manner for many decades, the public had an established fear of displaying personal expression against their regimes. The Arab Spring was a breaking point in the relationship between people and their rulers. The fear of the regimes was disrupted. People started to recognize what they could do and what power they had; they believed they did not have to be subjected to corrupt rulers. The streets of Tunis, Cairo, Sanaa, Tripoli, Damascus and many other Arab capital cities were full of hundreds of thousands, millions in some estimated reports, of people demanding freedom, justice

and equality or even for the regime to leave power. Change was the fixed desire and only change would satisfy them.

By early 2012 many regimes in the Arab world had been changed by the people. Many dictatorships were forced to give up their authority and many countries in the Arab world were approaching a new era of democracy. However, not all of these Arab uprisings ended well; it was different from one country to another. Some countries accomplished a full transformation toward democracy, some had struggles to establish a new democracy, and unfortunately for some of them the aftermath of the protests turned into chaos and civil war.

The Puzzle

The demand for change was the consistent goal for the different national publics within the Arab Spring. However, the outcome has been different in different countries. In Tunisia the massive demonstration achieved its goal successfully by ending the rule of Zine El Abidine Bin Ali. Bin Ali had been the president of Tunisia since 1987 when he came to power by military coup against the former president Habib Bourguiba. On 14th January 2011, after approximately twenty-nine years in power, the Arab uprising overthrew Bin Ali and forced him to flee the country.

Egyptians were inspired by the Tunisian rebellion and they went to the streets in the capital, Cairo, as well as in other major cities such as Alexandria, to demand a new government. The regime of Mohammad Hosni Mubarak had ruled since 1981, after the assassination of former president Mohammed Anwar El Sadat. Mubarak was the fourth president of Egypt since 1952 when a military group called “Free Officers” overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. Mubarak

had ruled Egypt like a dictator for about thirty years. The outcome of the Arab spring in Egypt occurred on 11th February 2011 with the change of the regime and the overthrow of Mubarak.

The people of Yemen followed the Tunisian path and ordered the same demands: freedom, justice, and equality. The regime of Yemen under Ali Abdullah Saleh responded more aggressively than the regimes of Tunisia and Egypt. Confrontations between the forces of the regime and the demonstrators occurred in the capital city of Sanaa; leading to an unexpected division within the military. The peaceful revolution had turned into armed tension within the military institution itself. A section was still loyal to Saleh while the other section of the military decided to stand in favor of public rights. Saleh was attacked and barely survived. He finally agreed to turn over his power to his vice president on the 27th of February 2012, ending his thirty-three years reign of the Yemen Arab Republic. He had been part of the government since 1978 and as the President of Yemen since 1990 after the unification of North Yemen with South Yemen.

The Arab Spring continued to spread to Libya, first appearing in the country's eastern region in the city of Benghazi. The same demands were chanted there as they had been during the rest of the Arab uprising. The dictator of Libya, Muammar Al-Gaddafi, was considered one of the oldest, if not actually the oldest, dictators in the world, coming to power after a military coup against the Libyan monarchy in 1969. The demonstrations of the Libyan people quickly turned into a civil war. Because of the actions of Gaddafi to maintain power, a bloody civil war erupted, costing tens of thousands of Libyan lives. With the aid of intervention from NATO the revolutionary forces gained the upper hand, Al-Gaddafi was killed by a group of rebels in August 2011 after forty-two years of holding power.

The people of Syria were inspired by the successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt to start their own revolution. The Arab Spring soon swept the streets of Syrian cities with people amassing in numbers by March 2011. The masses of protestors against Bashar Al-Assad's regime started to make their voices heard in the Syrian capital of Damascus and other major cities. The demands of the people were the same as elsewhere: freedom, justice, and equality. Although the Arab Spring in Syria followed the same pattern as it had in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya the outcome for the Syrians was very different. The Syrian revolution became an ongoing disaster. After five years since the beginning of the Syrian uprising against the Al-Assad's regime, the revolution has yet to accomplish its goals. The Syrian regime maintains its authority and the revolution has become a massive civil war that is far bloodier than the one suffered by Libya. The variation in the outcome between the Syrian case and the other cases of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya (especially the Libyan case) is the main puzzle of this thesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purposes of this thesis, revolution is identified as the mobilization of a segment of the people of a country to demand political changes from their regime or to change that regime entirely (Goodwin, 2001). World history is full of revolutionary incidents, from ancient times through to the modern era. Some of these revolutions have been major events in history that reshaped the world. The American and the French revolutions are the best examples of such major revolutions, changing the concepts of democracy and human rights. A people's revolution marks a remarkable point in any country's history whether or not the outcome matches the public's expectation. Unfortunately, the cost of revolutions can be high, bringing bloodshed and disorder to a country. As Nietzel (2012, p.1) writes, "As a historical process, 'revolution' refers to a movement, often violent, to overthrow an old regime and effect complete change in the fundamental institutions of society." When a society lives under the injustice of a regime, revolution may be the logical action for the public in order to seek better opportunities. Revolution is a signal point to the inadequacy of a certain regime to meet the satisfaction of its people. The public, sooner or later, may find a way to demand their rights. Throughout an upheaval, the populace of the country can be recognized by their involvement in the struggle.

Tullock (1971) provides a framework to consider the choices people may make when faced with a revolutionary situation: 1, a group of people may remain neutral; 2, a group of people may join the protesters; and 3, a group of people may stand with the regime. The first group, in general, does not track with any certain interest. They have faith that the conflict will end no matter who is the victor, and the country will eventually be restored to order. The second group may see opportunities in toppling the regime. For example, they may gain membership in

the new government's ranks or at least gain respect by being seen as a patriotic revolutionist. The third group, generally, acts from a comfortable situation, such as gaining profit from the existing regime, and the alteration of that government will likely damage or destroy their interests. This clash over interests and position can easily dissolve into civil war if none of the belligerents can achieve victory in a short period of time.

Revolution is one of many stages of violence a society may experience. With the cases of the Arab Spring the violence of revolution was driven by demands for changes of regimes that had never responded to satisfy their subjects. Gurr (1970) distinguished three mental traditions about the standard foundations of human violence. First, violence is exclusively instinctive. Second, violence is exclusively learned. Third, violence is an intrinsic reaction triggered by frustration. Gurr (1970) explained that violence is a persistent improving instinct, assuming that the majority or entirety of men have inside them an autonomous base of violence desires. Violent actions are learned and used intentionally in the struggle for political principles, whether national policies or ideological views. Violence happens as a response to frustration that is interfering with goal-engaged actions. According to Dollard (1939), the incidence of violent revolutionary activities continuously presumes the presence of frustration and, in reverse, the presence of frustration continuously leads to some form of violent behavior. Within the Arab societies that faced the waves of the Arab Spring, people were under the oppression of their regimes for many decades, and generations started to develop and adopt Gurr's (1970) three sources of human aggression and violence.

People fight for revolutionary causes because they believe that their causes are right. Political violence, including revolutions, has aspects that may justify aggressive action toward a regime. Ideology is one key factor that has justified violence for rebel groups. "Men's ideational

system, including their political ideologies, usually incorporate norms about the desirability of political violence; they may prohibit the use of violence as an instrument of political competition or prescribe violence as an historically justified response to political oppression; under conditions of strain or discontent, however, new ideas circulate among the discontented which are more likely to offer normative justification for violence” (Gurr, 1970, p. 194). The Arab uprisings did not occur after a few years of political oppression, but after many decades of dissatisfaction under oppressive regimes. People started to form ideas about overthrowing their governments even if it accordingly meant that violence would play a role in reaching their goals. The people of Libya and Syria were under dictatorship regimes that failed to meet the expectation of their subjects.

However, it is important to take into consideration that when groups of rebels rise up against a government that the ideologies may differ from one group to another. Thus, the success of the rebellion might be at risk; “Most participants in political violence, revolutionary or otherwise, do not carry complex ideologies in their heads; the subtleties of justification articulated by revolutionary leaders” (Gurr, 1970, p.195). This explanation applies to the Syrian revolution where the rebels were fragmented into many groups with different ideologies and goals - such as the Free Syrian Army aiming for a new society without Al-Assad and on the other hand ISIS with the aim of establishing an Islamic Khilafat¹.

In certain circumstances, discontented people are exposed to new thoughts of revolution and violence. It is easier to mobilize discontented people via the diversity of ideologies, slogans, rumors and, for the case of the Arab Spring, through the advantages of social media (Gurr, 1970; Skinner, 2011). The vast use of social media, especially after the Egyptian revolution, pictured

¹ “Khilafat” is the common Arabic spelling, but many English sources write it “Caliphate.”

the act of violence as justified and rational in order to stand against an oppressive regime.

Another key aspect of political violence is the utility of violence that shows violence as a rational choice (Bray, 2009). The majority of participants in group demonstrations and acts of violence have utilitarian motivations, as well as pure anger. Conflict theorists commonly accept that people are rational or at least rationalistic in circumstances of struggle. Hence, they have a tendency to select the paths of action that they consider making the most of the probability of accomplishing what they are aiming for (Gurr, 1970). After the accomplishments of the Tunisian revolution, the motives of public demonstrations and revolutions against regimes spread all over the Arab world.

In some cases, revolution may lead to a civil war. Kalyvas (2006) indicated that civil war is an armed disagreement within the territory of a recognized sovereign state amongst parties that were under the supreme authority of that state but now disagree due to their dis-satisfaction toward that authority. When the circumstances lead to a struggle amongst the forces of a regime and an armed militia or a group of rebels, it may not be precise to classify it as a civil war. The conditions of civil war comprise a massive armed conflict between the regime and its people who have become a fully organized army. When each of the central parties effectively gathers enough of the population onto its side, thus dividing the entire nation into at least two distinct central rivalries in the armed conflict, then a “civil war” would be the accurate classification.

If the parties within an armed revolution are themselves fractured, even though they may have a mutual objective in challenging the old system, many obstacles for revolutionary efforts are generated. As Pearlman (2013, p.40) said, “...political fragmentation, meaning the lack of coordination among actors producing unified political action, is distinct from social fragmentation, referring to the cleavages that divide a population.” For a society with many

splinter groups in its structure, the potential success of its rebellion would be far less than a society with little fragmentation. According to Honore (1988, p.38) "...a rebellion can have one of three justifying aims. The aim may be the radical one of changing or the conservative one of preventing change in an existing society. Alternatively, the goal may be to break away from an existing society and create a new one." Changing regimes became the goal of the Arab uprising and preventing this change the counter-goal of ruling regimes. In the case of Syria, and some other countries, creating a new society, was the goal of the people participating in massive demonstrations. Unfortunately for Libya and Syria the waves of protest turned into destructive civil war between fragmented parties. Hence, it has been hard to achieve the initial goals of the protesting masses, and also to resolve the conflict.

In the case of Syria, religious schism is a key expression of internal fragmentation that defines conflict between the regime and the opposition, and within the opposition. Sunni Islam and Shia Islam are the major camps of the Islamic religion. Although they share the belief of one God, one prophet and one holy book, they have extreme variations toward some other Islamic matters and practices. The main argument between them is the question of succession, who is the rightful successor to the Prophet Mohammed? For the Sunni the rightful person to be the Muslim's Khalifat² is the most qualified one; while for the Shia, the rightful figure should be someone descended from the prophet's blood line. This disagreement has affected the Muslim world since the first decade of Muslim history. With time, this Sunni-Shia conflict became an identity for its supporter even on the regime level. For example, the whole society of Iran is known as Shia and its regime purely follows the Shia methodology. The regime of Al-Assad in Syria is a great supporter of the Shia minority in a society that contains a Sunni majority. The

² Many English sources use the spelling "Caliph" for the word "Khalifat."

social identity of the majority of Syrian Muslims is Sunni, but they have a regime that advances the Shia minority. Hence, the regime is against the stream of the society's structure. The conflict of Sunni-Shia continues and has spread over almost every aspect of Muslim practices. However, the conflict becomes fatal when it is embedded within a political struggle like that in Syria. The Syrian case is notable as the regime of Al-Assad, unlike any other Arab regime, is supporting the Shia against the Sunni.

The autocrat family of Syria, the Al-Assad family, does not belong to the sect of Sunni Muslims nor to the sect of Shia Muslims. The Al-Assad family belongs to the Alawite sect. The Alawite sect is another branch of Islam. The Alawites agreed with the Shia on the matter of succession but the Alawites have a supplementary statement in the magnification of Imam Ali, Prophet Mohammed's nephew and son in law, supposedly advancing him with celestial features. "Until 1920, the Alawites [of Syria] were known to the outside world as the Nusayris or Ansaris. The name change was imposed by the French when they seized control in Syria. 'Nusayri' emphasizes the group's different approach to mainstream Islam, whereas 'Alawi' suggests an adherent of Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad) and accentuates the religion's similarities to Shia Islam" (Fildis, 2012, p. 150). The Alawite community makes up only 12% of the Syrian population while approximately of 70% of the Syrian people are Sunni. For the Alawite the Sunnis are their main rival due to the many dogmatic disagreements with them, including the matter of succession and the interpretation of the Muslims' holy book "the Qur'an." To the Alawites the Shia is their closest ally since at least they have some common beliefs with them. This connection has been strengthened after the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran. The Iranian regime, which belongs to the Shia sect, and the Syrian regime, whose leader belongs to the Alawite sect, have become very strong allies. As Primoz Manfreda (2016) stated,

“Alawites are often portrayed as religious brethren of Iranian Shiites, a misconception that stems from the close strategic alliance between the Assad family and the Iranian regime (which developed after the Iranian revolution in 1979), but this is all politics. Alawites have no historical links or any traditional religious affinity to Iranian Shiites.”

The Al-Assad regime in Syria is heavily backed up by the Shia Iranian regime and some of the Shia militias who got involved into the Syrian war, such as the Shia Lebanese militia of Hezbollah. The historical conflict between the two Muslim's major faiths, the Sunni and the Shia, has affected the Syrian revolution and its outcomes even though the Al-Assad family does not follow the faith of either of them. Al-Assad and his regime, as they are pro Shia, guaranteed the support of their Shia Allies in this conflict while, on the other hand, the Sunni opposition of Al-Assad, especially the extremist groups, are considering this conflict as a holy war. This is why the Syrian revolution in one of its aspects has been highly impacted by the historical Sunni-Shia conflict and has gained more complexity.

The situation in Syria is not as simple as it looks. It is not just a conflict between the forces of the Syrian regime against the Free Army, which represents some of the public demands. The situation has deep roots through the components of the Syrian society in general. Indeed, it is more likely to be a settling of accounts from the course of Syrian history. The conflict has many dimensions in addition to the people's demands for freedom, justice, and equality. In fact, it is better framed as a conflict between religious parties and a conflict between dissimilar ethnicities. Al-Assad, as the figure of the Shia minority in Syria, has all the necessary support from almost all of the Shia population. However, while the Sunni are the majority in Syria they do not agree on a figurehead leader. What makes the conflict even more complicated is the mixed ethnicity in Syria, with a Kurdish minority. The Kurds have been seeking their

independent sovereignty for decades, and through this civil war they may achieve their claim, at least partially. Unlike other Arab regimes that faced the wave of the Arab Spring, the Syrian regime has a better chance to survive the phenomenon, especially, retaining the head of state. Al-Assad has successfully taken advantage of Syrian society; a fragmented society has less opportunity to reach victory in its revolution than a unified society. A context of disunited parties in the time of armed revolution, although sharing a common goal of challenging the regime, will generate many obstacles for revolutionary efforts.

As Lane (2008) stated, revolution is not the change of a regime by another political party. It is the change of a regime by its own subjects. The concept of revolution in this thesis is the uprising of the people without any motivation from external agents. Even though the Arab Spring spread out and moved from a country to another, it moved by the willingness of the people within each country without any encouragement by external forces or agencies. Some conspiracy theory advocates may look at the phenomenon with an eye towards external agendas. However, there is no clear evidence that foreign actors initiated the processes of revolution and civil war in Syria. Revolution contains two elements: change in the political structure and massive participation (Goodwin, 2001), a situation that describes the actions of the people of Syria against the Al-Assad regime.

External, or foreign, intervention is when another country, often a more powerful country, is trying to alter the conflict. The intention may be to the advantage of the regime or to support the rebellion's efforts. International intervention is based on treaties, international laws, and on state domestic actions (Farer, 1969). In the Syrian case, a formal role has been played by international powers, especially the veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council. Also, Syria has experienced intervention from regional countries, including those who have supported

the regime (e.g. Iran) and those who have supported the revolution (e.g. Turkey). Comparing the Syrian case to the Libyan case provides a clear example of how a legal and just international intervention can change the revolutionary situation. In Libya the forces of the regime were the dominant side of the conflict until the international community, represented by NATO, decided to change the equation. The security council of the UN agreed and gave the green light to NATO intervention. The Libyan regime forces were defeated and the revolutionary forces were advanced. With the Syrian case there is no such international agreement on the matter. All the interventions, whether by the regime's supporter like Iran or the rebels' supporter like Turkey, lack international authority.

International intervention usually plays a large role in the case of revolutions, but there is the question of whether it is legal and just for a country to intervene into the issues of another country and, accordingly, violate the sovereignty of that country. Fixdal and Smith (1998) discussed the matter of foreign intervention through the lens of human rights and by analyzing the three models of Donnelly (1995). The first model is statism. In this model, human rights are in principle the responsibility of the sovereign nation-state; accordingly, there is no general right to intervene. The second model is internationalism. This approach acknowledges the centrality of states and sovereignty but stresses the international social practices that regulate interstate relations. For internationalists, intervention is permissible if it is authorized by the society of states. The third model is cosmopolitanism, which corresponds to Wight's Kantianism (1994). In this model, the international system is seen as consisting of individuals rather than states; states have rights only if they promote the rights and welfare of their citizens (McCarthy, 1993). In this perspective, sovereignty is beside the point: the real issue is how to meet the needs of the world's

citizens (Pastor, 1993). Accordingly, when massive human right abuse occurs, the burden of proof lies on those who argue for nonintervention (Fixdal and Smith, 1988, p. 292-294).

In the Libyan case the UN intervened into the conflict in order to protect human rights. However, in Syria even though there was much evidence of human rights violations by the regime international intervention never took a place. According to Fixdal and Smith (1998) there are two conditions that justify a humanitarian intervention. First are cases where the country agreed to join UN peacekeeping forces. Second are the cases of intervention into so-called failed states. In Libya the intervention of foreign forces came within the first year of the revolution, but in Syria after five years of massive civil war, a legal and just authorized foreign intervention has not yet happened.

One of the aspects that made the Syrian revolution unique in its outcomes is the reaction of the Syrian regime towards the public demands. Syria is under the control of a dictator who is descended from another dictator, his father. This is one of the differentiations between Syria and other Arab countries that experienced the Arab Spring revolutions. After decades of family control over Syria, Al-Assad has secured his position in power more than any other Arab leader, and he has gained the support of many institutions and individuals within Syria and as well as creating external alliances. The case of Al-Assad's authority can be analyzed through the lens of autocratic resilience theory in order to explain the survival of the Syrian regime. Therefore, the resilience of a regime can be explained by selectorate theory that connects political entity's organizations for choosing its leaders to the policy selections leaders make and their scenarios for survival (Gallagher and Hanson, 2013). The actors contain the supporters of the selectorate, a leader, and a contestant. The disenfranchised, occupants of the organization who are not part of the selectorate, play a limited role in this theory. In each institution, there occurs a subsection of

the populace "Whose endowments include the qualities or characteristics institutionally required to choose the government's leadership and necessary for gaining access to private benefits doled out by the government's leadership" (De Mesquita, 2003, p. 42). Distinctive features that explain the potent role of actors in the selectorate, or exclusion from it, comprise the following: individual origin and ancestry; extraordinary talents, ability, or understanding; affluence; and sexual category or age.

The theory also explains the winning coalition as the "Subgroup of the selectorate of adequate scope such that the subgroup's support endows the governance with political authority over the remnants of the selectorate as well as over the marginalized members of the social order" (De Mesquita, 2003, p. 51). What establishes an "adequate" size differs according to a state's specific influential measures. Even in a situation of social equality with complete agreement, for example, variances in electoral procedures generate diverse pathways for capturing office and therefore forming alliances of different magnitudes (Gallagher and Hanson, 2013, p. 5). A crucial statement of the model is that the charge of providing private goods to the affiliates of the winning coalition is proportionate to the coalition's dimensions (Gallagher and Hanson, 2013). When winning coalitions are minor the minimum costly process of obtaining the support of the coalition is with private goods, but the greater the size of the winning coalition the greater the temptation for leaders to change to provide public goods. Since public goods by their nature are accessible by all followers of the organization, a great winning coalition produces larger general welfare. As Bueno de Mesquita (2003, p. 329) states, "Leaders survive longest when they depend on a small coalition and a large selectorate. They also do least under those conditions to promote the well-being of most people living under their control." In this situation, followers of the winning alliance are the privileged few who obtain private goods. The likelihood

is low that they will continue to be so blessed if an opponent increases their authority. With no motivation to desert from the leader's alliance supporters' loyalty persists. This theory was designed to analyze the Communist regime of the USSR. It is also applicable for the Syrian regime. The situation in Syria is a game of coalitions among the social order of society. The Al-Assad family chooses to gain support from a minority of social groups in Syria rather than to stand with the majority. In return the minority is raised in power, politically and economically, and remains loyal to the rule of the regime against the demands of the public in order to maintain their privileged status in society.

Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014, p. 314) define a regime as “a set of basic formal and informal rules for choosing leaders and policies,” and the leadership resembles the selectorate. They explain that in order to maintain authority, leaders are required to maintain the provision of supporters of this group. However, leaders similarly have significant capability to impact the membership of the group. Their discussion of the selectorate is distinguished by the claim that formal rules do not determine membership in the group: “Bueno de Mesquita et al, also use the word Selectorate to identify those citizens who influence the selection of leaders, but our leadership group is more similar to what they call the Winning Coalition, the subset of the Selectorate from which leaders come” (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2014, p. 315-317). They agree with de Mesquita that the leadership group has prominence in authoritarian regimes, but they disagree about the features of the group. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) think that the elementary functional characters of the governance assembly, such as the hierarchical connections that distinguish officer groups, mark autocratic choice making; their autocratic government category coding depends on these kind of features and characteristics.

Following Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) an essential reason for the persistence of the autocratic regime of Al-Assad in Syria is the hierarchical system that depends on the rule of the elite. Al-Assad's winning coalition is combination of Alawites, Shia, and other individuals whose interests depend upon the persistence of the regime. Hence, the nature of the regime and the fragmentation of Syrian society intersect. A further factor is Al-Assad's foreign policy choices, especially his international alliances with Iran and Russia. The revolution in Syria exposed to the world a very resolute example of authoritarian survival and its insistence on maintaining authority when facing a people's revolution. Sadly, we have witnessed the disastrous results of a confrontation between the forces of people's revolutionary anger and the forces of an authoritarian regime.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The political science literature provides a framework to investigate the question driving this thesis. Why did the regime of Syria under the leadership of Bashar al-Assad remain in power, while the Arab Spring overthrew other regimes? The conflict between the regime forces and the rebel forces in Syria has been ongoing since 2011. What is different in the abilities of the Syrian regime compared to the Arab regimes that fell in the course of the Arab Spring? The ability of the Syrian forces to fight against multiple groups, regardless of the fragmentation of society, is impressive in comparison to the other regimes of the Arab Spring and their failures to maintain power over their countries.

In the case of Syria, the current regime of Bashar Al-Assad is a continuation of the system of his father's regime when unjust abuses of authority were familiar. Bashar, as a civilian President, tried to make some changes when he came to the Presidency. Yet the inherent traditional oligarchical system of his father prevented his attempts to change Syrian politics. From the beginning, the Arab Spring movement was started by people who demanded justice and equality, people who were tired of being under governments that had been exploiting their power against the public good or the public interest. The people of Syria were passive for many decades under the regime of the Al-Assad family, but when they saw the possibility for revolution in the context of the Arab Spring, they could not resist the winds of change. Using the general framework of autocratic resilience and selectorates (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2014; de Mesquita, 2003), the staying power of Bashar Al-Assad will be examined.

In Syria Islamic ideology plays a key role in the underlying societal fragmentation that defines the mechanisms of autocratic resilience. Syria is the only country in the Arab region where the president and most of the regime members are Shia supporters and the major population is Sunni. Is this a factor in the Syrian regime's survival? Furthermore, how does the structure of Syrian society play a role in the extension of the conflict? The structure of Syrian society is more complex than any of the other Arab countries, with a great fragmentation in ethnicity including the Arabs, the Kurdish and some Turkish groups. This ethnic fragmentation intersects with the religious partition between the two major Muslim doctrines Sunni and Shia. There is also a significant number of Syrians identifying as Christians.

A further consideration is the role of external countries. Iran is the center of Shiaism in the Muslim world and has supported their Syrian ally. Would the Syrian regime be able to hold onto their authority without external assistance? The Libyan regime did not receive any assistance from regional or international forces. In fact, the international community represented by NATO was assisting the revolutionary forces by sending a series of daily air strikes against Gaddafi's forces. The intervention of Shia militias in Syria has been noted since the early days of the civil war, and the diplomatic support of Russia by using their right to veto in the UN Security Council is well known.

This thesis will engage these questions and intersecting processes to try to understand the reasons that make it possible for the Syrian regime to continue to survive the Arab Spring. The general question of why did Al-Assad survive the Arab Spring leads into four specific questions and their related variables. Two of them are directly related to the regime and the other two have indirectly played a role in the standing of the regime. Essentially, the puzzle boils down to the

nature of the regime, the form and fragmentation of opposition, and the role of external countries and non-state actors.

First of all, the character of the Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad is considered. It is hypothesized that the background of the head of the Syrian regime plays an important role in the term of presidential legacy and resilience in the face of revolution. In contrast to other Arab presidents, Al-Assad has heritage to his power, from his father Hafez Al-Assad. A family legacy rather than a military coup installed him in power. His family supports the Shia Muslim minority in the country, in contrast to the other presidents in other countries who belong and support to the Sunni majority. In terms of age, he is younger than other Arab leaders. When the Arab Spring started in Syria, Al-Assad was forty-six years old while the other presidents were over sixty.

The second question focuses upon the role of the military in securing an autocratic regime. The military has taken a major role in both the Syrian and Libyan revolutions. In Libya, a large part of the military forces decided to join the rebellion, while others fought against them; especially the military troops in the Eastern part of the country. In contrast, in Syria the majority of the military institution has remained loyal to Al-Assad's regime, and just a small number of soldiers and officers have joined the rebels. The military institution is one of the most substantial tools for a dictatorship to survive and to provide the balance of private and public goods to the selectorate. Al-Assad still has a sufficient and efficient control of the military.

The third question considers whether the numbers of belligerents in a conflict has an impact upon the outcome. This question investigates the role of societal fragmentation in autocratic resilience (Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, 2014; de Mesquita, 2003). In Syria Islamic fundamentalist groups (such as Al-Qaeda) have joined the fight, taking their own side and not

supporting the revolutionary army, the Free Syrian Army, or the ruling regime. Later in the conflict another Islamic extremist group was established, claiming the right to represent the Islamic Khilafat and giving themselves the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Other groups have joined the conflict as well, whether they stand with the regime, the revolutionaries, or with the fundamentalists is up to them. This complicated situation was not the case in Libya.

The fourth question considers whether the alliances of a regime can influence its ability to resist revolution. In contrast to the Libyan situation, which is the main comparative case study for this thesis, the Syrian regime formed alliances with Russia, China, and Iran. Russia has heavily backed the Syrian regime in the UN Security Council using its veto right to prevent any sort of decisions against the Syrian government's interests. Also, Russia has supplied the Syrian regime with an arsenal of weapons. In terms of weapon deals and agreements, the Iranians have encouraged the Shia Militias to join the fight with the Syrian regime's armed forces. A Lebanese militia called Hezbollah "Party of God" has been participating in the conflict alongside the Syrian regime since the early days of the fighting, with the support of Iran. China keeps its economic relationship positive with the Syrian regime, which ensures an influx of money into the regime's treasury. It is hypothesized that these alliances of the Al-Assad's regime made him able to withstand the challenge of the rebels and drove the country into a massive civil war.

The last question is related to the previous one and regards the role of external interventions in the success of the revolution. Specifically, the intervention of other countries (either regional powers such as Turkey and Iran or international powers such as the United States and France) will be considered. In Libya, an external intervention backed the rebel forces politically and militarily. Yet in Syria the situation is quite the opposite. The international

interaction in Syria was very limited and has not reached the expectation of the Syrian people as well as the Arab world in general. Moreover, the foreign intervention in Syria is actually in favor of the Al-Assad regime. There have been some statements that have been made by the White House, the European Union, Turkey, and the Arab League³ stressing the necessity of supporting some rebel groups, such as the Free Syrian Army. However, these external actors have not yet come to an agreement over their goals or the means to attain them

These five questions will be used to compare the Libyan and Syrian cases to shed light, in an inductive procedure, on the intersection of reasons that have led to the Al-Assad regime staying in power despite facing a revolution and a protracted civil war.

³ The Arab League is a council consists of the most Arab countries their main goal is to provide the necessary support to its members when needed as well as to set the disagreements among them.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis follows the comparative method of study, particularly a case-by-case study of Syria and Libya. By applying the comparative method, the thesis will organize the two cases in terms of their similarity in some general characters but with a variation in the outcome. As David Collier (1993, p.1) says, “Comparison is a fundamental tool of analysis, it sharpens our power of description and plays a central role in concept formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases.” The comparative method seeks to analyze the similarities and differences of the two or more events in order to find the reasons why those events ended up with the same outcomes or, in other cases, with different outcomes. “By comparing, the researcher is able to do what is necessary to develop a theory more or less inductively, namely categorizing, coding, delineating categories and connecting them” (Boeije, 2002, p. 393). For example, in the case of the Arab Spring the method can seek the pattern of behaviors by the regimes, the rebels and the societies in which they are in conflict to categorize them under the same or different stream.

One of the branches of the comparative method study is the case-by-case study that allows the researcher to pick a case as their central case and another case as the comparison case. The two cases must have similarities and differences to allow for analysis. According to Eisenhardt (1989) the cases-by-case study assists the researcher to build a theory by following these steps: getting started, selecting cases, creating instruments and protocols, entering the field, analyzing data, shaping hypotheses, enforcing literature and reaching closure. The method itself can be the way of generating a new theory, or it may be a way to advance a theory that has been defined by the researcher. With the Syrian-Libyan comparative aspects, this method would

provide an examination and explanation for the behaviors of the actors, the direct and indirect actors (Tellis, 1997). Within this thesis the direct actors are identified as those who have played a tangible role in the conflict, such as the Syrian regime and the rebel groups. Indirect actors are those who have played a role by only condemning and denouncing the immoral actions of the Syrian regime and the violations of human rights without having a presence in the ground conflict: Saudi Arabia and Qatar are two examples. In both cases, the regime forces and the rebellion forces are the main direct actors, and later on some foreign forces have joined the conflict as direct actors (NATO in the Libyan case and the Iranian with Hezbollah in Syria). In the Syrian situation, there is also Islamic fundamentalist groups that can be identified as direct actors. However, these groups will not be included in the detailed analysis, because it will distract the thesis away from its main questions. In both cases the United Nations and the Arab League remain indirect actors.

The central case of this thesis is Syria. The central research design task is to find a suitable case to compare. The best comparison to the Syrian case, among all the countries that were involved in the Arab Spring, is Libya. The people of Syria and Libya started their uprising similarly by protesting in the streets demanding freedom, justice, and equality. The regimes of both countries did not respond to the public peacefully. Instead they responded with oppression. The regimes of Syria and Libya used their armed forces to end the uprising. The result in both cases was armed confrontation. In both countries, as groups of people started to fight back against the regime, groups of the regime's armed forces joined the rebellion. As a final outcome, a civil war occurred, which turned both countries into chaos. Yet the Libyan people succeeded in overthrowing their regime and capturing their dictator within a year of the revolution. In the Syrian case, on the other hand, protests failed to overthrow the regime and the civil war is still

ongoing after four years of the initial revolution. This thesis is seeking the answer behind the failure of the Syrian revolution in comparison to the Libyan one: The failure that enables the regime of Al-Assad to maintain its power.

The case-by-case study analyzes variables to see how they have intersected to generate a different outcome for the Syrian case. The variables are:

1. The character of the president
2. The structure of the regime and the role of the military
3. The structure of society
4. The role of foreign intervention.

In terms of President's character, Al-Assad differs from Al-Gaddafi in many points, though some characteristics are shared. Unlike the Libyan dictator, Al-Assad does not have a military background. He is a civilian president who was an eye doctor before becoming the new dictator of Syria in 2000. Bashar Al-Assad, in comparison to Al-Gaddafi in particular, and other Arab dictators in general, is younger in age and has spent less years in power. At the time of the Arab Spring, Al-Assad was forty-six and had spent about ten years in power. Al-Gaddafi was sixty-nine and had spent around forty-two years in power. The unique character of Al-Assad may play an essential role in the survival of his regime in comparison to other regimes that faced the wave of the Arab Spring.

The regimes in Syria and Libya both came to power via a military coup, Al-Ghaddafi in 1969 and Al-Assad senior in 1971. Power was subsequently inherited by Bashar al-Assad from his father. Furthermore, both regimes were secular. In each case, the response to the Arab Spring

demonstrations was to suppress them through military forces. The key difference between the regimes is the religious factor. In Syria the regime favored the Shia against the Sunni, even though the majority of the Syrian are Sunni. In Libya, there is barely any Shia presence in the country, and the regime itself was close to being one hundred percent Sunni. Hence, the comparative role of religious preference is examined.

Among the Arab countries that experienced massive demonstrations in 2011, Syria is the most unique of them. The Syrian society in contrast to the other societies of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya has a complicated social structure. The society in Syria is divided into many identities that are categorized by religion and ethnicity. The situation in Syria, after four years of catastrophic civil war that started by a call for human natural rights, is now a conflict of social ideologies and identities. Even within the revolutionary forces themselves there is no common agreement. They are divided by religious doctrines. For example, the Free Syrian Army and the Army of Islam have a different religious identity even that they are Sunni Muslims, and the goals of Arab fighters and Kurdish fighters are of different ethnic backgrounds. The role of Syrian society's complex structure in advancing the regime of Al-Assad is examined.

Finally, the role of foreign intervention in the comparison of the Syrian and Libyan revolutions can be seen through the alliances of both regimes. For forty years, the Libyan regime did not build a strong network of alliances, especially with major powers. When the civil war occurred in Libya many countries, including the United States and Russia, condemned the brutal uses of the regime's forces, and the UN Security Council voted for a lawful international intervention in Libya in order to protect civilians from their government. The situation in Syria is quite the opposite. The Syrian regime is allied with two major powers, both with veto power in the UN Security Council (Russia and China); as well as alliances with one of the major regional

powers in the Middle East (Iran). Of these allies, Russia has recently intervened militarily. Hence, the role of external alliances and interventions in perpetuating Al-Assad's regime will be analyzed. Table 1 lists the variables that are analyzed in both countries: Syrian and Libya.

Table 1. Summary of variables

The variable	Syria	Libya
Sunni-Shia conflict	yes	no
Dictatorship regime	yes	yes
Military stood with the regime	yes	no
Regime allied with major powers	yes	no
Lawful foreign intervention	no	yes
Foreign intervention is in favor of the rebels	no	yes
President's character differs from the social majority	yes	no
Civil war occurred	yes	yes
Islamic fundamentalist groups have a direct role	yes	no

Data collection

The data contains the statements of the main actors if applicable and related to the questions of the thesis. The main actors of this thesis are: the head of the Syrian regime Bashar Al-Assad, the Syrian foreign minister Walid Muallem, the representative of Syria to the United Nations Bashar Jaafari, and Syrian prime ministers since 2011 (Syria has had five prime ministers since the beginning of the revolution in 2011). The statements of these actors are used to analyze and measure the structure of the Syrian regime as well as to analyze the character of the Syrian president. For the matter of social structure and military institutions, the thesis analyzes news reports that are dealing with those two variables, such as primary reports from Syria and Libya. Also the statements of some religious leaders like Hassan Nasrallah the Secretary General of the Lebanese Militia Hezbollah, and the official statements of some rebel armed group like the Free Syrian Army are taken into consideration as well. The United States'

President Barak Obama, the United States' Secretary of State John Kerry, the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, the president of Turkey Rajab Tayb Erdogan, the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Kings of Saudi Arabia Abdullah and Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon, and the statements of key people within the European Union and the NATO are analyzed to evaluate the role of foreign intervention in Syria and Libya.

The data are collected from three main sources: the first source is newspapers, the second source is TV channels and the third source is online analysis and reporting websites. To make sure that the sources are representative of a variety of voices and opinions, the data are collected from three different regions: The United States, Europe and the Middle East. The newspaper sources from the United States are: The New York Times, The Huffington Post, The Los Angeles Times and USA Today, The Foreign Policy, The Worldnews, The Newsweek. The newspaper sources from Europe are: The Daily Star, The Guardian, The Independent, and The Daily Telegraph (UK), Sputnik News (Russia) and El Pais (Spain). The newspaper sources from the Middle East are: Al-Ahram (Egypt), Al-Akhbar and The Daily Star Lebanon (Lebanon), The Middle East (Saudi Arabia), Quryana News (Libya) and Times of Israel (Israel). TV channel sources are: CNN (USA), BBC (UK), Al Jazeera network (Qatar), Al Arabiya (Saudi Arabia), Al-Hurra (USA) and Rudaw TV (Iraqi Kurdistan). Online analysis and reporting websites sources are: The Pew Research Center, The Jamestown Foundation, The National Public Radio (NPR), The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS), Al-Monitor, The Kurdish Project and Joshua Landis blog, (USA), The Middle East Eye (UK) and Russia Direct (Russia). Analyzing data from this variety of sources from different areas enable the collection of a diversity of various voices and opinions and address the complexity of actors in the Syrian civil

war. Key words used in the data collection include words and phrases such as Syrian revolution, Syrian civil war, Arab Spring, Al-Assad, Free Syrian Army, and conflicts in Syria.

The primary object of the data is to incorporate the statements of people who represent the main actors in the conflict and analyze them with reference to the questions and variables described earlier. The most essential statements are those from Syria, whether from the Syrian regime or the Syrian rebels. The voices and opinions of those who represent the governments of the United States, the European Union, and Russia are also analyzed. In addition, some other voices such the secretary general of the UN, voices of the Saudis and the Turkish, and voices of Iran and Hezbollah are included. The international voices are given secondary weight since the main focus of the thesis is the internal dynamics of the Syrian revolution. The data illustrates the roles of Bashar Al-Assad and his family, the Syrian military, and the different factions of Syrian rebels.

The data collection was limited to the period beginning in 2011, the starting point of the Arab Spring and October 6, 2016, when the data collection ended. However, some statistical and factual data were collected from dates before the event of the Arab Spring.

ANALYSIS

What makes the Syrian revolution and its outcomes complicated is the variety of the variables and the way they intervene with each other in a complex way. The complexity is addressed through a number of questions, starting with the characteristic of the President, moving to the role of the military and the social structure, and ending by discussing the impact of foreign intervention. All of the above help us to address why the Syrian revolution has failed. In this section of the thesis, the questions are addressed by analyzing a variety of newspapers, TV channels, and analysis and reporting websites sources that show the voices of many representatives of the Syrian conflict.

The Character of the Dictator

Syria

The first question addresses the role of the characteristics of the Syrian regime's president Bashar Al-Assad and how his background has played a role in the survival of his regime. Moreover, to what extent has Bashar Al-Assad, and some of the Al-Assad family members in general, played a role in creating and maintaining the ongoing conflict in Syria? In order to answer this question, we need to take a closer look at the history of the Al-Assad family to better analyze the role of his character and background on the ongoing Syrian conflict.

Bashar inherited power over Syria via his father Hafez Al-Assad who took over the power and the authority of Syria in 1970 after a military coup. The Arab world has witnessed a lot of military coups after the era of European colonization, especially, from the end of World

War II until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like other Arab presidents, Hafez al-Assad was believed to be preparing one of his sons to inherit the authority of the country after him; that son was not Bashar, it was his older brother Bassel who was a lieutenant colonel in the Syrian army. However, Bassel died in a car accident in 1994, just six years before the death of his father and the coronation of his brother Bashar as the new president of Syria in 2000. Unlike other Arab presidents who faced the Arab spring, Bashar was not a military man from the beginning of his career. He had to join the military right after the death of his brother Bassel by the order of his father. He was forced to leave his career as an eye doctor to become part of the Syrian military in 1994 when he was around age thirty. This change in his life might affect his reaction toward the rebellion. Bashar was not the favorite Al-Assad member to take the presidency, yet the death of his brother Bassel made him the choice of his father to succeed him. According to Hussien Shobokshi (2014), Bashar has the problem of acceptance within himself due to the fact that he was not the first choice of his father, but Al-Assad senior had to choose him after the death of Bassel who was the first choice of succession. With this psychological matter in his character, Bashar had to prove himself in front of the Al-Assad family and his father's generals within the military institution who doubted Bashar's capabilities from the beginning. Oppressing the revolution and saving the legacy of the Al-Assad family would be the great chance for Bashar to silence anyone within his family and his regime who was uncertain whether he was the right person to succeed his father.

In fact, Bashar was just following his father's methodology in terms of suppressing a revolution. In 1982, a political and a social movement was organized in Hama, a city located 132 miles north of Damascus, by the Society of Muslim Brotherhood against the regime of Al-Assad senior, specifically, and against the rule of the Arab Socialist Baath Party in general. Hafez Al-

Assad did not hesitate to use the ultimate force of the Syrian army to burn the city down in order to restrain the movement and crush the rebels. As a result, between ten thousand to thirty thousand people were killed; many thousands of people were injured; and sixty to seventy thousand people were made homeless. Also, around eighty-eight mosques and five churches were destroyed (Paul, 1990, p.23). The action of Al-Assad junior toward the 2011 uprising in term of suppressing a social movement against the regime is a replication of Al-Assad senior's behavior in 1982.

Like many Arab dictators, Bashar has installed many people of his family in important positions within the governmental structure. The high ranked positions of Al-Assad family members have played an essential part in the retaining the Al-Assad family in power. One of the most powerful men in Bashar's regime, the man who is considered to be the second in command, is his younger brother Maher, who is the leader of the Syrian Republican Guard and Bashar's most trusted counselor. In fact, Maher was expected to be the one who would succeed his father after the death of his older brother Bassel since he was an officer in the Syrian army and Bassel's right hand man. But surprisingly Al-Assad senior decided to choose Bashar instead. Maher was assigned to lead the Syrian forces in its effort to oppress the revolution. Maher has led the Syrian forces against the rebels in many battles including the siege of Deraa, the siege of Homos, and the battle of Aleppo. Another person of Al-Assad's family who played a role in the survival of the Syrian regime is Hillal Al-Assad who was killed on March of 2014 after an attack by some of the armed opposition groups. Hillal is the son of one of Bashar's uncles and he was the commander of the National Defense Forces in the city of Latakia (a branch of the Syrian military institution that was founded in November of 2012 just to deal with the rebels and to put down the revolution). Hillal was known as one of the most brutal members of al-Assad family when it

comes to the family interests. Latakia is considered as the base of Al-Assad family and to a large number of Alawi families, so his main task is to secure the stronghold of the family. The following quote illustrates the way Hillal's role was seen by media commentators:

“The first major military action this militia saw was during the famous attack of August 4th 2013, when Sunni groups attacked 11 Alawite villages. The attack ended, but the military scrimmages continued, especially now with this Anfal attack in the Kassab region. When Hilal died, the National Defence forces (al-Difa' al-Watani) had grown from being composed of only a few local “popular committees” (Lijan Sha'biyah) into a small-sized army, complete with a few tanks and many pieces of heavy artillery” (Mohammed D., 2014).

After about five years of the Syrian revolution, the Al-Assad family has stayed in power due, in part, to the solidarity among the family members, and especially by putting some of them in the place of authority.

In Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, the presidents and the government officers all belonged to the majority religious structure, but in Syria it is totally the opposite. The Al-Assad family belongs to the Alawite minority, while the majority of the Syrian population belongs to the main stream Sunni. As a president who belongs to the minority group in the religious structure of the country, Al-Assad family has to ensure that people who belong to the majority group, the Sunnis, will not take the majority of positions within the governmental structure. When the uprising occurred most governmental officials were either from the Al-Assad clan or from other minorities. "Power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of just a few people in Assad's clan, which has grown autistic and seems to have chosen to just keep going," according to Paris-based expert Karim Bitar told the Agency France-Presse (AFP)” (Dailystar.com, December 26/2012).

The same article went on to describe the religious and minority backgrounds of members of the regime in more detail:

“Assad's circle includes his brother Maher, 44, who heads the army's elite Fourth Division and his wife Asma, an analyst told AFP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject. The group also includes Assad's notorious businessmen uncle Mohammed Makhlef, 80, cousin Rami Makhlef, 43, and Damascus security chief, Hazem Makhlef, aged 41. Like Assad, all are members of the minority Alawite community, except his wife, who is a Sunni Muslim. The Presidential affairs minister since 2009, Mansur Azzam, aged 52, and former Al-Jazeera journalist Luna al-Shibl are also close to Assad. Both are members of the Druze community. Alawite Hussam Sukkar, a security advisor to the president, is also key, as are two Sunni veterans: National Security director Ali Mamluk and Political Security chief Rostom Ghazali. "This is the group that takes the decisions," the analyst said. "Bashar, who runs the show, only listens to people who owe him, for the most part, for their rise." DailyStar.co.uk, 12/26/2012

The decision makers in Al-Assad's regime were chosen and selected very carefully in order to promote the rule and the continuance of the regime. The strategy of creating a closed bloc of governmental officials and decision makers was seen to be beneficial by the time of the revolution. At this time Bashar had almost the entire support from within the regime since he was the one who put them in their positions. The will of the public had not been a factor in deciding the personnel of the regime.

The last aspect of Al-Assad's character in this analysis is his age. In comparison to the other Arab presidents, Bashar is the youngest, and he is considered as one of the second generation of Arab leaders since the end of the colonization era after the World War II. In comparison to the dictators of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, Bashar is different in term of how he came to the presidency. The other dictators took the power by the actions of their own hands. In contrast, Bashar came to the position of authority by the action and decision of his father Hafez when he decided to prepare him as his successor. He is among few Arab rulers, like King Abdullah of Jordan, who had the chance to study abroad. As a young president, Bashar may consider himself better than the others who had fallen after the wave of Arab Spring. He may think that he has a better education, and he is from a very well-known family in his country by the time he took over the power. Also, he wants to prove that he can survive the revolution

when the others could not. In one of his recent statements he said “Ten years later, I want to be remembered as the person who has been able to save Syria, but that does not mean that I will be president at the time,” he added, “Syria will be fine and I will be the one who saved the country.” (France 24.com, February 21/2016). After nearly five years of the revolution in Syria, the Syrian autocrat Bashar Al-Assad has proven that he has the resilience to survive the people’s uprising. Leading the country into a massive civil war that has cost hundreds of thousands of casualties and massive destruction to the country’s infrastructure, Bashar Al-Assad still sees himself as the rightful president of Syria, and has the determination to stay in power.

Libya

When Muammar Al-Gaddafi came to power in Libya in 1969, he was already a charismatic person. He was one of the officers, specifically a Captain, among a group of officers under the name of “The Libyan Revolutionary Command Council” who led the One September coup of 1969 which overthrew the Libyan monarch⁴. Later, Al-Gaddafi was selected by the revolutionary leaders to be chairman of the The Libyan Revolutionary Command Council (RCC),” and promoted to the rank of Colonel. After the bloodless coup of 1969 “he governed Libya as Revolutionary Chairman of the Libyan Arab Republic from 1969 to 1977 and then as the "Brotherly Leader" of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya from 1977 to 2011” (World News. Com, June 13/2016). Al-Gaddafi did not inherit his position from someone else, he was among those officers who had taken the power from the previous authority. Therefore, Al-Gaddafi did not experience the question whether he was right man for the position. This is in contrast to Bashar Al-Assad who faced many uncertainties from some of his family members and some of his father’s regime officers when he was chosen as his father’s successor.

⁴ The last monarch of Libya was Muhammad Idris As-Senussi (12 March 1889 – 25 May 1983).

This dissimilarity in the background between the two dictators is one of the characteristic factors that may have lead Al-Assad to deliver Syria into its current fate.

Another variation in characteristic between the two regime leaders is that Al-Gaddafi did not belong to a religious minority group within his country. Al-Assad belongs to the Alawite sect of Islam while Al-Gaddafi belonged to the Sunni Muslims. When the Libyan revolution started the issue of religious conflict did not occur since Libyan society is not fragmented by religious diversity. In addition, Al-Gaddafi did not have the support of foreign Muslim militias that are against the majority, compared to Al-Assad who has the support of some Shia militias such as the Hezbollah of Lebanon. What if Al-Gaddafi was not a Sunni? Would he and his regime have received the support of the non-Sunni militias? There is high chance that the answer of the previous questions might be yes. If so, the Libyan revolution may have gone down the same path as the Syrian one.

The Role of the Military

Syria

Dictatorships gain their strength mostly from their military institutions, the armed forces that act as the iron fist of regimes and secure the control over their oppositions. In this section, the analysis interprets question two of the thesis by analyzing the role of the Syrian military institution in the survival of the Syrian regime. In every country around the world, whether in ancient or modern periods, the military institutions, and the army in particular, hold ultimate physical power within the state. Military institutions are essential for a regime to insure the

control of the country's territory, and it becomes ever more essential during the time of uprisings.

When the Arab Spring began in Tunisia on December of 2010, the Tunisian Army did not get involved in the matter. The military decided to support neither the regime nor the protestors; the army was a neutral factor in the uprising. The situation was similar in Egypt where the army did not support the regime or the people in the January 25th revolution. The Egyptian military stepped away from conflict; they only came to the streets of Cairo to keep order at particular major areas in the city. Yemen and Libya experienced a slightly different attitude by the military institutions. In both countries, the army was divided into two sections: one was in favor of the regime and the other was in favor of the people who claimed to have overthrown the regime. In Yemen, Lieutenant General Ali Al-Ahmar, the president's cousin and the commander of the northwestern military district and the 1st Armored Division, supported the revolution. In Syria, although a few soldiers and officers abandoned the regime, the military institution as a whole favored the regime. The Syrian revolution was the only case in which the military strongly and almost fully stood by the side of the regime.

The Syrian army remains loyal to the regime, and the matter of disobedience is not an issue to the Syrian regime. To the Syrian military institution, the decisions that have been made by the regime are not questionable and the army is willing to devastate many parts of the country in order to put down the rebellion. Evidence of the army's brutality has become a part of daily life across Syria. Al-Qaboun, a district of Damascus, stands witness to this fact:

Qaboun in Damascus saw fierce fighting between rebels and government forces in July 2012 and was destroyed over a lengthy period. A restaurant owner called Walid says: "I saw the bulldozer demolishing my shop. The shop was opened by my grandfather many years ago... all of my family's hard work was destroyed in one second." Walid told Human Rights Watch that the demolition took place over 50 days: "The army demolished

1,250 shops and 650 homes. 1,800 families had to evacuate. There were two or three families in every house. The Syrian army gave the shop-owners 24 hours to empty their shops. Homeowners were given only three hours to pack their stuff and leave. It was not enough time. People barely took anything with them." independent.co.uk, 01/31/2014

The Syrian army has acted in a far more ruthless manner against rebels than in any of the other Arab countries in the period since the Arab Spring. This kind of inhumane action by the army, especially against civilians, serves as a clear message to those who are fighting or opposing the regime on what punishment may await the people who present a challenge and support the rebels. In Egypt during the first few days of the revolution against Mubarak's regime, only police departments with riot police had the responsibility to defend the regime while the Egyptian army stepped aside as a neutral player (Aljazeera.net, January 30/2011). It was clear in the first statement of Egyptian army in the revolution of January 25th that the army was supporting the legitimate demands of the people and the preserving of the nation and its gains (Ahram.org, January 25.2015). Even in the aftermath of the revolution the Egyptian defense minister Field Marshal Mohamed Tantawi said that the army would not stand behind the overthrown president nor send soldiers to fire on the protesters (The New York Times, February 11/2011). There is no comparison between what the police are capable of and what the army can do when it comes to the men, power and weaponry. Police forces cannot protect a government in the case of war, this job is for military forces. The brutality of the Syrian army is just one aspect of how dedicated it is to preserving the regime against the uprising.

The factor that Al-Assad's regime is pro-Shia also helped the regime to gain more control of the military. Al-Assad appointed many of his family members to the top of the military hierarchy. Also, he and his regime would assign many Allawi officers or pro-Shia officers as leaders of military units to insure their loyalty to the regime and not to the people. A few

Alawites are mainly in charge of the Syrian army, which supposedly has to defend a country that is majority Sunni. As the result of this kind of military hierarchy, when the uprising of the people of Syria took place the leaders of the Syrian Army and the Syrian military in general stood beside the regime rather than being neutral or supporting the rebels. Military units showed their willingness to destroy the people's will from the beginning of the revolution. From many videos and news reports that have been released via social media, it was obvious how much hatred the regime's army expressed towards the public and especially the rebels (The Guardian.com, May 4/2013). For the military, the war is not about putting down a revolution but is a way to advance the dogmatic beliefs of their leaders, especially, those who belong to the Alawite sect against the opposite beliefs of the most of the Syrian people (Aljazeera.com, October 10/2011). The army of the Syrian regime objective, which is considered to be one hundred per cent a Muslim army, was destroying as many mosques as they could. This included many historical mosques especially in the cities of Aleppo and Hama through the claim that the rebels were hiding and positioning inside these mosques (USA Today.com, April 24/2013). The action of destroying a mosque is a very unusual practice by Muslims even during the times of wars against each other. If mosques could not survive the brutality of the Army in putting down the revolution, imagine what the army has done to other types of buildings and infrastructure. By the fifth year of the ongoing uprising, the regime's forces have turned most Syrian major cities and towns into ruins.

This divergence in the loyalty of the military institution has played one of the most important roles in the survival of the Syrian regime and the continuance of the conflict in Syria. The Syrian case stands in contrast to Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and more obviously Libya where the regimes collapsed to the willingness of the people. One of the reasons that the Syrian army did not turn on the regime is that Al-Assad has managed to put many Alawite and pro-Alawite

officers in charge of military units. In Libya a large part of the army sided with the people, including some of the high ranked commanders. While in Syria, most of the Syrian army's soldiers and their commanders remain in favor of the Syrian regime. Most authoritarian state regimes cannot survive without gaining the favor of the military institution. This was the situation in Libya, yet in Syria the regime is still in control of its army.

Libya

In Libya Gaddafi's son Sa'if Al-Islam Al-Gaddafi, told Libyans: "The army will play a big role [in defending the regime], it is not the army of Tunisia or Egypt. It will support Qaddafi to the last minute" (Al-Sayda (Libyan State TV), February 20/2011; Quryna.com, February 21/2011). However, despite this statement a large section of the Libyan army decided to disobey Al-Gaddafi's orders to attack cities that had revolted against the regime's authority. There were even some reports stating that the military's chief-of-staff and minister of defense, Major-General Abu Bakr Yunis Jaber⁵, was detained by Al-Gaddafi after refusing to carry out orders to conduct brutal repression of protesters in Libya's cities (al-Hurra, February 21/2011).

The kind of division between the military and the public that has occurred in Syria did not exist in Libya. When the Libyan revolution took place in 2011, many of the military leaders decided to side with the people and not the regime. One of the generals that disobeyed the Libyan regime and defected to the rebels' side was Abdul Fatah Younis, the Minister of Interior during the rule of al-Gaddafi. He had become the Libyan rebels' chief of army staff, but was assassinated later on by pro-Gaddafi agents, according to the rebel authorities (The Guardian.com, July 28/2011). This was a huge boost for the rebels and altered the balance of

⁵ He was one of Gaddafi's comrades during the military coup of 1969 and a member of The Libyan Revolutionary Command Council.

power between the public and the regime. According to the BBC “One of the generals who spoke to reporters in Rome, named as Oun Ali Oun, read an appeal to fellow soldiers and security officials to abandon the regime in the name of the martyrs who have fallen in the defense of freedom” (BBC.com, May 30/2011). The same report quoted another general, Melud Massoud Halasa, who told reporters “that Col Gaddafi's forces were only 20% as effective” as they were before the rebellion, as “not more than 10” generals remained loyal to him (BBC.com, May 30/2011).

Because a large number of the officers and soldiers of the Libyan army had turned to the side of the people in their demand for the regime change, the Libyan regime ended up with hiring many African militias to fight for the regime. While many of the Libyan high-ranking military officers had turned against their government or remained neutral, the situation is quite the opposite in Syria. High ranked generals stayed faithful to the regime and to the Al-Assad family. Riad Al-Assad, the officer who established the Free Syrian Army, was only a colonel in the Syrian Air Force before he defected to the side of people in July of 2011. The establishment of the Free Syrian army has played a big role in attracting many members of the Syrian military institution to the side of the rebels, especially Sunni soldiers and officers. However, the dissident movement was not enough due to the lack of men and weaponry (Aljazeera.net, October 13/2012) and most of the high military commanders are still in favor of the Al-Assad regime.

The Structure of Syrian Society

Syria

The structure of Syrian society has been embellished and altered by many cultures, ethnicities and religious groups throughout history. As a result of the many successive groups of people that have lived and settled in Syria through history, contemporary Syria has one of the most complex society structures in the region. The majority of the current Syrian population is Muslim, yet there are many divergences and dissimilarities among them. These cleavages are one of the reasons that the Syrian revolution has not succeeded. Moreover, beside the religious differences, Syrian society is impressively rich in term of ethnicity in comparison to many countries within the Arab World. This situation has impeded the rebels from accomplishing the goals of the rebellion. The variation in religious dogmas and ethnic groups within Syrian society has caused fragmentation that negatively affects the Syrian revolution.

Three cleavages are evident in Syrian society. With regard to religious differences, there are two cleavages. The first is the Sunni-Shia conflict that is evident in the fight between the rebel armed forces and the regime's forces and its allies' forces and militias. The second cleavage is the dogmatic conflict between the rebel groups themselves and the emergence of ISIS (Daesh). Furthermore, there is the matter of ethnic variation within the Syrian society, a component that should be considered as the third cleavage. This cleavage requires consideration of the role of the Kurds and what have they contributed toward the revolution.

Islam was divided into two main sects of practice since the first century of the Islamic origination. The majority of Muslims (85%) embrace the Sunni sect while there is a minority group of Muslims (15%) who accept the Shia sect as their Islamic doctrine (CFR.org, 2011). In

Syria the Shia population is approximately around 3-4 million, estimated to be 15%-20% of the total population of Syria (Pewforum.org, 2009) These figures can be compared to the estimated Shia population and the percentage of the total population in countries that have at least 100,000 of their entire population as Shia Muslims. Table 2 lists countries with more than 100,000 Shia Muslims within their population, indicating the percentage of the Shia relative to the country and to the world.

Table 2. Countries with More Than 100,000 Shia Muslims

Country	Estimated 2009 Shia Population	Approximate Percentage of Shia Population	Approximate Percentage of World Shia Population
Iran	66 – 70 million	90 – 95%	37 – 40%
Pakistan	17 – 26 million	10 – 15	10 – 15
India	16 – 24 million	10 – 15	9 – 14
Iraq	19 – 22 million	65 – 70	11 – 12
Turkey	7 – 11 million	10 – 15	4 – 6
Yemen	8 – 10 million	35 – 40	~5
Azerbaijan	5 – 7 million	65 – 75	3 – 4
Afghanistan	3 – 4 million	10 – 15	~2
Syria	3 – 4 million	15 – 20	~2
Saudi Arabia	2 – 4 million	10 – 15	1 – 2
Nigeria	<4 million	<5	<2
Lebanon	1 – 2 million	45 – 55	<1
Tanzania	<2 million	<10	<1
Kuwait	500,000 – 700,000	20 – 25	<1
Germany	400,000 – 600,000	10 – 15	<1
Bahrain	400,000 – 500,000	65 – 75	<1
Tajikistan	~400,000	~7	<1
United Arab Emirates	300,000 – 400,000	~10	<1
United States	200,000 – 400,000	10 – 15	<1
Oman	100,000 – 300,000	5 – 10	<1
United Kingdom	100,000 – 300,000	10 – 15	<1
Bulgaria	~100,000	10 – 15	<1
Qatar	~100,000	~10	<1
World Total	154 – 200 million	10 – 13	100

Note: Countries with an estimated Shia population of less than 1% of the country's Muslim population are not listed. The figures for Shias are generally given in a range because of the limitations of the secondary-source data (see Methodology for Sunni-Shia Estimates). Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Mapping the Global Muslim Population, October 2009

In Syria, the uprising has become a sectarian war between two religious ideologies. The Syrian regime, which supports the Shia rather than the Sunni, has gained heavy support from its Shia citizens and, furthermore, from external Shia allies. As the Syrian Shia allied with Bashar Al-Assad, many Sunni Jihadist groups (such as the Army of Conquest and The Islamic State) have successfully recruited large number of Syrian Sunni to their forces. Sunni leaders have represented the fighting as a religious battle. For example, Abdullah Muhaysini, top cleric of the Army of Conquest said, “The Aleppo battle was a truly divine one. ... The lions roared, the heroes of this blessed ... Army of Conquest” (Los Angeles Times, August 17/20016). Another cleric, Ibrahim Shasho, spoke of how “scores of the young men” had registered to become suicide bombers and prayed that the fighters would “purify the land of Syria from the filth of infidelity and the Shiites (Shia) and the Nusayris⁶” (Los Angeles Times, August 17/20016). The statements of the two leaders of one of the rebels’ armed groups indicates how the Syrian revolution, that started peacefully by people demanding regime change, has changed into a chaotic civil war and bloodbath stoked by sectarian differences.

Since the uprising became an armed conflict, the opposition has formed many armed groups. According to the BBC, there are believed to be as many as 1,000 armed opposition groups in Syria commanding an estimated 100,000 fighters (BBC, December 13/2013). However, most of the rebels’ armed groups are minor players and small units that only keep their operations at a local level. The major armed groups within the opposition can be divided into five major sections according (BBC, 2013). The first section is The Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army, it is known to be a more moderate and stronger alternative to the jihadist rebel groups in Syria. The Supreme Military Council (SMC) includes many affiliates and

⁶ The Nusayris are part of the Alawite faith.

brigades such as Martyrs of Syria Brigades and Ahrar Souriya (Free Men of Syria) Brigade as an alliance to fight for its agenda. The second section is The Islamic Front, which was the outcome of collaboration between seven rebels armed groups:

” seven Islamist groups - Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, Jaysh al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, Liwa al-Tawhid, Liwa al-Haqq, Ansar al-Sham and the Kurdish Islamic Front - declared that they were forming the largest rebel alliance yet in the 33-month conflict, with an estimated 45,000 fighters. They said the new Islamic Front was an "independent political, military and social formation" that aimed to "topple the Assad regime completely and build an Islamic state". They outlined a new command structure, with key roles shared between the seven groups, and said they would work towards a "gradual merger" (BBC, December 13/2013).

The third section is the Jihadist Groups, a similar development as happened in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003. Many jihadist groups formed and managed to recruit large numbers of fighters, both locals and foreigners. The jihadist groups in the Syrian civil war contain some extremist and radical Islamic groups, like The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or known as (DAESH) in Arabic, Al-Nusra (Support) Front, and Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar (Army of the Emigrants and Helpers).

The fourth section is the Kurdish Groups. The Kurds are one component of Syrian society, and they have played a major role in this conflict. They have tried to protect their areas that are located in North-Eastern Syria. The major forces of the Kurds are The Popular Protection Units (YPG) and The Democratic Unity Party (PYD). “The PYD has tried to keep the Kurds out of the conflict and consolidate its territorial gains. However, there has been occasional fighting with government troops, and since November 2012 also deadly clashes between the YPG and rebel fighters - particularly those from Islamist and jihadist brigades” (BBC, December 13/2013).

The fifth section of the Syrian rebel groups is the Independent Groups. They range between conservative Islamist to some moderate Islamist and nationalist fighters, such as the

independent groups including Ahfad al-Rasoul (Grandsons of the Prophet) Brigades, Yarmouk Martyrs' Brigade, and Kataib al-Wihda al-Wataniya The (National Unity Brigades).

Unfortunately for Syria, the revolution has been converted into a field for ideological and sectarian struggle between the rebels themselves. This has prevented the opposition groups from assembling their armed power and efforts to overthrow Al-Assad's reign, which was the primary intention of the people in 2011. This situation is unlike what happened to Al-Gaddafi's regime in Libya. There the rebel groups successfully unified their forces and efforts in order to overthrow the dictator. In term of religious ideology, the Libyan society structure (see Table 1) does not show the type of sectarianism that exists within Syrian society. The Islamic sectarianism within Syrian society has advanced Al-Assad due to the diffuse society structure and the inability to provide a single revolutionary front. Al-Assad has gained massive support from the Shia while his opposition, who are the majority Sunni, has failed to unify their plans in the fight against him. Furthermore, the rebels' armed forces have fallen into a struggle of dogmatic beliefs resulting in clashes against each other. The variation between the opposition's agendas and sectarianism has been one of the reasons that have resulted in the survival of al-Assad's regime.

Beside the doctrinal divergence, the structure of the Syrian society has suffered from an ethnic conflict. The Arab majority of the society is not in a cooperative relationship with the Kurds, who represent one of the biggest minority groups in Syria. The Kurdish areas are located in the North-East of Syria, and they have long history in the region (TheKurdishProject.Org, 2016):

The Kurdish region of northeastern Syria is inhabited primarily by people of Kurdish descent. It is estimated that less than 2 million Kurds live within the Kurdish region of northeastern Syria, also known as Rojava, constituting the largest ethnic minority in Syria; Currently, the largest political group in the Kurdish region of Syria is the Democratic Union Party (PYD). The PYD is a Kurdish political party that was founded

in 2003 as an affiliate of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in Turkey. Founded by Kurdish activists, the party has between 60,000 and 80,000 members. The PYD is the primary Kurdish force fighting against the Syrian Government and against the Islamic State. The military wing of the PYD includes both the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Women's Protection Units (YPJ)."

The Kurds have always demanded recognition and to pursue their independence from the ruling class of Syria. The Kurds, in fact, are not in favor of either the Syrian regime or the opposition groups. However, they see the benefit of joining any coalition that guarantees their safety within the Kurdistan region and advances their national interests. They have experienced fighting against almost all of the belligerents of the Syrian civil war. Salih Muslim, head of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is the biggest Kurdish party in Syria, was quoted as saying that his group does not support the Kurdish National Council (KNC) joining the Syrian National Coalition (SNC): "I think it's going to divide the Kurdish people, because there was a decision by the Supreme Kurdish Council not to deal with any side of the opposition without permission" (Rudwa.net, September 30/2013).⁷

According to Salih Muslim, one of the reasons that may prevent the Kurds from joining the Syrian opposition is its fragmentation, "He pointed out that the Syrian opposition is not homogenous, he said, there are different ideas, opinions, and ideologically they are not the same" (Rudwa.net, September 30/2013). The collaboration between the Kurds and the Syrian opposition, particularly, the Syrian National Collation, is on the negotiation table. Salih Muslim and Ahmed Al-Jarba (the president of the Syrian National Collation) discussed the possibility of alliances between both sides. Muslim described the meeting with the Syrian National Coalition, "The latest was the meeting of our representatives with coalition leader Ahmed Al-Jarba in Paris,

⁷ Rudaw is a Kurdish media network funded and supported by Rudaw Company, the network aims to impart news and information about Kurdistan and the Middle East in a professional manner.

but even at that meeting they denied the existence of the Kurds. They don't want to recognize the Kurds and the administration we set up at Rojava. Our most basic demand is recognition of Kurdish rights in the new constitution to be drafted. But they don't even want to talk about it" (Al-Monitor.com, June 23/2014). The addition of the Kurds would be a large boost for the opposition groups in the efforts to defeat Al-Assad's troops, but unfortunately such an alliance cannot occur on the ground, which benefits Al-Assad.

The Kurdish factor cannot be neglected in explaining the persistence of the Syrian civil war. Since the beginning of the revolution the main focus for the Kurds has been to secure their territories and cities against invasion. The Kurds, with the assistance of the United States and Russia, have been successfully holding off the ISIS militants from advancing into their lands (The New York Times, April 21/2016). The Kurdish forces would provide great assistance to the rebel forces if they could agree to collaborate. Even the United States' ambassador in Syria, Robert Ford, met with a delegation of Syrian Kurds and asked them join the Syrian revolution, promising them that the Syrian opposition's program would grant them self-rule and guarantee their cultural rights (Alakhbar.com, March 6/2015). After the declaration of the Kurdish autonomous zone, the chances of collaboration between the Syrian Kurds and the Syrian rebels might have increased. But until this kind of agreement can be substantiated the Syrian civil war will continue to be defined by the fragmentation of Syrian society structure.

Unlike the other Arab states that were involved in what was called "The Arab Spring," Syria has faced more complicated challenges. Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya did not have to deal with the issue of religious sectarianism nor the variation in dogmatic faiths. The Libyan revolution, like the Syrian, became a massive civil war. Contrary to Syria, in Libya the rebels' armed forces unified their efforts to overcome the regime's forces, and the issue of religious

sectarianism was not an obstacle to accomplishing the objectives of the revolution. The Sunni-Shia conflict within Syria has divided the society resulting in the lack of effectiveness in terms of armed resistance. Moreover, the opposition side has also presented many different agendas that have divided their effort in fighting Al-Assad and his alliances. Furthermore, the structure of Syrian society is more complex than Libya or other Arab countries with regard to ethnicity. Syria contains many ethnic minorities who have been involved in the war, specifically the Kurds. Even though the Syrian National Coalition tried to attract the Kurds to fight with other opposition groups against the Syrian regime, the Kurds were not persuaded to join the opposition efforts. The dispersion of efforts in opposing and fighting Al-Assad's regime that have resulted from the structure of Syrian society has been a weak point in the foundation of the Syrian revolution. Religious divergence and ethnic diversity in Syria have played a role in the survival of Al-Assad and the continuation of the civil war.

Libya

In contrast to the Syrian case, the aspect of social fragmentation was not a major factor in the Libyan revolution. In Libya, the society is not being affected by dogmatic cleavages. Libya is among those Arab countries that do not show religious diversity within its state borders (Table 1). Hence, Libyan society has not suffered the historical conflict between the two major Muslim faiths (Sunni and Shia), and the divergence of the Islamic faith followers did not affect the revolution of Libya. Additionally, the matter of Islamic extremism fueled by the idea of fighting the "infidels" of the Shia and the Alawite was not a part of the Libyan revolution. However, the sectarian division came to the surface in the aftermath of the revolution, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The National Public Radio (NPR) reporter Corey Flintoff reported "That Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, the former head of the Transitional National Council, said at a recent rally

that Shariah, or Islamic law, should be the main source of Libya's laws, he added that Libyans will not accept any extremist ideology, either to the right or the left” (NPR.org, September 21/2011). The same article also quoted Ali Tarhouni, an economist who serves as deputy prime minister on the council (the Transitional National Council or TNC). Tarhouni agreed that Libyans favor a moderate form of Islam, but acknowledged that extremism is a concern by saying "This version of radicalization, I think that's an issue that we are concerned about and we talk about it openly...But so far, regardless of what you see, I'm not too worried about it” (NPR.org, September 21/2011). The officials of the Libyan Transitional National Council were not concerned about Islamic extremist groups during the Libyan revolution as they were not playing a major role in the fighting, unlike their counterparts in Syria. The efforts of the Libyan rebels were not divided by religious fragmentation.

Moreover, Libyan society structure does not feature the divisions of races or ethnicity we see in Syria between the Arabs and the Kurds. Libyan society consists of almost all Arabs with a few small minority groups like the Imazighen (Berbers) and a group of people called the Gybsies. The situation in Libya was not division between religious groups or ethnicities, but between the tribes of the Libyan regions who all belonged to one ethnic group, the Arab. Babak Dehghanpisheh reported that:

“Gaddafi has systematically stripped down Libyan civil society, banning every conceivable kind of organization”, he added “In Libya, there’s no political parties, no trade unions, no teacher’s organizations, no Lions Clubs or Kiwanis Clubs,” says Ronald Bruce St. John, an expert on Libya who’s written several books about the country, “Gaddafi created his own monster, in a sense. He made the tribes more and more important because that was the only place people could go to get personal and group reinforcement” (Newsweek.com, March 13/2011).

The same article also said that:

“Civilian and military leaders of the Libyan opposition clearly understand how important it is to unify their support, “There’s contact with the tribes every day,” says Gen. Ahmed Gatrani, a senior member of the opposition military council, indicating that he was going to talk to one tribal leader later the same afternoon” (Newsweek.com, March 13/2011).

The leaders of the Libyan revolutionary forces recognized the importance of the Libyan tribal system in order to unify the Libyan society to stand as one against Colonel Al-Gaddafi and his regime forces. Eventually the Libyan rebels successfully attracted most of the Libyan tribes to their cause, and the rebels accomplished their goal of removing Al-Gaddafi.

Foreign Intervention

Syria

It is rare to find an armed conflict, whether between countries or within a country, without any foreign intervention. The Syrian civil war is not an exception. Alliances have played an essential role throughout many conflicts in world history. The two World Wars illustrate the importance of having alliances to be on the victorious side by the end of the struggle, especially to have one of the world’s major powers at your side. Syria is one of the leading countries within the Middle East, and it has been a part of many struggles during the last century before and after its independence. The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the examples of the involvement of Syria in a regional conflict when Syria allied with Egypt and Jordan during the wars of 1967 and 1973. Therefore, the Syrian regime, since the time of Al-Assad senior, has realized the importance of having powerful alliances, especially when it is understood that challenges may occur at any time within this unstable region of the world.

The Syrian regime received strong support politically and, most importantly, on the ground in actual fighting, from two alliances: Iran represented the regional power, and Russia

represented the international power. Al-Assad answered an El Pais reporter regarding the foreign help that the Syrian regime received in this way: “Definitely the Russian and the Iranian support were essential for our army to make this advancement” (El Pais, February 21/2016). Iran sent units from the Revolutionary Guard and encouraged Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia based militia, to fight beside Al-Assad’s troops on the ground. Russia launched a series of heavy air strikes and by October 2015, according to The Daily Telegraph, “Russia's defense ministry has said that its air force had hit 1,596 ‘terrorist targets’ in eight regions including Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Homs provinces in the past week” (The Telegraph.co.uk, February 12/2016). The Russian air strikes allegedly targeted terrorist groups’ strongholds. However, the main intention of the Russian intervention was to secure the role of Al-Assad in Syria since Damascus is a strategic regional ally to Moscow. The reporter of Russia Direct Yury Barmin has stated:

“Everything changed when Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a military operation against Assad’s enemies. Russian jets not only helped the Syrian Arab Army regain control over recently lost areas that were crucial for the stability of the regime but also secured Assad’s presidency at least for the short term. And this is exactly what guarantees the Syrian leader’s survival” (Russia Direct, April 20/2016).

And according to CNN:

“The domestic political imperative has shaped Russia's tactics in Syria. The primary goal has never been to defeat ISIS, but to prop up the Assad regime. As Putin said on Russian television last month, ‘stabilizing the lawful authority’ is the key objective of the Russian intervention in Syria. After Assad's reception in the Kremlin on October 20, Russia may feel in his debt” (CNN, November 20/2015).

The Russian government sees the regime of Al-Assad as the only lawful authority in Syria and maybe the only government that could enhance Russian influence within the Middle East. Other major countries in the region, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, are on the side of the United States. Al-Assad needs Russia in order to maintain his rule in the country and Putin needs Syria in order to promote the Russian role in the region. Russia will not let Al-Assad and his regime down as

the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said: "Russia has given nobody any promises regarding Syria" (sputniknews.com, June 16/2016). The full context of Lavrov's statement regarding Syria at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum is: "First of all, we have not promised anyone to do anything. We have given no promises to anyone, but agreed that everyone working on the Syrian settlement will be guided by agreements reached by the International Syria Support Group, which have been written down in UN Security Council Resolutions" (sputniknews.com, June 16/2016). Lavrov made this statement after one of many temporary ceasefires that had taken place on the ground since the first ceasefire that started on February 17th 2016. All ceasefire attempts displayed some violations. The non-stop military operations in Syria between the many combatants, including the rebels armed units and the Islamic extremist groups, and the ongoing political struggle will most likely mean the continuance of the Russian intervention in Syrian and Russia's full support of the current Syrian regime. With Russia beside them, the Syrian regime is growing in power not only militarily but also politically.

The United Nation intended to refer the Syrian conflict to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2014. However, Russia pledged to veto the move. Moscow's position, was announced by Gennady Gatilov, the deputy foreign minister: "The draft that has been submitted to the UN security council is unacceptable to us, and we will not support it," and followed by, "If it is put to a vote, we will veto it" (The Guardian.com, May 20/2014). This kind of political support was not available to the Libyan regime from any of the world's major powers, specifically Russia. The lack of political support was one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Libyan regime in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings. When NATO decided to launch

air strikes against Al-Gaddafi, there was no country to threaten using some kind of veto to prevent a related UN resolution.

As Russia is acting as an international ally to the Syrian regime, Iran is their main regional ally and supporter on the battlefield since the beginning of the Syrian revolution. Syria is one among very few Arab countries, specifically, and Muslim countries in general that has a good relationship with Iran, especially after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Most of the Muslim world and the Arab countries have not developed meaningful relations with Iran due to the ideological differences between the Sunni doctrine and the Shia, since most of the Muslim world is Sunni. Iran cannot afford losing its closest Arab ally, and the Iranian former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made it clear from the very beginning of the uprising that Iran would be always in the side of Al-Assad when he said “There was no limit to expanding ties with Syria, and Iran would do all in its power to support this country” (Huffington post, March 27,2012). Supporting a country should mean doing the best possible actions for that country, but for Iran supporting Syria means protecting Al-Assad and assisting him to remain in power rather than listening to public demands and trying to end the chaos within Syria.

At first, Iranian officials did not admit that they were sending military troops to fight with the Syrian regime army. Iran claimed that they were sending some military advisers to Syria in the aid of Al-Assad’s troops, but reports from the battlefield have shown that they are actually Iranian fighters fighting the battles on the ground side by side with the Syrian regime troops. Moreover, Iran has mobilized battalions of some Shia units including fighters from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Also, Hezbollah (the Lebanese Shia militia) has been in Syria since the very beginning of the conflict (Aljazeera.com, October 1/2015). With an increasing number of Iranian casualties in Syria, the officials of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have had to

declare the Iranian military intervention in Syria. As Hossein Ali Rezayi, a Guards spokesman in the region, told the ISNA (Iranian Students' News Agency) and Fars news agencies when announcing Iranian losses in Khan Touman (a village located south of Aleppo) in December of 2015: "The names of those killed and when their remains will be repatriated will be announced later, all were from Iran's northern province of Mazandaran" (Aljazeera news, May 7/2016). Robert Fisk, the reporter for The Independent, witnessed the presence of Iranian fighters by saying, "We knew who they were the moment they approached us on the front line outside Aleppo. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards – no longer merely advisers but fighting troops alongside the Syrian army – emerged on the roadside in their grey-patterned camouflage fatigues, speaking good though not perfect Arabic but chatting happily in Persian when they knew we could understand them" (The Independent, February 13, 2016). It was no longer hidden that Iran is involved in the Syrian armed conflict in favor of the regime by sending units of its Revolutionary Guards. Major Abu Osama al-Jolani, a Free Syrian Army (FSA) commander and defected officer described how the war had changed: "The Shia militias are leading military action to support the regime in all battles for the last year, everyone we are fighting now are foreigners" (MiddleEastEye.net, November 18/2015). The support of Iran helped Syrian troops to regain many important areas that they had lost to the rebels since 2011, especially in the city of Aleppo. Without this support the Syrian regime may have lost more territories to the rebel forces.

Foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict has altered the balance of power amongst the belligerents. The allies of the Al-Assad, Russia and Iran, were very effective in overcoming the rebels and helping the Syrian regime troops to advance in many battles. The Russian air force and Iranian units on the ground ensured many victories for the Syrian regime's troops. One of

the reasons Al-Assad and his regime, unlike Al-Gaddafi, have managed to survive the Syrian war and maintain the position of the president of Syria is by having alliances. At the time of writing, Russia and Iran are still behind Al-Assad politically and militarily, which gives him the upper hand, at least on the battlefields. The consequence is that Al-Assad may not come to a settlement with the opposition, and he is not ready yet to give up power for the foreseeable future.

Libya

In Libya the situation was totally opposite. It was the NATO air force that helped the rebel troops to advance and overcome the regime army and militias. The NATO intervention in Libya was led by the United States, and the declared goal for the mission was humanitarian, to protect civilian from the strikes of Al-Gaddafi's air force. Regime change was not one of the declared agendas of the NATO invention. Therefore, the objective of the NATO intervention was to build a no-fly zone as stated by President Barack Obama On March 28, 2011, when he addressed the nation: "The task that I assigned our forces [is] to protect the Libyan people from immediate danger and to establish a no-fly zone.... Broadening our military mission to include regime change would be a mistake" (foreignpolicy.com, March 11/2016). Also, the statement of Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon echoed this stance when he declared that, "The military mission of the United States is designed to implement the Security Council resolution, no more and no less.... I mean protecting civilians against attacks from Qaddafi's forces and delivering humanitarian aid" (foriegnpolicy.com, March 11/2016).

Yet the NATO intervention played a major role in the overthrow of the Libyan regime and the removal of Al-Gaddafi. Once the UN Security Council gave the green light to NATO, the Libyan rebels started to advance over Al-Gaddafi's forces on the battlefield. The foreign

involvement in Libya benefitted the rebels, while in Syria it advanced the regime. Although the officials of the western coalition that intervened in the Libyan revolution denied any intention of regime change there is evidence that regime change was part of their agenda. For example, Al-Gaddafi's administrative and residence compound in Tripoli was targeted by Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from NATO submarines stationed in the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, the Western Coalition allowed some regional forces to intervene in the conflict by permitting some air forces of Qatar and Egypt to launch a series of attacks on Al-Gaddafi's troops. According to Micah Zenko, of Foreign Policy magazine, "on Oct. 20, 2011, it was a U.S. Predator drone and French fighter aircraft that attacked a convoy of regime loyalists trying to flee Qaddafi's hometown of Sirte. The dictator was injured in the attack, captured alive, and then extra judicially murdered by rebel forces" (foriegnpolicy.com, March 11/2016). It seems clear that in the case of Libya foreign intervention enabled, rather than prevented, regime change.

Summary of Results

After more than five years of civil war in Syria the struggle is not likely to reach its resolution in the near future. The demands of freedom, justice and equality that started the Syrian revolution in 2011 have become a massive armed conflict that has torn the country apart. In contrast to the outcome of the Arab Spring movement in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, the Syrian movement did not achieve its desired objectives. In comparison to the case in Libya, which had suffered from the transformation of the people's demands into a civil war as well, Syria has a greater complexity of elements that have affected the outcome of the whole situation, starting from the people's demonstration and leading to the ongoing civil war.

It is true that both countries had been under the control of dictatorships, however, there are many differences in the characteristics of the dictators. Two main points can illustrate the dissimilarities between Al-Assad and Al-Gaddafi. First is the factor of age. Al-Gaddafi was an old dictator who belonged to the era of post-colonialization, who often gave aggressive speeches and usually delivered them in local Arabic dialect. Al-Assad is a modern educated president who regularly uses the language of contemporary logic via the common Arabic dialect. As a result, Al-Assad succeeded to convince and gather his supporters to fight for him while Al-Gaddafi failed to do the same. Second is the factor of religious affiliation. Al-Assad's membership of a minority sect has affected his choice of a trusted circle. He has appointed many of his family members, and other Alawite and pro-Shia figures, to high positions within the Syrian regime to ensure their loyalty. Al-Gaddafi, however, was not as successful as Al-Assad in this matter, and two of his ministers⁸ joined the rebels by the time of the revolution.

The military institution in Syria has also contributed towards the survival of Al-Assad. The loyalty of the military institution in Syria was to the Syrian regime, rather than being on the side of the nation and the volition of its people. In contrast, many units of the Libyan military institution rejected the regime's commands to bomb and attack the protesters and followed the path of rebellion after a few weeks of the Libyan uprising. In Syria, the loyalty of the military is for the ruling party, "Al-Baath," and to their leaders, and many of those leaders have strong devotion to the president and his sect.

The Sunni-Shia conflict has negatively impacted the outcome of the Syrian revolution. Syrian society has been divided into three camps. The first camp consists of the supporters of the

⁸ Abdul Fatah Younis who was the minister of interior within the Libyan regime, and Mustafa Abdul Jalil the minister of justice who was one of Al-Gaddafi's closest friends.

regime, mainly the Shia and their alliances. The second camp is the opposition to Al-Assad, mainly the Sunni groups. Unfortunately, for the effort of the Syrian uprising, this camp is divided into many groups based on religious faith or national interest. The third camp is the Kurds who seek to establish the autonomy of the Kurdish area in the northeast of the country. Unlike the case of Libya, which did not have to face the challenges generated by the religious or ethnic diversity of its society, the Syrian revolution lacks coherence because of the obstacles that emerge from the structure of the society.

Finally, the role of foreign intervention in the Syrian case is more complex than the Libyan case. The Libyan regime did not rely on powerful regional or international alliances like the regime of Al-Assad has. Therefore, the Libyan regime did not receive any foreign support and all of the foreign intervention was to the advantage of the rebels. In the Syrian case, with Russia as its main international ally and Iran as its main regional ally, the Syrian regime has received political and military backing in order to resist its opposition.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the thesis questions and comparing the variables of the Syrian revolution case to the Libyan one, the main finding of this thesis is that religious sectarianism has played a role in every aspect of the Syrian revolution. The Sunni-Shia conflict has affected the Syrian uprising the most. First of all, the President is in favor with the Shia rather than Sunni. He is pro-Shia and allied with the Shia forces internally and externally. Secondly, the military institution of Syria is under the control of the Alawite sect and pro-Shia leaders resulting in the military's strong loyalty to the regime and its leaders rather than the nation and its people. Thirdly, the structure of the Syrian society in term of religious faith is divided between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and they have not set any terms of agreement to link their efforts against Al-Assad. Sunnis and Shias have chosen different sides and fight each other. Finally, the issue of foreign intervention is also impacted by the Sunni-Shia struggle. Iran supports the Syrian regime as part of their strategy to support Shias since the Islamic revolution in Iran. Many of the Shia militias from Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan have been encouraged by Iranian leaders to go to Syria to assist Al-Assad. The conflict of sectarianism within the Muslim world has its historical roots back to the first century of Islam, and since then it has torn the Muslim world apart and causes many bloody conflicts. The Syrian civil war is the contemporary manifestation of this history.

The definition of civil war provided by Kalyvas (2006) is clearly applicable to the Syrian revolution. Public demonstration has been converted into an armed confrontation between the current political system and its dissatisfied subjects, and the society has divided into a number of parties fighting to advance their interests. Beside the forces of the regime, there are other armed forces that represent the opposition groups of the Syrian subjects such as the Free Syrian Army,

the Kurdish forces, and the Jihadist armed groups. The main goal of the Syrian uprisings was to change the regime of Al-Assad. However, the rebels were fractured into more than one group. Even though they shared a common goal at first, they have faced disagreements throughout the length of the revolution and civil war. This division matches the argument of Pearlman (2013) on the fragmented society and the lack of coordination among its actors. Moreover, the situation of the Syrian revolution proves Gurr's (1970) argument of how the ideologies of the rebels may differ and, therefore, risk the success of the revolution. The issue of the diversity of ideologies is valid in the Syrian case as the revolution has suffered from the challenges of religious schism and ethnic cleavages.

The analysis of the Syrian regime also supports autocratic resilience theory discussed by De Mesquita (2003) and Gallagher and Hanson (2013). The theory explained autocratic resilience and the survival of a regime via the selectorate group and the winning coalition. Al-Assad, unlike Al-Gaddafi, formed his winning coalition a long time before the uprising of his subjects. The Syrian regime has allied with a combination of internal and external groups and, as the result of those choices, has survived the Arab Spring uprisings while other regimes failed. Al-Assad has also successfully constructed a selectorate group by his choice of governmental high ranked individuals. He has carefully chosen most of them from the elite circle of his family, sect and Shia supporters. Furthermore, as mentioned by Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014), the hierarchical system of the government has been crucial to the persistence of Syria's autocratic regime. The thesis supports the statement of Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014) that hierarchical connections are a feature of autocratic selections. Based on the characteristics of its leader, the Syrian regime has decided many of its actions, and the reflection of Al-Assad's characteristics have impacted the Syrian revolution and transformed it into the Syrian civil war.

According to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), there has been a staggering number of around 470,000 deaths in the Syrian civil war since 2011 (PBS.org, February 11/2016). “In all, 11.5% of the country’s population have been killed or injured since the crisis erupted in March 2011,” the report estimates. The number of wounded is put at 1.9 million and life expectancy has dropped from 70 in 2010 to 55.4 in 2015. Overall economic losses are estimated at \$255bn (£175bn)” (the Guardian, February 10/2016.). Furthermore, “according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria. Meanwhile about one million have requested asylum to Europe. Germany, with more than 300,000 cumulated applications, and Sweden with 100,000, are EU’s top receiving countries” (UNHCR.org, September 4/2016). These numbers are just one way to illustrate the horrible situation in Syria, and to display the negative outcome of the ongoing conflict between the regime of Syria and its opposition. The civil war in Syria is still ongoing at the time of writing, with no signs on the horizon that the situation may find a conclusion to one of the most destructive civil wars in the region, and to put an end to the misery of millions of people.

The continuous tension in Syria has had an impact on the entire region, and it is affecting international security as well. With many regional countries involved in the chaos (including Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia) the regional instability tension may cause a larger war. The relations between the neighboring countries of the region have faced many uncertainties during the past, some of them leading to wars against each other. The probability of a war within the region and among its countries has always existed. Nowadays with the growing tension of the Syrian war, the probability of a new war in the region has increased. Also, there is a real concern that a larger war involving some of the world’s major power (like the United States and Russia)

is possible. The involvement of many major powers in a single struggle has proven to be devastating. For example, the entanglement of alliances prior to the World War I produced a major conflagration. The region has suffered from many wars in the past that have caused instability: For instance, the Iraqi-Iranian war in 1980-1988, the Gulf war of 1990-1991, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Another massive war will probably produce more hatred and distrustful relationships between the nations of the region, as well as generating greater tensions that will negatively disturb international security.

Further research is suggested by my thesis. A deeper research examining and analyzing the conflicts and tensions triggered by the dogmatic dissimilarity of the Muslims two major beliefs, the Sunni and the Shia, especially after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, would be another approach to understanding the reason behind the many tensions and conflicts in the Arab world. The region contains the holy places for both doctrines: Saudi Arabia for the Sunnis, and Iran for the Shias. In addition, studying the relationships between the regional powers of the Middle East and the world's major powers might reveal vital aspects of how Middle Eastern elites may act toward further uprisings.

Al-Assad has survived the rebellion of his subjects for roughly five years and has led his country towards destruction. The leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya had fallen to the demands of the public within a few days in Tunisia and Egypt, a few weeks in Yemen, and a few months in Libya. Yet Al-Assad has resisted the similar demands of his people. Instead of accomplishing freedom, justice, and equality the Syrians are suffering from the destruction of the country as the outcome of an uprising that lost its way.

References

- Abdo, G., Amos, A., Aslan, R., Gause, G., Hoffman, B., Husain, E., & Nasr, V. (February, 2016). The Sunni-Shia Divide. Retrieved from *Council on Foreign Relations*: http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/?cid=otr-marketing_url-sunni_shia_infoguide
- Agence France Presse. (2012, December 26). Assad Inner Circle takes Hard Line in Syria Conflict. Retrieved from *The Daily Star Lebanon*: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Dec-26/199833-assad-inner-circle-takes-hard-line-in-syria-conflict.ashx#axzz2OYO1mUZ8>
- Alandete, D. (2016, February 21). Bashar Al-Assad: “80 countries support the Terrorists in Syria.” Retrieved from *El Pais*: http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/02/20/inenglish/1456005883_962894.html
- Al Arabiya News (2015, April 15). Syria Rebels in south reject Al Qaeda affiliate after Tensions. Retrieved from Al Arabiya: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/15/Syria-rebels-in-south-reject-Al-Qaeda-affiliate-after-tensions-.html>
- Al Jazeera News. (2011, January 30). The Increasing Death of Egyptian Protests. Retrieved from *Al Jazeera Arabic*: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2011/1/30/%D8%AA%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1>
- Al Jazeera News. (2014, April 14). Maher Al-Assad. Retrieved from: <http://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/icons/2014/12/23/%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%AF>
- Al Jazeera News. (2015, October 01). Reports: Iranian troops in Syria for joint offensive. Retrieved from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/10/reports-iranian-troops-syria-joint-offensive-151001143337046.html>
- Aron, L. (2015, November 20). Why Putin won't abandon Assad. Retrieved from *CNN News*: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/20/opinions/aron-russia-us-cooperation/>
- Babbie, E. (1989). Operationalization. In E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (p.137-147). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Barmin, Y. (2016, April 20). Why does Russia continue to protect Assad in Syria? Retrieved from *Russia Direct*: <http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/why-does-russia-continue-protect-assad-syria>

Barnard, A. (2016, April 21). Kurds and Syrian Forces Clash, Adding Wrinkle to War. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/world/middleeast/syria-government-forces-clash-with-kurds.html?_r=0

BBC News. (2011, May 30). Libya: Senior officers defect from Gaddafi army. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13596475>

BBC News. (2013, December 13). Guide to the Syrian Rebels. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>

BBC News. (2016, January 04). Sunnis and Shia: Islam's Ancient Schism. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>

BBC News. (2016, March 14). Who are the Kurds? Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>

Beaumont, P. (2013, May 04). Syria: Massacres of Sunni Families reported in Assad's Heartland. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/04/syrian-sunni-families-die-in-assads-heartland>

Black, I. (2011, February 23). Libya: Defections leave Muammar Gaddafi isolated in Tripoli bolthole. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/23/muammar-gaddafi-libya-tripoli-uprising>

Black, I. (2014, May 20). Russia vows to veto UN Resolution on Syria. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/russia-veto-un-resolution-syria>

Boeije, H. (2002). *A Purposeful Approach to the Constant Comparative Method in the Analysis of Qualitative Interviews*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Boghani, P. (2016, February 11). A Staggering New Death Toll for Syria's War — 470,000. Retrieved from *PSB.org*: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/a-staggering-new-death-toll-for-syrias-war-470000/>

Bray, J. (2009). Rational Choice Models of Political Violence: The Role of Injustice and Retribution. *Institute for Homeland Security Solutions*. Retrieved from <https://sites.duke.edu/ihss/files/2011/12/IHSS-RBv7.pdf>

Bulos, N. (2016, August 17). Soldiers on Both Sides see the Fight for Aleppo as a Battle between Jihadists. Retrieved from *Los Angeles Times*: <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-syria-aleppo-jihadists-20160816-snap-story.html>

Charara, N. (2013, July 18). The Syrian National Coalition's Saudi Makeover. Retrieved from *Al-Akhbar*: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16463>

Chehabi, H. (1991). Religion and Politics in Iran: How Theocratic Is the Islamic Republic? *Daedalus*, 120(3), 69-91. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025388>

- Cockburn, P. (2014, Jan 31). 'Destroyed in a Second': Entire Neighborhoods demolished by Syrian Army. Retrieved from *The Independent*: <http://search.proquest.com.dist.lib.usu.edu/docview/1492746716?accountid=14761>
- Collier, D. (1993). The Comparative Method. In A. W. Finifter (Ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (p.105-120). Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- CNN Arabic. (2013, October 18). Maher Al-Assad: The Man of Dirty Task and the Playboy. Retrieved from: http://archive.arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle_east/9/10/syria-assad-brother/
- Daunt, J, & Ensor, J. (2016, February 12). Why does Russia support Syria's Bashar Al-Assad? Retrieved from *The Telegraph*: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11919242/Why-does-Russia-support-Syrias-Bashar-al-Assad.html>
- De Mesquita, B., Smith, A., Siverson, R., & Morrow, J. (2003). *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Dehghanpisheh, B. (2011, March 13). Tribes in Libya Are Changing the Conflict. Retrieved from *Newsweek*: <http://www.newsweek.com/tribes-libya-are-changing-conflict-66185>
- Dimitrov, M. (2013). *Why Communism Did Not Collapse? Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisenhardt, K. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/258557>
- El-Amraoui, A. (2016, May 07). Members of Iran's Elite Force killed in Syria Clashes. Retrieved from *Al Jazeera*: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/members-iran-elite-force-killed-syria-clashes-160507162338065.html>
- Fildis, A. (2012). Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria. *Middle East Policy*, 14(2), 148-156. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2012.00541.x/full>
- Fisk, R. (2016, February 23). Syria civil war: On the front line with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards battling outside Aleppo. Retrieved from *The Independent*: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-civil-war-on-the-front-line-with-the-iranian-revolutionary-guards-battling-outside-aleppo-a6891891.html#commentsDiv>
- Fixdal, M., & Smith, D. (1998). Humanitarian Intervention and Just War. *Mershon International Studies Review*, 42(2), 283-312. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/254418>
- Flintoff, C. (2011, September 21). What Role Will Islamists Play In Libya? Retrieved from *National Public Radio*: <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/21/140665324/what-role-will-islamists-play-in-libya>
- Gallagher, M., & Hanson, J. (2013). Authoritarian Survival, Resilience, and the Selectorate Theory. In M. Dimitrov (Ed.), *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian*

Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe (p. 185-204). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/johanson/papers/gallagher_hanson11.pdf

Geddes, B., Wright, J., & Frantz, E. (2014). *Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: New Data*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Glioti, A. (2013, September 23). Syrian Opposition, Kurd Agreement Irrelevant without PYD. Retrieved from *Al-Monitor*: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2013/09/pyd-snc-knc-syria-kurds.html>

Goodwin, J. (2001). *No Other Way Out. States and Revolutionary Movements 1945-1991*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Gurr, T. (1970). *Why Men Rebel*. Boulder, Co: Paradigm Publisher.

Gurr, T. (2000). *People Versus States*. Washington, DC: United States Institution of Peace.

Honore, T. (1988). *The Right to Rebel*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Jummah, I. (2015, January 25). The Army saved the Revolution and the State of Collapse. Retrieved from *Al-Ahram online*: <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsPrint/356188.aspx>

Kalyvas, S. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lane, D. (2008). The Orange Revolution: People's Revolution or Revolutionary coup? *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 10(4), 525 – 549. Retrieved from http://commonweb.unifr.ch/artsdean/pub/gestens/f/as/files/4760/39746_174023.pdf

Levitsky, S., & Way, L. (2010). *Comparative Authoritarianism: The Emergence and Dynamics of Hybrid Regimes in the Post-Cold War Era*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Manfreda, P. (2016, October 06). The Difference Between Alawites and Sunnis in Syria. Retrieved from *About News*: <http://middleeast.about.com/od/syria/tp/The-Difference-Between-Alawites-And-Sunnis-In-Syria.htm>

McGregor, A. (2011, February 23). Special Commentary: Can African Mercenaries save the Libyan Regime? Retrieved from *The Jamestown Foundation*: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37551&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=f0b3ef8200af7c3a039bc6f593c6ffc6#.Vs_g65wrLjY

McNaught, A. (2012, October 13). Q&A: FSA 'Commander' Riad Al-Assad. Retrieved from *Al Jazeera*: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/10/20121013115029583126.html>

Micallef, J. (2016, February 21). The Enemy of My Enemy: Russia and the Kurds reshape the Syrian Civil War. Retrieved from *The Huffington Post*: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joseph-v-micallef/the-enemy-of-my-enemy-rus_b_9282978.html

Mohammad, D. (2014, April 05). Who was Hilal Al-Assad? Retrieved from *joshualandis.com*: <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/hilal-al-assad-mohammad-d/>

- Mouzahem, H. (2016, May 12). Who are Syria's Alawites? Retrieved from *Al-Monitor*: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/alawite-sect-muslim-misconceptions.html>
- Neitzel, L. (2012). What is Revolution? Retrieved from *www.exeas.org*: <http://www.exeas.org/asian-revolutions/pdf/what-is-revolution.pdf>
- Nelson, L. (2015, November 08). The Shia Jihad and the Death of Syria's Army. Retrieved from *Middle East Eye*: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/shia-jihad-and-death-syria-s-army-1508759016>
- Paul, J. A. (1990). *Human Rights in Syria*. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch.
- Pearlman, W. (2013). Understanding Fragmentation in the Syrian Revolt. In *The Political Science of Syria's War* (pp. 40-42). Washington, D.C.: The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS).
- Pew Research Center. (2009, October 07). *Mapping the Global Muslim Population*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>
- Pew Research Center (2012, August 09). *Infographic: The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/08/09/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-infographic/>
- Pizzi, M. (2013, November 30). Syria Rebels say Peace Talks destined for Failure. Retrieved from *Al Jazeera America*: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/11/30/syria-rebels-skepticalaboutgenevataks.html>
- Reuters. (2012, March 27). Syria Crisis: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad praises Syria for its Handling of Uprising. Retrieved from *The Huffington Post*: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/27/syria-crisis-mahmoud-ahmadinejad_n_1383010.html
- Rosen, N. (2011, October 10). Assad's Alawites: The Guardians of the Throne. Retrieved from *Al Jazeera*: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/10/20111010122434671982.html>
- Shanker, T, & Schmitt, E. (2011, February 11). Egypt's Military Leaders face Power Sharing Test. Retrieved from *The New York Times*: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/12/world/middleeast/12military.html?_r=1
- Shobokshi, H. (2014, June 07). *Al-Assad: The Acceptance is from God*. Retrieved from *Asharq Al-Awsat*: <http://archive.aawsat.com/leader.asp?section=3&article=774722&issueno=12975#.V-2SvpgrLgk>
- Shuster, M. (2007). The Partisans of Ali: The Origins of the Shia-Sunni Split. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2007/02/12/7332087/the-origins-of-the-shiite-sunni-split>
- Smith, D, & Fixdel, M. (1988). Humanitarian Intervention and Just War. *Blackwell*, 283-312.

Sputnik News. (2016, June 16). Lavrov on Kerry's Statements: Russia gave No Promises to Anyone on Syria. Retrieved from:
<https://sputniknews.com/politics/20160616/1041444125/lavrov-kerry-syria.html>

Stephen, C. (2011, July 28). Abdul Fatah Younis Ambush Killing blamed on Pro-Gaddafi Forces. Retrieved from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/29/abdul-fatah-younis-killed-libya>

Tellis, W. M. (1997). Application of a Case Study Methodology. *The Qualitative Report*, 3(3), 1-19. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol3/iss3/1>

The Associated Press. (2012, April 21). Tantawi says Military not taking Sides in Egypt's Presidential Election. Retrieved from *The Times of Israel*: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/tantawi-says-military-not-taking-sides-in-egypts-presidential-election/>

The Associated Press. (2013, April 24). Famed Mosque's Minaret destroyed in Syria. Retrieved from *USA Today*: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/04/24/minaret-mosque-syria-destroyed/2110919/>

The Kurdish Project. (2015). *Syria (Rojava or Western Kurdistan)*. Retrieved from:
<http://thekurdishproject.org/kurdistan-map/syrian-kurdistan/>

The UN Refugee Agency. (2016, September 4). *Syria Emergency*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>

The WorldNews. (2016, June 13). A Man Called Gaddafi (His Life & Death). Retrieved from:
WorldNews: https://wn.com/libyan_revolutionary_command_council

Tullock, G. (1971). The Paradox of Revolution. *Public Choice*, 11, 89-99. Retrieved from
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30022655>

Watson, I. (2013, March 15). Two Years Later, Syrian Revolutionaries Reflect on their Cause, the Costs. Retrieved from *CNN U.S*: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/14/world/meast/syria-revolution-anniversary/index.html>

Wight, M. (1994) The Three Traditions of International Theory. In G. Wight & B. Porter (Eds.), *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (pp7-24). New York: Holmes and Meier.

Wilgenburg, W. (2013, September 09). PYD Leader Skeptical of Kurdish Agreement with Syrian Opposition. Retrieved from *Rudwa*: <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/30092013>

Zaman, A. (2014, June 23). Syrian Kurdish leader: Turkey turns blind eye to ISIS. Retrieved from *Al-Monitor*: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/zaman-salih-muslim-turkey-blind-eye-isis-mosul-syria-iraq.html>

Zenko, M. (2016, March 22). The Big Lie About the Libyan War. Retrieved from *Foreign Policy*: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/22/libya-and-the-myth-of-humanitarian-intervention/>