Political Science Undergraduate Honors Theses   Political Science

5-2015

Prospects of Democracy in a Post-Assad Syria

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An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Studies in Political Science

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2015
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Acknowledgements

This honors thesis would not have been possible without the support of my thesis director, Dr. Donald Kelley. Thank you for guiding me on this journey and helping me grow as a student and a political scientist. I am very grateful for your patience and advice during the stressful times.

I would also like thank Dr. Jeffrey Ryan and Professor Larry Foley for being a part of my committee. Thank you for taking on this challenge and helping me through it.

I would also like to extend a big thank you to all my interviewee's. Their trust in me helped personalize my research and give it meaning.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Patrick Conge, who listened to my last minute stresses about my research. Your advice on the last day helped me understand that there is a start to every story, and this is the beginning of mine.

I am grateful for the support of my friends and family throughout my research. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me throughout this journey.

Contents

Introduction

   The study behind this thesis is to examine how Syria can rebuild its country as a democracy after the Assad regime. The country has undergone a civil war since 2011, after Syrian teens were arrested for writing political graffiti. While this wasn't the spark of the Assad regime and the Syrian revolution, it was the start of the uprisings in the country. Earlier 2011 activism by Egypt and Tunisia inspired Syrian protestors to demonstrate against Ba'athist party president, Bashar al-Assad. Unlike Arab Spring uprising in the other two countries, the Syrian government responded very aggressively to the activists. A country, once rich in culture and life, has fallen into ruins after the Al-Assad government took forceful action against the citizens, who came together to demand a change in the long-corrupted system of government they lived under. A country that once thrived in culture and history is now packed with ruins and pieces of life. Chemical bombs dropped and killed thousands of mothers and children. I've chosen to surround my research around how Syria can rebuild a democratic government post-Assad regime. Considering that Syria is not only undergoing the Assad regime, but also invasion by the Islamic State (ISIS) a potential proposal of new government is very far away. However, I have spent this year studying the history of government in Syria, as well as understanding the characteristics of developing a democracy. Unlike the revolutions that have taken place in the Middle East throughout the Arab Spring, Syria has fallen into a separate category. Rather than watch the government responds proactively to the uproar of the citizens, Bashar Al-Assad has maintained the long-living iron-grip on the country. In a realistic perspective, the situation in Syria will continue to deteriorate for many years. Considering the growth of ISIS in major parts of the

country, with more than 30,000 militants seizing several areas of the country, a bright

future looks unlikely[1]. At the beginning of my research, I approached my sources and

ideas with the perspective that there was one specific framework that would help solve

the crisis in Syria. While I still believe this is true, I've taken into considering the

advancing state of the country. President Obama recently approached his national

security to review U.S. policy towards Syria, explaining that defeating ISIS would not

happen without a political transition in the country, therefore removing Assad from

power[2]. While I believe this is a realistic approach, President Obama's suggestion comes

with a lot of baggage. First of all, if we were to intervene with a political transition in

Syria, there would have to be a standby government to take over once Assad is out of

power. If the country goes under no government for even a small amount of time, this

would hold great meaning to ISIS' growth.

       With this being said, the goal of my research is to propose a sequence of

potential resolutions to the crisis in Syria. Ultimately, my goal is identify the

components of democratization and apply them to the state. However, I want to stress

that I do not believe that the framework I applied will ultimately be realistic. For that

reason, I will analyze another potential resolution that could take place in Syria that will

apply current events and foreign affairs occurring between the state and the

international community.

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[1] U.S. Intelligence estimated the number of ISIS fighters around 31,000. Number amounts have differed between Intelligence and the Pentagon, but it is undeniable that there has been an increase in the number of fighters (Winderm).

[2] President Obama's review request asked that we confront ISIS in Iraq first, then take on group fighters in Syria. Officials have said there is no formal strategy review, but that the president wants to degrade ISIL without ending support for the opposition (rebels), but also cross the course of the Assad regime (Labott).

The House of Assad

Why has the war in Syria carried on for so long? As I said earlier, it's the only country involved in the Arab Spring that still continues to struggle to break off from the iron-grip of Bashar al-Assad. But the iron-grip rule of the family is no stranger to the people. The country has long lived under the rule of the Assad family, dating back to the election of the late Hafez al-Assad, who showed Syria ups and downs that may have lasted them a lifetime. Hafez was the president of Syria from 1971-2000, and after his death, Bashar succeeded him. A unique aspect of Hafez's presidency is his use of Soviet aid to build his military. Even in the current state of regime in Syria, the military continues to remain a definite alliance to the government, and Russia has promised its commitment to vetoing any sanctions proposed against Syria by the Security Council, as well as standing side-by-side with their government.

First of all, Hafez's presidency in no way properly represented the claimed "Semi-presidential" government the country has. Syria is built with the president, a prime minister and a cabinet. But Hafez's presidency succeeded with his commitment to instilling the Baath party into all aspects of life in Syria[3]. In a brief sense, the Baath Party under Hafez aimed to have secularism, socialism, and freedom from Western influence as objectives that infiltrated the country. In 1973, under the Hafez leadership, the constitution was amended to create the Baath Party as the leader of the state and society, which forced it into all areas of civilian life. Basically, the aim of instilling the party as a national movement was to spread the authoritative instruction from a central government level to government representatives. The party's ideology was brought in

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[3] The party aimed to have pan-Arab unification. But the transition from being a socialist movement to a nationalist movement is what brought the Assad family to power in Syria (Langley).

at an elementary level for children, and Baathist members controlled many areas of the

public sector, including military and armed forces[4].

The Assad reign was the result of an altered constitution. In 1971, Hafez won the

elections with an appalling 99.2% of the vote in Syria. As a result of his success, the

country adopted a constitution that laid out their power, and officially made the Baath

Party the leader of the state and society. Along with this, the constitution gave the

president monopoly power through the party's regulations. This means, that even now,

if there were transparent, unrigged, and fair elections in the country, the constitution,

although amended after Hafez's death, will give Assad the win based off of the

constitutional powers[5].

The Start of Political Uprisings

The uprisings in the Middle East began when Egyptian citizens took to the

streets to call for the removal of long-time leader, Hosni Mubarak. While the sight of

citizens gathering in the masses to protest corruption was a sight of inspiration for

fellow states, I believe that the realization of living under corrupt and excluded rule for

so long is the cause of the uprisings. These citizens, whether in Egypt, Tunisia, or any

Middle Eastern country, had been subjected to denigrate rule and denial of rightful

freedoms. The use of public space as a means of mobilized political force acted as a way

for the citizens to express a common demand, although their opinion on who should

replace the regime was not the same. In the case of Syria, I believe that the continuous

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[4] They also controlled trade unions, and their reservations in the public sector helped boost their party membership (BBC: Syria's Ruling Baath Party).

[5] Assad's leadership in Syria did not start off as anything welcoming and exciting to the country. Hafez's creation and adaptation to the Syrian Constitution is what solidified him in his position, and locked the family as leaders of the state for years to come (Fares).

oppressions and forced rulings by Assad is what pushed the people into retaliation against the government.

The protests in Syria sparked in early 2011 after teenagers were arrested and tortured who painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall. Armed forces fired at the protestors, only pushing more out to the streets of Syria. As the months went on, the country was divided between the regime and the opposition, creating a civil war in Syria. While the war may have started as a divide between Assad supporters, it's expanded into a religious battle between the Sunni majority and the government's Shia Alawite sect. This religious fight has continued to involve neighboring countries, and now, the Islamic State (ISIS), which has maintained a home inside of Syria[6].

More than 200,000 lives have been lost in the four years of this civil war. A battle that began with anti-government protests turned into a war that displaced millions and divided a country into pieces. While this thesis will examine a democratization transition after the Assad government, there are different players that will participate in the explanation of this process. At the beginning of my research in 2013, my sole focus was to examine the Assad regime from all aspects. As the months carried on, the Islamic State came into play and influenced my research. Rather than focus entirely on a free Syria post-Assad, I am examining the process of democratizing the country after his exit, along with defeating the Islamic State. Even if the Assad government is overthrown, a free Syria will not exist as long as ISIS controls parts of the country (Syria: The Story of the Conflict).

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[6] The Alawite's gained power in Syria because of the Baath Party's influence. The UN has evidence of war crimes occurring since the conflict started in 2011, including accusations of blocking access to food, water, and health services to civilians by the government rebel forces (BBC: Syria: The Story of the Conflict).

Syria and the Islamic State

When the Assad regime first began back in late 2010, the only terroristic group that was a fear to the people and outside governments was the leaders of the regime themselves. However, within the last year, the Islamic State has identified itself as an extremist movement in the Middle East and has nested in Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State, who also identify themselves as ISIS/ISIL is made from the remnants of Al Qaeda and Hussein supporters. The group has clearly represented their disapproval of Western influence on Islamic society and way of life, and have used global media as an outlet to deliver their messages to the United States.

Iraq has been homeland for ISIS members because the core of their agenda seems to be based off the idea to overthrow the Shiite Muslims of Iraq and develop an Islamic State guided by religious scholars under the reign of the caliph—a successor of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Their strategies of developing this Islamic State are based off the extreme interpretations of the Quran and Islamic religion. In a simple perspective, the mix of Western society in Islam has buried the true meaning of the religion and corrupted it entirely. So, the Islamic State's mission is to rebuild what the ideologies of Islam, and the proper way of life, that the West has destroyed. For Iraq, the goal of ISIS is to recreate the Shiite government into a Sunni Islamic State. ISIS has targeted Christian and Shiite Muslim citizens in Iraq, and has attempted to seize cities with high populations of both religions in order to gain control and rebuild them based off of the Islamic State agenda[7].

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[7] NBC's continuous coverage of ISIS and their threat had a storyline article explaining the details of what ISIS wanted. Johnson's explanations went into goals of restoring the caliphate, gaining territory, recruiting followers, as well as generating money and revenge against America (Johnson).

Before I approach the relations between ISIS and the Syrian regime, there are a few points I want to readdress regarding the Syrian rebels. To make it clear, ISIS is disconnected from the Syrian army and the Syrian government. As I said earlier, the opposition did not start out as a rebel organization, but rather as a group of peaceful protestors against the Assad presidency. As the calls for reforms against the government spread across the country, the protestors became the Free Syrian Army and promised a war against Assad. Now, a disadvantage of the FSA that stands in the way of the international community is that some of the rebel groups within the organization are linked with Al Qaeda, which has been a setback to gain powerful support.

With the terror that the Assad government has already imposed on Syria, ISIS has brought outside pressures and attacks into the country. Because of the civil war in Syria, the inter-rebel presence between the Syrian rebels and ISIS has caused tension in the country and has not improved the state of terror that the country is undergoing under Assad. Contrary to common belief, ISIS is not working with the Syrian rebels against the government regime. The Syrian National Coalition serves as an official liaison to the U.S. regarding political matters and humanitarian aid to Syria. Earlier this year, they released a statement explaining their belief that ISIS is closely linked with the Assad regime and is working in the interest of Al-Assad.

In addition to the statement from the SNC, leaders from different Syrian rebel groups have blamed ISIS for the war between the organizations. They've called out ISIS incapability of recognizing itself as a group amongst other groups, not the only opposing organization in the country. Hassan Aboud, who is head of the political bureau

of the Islamic Front—a merger of the rebel groups involved in the civil war—called out

ISIS for their aggressiveness towards rebel resources and territory. In his interview, he

said that ISIS "attacked many other groups, stole their weapons, [and] occupied their

headquarters" (Landis). ISIS has made no efforts in cooperation with the rebels, but

rather sees itself as a unique beneficiary to Syria and has set up its own establishment

wherever they decide. As Abu Ibrahim told me, it's in the benefit of ISIS and the regime

to work together.

In the beginning stages of my research, ISIS did not have a big role because they

were not as prevalent. My understandings of the democratization frameworks made

sense to me because I was dealing with a country divided by civil war. While

Huntington's frameworks and explanations of democratization theories and guidelines

were thorough and helpful, I believe that they put me at a disadvantage when ISIS

continued to grow. As I begin applying and analyzing the frameworks I have researched,

I want to stress that as I analyze hypothetical scenarios, I am doing so based off of idea

and understanding. I believe that the hypotheticals that I have created in my research

help compliment the fundamentals of what I am trying to explain. I am not a political

scholar, however, I believe that my level of understanding of the regime and the

frameworks allows me to exercise these hypotheticals within reason.

Democracy: How is it created?

I've found that there is a strongly developed framework for how a democracy is

created. The center of my research has focused on the methodological framework

provided by Samuel Huntington in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late*

Twentieth Century. Huntington outlines and identifies the wave of democracy, which is a change that has helped the world transition to create democracy. Before I go into the explanation of Huntington's framework and Syria, I want to clarify that it is safe to recognize Syria's government type as a Republic under Authoritarian Rule. Assad has not announced himself dictator of the country, and the people are still free to live under their natural-given freedoms, which are outlined and chosen by the government itself. Huntington explains that the first step of democratization involves ending an authoritarian regime. However, he points out at that ending a nondemocratic regime does not necessarily promise a transition into a democratic one, but proposes the potential for another nondemocratic regime to take its place (35). In terms of Syria, Bashar inherited the seat from his father one month after Hafez's passing, winning at an unopposed 97% approval rating by the people. Congress of Syria scratched off the age requirement of 40 years to put Bashar into power.

In *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Samuel Huntington aims to break down the process of building a democracy through a waves process. Rather than using the approach of immediately overthrowing the authoritarian leadership and replacing it with a citizen-elected government, Huntington sets out the steps to approach democratization without completely destroying the system. I've understood Huntington's method to break down the democratic system to create an arrangement that criticize the traditional democratic structure of a normal democracy and replaces with it with a framework that has paved the road for democracies in the latest wave. This structure is based off the democratizing regime changes produced in

the 1960s and 1970s, that carried onto be applied as variable players in examining democratizing regime changes in the 1970s and 1980s.

Huntington' framework is represented by the following steps. The first is targeting validity of iron-gripped authoritarian regimes with broken military systems and economic deterioration. By this, Huntington explains that this step serves to prove the declining legitimacy of once promising regimes by exposing their ability to stand by promised reforms. The structure of these pre-democratized authoritarian regimes is, that the internal structure of the regime, involving all the authoritarian key leaders, is kind of like musical chairs. All the participants involved in the authoritarian government stick around in hopes of getting their chance at being a leader. What Huntington has explained, and what I have understood, is that the authoritarian regime is welcomed because of a failed imitation of a potential democratic government in the country[8]. The regimes based their objectives based on democratic rhetoric, and that a democratic structure would emerge once the government solved the problems confronting the society. So, this creates the ideology that the authoritarian regime wants to take care of the conflicts preventing the society from advancing forward, and then they'll apply a democratic structure to the authoritarian regime (47-49).

The second step in the wave structure is the growth of economies in newly democratic states, along with higher levels of education and higher living standards. In this step, Huntington explains that the civic expectations of the people have increased, allowing them to express what they want from the government. The economic

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[8] In a simple idea, the ruling authoritarian government imitated the idea of a democratic structure by promising it within their regime. If we look at Syria, we can consider that Hafez's proposed constitution highlighting the leadership of the Baath Party was the promise of change, although disguised to assure his position in power.

development step of the wave doesn't necessarily bring out democratic development, however, I've understood that the relationship shared by the two isn't necessarily economic growth transferring itself to a democracy, but rather the achievements of economic development in the state provides a basis to create a democracy. Huntington explains that as countries develop economically and become wealthier, their transition democracy becomes achievable. However, with the third wave, economic development wasn't always the key to democratization. Huntington explains that in countries like Iraq and Iran, although wealthy, and sustainable in oil production, democratization was unsuccessful. While a strong economic basis serves as building block for democratization, countries with developing industrialization and blooming social structure became difficult for an authoritarian regime to control. In this case, the economic development brought on by industrialization brought more external wealth and resources to the country, forcing the government to adapt to a functional devolving form of decision making to take advantage of the resources outside the state (59-61, 68).

With that being said, Huntington also points out the growth of the middle class in ties to economic development. Since the middle class population is normally the product of economic growth and industrial expansion, these citizens, from my interpretation, find themselves in the balance between the poverty level citizens and the rich. Because of that, as Huntington clarifies, the increasing size of the middle class places them in a position where they are confident enough to participate in the electoral process. In this theory, the middle class is the average working American. So, as the amount of these average Americans increase, they begin to develop an identity in the

democratic community. For instance, in Obama's election for both terms, a good amount

of voters where of the Latino and African American community. The ties between

Obama's promises to strengthen the middle class and the percentage of the middle class

being of Latino or African American origin placed them in a trustful position with

Obama because his agenda focused on plans that would help strengthen their

community. However, while these correlations between economic development and

democracy prove to be crucial to develop a basis for the path of democratization, a

powerful economy serves a crucial purpose when it is associated with education (68-

69). As Huntington explains, economic development brought an increase in citizens

attending secondary, therefore strengthening their trust to democratization. Because

the citizen is increasingly educated, as well as satisfied with his own well-being and the

social structure of the state, willingness to accept democratization is welcomed[9].

  The third step of the process is a change in religious institutions that make them

opposing to the authoritarian regime in place. In other words, I've deduced that this

step calls for the separation of church and state in the democratizing country. As

Huntington explains, modern democracy was created by the vigorous attempts made by

Catholicism and/or Protestantism to break the ties of church and state in repressive

countries. From my own analysis, if religious beliefs and government intermix together,

especially in an authoritarian regime, the end result is constant battle between other

religious sects in the country and the government's selected religious representation. In

my opinion, this step in the wave explains the important characteristics that fall with

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[9] Huntington explains that if economic growth can occur without economic crisis, the democracy can begin to evolve slowly. In the long-term, economic development creates the fundamental basis for a democratic regime to occur.

separating church and state. In the characteristics of the Protestant Church, their agendas represented democratic leadership and did not allow any one sole power to a bishop while denying the congregation. The Protestant Church was represented as a democratically organized church. In contrast to that, the Catholic Church was set up with an authoritarian structure, with ranks that divided all participating figures of the church. So, the association between the authoritarian regime and the Catholic Church was unchallengeable, until the 1970s and 1980s (76-77, 80).

At this point, the democratizing countries in the third wave during those years were predominantly Catholic. In summary, three-quarters of the countries that transitioned to a democratic government in the mid 1970s to the late 1980s were Catholic countries. I've understood that the explanation behind this transition is the overflow of democratization in Protestant countries. Because it seemed that Protestant countries were democratized by selection, the remaining countries that were left were democratized by the wave would have to be Catholic countries. Historically, Catholic countries were known to be poor countries with little economic development. So, how does the historical authoritarian organizational structure of the Catholic Church correlate with a new wave of democratized countries? Huntington explains that in the 1950s, there was a shift in the organizational system that was built within the Catholic Church. Unlike the previous authoritarian divide, the Catholic Church's transition into an opposing institution of dictatorial and authoritarian regimes, therefore redirecting Catholicism as a force for democracy, rather than an obstacle of democracy (82-85).

With the third step serving as a stride to separate church from state, the fourth steps of the wave introduces the necessity to promote human rights and democracy in a

state by external participation. This step in Huntington's framework explains the importance of external states or resources giving an extra push to newly transitioning democratic countries. While the internal transition from authoritarian to democratic can be built off the earlier steps in the framework, the participation of external democratized nations adds a monitor to the newly developed governments of these democratized states. Since these states have completely restricted their governmental framework, Huntington's points about democracy and human rights promotion serve as a monitoring eye to these transitioning states. I believe that since there would most likely be an internal divide about the newly founded government, an external source, like the United States or the European Community, would serve as an adviser to how the human treatment and social structure would carry out in the country (86-88). In any case, I think that the positions of these external resources would each play a different role. One position would be mediate relations and discussions between opposing sides of the country. Another position would serve as a monitor to ensure that the upmost humanitarian treatment is carried out in the state. Another resource would play the role of influencer by continuing to promote the benefits of a democracy in the transitioned state. In summary, these external forces would play a role that would influence and ensure that the newly democratized state would be able to maintain the transition, rather than fall back into a limbo[10].

The final step in the wave is the demonstration, or domino effect that a newly developed, successful democratized nation has on other countries. Demonstration

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[10] In a measure of U.S. impact on democratization, Huntington explains the complaints coming from dictators in South America and Asia about U.S. interference in their own domestic politics. In most cases, these complaints were justified (96).

effects in the third wave of democratization differ than other waves because the

expansion of global communications that the twentieth century has offered presents an

expanded audience to world affairs. Because country leaders could not easily regulate

what was seen, the 1980s idea of "world democratic revolution" was a fearful reality in

the minds of many political leaders across the world. This theoretical revolution posed

the opportunity for the people of the world to connect themselves to political events

and situations that were not near them, as well as tie their relevance and importance to

these political events. Furthermore, the powerful importance of global communication

and its ability to tie relevance all over the world was not the only step in strengthening

the demonstration effect of the third wave. Decade-standing authoritarian regimes

were being conquered and torn down from the impacts of newly developed democratic

states (101-102). While some countries' democratizations served little meaning in the

international community, other newly transitioned countries changed international

relations, as we know them. However, as Huntington stresses, the demonstration effects

were not always effective in early democratizations. Some of these democratized states

were caused by the snowball effect. However, once these transitions were made, they

began to impact the big leagues in the international community, influencing them to

then make the transition themselves. When countries like Spain, Argentina and Portugal

were democratized, they opened doors for other struggling countries to break free from

the iron grip of their withstanding authoritarian regime and take the path to create a

democratic state of their own[11].

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[11] Huntington explains the element of "why not us?" in the case of Korea and East Germans. In my own perspective, from my research, I think it's safe to say that Syrians asked themselves the same questions when the pro-democracy protests began (105).

Overthrowing and Democratization

How does Huntington's framework mechanisms apply to Syria? To begin with a simple fact, a 97% approval rating by the public with a father whose massacre of the country murdered more tens of thousands of people is skeptical. At this point, the Baath party has been in place since the late 1940s. Although Bashar promised to enter power with a plan of more modern freedom for the Syrian people, we saw that his promise wasn't carried out[12]. Huntington explains that nondemocratic regimes and one-party systems approach an opposition by identifying another party in the state. In the case of Syria, the Baath Party's new role as a leadership framework for the country seemed to deter the idea of an authoritarian regime taking place under the—clearly false—idea of a democracy. After Hafez died, the Syrian parliament amended the constitution to lower the minimum age requirement for presidency to allow Bashar to take hold of the country. The Baath Party unanimously elected him as leader, with no elections or public opinion in the process. The only clear amendment to the constitution at this time was lowering the age requirement from forty to thirty-four. This amendment, in and of itself, is the first flag to show the oppression in Syria. Not only did Hafez's proposal of the original constitution secure his place in power, but the amendment made for Bashar will secure his position in power for at least another decade, just because of the constitutional powers he has as president (Fares).

How can we legitimize the Assad regime without using the point of it being a forced government on the public? In his book, Huntington has created a guideline to

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[12] Assad insisted that Syria was immune from the Arab uprisings that started in 2011. When he entered Syria as the new president, he took initiative to free political prisoners, but failed to change powers that denied citizens' rights to form associations and political parties that would express their opinions (Profile: Bashar Al-Assad, Al-Jazeera).

overthrowing authoritarian regimes. The first step of the guideline is to focus the attention on the illegitimacy of the regime, with extra attention to how it's failing and its vulnerable points. Before I dive into the brutality of the regime, as well as the overflow of refugee in neighboring countries, I want to discuss one of the key building blocks to building a stable and strongly-developed country and government: economy. Before the war, the unemployment rate of Syria was 10%, and they had more than $2 billion in exports and commodities (Deutsche Welle). Oil revenue played a big role in the overall government revenue, bringing in more than 150 billion Syrian lira in 2010. After the bloodshed of the war, the unemployment rate has skyrocketed to 50%, making about every other Syrian unemployed. A report issued by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia showed that the transportation sector in Syria fell from 190 billion SYP to about 12 billion SYP from 2010 to 2012. Continuous sanctions against human rights violations put in place by the European Union have severely participated in the crash and burn of this economy.

I was recently able to interview a Syrian refugee who came to the United States about the living and employment conditions in Syria. For the purpose of my research and her safety, I will refer to her as Layla. She explained to me how water, electricity, Internet, and heat would be cut off at random times in rebel-lead areas. She said that these outages came unexpectedly and would last for different periods of time. Abu Ibrahim Al-Raqqawi, who is co-founder for a widely known Syrian activist group, Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, told me that after the civil war began, electricity and water would cut-offs would be isolated to areas that were more populated with rebels.

The areas that were known to have greater support for the regime would have electricity and water for longer parts of the day.[13]

But in the case of economic stability for the regime and Assad supporters, they had a helping hand. As ISIS continues to seize oil fields, they sold back the regimes oil to them at cheap rates, helping boost their financial slips. Abu Ibrahim explained to me that after ISIS seized eastern parts of the country, regime supporters were forced to turn to them for resources. "It was in the best interest of the regime to cooperate with ISIS for these resources," he said. "ISIS would say 'I will give you [x] amount of hours of electricity, in exchange, you bring someone to help fix the power lines or we will not help you,' so it was beneficial for the regime to cooperate."

Economy is one solid point that I wanted to discuss in regards to Huntington's guideline to overthrowing a regime. As I previously said, he explains that a key to confronting the regime is to attack the corruption and brutality it shows. In 2013, the regime threw chemical attacks on neighborhoods, killing more than 1,000 citizens. Videos swarmed the Internet, and the U.N. was demanded at the sight to determine what happened and who was behind it. U.N. inspectors confirmed that sarin gas was used, and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said that this was the largest case of chemical weapon use since the 1988 attacks by Saddam Hussein in Haljaba[14]. Huntington's point about attacking the vulnerability of the authoritarian government is one of the easier steps when discussing the Assad regime. Because of the advancement of technology past borders and oceans, the world has been able to get an inside look of

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[13] I was able to speak to Abu Ibrahim several times about his experiences in Raqqa, which is now controlled by ISIS.

[14] An article released by BBC gave all the facts to what the UN found in their investigations after the chemical weapon attack. They confirmed that sarin was the agent used in Damascus on August 21st.

what is happening in Syria secondhand to what the citizens are going through. I think the outrage of the crimes and the lack of movement being made by the government as well as international allies is what is most surprising about the tragedy. Iran, China and Russia have already confirmed their alliance, and with China and Russia being permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, they've already secured their promise to Assad to make all efforts to veto and throw off any attempts made by the council that may potentially threaten his position.

However, although the points of economy and chemical attacks are illegitimate and dubious, it doesn't make a difference in terms of the solidity of the regime. With allies like Russia and Iran, it will be difficult for Assad to be removed from power. Not only this, but the role of ISIS in Syria has deterred the path of overthrowing Assad and reconstructed itself into a path that will defeat ISIS. So, in a sense, yes, this step of Huntington's framework is applicable to Syria. We see that the economy is failing and the citizens are suffering from the brutality of the violence. However, ISIS' position inside the country, and their financial exchanges with the regime put this step at a difficult position for action. While the situation in Syria meets the criteria for this step, ISIS' presence distracts the objective of the framework.

The second step of Huntington's democratization guideline explains the efforts made by authoritarian leaders to recruit high-class officials that help legitimize the regime, making it look more respectable and responsible. Abu Ibrahim explained to me that all the supporters of the regime where in close contact with Assad government. He tells me that it was in the best interest of the high-class supporters that Assad stays in power so that they can stay protected and have money. As Huntington explained, many

of these enlisted leaders were original supporters of the authoritarian system in its

beginning stages (150). As Abu Ibrahim told me, those who were in support of the

regime were taken care of by Assad, and were promised luxury as long as they pledged

an allegiance to him.

In terms of citizen support, he explained to me that the same network promises

were offered. Although they were not promised the luxury of the high-class leaders, the

Alawite citizens of Syria maintained their allegiance for social safety and benefit. "It was

helpful to them, and in their best interest, to stay with Assad," said Abu Ibrahim. "They

know that if Assad is removed, they have no hope in the country." And what he says is

true. A BBC analysis of the Alawite's in Syria explained that many of them Alawites

believe that all that stands between them and a return to a second-class status, or even

death, is Assad[15]. Along with that, Abu Ibrahim told me that the people controlling jobs

in the community, like teachers or businesses, were Alawites, because Assad was sure

of their commitment. If they were able to control what's left of a basic functioning

society, then he could be sure that regular citizens were able to keep the reigns of the

Alawite allegiance in the community. Huntington explains that authoritarian leaders

enlist high-class figures to keep their position strong, especially if these figures are well

liked. While I can't confirm the likeness of his house and cabinet members, I can say that

his promise to middle and lower class citizens is what helps keep his regime strong

today. Abu Ibrahim told me that all of his supporters are getting the rare jobs and are

getting an education. "They have a role in the community," he said, "because he knows

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[15] The documentary explained how the Alawite sect was under threat. Abu Ibrahim explained to me that they knew if Assad was removed from his seat, they would die or be run out of the country. He explained that they have no hope without him.

they'll keep his order running." When it comes to anti-regime supporters or citizens associated with the rebels and Free Syrian Army, he told me they have no place. "They are at the bottom," he explained. "If a regime supporter didn't have a degree, but a revolution supporter did, the regime supporter would get the job, and the revolution supporter would have nothing."

This step in the framework to overthrow regimes is difficult to apply to Syria. We know how negatively the regime is impacting order in Syria. However, in my opinion, the support from the citizens in the community is playing a bigger role in deterring the process of overthrowing the regime. Along with that, Assad has the full support of Hezbollah and Iran. Iran's role in the Middle East and their conflicting relationship with the U.S. puts them at a very powerful position with Syria. In my opinion, after examining the topic, it would be very difficult to apply this step to democratizing Syria. Iran is a figurehead in the Middle East, and I do not believe that coming head-to-head with Syria on this step would be reasonable.

The third step of overthrowing an authoritarian regime, Huntington explains the importance of generals. The last analysis explained how having these leading figureheads on your side will play a role in how the crisis evolves[16]. In the case of Syria, the Free Syrian Army is made up of rebels opposing the regime. The problem with this is that they are not a unified organization. Due to the fact of the rapidly changing and deteriorating atmosphere of the rebels, I was unable to find convincing evidence to prove my point of their disconnections. However, Dr. Najib Ghadbian, a Political Science

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[16] Huntington explains how military assistance is beneficial when the crisis comes. He also explains how these figureheads decide whether the regime collapses by standing next to it in support, or on the sidelines (150).

professor at the University of Arkansas, as well as the Special Representative to the United States for the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition forces sat down with me to explain on a deeper level why this step might stand in the way of the framework.

He explained that the regime was a centralized organization, which was able to tie back to the government. In the case of the rebels, they existed in their own areas as independent groups. "The Free Syrian Army of Aleppo is the Free Syrian Army of Aleppo, and the Free Syrian Army of Daraa' is the Free Syrian Army of Daraa'," he said. Dr. Ghadbian explained that their decentralization and inability to have a unified relationship is what limited their power in the war. As ISIS and the regime were able to have a centralized network, the rebels were working off the whim of what was available. They were all for the same cause, they were localized. They are not the entire Free Syrian Army as a whole.

Huntington says that you need military unwillingness to defend the regime, as well as cultivate generals to support overthrowing the regime (150). In the case of Syria, Huntington's framework needs to be altered. I have no doubt that the revolution can cultivate general to support overthrowing Assad. What stand in the way is not only their decentralization, but the limited access there is to the country. Along with that, ISIS' presence on the Eastern side, as well as their collaborations with the regime to infiltrate themselves into regime-controlled areas, puts any type of cultivation or democratic support on hold. There is no room for anyone to come in and help Syria. While Huntington's framework is the most reasonable, as well as most applicable to what I am trying to defend, his guideline for democratization does not consider the

mechanisms of a civil war-torn country with the control of a terrorist organization. This step of the guideline fails to analyze the limited access, limited resources, and limited support there is for the democracy supporters. Huntington says to cultivate generals that would stand by the movement; in this case, who would stand by the rebels? The United States has shifted agendas from removing Assad to dismantling the Islamic State. If we look to surrounding nations for support, it's very minor and limited. We have Iran providing weapons, political support, as well as Hezbollah as a resource for the regime fighters. On the other hand, countries like Saudi Arabia or Turkey or Qatar are in support of the revolution, but they give a little here and a little there. The amounts don't match up to the regime[17].

In the fourth step, Huntington explains the importance of preaching nonviolence to help overthrow. A unique aspect of Bashar's presidency is that he promised to push a more modern and free way of thinking during his presidency. In an interview with National Public Radio, David Lesch, a professor at Trinity University, explained his encounters with Assad. Lesch explained that as Bashar entered the presidency, it was clear that he wanted to establish change in the country, and make efforts to remove the authoritarian regime. But instead of Bashar gripping the system, the system gripped him. "What I think ended up happening is the authoritarian system changed him," said Lesch. The unique part of this situation is that Lesch's second book, *Syria, the Fall of the House of Assad,* hints that the fall of the Assad regime has its end, and Lesch doesn't deny that. He explains that the regime sees this battle as a 10-15 year path from when it started, and from that point the opposition will deteriorate and people will conform. In

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[17] Dr. Ghadbian explained these countries' limited offerings when it came to helping the rebels.

an article Lesch wrote for the *New York Times,* Lesch explained how Assad was not

Moammar Ghaddafi, and that Syria was not Libya. He explained how the brutality on the

people was not necessarily a regime action, but maybe action taken by the police after

too many years of being laid back with the public.[18]

This step in the guideline advises to practice and preach nonviolence. This way,

the pro-democracy group can win over security forces because they are not resorting to

violence as a means of attention (150). To apply this concept to Syria, we would have to

re-establish the role of rebels in the civil war. Although, in my opinion and from my

analysis, the beginning of the pro-democracy protests were peaceful, I will reproach

this thought according to the current situation. Huntington says to practice what you

preach. In this case, the rebels are contradicting their purpose of a free Syria. If they are

fighting for a democracy, why should there be bloodshed? Instead, the rebels need to

step away from the violence and resort to a peaceful resolution to call for a transition in

government.

Now, I'm not in full agreement with my statement. While Huntington makes a

good point about practicing nonviolence as a means of communication, I don't believe

there is any hope of peaceful communication between the opposition and the rebels at

this point. After more than four years of bloodshed, how will trust be established

between security forces and the rebels, the rebels and the opposition, and ISIS with all

three? It cannot exist. If we were to start back in 2011, and present the rebels as a group

of peaceful, democracy-seeking citizens, who hoped to establish a means of fairness in

the government, then this would have worked out in some way or another. But after

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[18] Lesch explained how the uprisings in Syria gave Bashar a chance to become something beside Hafez Al-Assad's son.

four years of crime and explosions, I do not believe that the 'peaceful' aspect exists in Syria. Huntington is right; we should preach nonviolence and peaceful cooperation. But now, who will preach that loud enough and peacefully enough for the government to pay attention? Even more, who will listen to them if they do?

The fifth guideline is something I touched on when discussing elections in Syria. It discusses overthrowing an authoritarian regime by seizing every opportunity to express opposition towards the regime, including election periods. In the case of Syria, expressing opposition to Assad's rule was limited to every seven years. In the most recent elections last year, Bashar Al-Assad won, signing him up for another seven-year term as president. However, the constitution allows the person to renew their term only once. As of now, no coincidental efforts to amend the constitution have been made, but that will probably change in years to come. In the case of Syria, we have seen how far they go to express their opinion about the opposition. Bashar's respective 88.7% majority win after holding elections in government-controlled areas and excluding areas that are in rebel hands[19]. The next opportunity presented to the Syrians to exercise Huntington's guideline will be in 2012.

In terms of the sixth and seventh guidelines, I believe that these can actually apply to Syria's condition right now. While most of Huntington's points in this guideline are realistic when it comes to overthrowing a regime, I think they failed to capture the unexpected arrival of ISIS during the civil war. While ISIS does not have a direct hand in overthrowing the government, their presence creates an obstacle when it comes to seizing the country away from Assad. This is why I believe these next two guidelines

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[19] The opposition, along with western allies, all denounced the election, despite a promise made by a delegation that promise transparent and free elections (The Guardian).

help establish a mechanism that can be used by Syrians today as practice for what is to

come.

The sixth guideline encourages pro-democracy seekers to develop contacts with

the global media and expand their networks beyond their state borders. By this,

Huntington suggests that mobilizing supporters in the United States will benefit the

revolution. He says that American congress members are looking for good causes to

support in return for positive publicity (150). While this is unfortunately true, it can

only benefit the opposition against the regime. In the case of Syria, we've seen how

social media has helped expand their voice beyond the borders. Syrian activist Twitter

accounts, Facebook pages, and blogs have been set up to give the world a live view as to

what is going on inside the country. Children dead on the street, foaming at the mouth,

malnourished and nude outraged the world and pointed fingers at America for staying

silent. This tactic was used before I applied this guideline. Not only does this show us

how unique democratic elements can be in an authoritarian country, but we also saw

how fast this global hand extended and the result of it. In a country like Syria, where

you've been denied your freedoms, immediate exposure is the only solution[20]. What's

even more unique is that many times, this media outreach would not always shed a

bloody light on the country. In cases like the murder of teenager Michael Brown, we

saw Syrians come together in silent support of protecting black lives in America. They

held a sign with a message of sympathy. Rather than shed the light on themselves in a

negative way, they were able to show their unity as citizens in a war-torn country. Not

only is this incredibly smart, but I think it goes above and beyond what Huntington

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[20] Huntington says that you should dramatize your cause to them and give them a chance for TV
opportunities and speeches (105).

meant in the sixth guideline. In the case of any regime, it's important for citizens to reach out to the world for attention and help. However, if these nations can represent solidarity with the rest of the world, rather than ask for sympathy and help, it gives them a stronger picture in the eyes of the international society. The Syrians of Kafarnbel showed unity with Ferguson in that photo; not sympathy for Syria.

Furthermore, the element of the sixth guideline moves me on to the seventh: promoting unity among opposition groups. Huntington tells the reader that in order to test your democratic qualifications, you must prove your country's ability to overcome opposition disunity. In truth, I am not sure if this guideline can be applied to the regime. At one point, I do know that rebels and supporters were neighbors and coworkers and friends. Once the opposition broke out, it was clear who was taking which side. However, I believe there is hope. In a hypothetical scenario, let's assume that pro-democratic citizen came together to propose unity between the rebels and the regime, in such a case where they could come together to overthrow Assad and rebuild the nation under new terms. If we assume this hypothetical scenario were to happen, this would mean that the unity between both sides would be strong enough to defeat ISIS. Right now, the undercover relationship between the regime and ISIS is like a 'marriage of convenience,' which means that once one side is ready to let go, it has no value. If a pro-democratic Syrian were to tackle the issue of unity, I think that this would ***ideally*** be the first step in overthrowing the Syrian government. While the first guideline was reasonable, it was not tailored enough to fall into the specific dilemma consuming Syria. One of the biggest problems now is disunity in the country. If a group can come together to bring both sides of the war and create an alliance between them, that unity would be

enough to dismantle the Assad regime. At that point, the regime would have no fighters, and the rebels would not be on the losing side of the war[21].

As we conclude this section, I will finalize the guideline with the eighth and most important step: filling the empty seat of the regime a democratic one. When the Assad regime falls, a coalition of supervising nations must help the Syrians come together to replace the regime with a democratic government. It is crucial for the Syrians to be smart in the process of electing a new leader. I believe that even before the regime is overthrown, there needs to be a drafted plan in place. If Assad falls, Syria will be at the mercy of ISIS. The Islamic State has continuously announced their plan to spread their caliphate into the Middle East to create one large nation under Islam. If they find time between Assad's fall and a new leader, they might see the empty chair as an opportunity to take political control of the country. It is absolutely crucial that this does not happen. For this reason, it is essential that the coalition that comes together to draft a new plan for Syria has no ties with the previous government. Any persons associated with supporting the Assad regime will take no part in the government transition. Not only will this bring back the bitter taste of his ruling, but as Huntington explains, some of these partners will try to quietly establish a dictatorship and gain supporters under an assumed democracy (151).

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[21] Huntington stresses that creating an umbrella of organizations that help facilitate operations and unity among the opposition will make them stronger.

Democracy: Can it exist in Syria?

For the purpose of this research, democracy will be defined "as an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote," as quoted in Huntington's book[22].

In the eyes of the United States, our democratic structure is ideal and suitable for the rest of the world, right? Possibly, yes. We live under a governmental framework that does not give possibilities for leaders to take advantage of anything. There is no law above the constitution, which, in my opinion, is the key to the continuous stability in the United States. However, our extensive push to democratize the world continues to put us in a bad place with many world leaders. What I believe we have failed to understand is that the standards to create democracy in the United States differ than other parts of the world. For instance, they stem from the proposed natural rights: life, liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. The democracy of the Western World branches out from these rights, along with the satisfaction of establishing security, fairness, and inclusiveness in our society. Our constitution stops our pursuit of happiness when it's infringing on someone else[23].

However, I think that there is a level of contradiction in the framework of democracy in the West. America is built on a dream of freedom and opportunity, but we fail to highlight and elaborate on the difficult road that was taken to reach this dream. In the case of the U.S. and the Arab nations, there were too many situations where the

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[22] This definition was formulated by Joseph Schumpeter and was labeled as "another theory of democracy" (6).

[23] This means that our social contract limits us from using our rights to infringe and interfere on the rights of others (Shomar)

West compromised the freedoms and the pursuit of happiness of the people in the

Middle East in return for their own security. While forced resources and occupations

played a factor in this, I think the lack of ignorance from the West is what really stalled

the development of proper democracy in the Middle East.

Arab World Democratization

David Shomar, author of *Democracy and the Arab World* for the *Syracuse Journal*

of International Law and Commerce efficiently explains the lack of movement made by

the Arab community to maneuver through the conditions to develop a democratic

system. However, along with that explanation, it is very hard for the U.S. to help Arab

nations develop the framework for democracy following their own outline. Shomar uses

the example of U.S. support in an Iraqi constitution if Iraq agreed to create separation

between church and state. Not only would this create tension between both countries,

but also it would be incredibly difficult for Iraq, whose government and society is

tailored to religion[24]. The idea behind this is that while it's important for the strong

democratic civilizations of the West to help the Middle East, the frameworks for

creating a strongly developed democratic nation are not one-size-fits-all. If the United

States tries to impose our standards of freedom and rights onto these countries, whose

tribes and governments are generational, it will pose a sign of authority from the United

States, rather than create a path of equality. If we want to impose on the governmental

system of a Middle Eastern country, we should consider the grudge being held against

the U.S. by those citizens. Since Obama's election in 2008, U.S. favorability ratings have

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[24] According to Shomar, our interference in demanding the separation of church and state in Iraq denounces their ability to make statewide decisions on their own.

plummeted drastically in the among the Arab Nations, with some countries favoring the U.S. more at the end of the Bush Administration versus the Obama Administration[25]. One of the top reasons ratings continue to fall is due to the consistent U.S. support towards Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which hits hard for a large majority of citizens in the Middle East. While countries across the world continue to condemn the Israeli occupation on Palestinian, the U.S. continues to provide Israel with billions of dollars yearly in military aid.

Then again, Western involvement in Middle Eastern democratic development does not entirely depend on the structure of politics alone. A strong role-player in a strong built country is the economic market. Emerging democracies and market economics continue to conflict when it comes to the development. The Arab World is well aware of the compelled interest the West has on the revenue that can be derived from that area of the world. The Arabs know that any interest shown by the U.S. to help build their democracies isn't coming from the kindness of their hearts, but because they have their eyes on the revenue-generating resources that exist in that area of the world. A mixed economy like the U.S., with widespread benefits will conflict with the free market system of many Arab countries, where financial security is passed down through hierarchical ties between the individual and the family and tribes. Basically, the system comes off as an every-man-for-himself, rather than widespread bonus for everyone. If an imposed proposal for democracy comes to the Arab World by the West, then the proposal should be strong enough to deter any doubts of inevitable disadvantages caused by a democratic economy. If these Arabs have been working in

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[25] The countries surveyed in this speech said that U.S. interference in the Middle East is a great obstacle to peace and stability in the region (Arab American Institute).

the same free market system through generational tribal systems, then the proposed democratic economy needs to be a fair trade (Shomar).

What's unique about Shomar and Huntington is that they have both developed democratic frameworks that tie in together. While Huntington's ideas are based on a more general perspective of overthrowing a regime and developing a democracy, Shomar narrows down his framework strategies to fall in place with the known status quos in the Middle East are. On the contrary to Huntington's guidelines, Shomar's outline can help relate to the withstanding conflicts in the Middle East, which ties back to evaluating Syria's compatibility to compromising with the existing conflicts between Western democratization in the Arab World. Shomar gives two potential scenarios that could occur when the occupier intervenes into the nation to assist with the development of a brighter future. The first scenario results in ending the latest conflict between the occupier and the newly liberated country, only to wait for it to spark up later on. In Shomar's explanation, this scenario ends with the freedom of the newly originated culture. The second path, the ending violence would result in the annihilation of the newly indigenous culture and its people. In the case of both scenarios, the outcomes don't necessarily mean an end to the relations. For the first case, if occupier-created liberation is the outcome, there will continue to be years and years of distrust between both countries. The establishment and development of the culture, does not guarantee that both sides will leave happily. The new society may have unhealed wounds from the occupier, and may continue to use these old wounds as motives for new conflicts on a road to revenge. It's not unreasonable, and the way Shomar explains it, the new culture would still hold a grudge against the occupying

country. The disadvantage of this would be the destruction of the new country, as well as any established agreements between the civilizations as allies in creating a new culture. Basically, all the effort made to create the newly liberalized democratic society would crash and burn.

For the second path, if the occupying country destroys the new population, they'll continue with the illusion of winning the battle. In this case, Shomar relates the situation to American ancestors destroying Native American culture. While we've tried to preserve what was left of the original inhabitants of America, the constant cloud of denial will continue to loom over this country.

The last framework by Shomar that I want to explain shows that the best approach that can be made by the occupier is to enter that country with humble goals and respect for the values of that culture. Instead of entering the country with the goal of victory for the occupier, they should disconnect themselves from the image of enemy with superiority. Shomar uses the example of the U.S. with Japan and Germany after World War II. Our humble approach and respect to their rebuilding process of society and civilizations led to half a century of strong relations between the countries. In the case of Syria, this would suggest that the U.S. enter the country with no intentions on claiming victory for the fall of Assad and a new democratic government, but instead enter the country with no agenda, and respect the sovereignty of the nation to rebuild itself with no influence. If Syria were to be free from Assad, the last thing the country would need is the United States implementing a governmental structure on them. Instead, as I said earlier in the guidelines of overthrowing a regime, the U.S. along with other global powers should draft a plan for a transitional government in Syria if Assad

were to be removed. This does not mean that the U.S. needs to take it upon themselves to dictate the country; it means that they play the role democratic supporters and allow Syria to reconstruct itself[26].

So, can Shomar's structure relate to Syria on a deeper level? Realistically, I do not think that all of the steps in the framework provided by Shomar can apply to the Syrian regime. For starters, the first two paths seem shaky in determining an end result of the situation. More than that, I did not find that Shomar's structure was a means of democratization as much as it was gentle interference. I will not deny that his explanations are realistic when it comes to creating a supervised draft of government order, but it does not synchronize well with the idea of democratization. It is not as much of a framework as it is a game plan for the West to gently interfere without coming off as pushy.

Framework Comparison and Analysis

In a situation like the one in Syria, applying the frameworks that I've discussed so far is very difficult. First of all, I don't think that Shomar's framework is applicable because of the ISIS occupation. If we were to apply it when the regime began, with the regime being the only forced occupation in Syria, then most aspects of the framework would have been applicable to achieving a plan that would lead to a democratic state. On the contrary, ISIS has been added to the occupiers of the country. To clarify, I am not implying that ISIS has the same level of power as the Syrian to be an occupier of the country, but their presence and decent level of military and weapon power places them

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[26] Shomar's framework is a little fluffy. It's reasonable, but I think it's only applied in a world where unity exists peacefully with no disputes.

at a high threat for Syria. With that, I also want to consider their focus of creating an entire Sunni Islamic State. What's unique to me is that ISIS has not made efforts to seize control of the Assad House, who is Alawite Muslim, falling under the Shiite sect of Islam. We've already seen ISIS aggressiveness to gain control of the Shiite-majority Iranian government, but the same efforts have not been made towards Assad.

With the continuing ISIS involvement in Syria during the regime, this places less attention on Assad's regime as an authoritarian leader, and more attention on the fact he's leading a country undergoing a civil war and an occupation by a terrorist organization. For the rest of the world, I see this as a chance for them to pitch in and participate in strengthening the rebels—who are essentially fighting for freedom— against ISIS. At this point, Bashar is a key ally to the West in the fight against ISIS. Obama's statement was right—Assad needs to leave the country in order for us to defeat ISIS. However, as I said earlier, I do not believe that a political transition with the existence of a terrorist organization in a country so fragile would be the wisest approach. To add to that, neither Huntington nor Shomar show any evidence of such a transition being successful. To begin with, I find that Shomar's framework and steps are very soft touching when it comes to battling terrorism in a corrupt country. If we were dealing with the Assad regime on it's own, with no interference from ISIS, then it would hold a better standing. But in my perspective, Shomar's entire framework is built on this idea of gently removing the authoritarian regime without doing harm to the country. ISIS has done more harm socially and economically to Syria, especially considering the amount of refugees that have fled the country in order to escape. In

straight words, there is no gentle way of overthrowing the regime with ISIS in the country.

If we were to look at Huntington's frameworks, they are more solidified in the case of democratization because they address the realities of the process. While Shomar's is based off a gentle approach to overruling, Huntington's is more matter-of-fact. Still, he doesn't offer an approach to overthrowing a regime with an existing extremist group. Huntington explains that opposition groups in the country would use government officials, collaborators and civilians as target as a means to get what they want (201). However, there's a trap between ISIS, Syria, and the U.S. Assad recently said in an interview that he refuses to cooperate with the U.S. led anti-ISIS campaign because he accused the Obama administration of collaborating with the anti-regime militants. So, here's the problem in all of this: if Assad refuses to cooperate with the U.S., and the U.S., is unable to reach ISIS on the inside without 1) overthrowing Assad, or 2) cooperating with him until the organization is defeated, how is Syria expected to fall out of this black hole? Assad pointed fingers at the U.S. government for cooperating with the Syrian rebels fighting his regime. If the U.S. hopes to gain any type of alliance with the Assad house, then there must be a halt between them and the support provided to the rebels. At that point, America would have dropped all efforts to promote a free Syria; something that we promised the world we would be a part of.

Concluding Scenarios

As I begin the conclusions to my research, I would like to outline that I do not believe there is a set solution to resolve the Syrian crisis. I also do not believe that any significant resolutions will take place within the next five years. However, from my research, analysis, and extensive reading, I've come up with a set of three hypothetical concluding solutions to finalize my research. I am not a scholar, however, I believe that the set of these three scenarios are logically reasonable as potential solutions. These scenarios and conclusions are completely built by me, with the support of my research and sources.

My first concluding solution is rebuilding a democratic government in Syria based off of the Bosnia-Herzegovina framework. The start of the agreement between the countries came as an end to the war in Bosnia, and it was also signed by Serbia and Croatia. Ultimately, this framework aimed to bring an end to the war and create and outline set of government standards needed to establish a country. The agreement served as a means of stability and peace in the area. What's unique about the framework is that the participants were taken out of their comfort zone, all the way in Ohio, to sign the agreement. I think this served as a humorous way to force everyone to come to an ultimatum with no way out (Dayton Peace Agreement). Ultimately, the peace agreement aimed to promote stability and prosperity as an entire state, rather than two battling nations. Although Syria is not at war with another country in a fight for independence, the agreement tying the countries as one has points that promote democratization with a gentle, non-aggressive approach. The annexes in the framework

promote severe democratization changes, however, they are not invasive and sudden,

therefore making the transition more peaceful.

The general framework in the agreement held the promise that both countries

would exist together with respects to each other's sovereign equality and to settle all

disputes peacefully. Now, I understand that Syria is not in conflict with co-existing with

another nation. However, the Annexes listed in the Dayton agreement create a

reasonable outline that, I believe, helps compliment Huntington's initial

democratization framework. I will not apply each annex of the agreement, because they

are not all applicable to the content of my research. While the agreement aims to create

political stability and order between two, newly formed democratic nations, I don't

think that its associations can all be tied to the democratization of Syria when

considering the realistic atmosphere of the situation. The Dayton Peace Agreement

constructs a framework for two torn nations to become a sovereign state with

recognition as long as they apply by that framework. Syria has been broken apart and

divided by religious sects, terrorist organizations and their affiliates, as well as

revolution fighters and regime supporters. So, while I believe that this framework has a

60% success rate, I can only go so far with how I analyze it and apply it.

Before I break down the agreement and its annexes, we need to take a look at the

fundamental principles that create Syria, also known as its constitution. As I mentioned

earlier, under the current constitution, Assad has won his third seven-year term as

President of Syria. Not only that, but while Hafez Al-Assad was in power, the original

constitution was modified enough to brand the country as a means to the Baath Party,

therefore, reconstructing to support a government that would benefit the Baath party.

The irony in this situation is that during Bashar's later years as president, rather than following through with his promise to the Syrian people of a fair government, he appointed a committee of people to draft up a 'new constitution' that introduced multiparty system elections. As I point out earlier, the new constitution didn't mean anything. Bashar is still in power, and this constitution will keep him in power for about another decade (Fares).

With regards the Syrian constitution, we move into the Annex 4 in the agreement, which calls for a new constitution tying the countries, but recognizing their borders. My order of the annexes is based off the level of importance it plays in the democratic framework. Annex 4 is the most crucial to the entire agreement. In order for an authoritarian-ruled country to stabilize and democratize, a new constitution must be put into place to prevent previous issues from happening again (Dayton Peace Agreement). By calling for a new constitution in Syria, this would banish traces of the disguised authoritarian regime created by the Assad family. As I said earlier, I think that the Baath party was created to benefit the family in power. The Party and the Assad government not only held an iron-grip on all things state and society, but also on the military. The president is the commander in chief as well as head of all the intelligence agencies in the party. This means that Assad has control of anything and everything involving military force and nationwide intelligence. It wouldn't be hard to erase what might make him look bad. No bullet is shot without his approval and he chooses what's openly announced to the public. This creates corruption politically and socially. If the leader is in charge of the organizations that are meant to expose secrets of the country, how will the people know if their government is as transparent as they say? What's

ironic is that the Baath Party constitution aims to offer unified freedom to the people,

but it comes within the comfort zone of the president. Civilian freedom ends when his

exposure begins. I don't think that the annex regarding military in the Dayton Peace

Agreement can be applied to Syria's case because the state is not trying to coexist with

another, but rather exist democratically itself. The foundations drafted in the

constitution that discuss elections, military and government involvement, as well as

citizenship rights must represent democratic intentions.

The second important annex to Syria's framework is regional stabilization. The

agreement explains how negotiations fall into the framework by forcing the signing

nations to agree on confidence building measures, such as restricted imports or military

activity. If we were to put Syria in this category, I think that the confidence building

measures would ultimately have to exist with Iran, United States, and Russia. I put these

as the top three negotiators/members of stability because they've had the most

involvement in trying to take action against or protect the Assad regime. Before this

framework can even be applied, Iran and Russia have to sign on. We've seen this

extensive battle between the United States proposing action and Russia and Iran

striking them down out of commitment to Assad. Truthfully, the only moment that I saw

positive movement from both countries is their advisory to Assad to get rid of the

chemical weapons after he blasted them on more than 50,000 people.

What is crucial about this regional stability agreement is that these nations,

although geographically distant from the Middle East, must maintain their involvement

in the negotiations. By this, I mean that they must be active in proposing restrictions on

how far the new government can go. I'm not putting them in charge of rebuilding the

country, but they should be in a monitoring position. Establish a set of agreements in categories like importing heavy weapons, ammunition, chemical weapons or even nuclear weapons, as well as restricting military involvement in the public community. This should be the top concern. The military should *by no means* play the role of housekeeping and try to keep the social structure in order. In my opinion, their unbreakable commitment to the government was a big factor that increased the severity of the war in Syria. The military should maintain the position of defenders of that nation and nothing else. In time of war, they are set out to fight. However, in time of political dispute or disruption, they do not side violently with the government to conflict with the people. There should be a national guard put in place for this, with the sole role of helping maintain social and political harmony in the country. While there will always be political disagreement, the role of the guard should be to keep the community safe. There needs to be an emphasis to not use physical force against crowds freely and peacefully protesting against the government. This is absolute key.

A final annex that I want to elaborate on is elections. Annex three explains the importance of free, fair, and supervised elections after the established agreement. It discusses elections in all parts of the government, not just the presidency. By these elections, the president would not be allowed to appoint officials in the houses as he pleases. In the case of Syria, fair elections would be the biggest bond to proving they will become democratic. As I discussed earlier, despite all the turmoil, stress, tension, and bloodshed in Syria, Assad was re-elected by a shocking 88% of votes. These elections were held in government-controlled areas, limiting them to mostly regime

supporters [27]. A post-Assad Syria will have high expectations of an election immediately after he is out of office. I agree with this, but Assad is no longer the main concern of Syria. In order for any democratic structure to be established, there needs to be some action that will help decrease the power of ISIS in the country. Their dramatically increasing in size and expansion, which is helping them spread farther and faster. At the same time, ISIS will see the time between Assad's removal and a new leader as an opportunity to expand politically and forcefully. The country is in a very fragile state, and any sudden movements can have a domino effect on what may happen next.

One last point, not directly mentioned in the agreement, is economic reconstruction. Syria's economy is continuing to deteriorate and the transitioning government needs to offer hope of economic stability. The post-Assad period needs to prioritize the damaged lives of the citizens during the regime. While political relief and stability is crucial, providing economic and social stability and reform will help reorganize the way of life. The new government must make a means to provide basic services, such as food, relief, and shelter to areas and homes damaged by the war. An economic plan must be drafted that will rebuild necessary jobs that will help resynchronize economic function. In the Day After Project, the authors suggest that prior to the regime change assessments, the immediate priorities need to be specified. The transitioning government needs to have a set starting point before they take over. The state is too fragile for a new government to set down the rules as they go. When it comes to the economic and social reform, outside networks need to supervise and possibly participate in what will happen. We cannot rely on this new government to be

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[27] According to the article by the Guardian, as well as what Abu-Ibrahim told me, these elections excluded all the areas that had anti-Assad protestors. Essentially, regime supporters were the only ones that voted.

fair and reasonable. In fact, consider the new government an infant. In order to learn to crawl, stand, and walk, they need a guardian to hold their hand and pull them up in the process. They cannot be trusted to make moves on their own right away (The Day After Project).

This concludes my analysis of the first possible solution to the Syrian crisis. After analyzing and researching this hypothesis, I believe that it has a 60% chance of occurring and pulling through. However, I am not a scholar, and although my research has been as thorough as I can make it, there are still a lot of empty spaces that are not filled. However, I can say that the agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina has proven to be realistically successful. I think that it's an ideal framework in terms of drafting out a structure for a newly democratized country, but it needs to be tailored to address my specific topic. Democratization in Syria will not happen for a very long time, and when it does happen, I'm not sure that my analysis of these frameworks will be applicable. However, for this point in my research, the Dayton Peace Agreement highlights the key points and mechanisms needed for a democratic nation.

At this point, I am moving to my second and third conclusions, which will be tied together. After several days of research, interviews, and discussions, I believe that it was the most logical choice to tie these scenarios together because of the uncertainty that remains behind them. I was not able to gather enough scholarly or journalistic evidence to support my hypothesis, and I solely relied on credible interviews with Syrian refugees for this information. My sources wish to remain anonymous for this research because they still have loved ones under the control of the regime. For the purpose of this research, I will address them as Mira, Sarah, and Ahmad. All three of

them are reliable and have had experiences with the regime firsthand. From escaping

their homes to learning about family deaths, their stories help support my following

hypothetical conclusions. However, I find that my hypothetical conclusions contradict

each other at a certain level.

The beginning point of this hypothesis is the relations between the United States

and Syria. At the start of the regime, President Obama gave a limit to Assad's brutality

with a 'red-line' that truly, I do not believe did anything. The brutality and damage of

the chemical attacks and human rights violations pushed Obama to make efforts against

Assad. With all that being said, I'm not denying the attempt of United States

involvement and intervention. It was there at first, but the agenda quickly shifted when

the U.S. became a target. The creation of the Islamic State deterred the focus from the

regime to their threats of a new Islamic nation. Instead of looking at Syria as a nation of

war and bloodshed under a brutal regime, they saw ISIS' threat to destroy the west and

create a new Middle East. Here is where my hypothetical analysis will begin.

This hypothesis started as a potential solution, but the more thought I gave it,

the more illegitimate it seemed. When it came to the regime, Assad was very unwilling

to accept any type of involvement that would threaten his seat in power. The idea of U.S.

strikes or aid to the civilians was unacceptable. Of course, being in his position, he does

not want to feel the threat of outside powers assisting the opposition. He's in the middle

of a war with the people; there was no way he would accept outside intervention that

might demolish the government he tried so hard to build. On the other hand, he's said in

limited interviews that he refuses the U.S. campaign on ISIS because it's cooperation

with terrorism; more specifically, their willingness to train and assist the rebels fighting

his regime. But in other moments, Syria seemed to have cooperated with the U.S. during their first strikes against ISIS.

When I asked Mira, her thoughts about this, she laughed. She asked me if thought it was funny how, ISIS did not consistently target all by coincidence and luck, regime-controlled areas. She also asked me why is it that ISIS has been able to capture and behead non-Syrian citizens publicly, but haven't captured any leading regime fighters or officials. And why exactly is it that, despite ISIS' continuous threats against non-Sunni Muslims, they haven't stepped near the Alawite sects of Syria? Her questions stirred up my original conclusions, and followed along with Abu Ibrahim's statements. I had drafted out the idea of a U.S. and Syrian cooperation to defeat ISIS together in exchange for Assad stepping down as president. This hypothesis was a long shot, and I had no hard evidence to slightly support this idea. My reasoning behind this was that ISIS' growth rate was increasing quickly, and the crisis in Syria would only get worse if the Islamic State collided with the regime. Yes, they're cooperating on a certain level now. But as I said before, it is a marriage of convenience. If the regime, or ISIS, gets to a point where they do not need the other, the situation will deteriorate further, and at this point, there is no guessing what might come out of it. Her questions shed a new light to my conclusions: a dual cooperation between U.S. and Assad, along with Assad and ISIS. As I begin this elaboration, I would like to stress that this explanation is not backed by evidence, but it solely based on knowledge and discussion from my interviews.

Following my hypothesis, let's explore the scenario of a U.S.-Syrian agreement to fight ISIS. If we were to say that Assad agreed to the campaign against the Islamic State with America, he would do so with an agenda. From his interviews, he's said that he

refuses to cooperate because the U.S. is in support with the rebels trying to overthrow

his government. With that being explained, we will assume that in order for him to sign

on to this campaign, the United States must agree to withdraw training and support to

the rebels, in which case they would be left to their own independent training and

scarce resources to fight the regime. In the eyes of the United States, I do not believe

that the welfare of the Syrian people is their top priority anymore. Although at one

point, the international community was focused on saving the civilians, their agendas

switched when major global powers were threatened by the terrorist organization. If

we were to look at this hypothetical agreement in the eyes of international security, the

U.S. would have to either represent themselves as supporters of the regime, or, blindly

deny the agreement and show that they are not willing to stand against the Muslims to

save their country. No side has a positive outcome. Obama agreeing to the deal would

be that his promises to support the revolution and punish Assad would be were

worthless; but denying the agreement and continuing to train and work with the rebels

will show him as a president more interested in the security of a war-torn country

rather than the safety of his own.

If we assume that Obama sides with Assad in this hypothetical agreement, then

we assume that Assad pledges allegiance to the U.S. in the fight against the Islamic State.

When I proposed this idea to Mira, Sarah, and Ahmad, they all said that there would be

no truth to this deceiving agreement. Unanimously, they all agreed that even if Assad

promised an alliance with America, there would still be undercover cooperation

between his regime and ISIS. As I explained earlier, ISIS' control of oil fields has

benefitted them as a means to generate profit, especially with the regime. Numerous

reports, aside from my own interviews, accuse and confirm the regime's cooperation in buying oil from ISIS[28]. Nonetheless, there is little to no hard evidence of these exchanges. When it comes to regime and ISIS operations, Assad has not come forward with any statements about the relationship between the groups. However, in the eyes of the U.S., most specifically Secretary of State John Kerry, ISIS and Assad are 'dependent' on one another, because of their corresponding attacks, which happen to miss each other's areas[29].

The unfortunate part about this hypothetical scenario is that it is all based off of assumption and personal experience that is not my own. I do not believe that a U.S.-Syrian agreement will exist as a resolution to the conflict with ISIS, and eventually Assad. The conflict in Syria now is no longer a fight between sides. Dr. Najib Ghadbian tells me that the regime's control of Damascus and coastal areas gives them an advantage at bombing the liberated revolution areas. But the support doesn't stop at the border. As Dr. Ghadbian explained to me, Iran's continuous support to Assad gives him momentum against the revolution. ISIS has seized parts of Eastern Syria, and most recently, the Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Damascus. Not only was this area highly populated with rebels, but also this camp is home to almost 18,000 refugees, many of whom are Palestinian[30]. Dr. Ghadbian says that seizing the camp is impossible "without the regime's implicit cooperation" with ISIS. And while ISIS and the rebels work together, the Free Syrian Army is now battling both.

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[28] As I mentioned previously, oil ISIS essentially sells back the oil to the regime at a cheaper rate.
[29] Sec. of State Kerry said that Assad 'purports' the last line of defense against the terrorist group, making them stronger. He said that they have a 'symbiotic' relationship (Ratnam and Hudson).
[30] Dr. Ghadbian told me that cooperation between the regime and ISIS helped them get into the camp. Reports of potential beheadings have been released. FSA members along with Palestinian militias are taking on a fight against ISIS.

However, I believe that a U.S.-Syrian deal to democratize can exist, but I do not believe that it will happen while Assad is in power. The united state is not in a position to battle heads with Iran, especially considering the rising tensions on nuclear agreements between the countries. While I had hoped that a temporary agreement might be the first step in developing some type of political agreement with Iran, it no longer seems like a logical solution. Iran's governmental structure and support of Hezbollah puts a red flag on them in terms of negotiations. Their power in the middle east is prevalent, and if the United States comes out to work with them on a regional stabilization plan, then the Americans as well as Israel as a channel to negotiate terrorism will criticize our government. In reality, I believe that if we want to get into Syria while Assad is there, we need Iran's help. Realistically, this will not happen. Therefore, my concluding hypothetical scenario goes back to drafting a transitional-democratic framework to take place if and when Assad is removed from power. I still have hope that at the end of his final term in 2021, dramatic developments would have been made to allow for a transparent and supervised election to take place in Syria. If the United States can work with neighboring countries like Jordan and Saudi Arabia to come up with a plan that will allow for a temporary government to hold office until the new democracy is established, then I believe that there is hope for a democratized Syria.

Of all my hypothetical conclusions, I feel the most strongly about my analysis of Syria under the Dayton Agreement.. This topic needs extensive attention, especially considering how the Syrian regime progresses each day. In this moment, I believe that in possibly ten years, creating a democracy in Syria using the Dayton Agreement will be

an ideal topic for discussion. I do not think that the country is far off from needing something like this; however, my only advice to this hypothetical scenario is that the powers that come to assist in monitoring and drafting the framework have no affiliation with the Assad regime. If we hope to have a free Syria one day, we need to wash it clean of the long-living power that destroyed it. A new Syria means a new set of ideas, a new set of powers, and a new framework with new ideals for the country. I believe that a free Syria is a reality that is off to the distance. However, the Assad regime took the world by surprise out of nowhere, and we were not prepared. An opportunity for a free Syria could be right around the corner by 2021, and I believe that if I continue to follow this path in my research, I can help be a part of creating this free Syria.

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