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## *Syria: adjusting to the new world order*

Neil Mason Quilliam

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# SYRIA:

## ADJUSTING TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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The Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

1997



20 NOV 1997

## ABSTRACT

The advent of the New World Order has challenged Syria's role in the Middle East. Traditionally viewed as a pariah state, and a Soviet satellite, Syria's future looked uncertain. Syria, however, has been able to accommodate the transformation in the world order.

The New World Order amounted to a redistribution of global power. The transmutation of Soviet power towards the US culminated in a unipolar world order. The withdrawal of Soviet support through the advent of the New World Order threatened Syria's quest for regional hegemony.

Existing in a state of anarchy, the co-ordinates of Syria's foreign policy have been founded upon the principles of self-help, national security, and national interest. These principles have found their expression through Syria's intractable struggle with Israel.

Syrian foreign policy has been determined by two factors: primarily, by the international political system, and secondarily, by the influence of domestic politics. Omnibalancing provides an explanatory model for foreign policy behaviour that bridges the divide between the determinants of the international political system and the influences of the domestic arena.

Following a rational policy, the Syrian state was compelled to realign with the US-led world order, in order to pursue regional hegemony. It was able to display its accommodation of the New World Order by joining the US-led coalition forces in the liberation of Kuwait in 1990/1991. Syria's adjustment to the New World Order was rewarded with a place in the post-war regional order, and a central role in the Madrid Peace Conference.

## DECLARATION

I, Neil Quilliam, the author of this research declare that the content of this thesis is my original work. None of the material contained in this study has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other University. All the material, in this thesis, which is not my own work has been appropriately cited.

Neil Quilliam

2 June 1997

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And then it was over, and we took our applause, we passed the peace pipe, and thought no more about the scenes ...

As the sun sets on this piece of research, I would like to extend my gratitude towards the following:

My parents, Jennifer and Nick, who shared the vicarious moments of elation and disillusionment with me during every stage of this research.

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Caution deters me from acknowledging specific friends and contacts established in Syria, but I am indebted to those individuals who granted me access to their families, society, and political culture.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to Barbara Minto and Barbara Farnworth for their co-operation and tolerance, especially with UNIPAL's voluminous correspondence.

During those dark days of writing-up, the inspiration flowed from Deheisheh camp, and the poetry of Mawgojzeta made the difference.

Neil Quilliam  
University of Durham

*If a person were to try stripping the disguises from actors while they play a scene upon the stage, showing to the audience their real looks and the faces they were born with, would not such a one spoil the whole play? And would not the spectators think he deserved to be driven out of the theatre with brickbats, as a drunken disturber? . . . Now what else is the whole life of mortals but a sort of comedy, in which the various actors disguised by various costumes and masks, walk on and play each one his part, until the manager waves them off the stage? Moreover, this manager frequently bids the same actor go back in a different costume, so that he who has but lately played the king in scarlet now acts the flunky in patched clothes. Thus all things are presented by shadows.*

(Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|              |                                                         |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AA</b>    | Air to Air                                              |
| <b>ACC</b>   | Arab Co-operation Council                               |
| <b>ASU</b>   | Arab Socialist Union                                    |
| <b>ATF</b>   | Advanced Tactical Fighter                               |
| <b>CIA</b>   | Criminal Intelligence Agency                            |
| <b>FIS</b>   | Islamic Salvation Front                                 |
| <b>GCC</b>   | Gulf Co-operation Council                               |
| <b>GDP</b>   | Gross Domestic Product                                  |
| <b>GIA</b>   | The Armed Islamic Group                                 |
| <b>IDF</b>   | Israeli Defence Forces                                  |
| <b>IMF</b>   | International Monetary Fund                             |
| <b>LF</b>    | Lebanese Forces                                         |
| <b>LMN</b>   | Lebanese National Movement                              |
| <b>MBT</b>   | Military Battle Combat                                  |
| <b>NATO</b>  | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation                      |
| <b>NICs</b>  | Newly Industrialising Countries                         |
| <b>NPF</b>   | National Progressive Front                              |
| <b>NSC</b>   | National Security Council                               |
| <b>NSF</b>   | National Salvation Front                                |
| <b>PDFLP</b> | Popular Democratic Front for<br>Liberation of Palestine |
| <b>PFLP</b>  | Popular Front for Liberation of<br>Palestine            |

**PFLP-GC**

Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine - General Command

**PLA**

Palestine Liberation Army

**PLO**

Palestine Liberation Organisation

**PNC**

Palestine National Command

**SAM**

Surface to Air Missile

**SCP**

Syrian Communist Party

**SEATO**

South-East Asian Treaty Organisation

**SS**

Surface to Surface

**SSNP**

Syrian Socialist National Party

**TNCs**

Transnational Corporations

**UAR**

United Arab Republic

**UN**

United Nations

# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

One is faced with two insoluble problems when writing about contemporary politics. The first is the propensity for political change. This alone can challenge the authenticity of one's research or alternatively, confirm one's own analysis. I have been fortunate with my subject as Syria has enjoyed an unprecedented period of stability for the past twenty-seven years, but I have also lived under the speculative shadow of President Asad's imminent death. The advent of his death has contained the seeds of destruction for my hypothesis.

It has been my contention throughout this thesis that Syria has been prepared for peace since the early 1970s. Contrary to the speculation of Asad's death, the possibility of a breakthrough in the peace talks has held the chance of vindicating my hypothesis. For now, the moment has passed, and I have to wait alongside other Syria watchers to observe history reveal itself.

Secondly, where there is political stability, one is also faced with the prospect of regurgitating existing ideas and analyses. The proliferation of articles and books since Syria's entry into the Gulf War coalition in 1990, and its participation in the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, have pre-empted and contributed to my analysis.

In order to set these analyses into context, I have attempted to incorporate Syria's adjustment to the New World Order into a theoretical framework.

The contribution of this thesis is its attempt to offer a better understanding of how the structural determinants of the international political system have affected Syria's foreign policy since the advent of the New World Order.

### ***Syrian foreign policy***

Syrian foreign policy, since its independence in 1946, has been shaped and justified according to Arab nationalism. After the Ba'th party had seized power in 1963, Syrian foreign policy called for the total liberation of Palestine, and the overthrow of the Arab state system. The military disaster of 1967, however, discredited the cogency of Arab nationalism as a dynamic political force.

Asad's assumption of power, in November 1970, heralded a new era in the formulation of foreign policy; since then, a sense of realism has been injected into the process. The role of ideology was relegated, and the new determinants of foreign policy have been shaped primarily by the international political system. Syrian foreign policy has been based on:

- the preservation of national security,
- the enhancement of its power and prestige within the regional state-system.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this research is that Syria has managed to adjust to the New World Order following a rational foreign policy. Syria's adjustment to the New World Order, which represented a transformation in the global redistribution of power, has



been consistent with its regional objectives. Syria's participation in the second Gulf War, and its decision to engage in the Madrid Peace Conference are testaments to its implementation of rational policies. These decisions were founded upon its national interest, national security, and the containment of Israel.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this research falls into three fields: *theory*, *interviews*, and *case studies*.

### ***Theory***

This thesis is grounded in international relations theory. Realism, pluralism, and globalism have provided the foundation stones of this study. Concepts borrowed from political economy, such as the state, and autonomy have also been used. This research builds upon existing literature, and attempt to complement its assessment of Syrian foreign policy.

### ***The paradigms of international relations theory***

There are three paradigms of international relations theory, realism, pluralism, and globalism, which are useful for analysing foreign policy. Each paradigm operates from a different set of assumptions, and offers alternative explanations for state behaviour.

The basic assumption of the realist paradigm, that the state is the principal actor in international relations, is applicable to the Syrian case. The pluralist assumption, that the state shares its functional role with other non-state actors, does not apply to Syria as all domestic and international actors are subjugated to state scrutiny. Additionally, the emphasis of the globalist paradigm on dependency perspectives cannot account

for Syria's foreign policy, as it has managed to insulate its economy from the economic determinants of globalisation.

I have chosen to adopt realism and neo-realism as the most appropriate paradigms for analysing Syria's adjustment to the New World Order. Realists and neo-realists suggest that the structure of the international political system determines the behaviour of states. The behaviour of states is governed by a rational set of principles founded upon the national interest.

According to realism and neo-realism, foreign policies of states are primarily determined by the international political system. The rational actor model, belonging to the realist paradigm, will allow us to analyse the structural determinants of the international political system, and to assess their impact on the formulation of Syrian foreign policy.

In spite of their utility to this research, realism and neo-realism contain a number of flaws. Their application to the First World may be pertinent, but they are not adequate for studying Third World states. Their failure to account for the permutation of domestic influences upon the unconsolidated states of the Third World leaves them open to criticism.

The realist and neo-realist paradigms, with their focus on the political system, are more befitting to the First World than the Third World. They do not account for the complexities that have characterised the process of state formation in the Third World. They assert that the behaviour of the units of the system, the states, is affected either by human nature (realists), or the structure of the system (neo-realists) and not by domestic concerns. Realism and neo-realism do not pay attention to the role of domestic actors in the foreign policy decision-making process.

Alternatively, domestic politics models, which combine elements of pluralism (mosaic model) and globalism (Marxism), focus exclusively upon the interaction of domestic forces within the state. Adherents of this approach aver that Third World states, as out-growths of the colonial period, are fractious, unconsolidated, and lack institutional foundations. In effect, the Third World state is often held hostage to the influence of primordial groups, domestic and/or international classes. Consequently, its foreign policies are determined by the necessity either to appease competing domestic interests, or to legitimise the fractious authority of the state. Protagonists of this particular view consider Third World foreign policies to be belligerent and irrational.

In this study, I shall attempt to bridge the divide between the realist paradigm and the domestic politics model through the concept of omnibalancing. David's model of omnibalancing will provide the link between the international political system and the domestic politics approaches. By examining the structural determinants of the international political system and the domestic politics within the state, I intend to account for Syria's adjustment to the New World Order.

It is the premise of the study that the international political system is the primary constituent of the foreign policy decision-making process. The internal process, however, does play a role, particularly, where the state lacks cohesion, and operates between a *neo-patrimonial* and *institutional* form of governance. The state can follow a rational foreign policy when it achieves autonomy from domestic social forces.

#### ***Autonomy of the state***

Comprehending the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the state is the key to understanding foreign policy in the Third World. The hypothesis of this study

proposes that the Syrian state possesses sufficient autonomy from domestic social forces to pursue a rational foreign policy. The relative autonomy enjoyed by the Syrian state has allowed its decision-makers to follow a consistent foreign policy. Examining the relative autonomy of the Syrian state will enable us to identify how Syria has managed to adjust to the New World Order, without eroding its domestic resilience. From a domestic perspective, the transition from being a client of the Soviet Union to working in compliance with the US was aided by the relative autonomy of the state.

### *The New World Order*

The conclusion of the Cold War was marked by the collapse of the Soviet system, and the succession of the US-led world capitalist system. The end of the bipolar world order has produced a period of political unipolarity and economic multipolarity. Wherever Soviet influence has abated, US political, economic, and cultural hegemony have superseded.

In the absence of the bipolar system, the US has filled the political vacuum, and assumed the role of global leader. State and non-state-resistance to US hegemony has, in some cases, resulted in punitive measures. The bombing of Libya in 1986 pre-empted the collapse of the old world order, and set a precedent for the flexibility at the core of the changing world order. Without the support of their Soviet patron, the pariah states of the Middle East became vulnerable to US foreign policy.

The implosion of the Soviet Union in August 1991, and the ensuing transformation of the world order from a bipolar to a unipolar structure has compelled Syria to adjust to the dominant US hegemonic order. *Inter alia*, the objective of this study is to define the New World Order, especially within the Middle East, and to ascertain how Syria has adjusted, whilst remaining consistent in its foreign policy.

The destruction of Iraq by the US-led coalition, in the liberation of Kuwait, indicated the nature and potency of the New World Order. The unipolar dimension of the Middle East, perpetrated by the presence of Israel, has become a resounding feature of the New World Order.

Perceived as an irrational, irredentist, and ideological opponent of the US throughout the 1980s, Syria's future looked most uncertain. Adjustment without capitulation became a necessity for the Syrian state; the political elite required the opportunity to display their commitment to the changes of the New World Order. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait provided Syria with the prime opportunity to change its strategy, and to adjust to the New World Order.

### *Interviews*

A series of interviews were conducted in Syria during the periods June-July 1994, September-November 1995, and in the West Bank during July-August 1996. I conducted a total of 28 interviews in Syria, and was privileged to have access to academics, officials, journalists, artists, and diplomats.

Owing to the sensitive nature of my research, and the web of paranoia that engulfs Syrian society, I could not openly declare my interests, and was dependent upon a network of contacts provided by Professor Ray Hinnebusch and Patrick Seale. It is not possible to conduct surveys in Syria to ascertain information; therefore, the researcher is reliant upon qualitative interviews. It was generally not possible to record interviews, and taking notes was often unwelcome. In most cases, I was asked not to attribute quotes or details; wherever possible, however, I have cited the source of information, but in most cases, I have protected the details of my source.

In the UK, I was able to work closely with Professor Ray Hinnebusch from October 1993 to June 1994. I have benefited considerably from his experience and insights into the domestic and foreign policies of Syria.

### *Case studies*

Syria's accommodation of the New World Order will be appraised through an examination of two case studies. Syria's adjustment to the New World Order has been illustrated by its inclusion in the US-led Gulf War coalition in 1990/91, and its decisive entry into the Madrid peace process in 1991.

#### *The Gulf War coalition*

With the decline of Soviet influence in world affairs, unipolarity, particularly in the Middle East, has defined the structure of the world order in the post bipolar era. The absence of Soviet support has accentuated Syria's security dilemma. Its inability to resist the pull of the hegemonic world order has compelled it to abandon its former foreign policy strategies, and to adopt a more US-centric approach.

The hypothesis of this thesis asserts that the primary motivation behind Syria's role in the Gulf War coalition derived from its necessity to realign its global position. Syria's decision was calculated according to a rational set of criteria. The gravity of the decision emanated from Syria's new found regional and international vulnerability. In order to occupy a role in the post-war regional order, Syria joined the US-led coalition.

Its participation afforded it the chance to move closer to the US without capitulating in its foreign policy objectives. The execution of this decision appeared, to some observers, to contravene Syria's Arab credentials. It is the contention of the author, however, that Syria's decision had been consistent with its Arab nationalist agenda.

The US promise to convene an international peace conference underlied Syria's motive for allying itself to the conservative Gulf Arab states, and the world's hegemonic power.

### ***The Madrid Peace Conference***

The transformation in the world order created a *window of opportunity* for Israel and the Arab states to reach a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The structural determinants, namely, the emergence of the US as the world's superpower, coupled with a weakened Arab World, have produced a political climate conducive to resolving the conflict. International and regional hegemony invested the US with enough power to impose peace upon the region.

The hypothesis of this research proffers that peace for Syria has become a strategic option since the decline of Soviet support, and the ascension of US influence in the New World Order. This will be examined with special reference to the Madrid Peace Conference. The period under review dates back to the beginning of the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, until the election of Benyamin Netanyahu in May 1996.

The Madrid Peace Conference has initiated an irreversible process in which Jordan with a Palestinian delegation, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel participated in peace negotiations. Syria's commitment to the peace has been consistent with its foreign policy goals, namely:

- the liberation of the Arab territories occupied in 1967;
- the restoration of Palestinian rights;
- the containment of Israel.

Despite popular public perceptions, Syria's participation in the peace process has been compatible with its foreign policy. The achievement of comprehensive peace has been an option for the Syrians since 1974. The term comprehensive, refers to a co-ordinated approach by the Arab states to reach a final settlement with Israel. Prior to the Madrid Peace Conference, peace, for the Syrians, included a total Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967, and the restoration of Palestinian rights.

Egypt's signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979 had severely weakened Syria's regional standing, and increased its vulnerability to Israel's hegemonic ambitions. Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, sanctioned by the US, demonstrated Syria's vulnerability to the conclusion of the separate peace between Egypt and Israel.

The Madrid formula gave Syria the chance to place itself at the centre of the peace process, and to co-ordinate the policies of its partners, Lebanon, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and Jordan. The agreements between Israel and the PLO, and Israel and Jordan, however, have circumvented the centrality of Syria to the peace process.

Despite the separate agreements, Syria has resisted capitulation, and remained resolute in fulfilling its objectives of preserving security, maximising power, containing Israel, and extending its hegemony throughout the Levant. Adjusting to the New World Order has enabled Syria to attend to its foreign policy objectives.

## **Organisation of the Thesis**

This research has been organised into seven chapters. Chapter One unveils the tools of analysis used for the theoretical framework of this study. The New World Order is



introduced and analysed in Chapter Two. The components of Syria's power, and the centres of Syrian power are addressed in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

Chapter Five examines Syria's role in the regional balance of power, with particular reference to its struggle with Israel. And, the two case studies, of the Gulf War and the Madrid Peace Conference, are scrutinised in Chapters Six and Seven. This study will begin by exploring, adapting, and applying the paradigms of international relations theory.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

### Introduction

Chapter One is designed to provide a theoretical framework for this study. The approach followed is grounded in international relations theory, with a few concepts borrowed from the political economy approach. The assimilation of these concepts into mainstream international relations theory will enable the author to analyse Syria's status in the international political system. I shall refer to the three basic paradigms of international relations theory, realism, pluralism, and globalism.<sup>1</sup>

The paradigms of realism, pluralism, and globalism will provide the foundation stones for this study. From the outset, the researcher has encountered numerous problems over the semantics and the semi-permeable parameters of each paradigm.<sup>2</sup> The state, power, and national security are critical variables in international relations theory, and will form the basis of analysis for this study. However, the globalisation of the world

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, S., "Paradigm Dominance in International Relations: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science," in C. Dyer, and L. Mangasarian (eds.), *The Study of International Relations: The State of the Art*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 3-27.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, S., "The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 18-21.

economy, and the proliferation of information systems make it necessary to extend the boundaries of international relations theory.

As it is not feasible to construct a paradigm that can resist the demands of time, I have found it appropriate to appraise the interacting elements of each paradigm.<sup>3</sup> This is an apposite starting point to examine the paradigms of realism, pluralism, and globalism.<sup>4</sup> After presenting a summary of the paradigms, a revised version of Steven David's concept of omnibalancing is offered as the most suitable framework for this study.<sup>5</sup> Omnibalancing will enable us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Syria's foreign policy, as it addresses some of the issues neglected by the Western-centric paradigms.

Before discussing the paradigms of international relations theory, as part of the foundation of this study, we need to look at four main concepts, which are crucial to the understanding of the paradigms of international relations:

- the state;
- power;
- security.

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<sup>3</sup> According to M. Masterman, in "The Nature of a Paradigm," in I. Lakatos, and M. Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 61-65, Thomas Kuhn uses the term paradigm in twenty-one different ways.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, S., "The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 15.

<sup>5</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233-256.

## The State

Traditionally, the state has been regarded as the principal actor in international relations, but throughout this century, the state has been forced, by economic determinants, to share its role with non-state entities.<sup>6</sup> The author acknowledges that the state-centric approach to international relations encompasses many inadequacies, which will be dealt with in the following section.

Many attempts have been made to define the term *state*. For a working definition, I have chosen to use a Weberian model as prescribed by Nordlinger. This definition is, particularly, valuable due to its universality.

*The state refers to all those individuals who occupy offices that authorise them, and them alone, to make and apply decisions that are binding upon any, and all parts of a territorially circumscribed population. The state is made up of, and limited to, those individuals who are endowed with society wide decision-making powers.*<sup>7</sup>

If the state is endowed with society wide decision-making powers, it is useful to examine the extent of its autonomy in making decisions. Autonomy from domestic forces and international pressures enables a state to pursue objectives that do not comply with the interests of a particular domestic class or the interests of an external power. Autonomy, however, remains in a fluid state, and is more likely to be found in a relative form.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more details see: Ayubi, N., *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), and Owen, R., *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987), pp. 362.

<sup>8</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 222-225.

Pluralists believe that the state is an autonomous actor, and that the competition for influence guarantees state neutrality.<sup>9</sup> Realists consider the state to be a hostage to the dominant social forces within society; and globalists pay attention to the international forces that hold states to ransom.<sup>10</sup>

State autonomy and foreign policy decision-making are two interdependent variables, which are essentially responsible for conducting relations among states. In order to appreciate the relationship between these variables, I have referred to Finer's typology of states.<sup>11</sup> The extent to which a state enjoys autonomy, from both domestic and international constraints, can often depend upon the state form.<sup>12</sup> Before we launch into considering the concept of autonomy, we will draw reference to the various state forms under question.

### *Typologies of the state*

The state has numerous typologies, and from these I have selected Finer's models. They are not ideal, as state forms are not static, nor do they conform to every characteristic. The state forms have been identified as:

- liberal-democratic;
- totalitarian;

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<sup>9</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 37-38, and Skocpol, T., "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 3-43.

<sup>10</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 224.

<sup>11</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Skocpol, T., "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 14.

- Third World.<sup>13</sup>

Although the state forms that Finer presents here are in absolute terms, and they emerge from a Western pluralist tradition, they contain some utility as a benchmark for comparison.

### *The liberal democratic state*

In principal, liberal-democratic states enjoy a large degree of autonomy from any organised domestic constraints. To recognise society as being pluralistic, therefore, carries the additional assumption that the government sets out to rule, not in the interest of any one group, or alliance of groups, but in the common interest of all.<sup>14</sup> As the mediator of interests, the state exists above competition, and enjoys autonomy from domestic constraints.

### *The totalitarian state*

It is difficult to delineate an accurate picture of the totalitarian state, as some of the terminology that appears in Western academic texts is coated in ideologically motivated language. During the era of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was depicted as the archetypal totalitarian state.<sup>15</sup> The association of totalitarianism with the evils of Soviet communism, the ideological opponent of the West, fulfilled the stereotypes used by Western policy-makers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 62-96.

<sup>14</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 64-65.

<sup>15</sup> Orwell's *Animal Farm* provides an allegorical depiction of the totalitarian state. Its origins lay in the inevitable outcome of the revolutionary process.

<sup>16</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 55.

The totalitarian model of the state entails the following features:

- one inclusive ideology;
- a single mass party;
- control over the economy;
- control over the means of coercion;
- control of the media and propaganda;
- a demagogic leader.<sup>17</sup>

Based on these six features, Finer identifies two conditions of the totalitarian state:

- (i) the total politicisation of society;
- (ii) the reduction of that politicisation to one single stand point.<sup>18</sup>

All conscious and arbitrary movements, or organisations, are totally controlled and engineered by the state. The state is totally expressed in the actual governing authorities, and coincides totally with the ruling body.<sup>19</sup> In the Soviet Union, the state remained autonomous from domestic forces through its seizure of all instruments of power: the economy, the military, education, agriculture, industry, and science.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Soviet state managed to achieve autonomy from domestic forces, through the implementation of coercion, it could not insulate itself from the constraints of global capitalism. Both Halliday and Wallerstein elucidate upon the Soviet Union's vulnerability towards the global economy, and the erosion of its state autonomy by the

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<sup>17</sup> Schapiro, L., *Totalitarianism*, (London: Pall Mall, 1977), pp. 18-20.

<sup>18</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 95.

<sup>19</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 95.

<sup>20</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 90-95.

dominant economic system. Both authors attribute the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union to its inability to resist the centripetal forces of the global economy.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Third World state*

Acknowledging that it is nearly impossible to place all of the seventy or more Third World states under one heading, when defining Third World states, Finer opts for the use of *authoritarian* and *oligarchic* labels. The four states that emerge from these terms are: the dynastic; the military; the historical oligarchy; and the neo-oligarchy states.<sup>22</sup> In each example, the state is controlled by an interest group, either placed in position by colonial heritage, or through national revolution.<sup>23</sup> In this study, we are most interested in the Third World state; our case study belongs to this categorisation.

The legacy of colonialism and the contemporary policies of imperialism have helped to shape the domestic and foreign policies of the Third World state. Unlike the liberal-democratic state, the Third World state is a new and artificial creation. Its borders had often been circumscribed by the previous colonial powers, according to the diktat of a divide and rule policy. Hence, nations living across the new states' boundaries were divided as these states were carved from existing political and economic units.

The new states have inherited a complex ethnic mixture of people with each group, community, or confession pledging its allegiance to its *natural* leadership. As a result, Third World states have been embroiled in numerous civil wars as each group in society has attempted to assert its interest or create cross-state ties with its parent group.

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<sup>21</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 42-43, and 76-77.

<sup>22</sup> Finer, S., *Comparative Government*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), pp. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Clapham, C., *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 39-40.



Third World states have been compelled to implement state-building programmes in order to ensure their survival. State-building has taken a violent path as the ruling group, that controls the state, has monopolised the coercive means, and has depended upon coercion to quell civil unrest and potential civil wars. This experience is not unique to the states of the Third World.

The historical experience of state formation in Europe was also a violent and protracted affair. State-formation was achieved through the melting of local identities and regional affiliations in a cauldron of political nationalism. Nationalism emerged as a potent force that adhered the population to the state, and invested the state with legitimacy.

The states of the Third World, however, have not been successful, to date, in producing a compliant population that adheres to one nation. Moreover, the state has not been able to consolidate its hold on society beyond the facade of the democratic processes that characterise the political system. The lack of an institutional framework invested with powers derived from the tacit, or overt consent of the population, has meant that Third World states have continued to rely upon the military for support. Thus, the Third World state can be characterised as authoritarian.

### *The autonomy of the state*

The political scientist is beset with enumerate problems when attempting to quantify the autonomy a state enjoys. It is crucial, however, to appreciate how much autonomy a state enjoys if one is to understand the role of the state in international relations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Skocpol, T., "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 9.

In this section, I shall assess the concept of autonomy in relation to the domestic arena and international environment by utilising the models offered by Potter<sup>25</sup> and Nordlinger.<sup>26</sup> Before discussing the components of autonomy, four points, suggested by Potter, should be taken into account:

- (i) State autonomy and state power are not synonymous. States are autonomous when they are *free* to decide on, and pursue their own goals. States are powerful when they also have the *capacity* to achieve these goals despite opposition.<sup>27</sup>
- (ii) The autonomy of states in relation to the global economy can vary on different dimensions. States in economically disadvantaged countries can be largely autonomous in relation to domestic groups; meanwhile, they have little autonomy from transnational corporations (TNCs) and internationally dominant groups.<sup>28</sup>
- (iii) A state is composed of a collection of entities, where one part may be more autonomous in relation to domestic and international forces than another part. For example, the military and security departments are often more autonomous,

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<sup>25</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 221.

<sup>26</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 223.

<sup>28</sup> Niblock, T., "International and Domestic Factors in the Economic Liberalization Process in Arab Countries," in T. Niblock, and E. Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp. 17.

from domestic forces, than the economic department,<sup>29</sup> though this trend is gradually being challenged by the success of global capitalism.<sup>30</sup>

- (iv) State autonomy is not static; its study, therefore, must be undertaken with respect to the historical moment. Harris refers the analyst to the case of the Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs). The autonomy of these states was originally considerable as their propulsion towards the semi-periphery was engineered by the state.<sup>31</sup> However, domestic private capital has benefited from the change in the economic climate; it has become increasingly integrated into the global economy. In the NICs, private capital has strengthened the position of the capitalist class vis-à-vis the state, and the autonomy of the state in some cases is diminishing.<sup>32</sup>

By incorporating these notes of caution, when considering the autonomy of the state, I shall now offer a working definition of autonomy that is suitable for the purposes of this research. A significant proportion of the literature dedicated to the autonomy of the state has analysed the state in the West. Although I have utilised a universal concept of autonomy, the framework I have adopted is particularly suited to the Middle Eastern state conceived within the Arab state-system.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 223

<sup>30</sup> The term *success* is borrowed from Fukuyama, who does not attach any value to its use. See Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, (London: Penguin, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 146-147.

<sup>32</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-State*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 223-224.

<sup>33</sup> Noble, P., "The Arab System: Pressures, Constraints, and Opportunities," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 49-102.

*Definitions of autonomy*

There are several preferred definitions of the autonomy of the state. Marxists believe that the state is held hostage by the bourgeoisie within society.<sup>34</sup> In order for a state to achieve relative autonomy, it must overcome the opposition of the dominant capitalist class within the civil society.<sup>35</sup> Relative autonomy, therefore, represents the flexibility a state has to pursue interests that are not necessarily in line with the dominant capitalist class.<sup>36</sup>

I have chosen a hybrid version that integrates the writings of Skocpol and Krasner. Skocpol refines the Marxist definition of relative autonomy, and makes it more flexible, by identifying other dominant interests in society. Skocpol avers that autonomy refers to the extent to which a state may formulate, and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands and/or interests of social groups or society within the state.<sup>37</sup> So, the more a state pursues the goals of others, say the ruling class or international capital, the less autonomy it has.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, "an autonomous state is one that prevails when its interests conflict with those of whichever class is economically and politically dominant".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Marx, K., and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 82.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, B., *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 178-181.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, B., *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 178-182.

<sup>37</sup> Skocpol, T., "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Potter, D., "The Autonomy of the Third World States within the Global Economy," in A. McGrew (ed.), *Global Politics: Globalisation and the Nation-state*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 225.

<sup>39</sup> Skocpol, T., *States and Social Revolutions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 29-30.

Krasner's contribution to this concept is replacing the notion of a *dominant class* with *other powerful actors*.<sup>40</sup> This direction is more complementary to the pluralist patterns of analysis.<sup>41</sup> The definition of an autonomous state, which seems most appropriate to this study, is one that prevails when its interests conflict with those of other powerful actors.

The autonomy of the state can be determined by assessing the relationship between the state and powerful domestic and international actors. To determine to what extent a state's autonomy is secure or insecure, it is necessary to elaborate upon the variables that constitute autonomy.

Nordlinger identifies four variables which are useful for determining the degree of autonomy a state enjoys. The first two refer to the positive sides of autonomy: insulation and resilience; the second two refer to the challenge to autonomy: malleability and vulnerability.<sup>42</sup> Although the four variables tend to overlap, and some parts seem rather obvious, it is, nevertheless, useful to delineate them for the convenience of this study.

### ***Malleability***

Malleability refers to the responsive features of the state. If a state is particularly receptive and sensitive to certain domestic interests, it is deemed malleable. The extent of malleability can be gauged through the cohesion of the state.<sup>43</sup> If the cohesive factor

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<sup>40</sup> Krasner, S., *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials, Investments, and US Foreign Policy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 56.

<sup>41</sup> For other powerful actors, one can read non-state actors of the global economy.

<sup>42</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987) pp. 372.

<sup>43</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987) pp. 373-374.

of the state is high, the level of porosity is low, and the state enjoys some autonomy. The level of cohesion depends upon two factors:

- (i) *The historical formation of the state*: If the state has emerged from a long struggle with domestic actors, as in a revolutionary struggle, its cohesion tends to be durable. Whereas a struggle with an external power might produce cohesion, usually based on nationalism, the durability of that cohesion is short-lived, due to the disparate and latent forces of the nationalist struggle waiting to re-emerge.<sup>44</sup>
- (ii) *The role and the function of the bureaucracy*: Where a bureaucracy is highly developed and self-perpetuating, the state is cohesive and less malleable. When a bureaucracy is less developed and based on patrimonialism, the state's cohesion is less and the degree of malleability is high.<sup>45</sup>

The malleability of the state is one factor that allows the analyst to understand the degree of autonomy a state may enjoy. History and the nature of bureaucracy are the keys to examining malleability. The more cohesive a state is, the less malleable it will be to dominant domestic interests. If a state lacks cohesion, it is likely to become malleable to the interests of a powerful domestic actor. The cohesion of a state, however, is a transitory experience and developing states, such as those in the Middle East, cannot depend upon a constant level of cohesion.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987) pp. 373-374.

<sup>45</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987) pp. 374-375.

<sup>46</sup> Clapham, C., *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 42-44.

### *Vulnerability*

Vulnerability refers to the ability of a state to implement a policy that may run against public opinion, and the interests of powerful domestic groups. Nordlinger suggests that public officials realise that some policy goals cannot be realised by offering material incentives, or by simply issuing laws and regulations.<sup>47</sup>

Vulnerability is not constrained to the domestic sphere; states are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economy. For example, the constraints placed upon developing states, to conform to the regulations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), often resulting in the implementation of unpopular economic policies, add to the states' vulnerability.<sup>48</sup>

The impact of the global economy upon the state and the effect of the information revolution have universally elevated the status of economic security above all other ideologies, beliefs, and value systems. Universal public opinion has become susceptible to global flows of information and influences. Consequently, the state is under increasing pressure to provide economic security. In order to fulfil such demands, the state can respond in one of two ways:

- either resort to coercive measures, a short-term answer;
- or accommodate the change in environment, and accept a diminution of its autonomy.

In other words, the state is vulnerable from the correlation of domestic and international factors.

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<sup>47</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987), pp. 383.

<sup>48</sup> Niblock, T., "International and Domestic Factors in the Economic Liberalization Process in Arab Countries," in T. Niblock, and E. Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp. 56.

### *Insulation*

Insulation refers to the degree to which a state can act without considering the interests of other social actors. Weber characterised "sultanism" as the most insulated form of state. The absolutist rule of the Sultan rested upon patrimonial credentials, and did not take heed of societal demands. Weber commented: "The ruler's authority over [the society] is appropriated just as he would any ordinary object of possession allowing him to sell it, to pledge it as security, or to divide it by inheritance."<sup>49</sup>

The ultimate source of insulation, that ensures autonomy for the state, is its ability to exercise monopoly over coercive means. If the autonomy of the state is under direct threat, it may resort to coercive measures. The willingness to use such coercive means is often dependent upon, though not necessarily, the history of the state, and the legitimacy of its ruling institutions. If the institutions of the state are not well defined and tacitly accepted amongst the domestic population, opposition to the state may take the form of an insurrection.<sup>50</sup>

The extent of insulation cannot be a constant feature of any state. In this respect, insulation is similar to malleability. As societies become more diverse and open to transnational organisations, the state loses its ability to insulate itself from the interests of domestic groups and international actors.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Weber, M., *The Theory of Economic and Social Organisation*, (New York: Free Press, 1947), pp. 347.

<sup>50</sup> Clapham, C., *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 138-139.

<sup>51</sup> Niblock, T., "International and Domestic Factors in the Economic Liberalization Process in Arab Countries," in T. Niblock, and E. Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp. 61-66.



### *Resilience*

Insulation and resilience are closely interrelated and help develop the concept of autonomy. Insulation is the *protection* of autonomy, and resilience is the *maintenance* of that autonomy. The resilience of the state refers to its capacity to counteract potential and actual opposition, whose aims may range from challenging the administrative rule to the overthrow of the state.<sup>52</sup> The ability to resist a challenge to a state's autonomy is largely influenced by the extent to which it is centralised. Centralisation makes all the resources of the state, for instance, the economy, education, welfare, and the military, immediately available.

Resilience can exist in the form of coercive means, the transfer of ideas, or a dependency upon national issues.<sup>53</sup> Traditionally, the state's monopoly over information has served the interests of the state, but the growth of information technology has divested the state of such controls. In its more primitive forms,<sup>54</sup> information could be disseminated in conjunction with the objectives of the state. Resilience has been perpetuated by the constant portrayal of internal and/or external threats to the national interest.<sup>55</sup>

In conclusion, it is possible to recognise that the subjective variables of malleability, vulnerability insulation, and resilience can help the analyst investigate the levels of autonomy a state enjoys. With an understanding of autonomy, we are now in a

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<sup>52</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987), pp. 379.

<sup>53</sup> Nordlinger, E., "Taking the State Seriously," in S. Huntington, and M. Weiner (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*, (London: LittleBrown, 1987) pp. 379.

<sup>54</sup> These forms are national television, radio, newspaper, and party propaganda.

<sup>55</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233-256.

position to examine power and its relationship to the state and the international political system.

## Power

Power is a key concept to understanding the behaviour of states. Power is omnipresent in all forms of human behaviour; it can be detected at the *individual*, the *state*, and the *systems* level.<sup>36</sup> Power is a concept that is extremely difficult to quantify owing to its existence in both tangible and intangible forms.

Power can exist in a potential or a realised form. The conversion from potential power to realised power, however, is not always proportionate; this can lead to a situation where a state acts beyond its means and capabilities. This makes power a difficult commodity to quantify when making decisions, such as, entering a war, or engaging in political negotiations.<sup>37</sup>

Power can simply be considered the ability to get others to do what they would, otherwise, not do.<sup>38</sup> This definition works on the assumption that the state attempts to influence the decisions taken by other states; nevertheless, the structural determinants of the international system compel the state to take decisions that are not in favour of its perceived interests.<sup>39</sup> With this working definition, it is possible to proceed to the determinants of power.

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<sup>36</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). Waltz makes this distinction between the levels of analysis, and refers to them as the *first* (individual), *second* (state), and *third* (system) images.

<sup>37</sup> Hindess, B., *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 27-35.

<sup>38</sup> Dahl, R., "Balance of Power and World War I," in J. Nye (ed.), *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 50.

<sup>39</sup> See Syria's entry into the Gulf War coalition in chapter six.

### *The determinants of national power*

If a state is to impose its preferences onto another state, its power projection should be greater than the projection of its adversary to succeed in a bilateral challenge or exchange.<sup>60</sup> Exchanges rarely, include just two actors, as the structure of the international system and the existence of interdependent interests invite third parties to intervene diplomatically or otherwise. To gauge the power projection of a state it is necessary to define the repositories of power, and analyse their relative value.

If one is to appreciate the role of power in international relations, one has to identify its sources. Power can exist in both tangible and intangible forms. The more tangible forms of a state's power can be found in:

- geography;
- population;
- natural resources.

The less tangible repositories of power are located in history and nationalism. If one considers these variables as inputs, the state as the converter, then the power outputs can be characterised as:

- the military;
- economy;
- information.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Couloumbis, T., and J. Wolfe, *Introduction to International Relations: Power and Justice*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), pp. 63-64.

<sup>61</sup> Merle, M., *The Sociology of International Relations*, (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 115-187

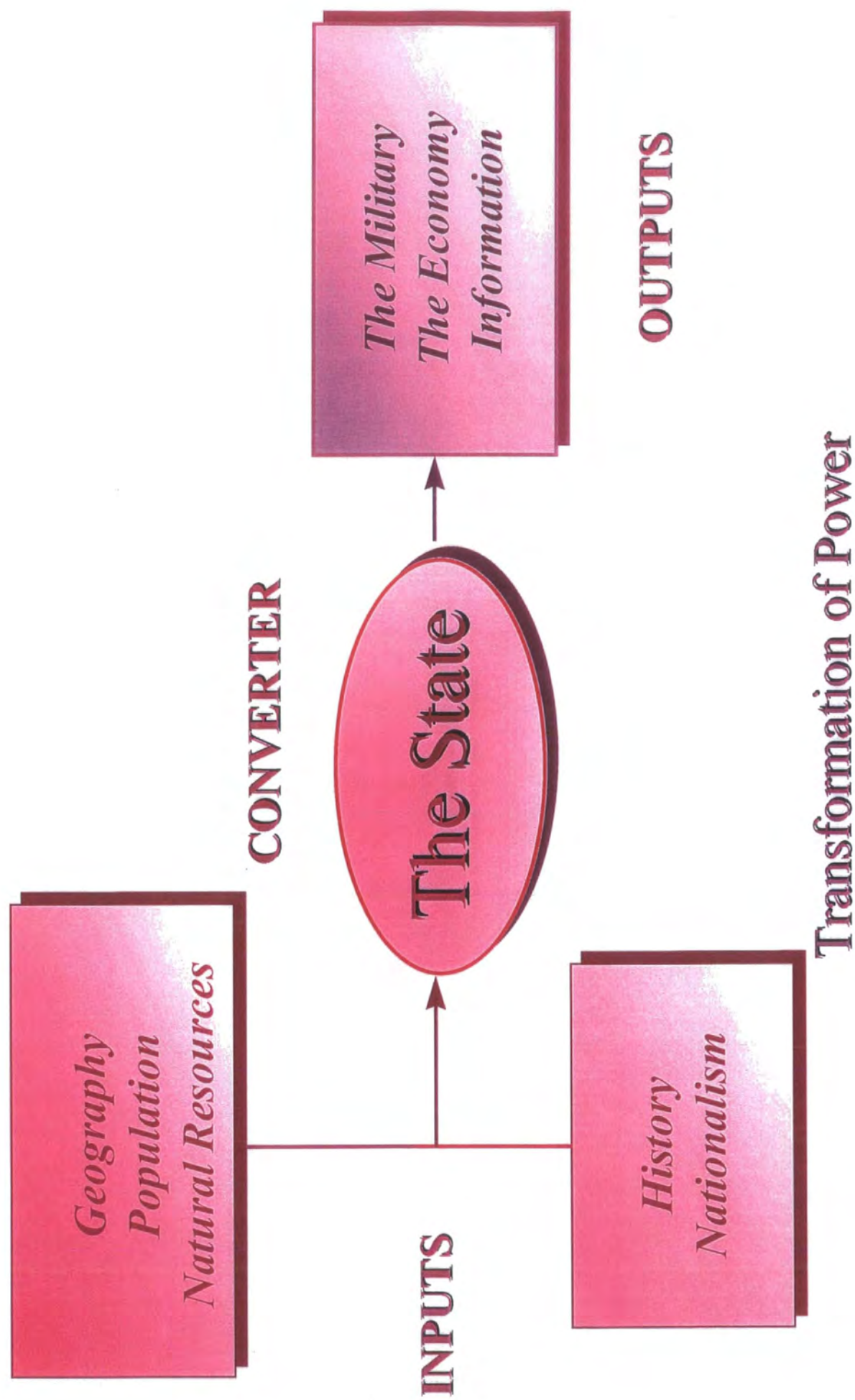


Figure 1.1

### *Power inputs*

Before one can assess the power capabilities of a state, one should look at the sources of power. The tangible sources of power are the determining variables, and long-term guarantors, of a state's position in the international system.

### *Geography*

Geography refers to the geopolitical location of a state, and the size of its territory. The location of a state, and the number of boundaries it shares with other states often determine the level of state vulnerability. Syria, for instance, shares borders with Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Turkey, and Iraq; its geographical location fragments its power potential, and increases its vulnerability.<sup>62</sup> Alternatively, the US, with its location far away from Europe, could delay its entry into the two contagious wars of the twentieth century. Its geographical isolation, from Europe and Africa, has allowed it to maximise its geopolitical power potential.

The size of the territory can endow a state with abundant indigenous resources.<sup>63</sup> South Africa and the US have benefited from vast reserves of natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, and oil. The size of the US and the Soviet Union contributed to their status as superpowers.

Size, however, has also proven to contain debilitating factors. Before the transportation and communication revolution, large territories, such as Russia, and China, were rendered vulnerable to the excesses of Turkish, British, and Japanese

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<sup>62</sup> Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 46-57.

<sup>63</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 109-110.

imperialism. The utility of geography, as a source of national power, depends on the cohesion and distribution of its population.<sup>64</sup>

### *Population*

The size, composition, and distribution of a population can have an important impact upon national power. A large population can provide an input into industrialisation, militarisation, and national purpose.<sup>65</sup> It can sustain a long-term war (Iran-Iraq), and can provide an engine for economic change (China).<sup>66</sup> A large population is not, however, sufficient in itself to produce these goals. Algeria and Egypt have substantial populations, but they have not propelled their respective states towards the centre or the semi-periphery of the global economy.<sup>67</sup> For a state to achieve empowerment through its population, the state must enjoy:

- social cohesion;
- high level of universal education;
- an adequate distribution, and maintenance of skills;
- a national purpose.<sup>68</sup>

### *Natural resources*

Resources are another tangible form of state power. Natural resources can elevate the position of a state in the international system. If they are successfully converted and realised, natural resources can enhance the influence of a state, both in regional and

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<sup>64</sup> Merle, M., *The Sociology of International Relations*, (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 123-126.

<sup>65</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 118-121.

<sup>66</sup> Merle, M., *The Sociology of International Relations*, (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 127.

<sup>67</sup> Farques, P., "Demographic Explosion or Social Upheaval," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 158-160.

<sup>68</sup> Merle, M., *The Sociology of International Relations*, (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), pp. 154.

global terms. The extraction, appropriation, and control of natural resources correspond to the conversion of potential power into realised power. The educated population factor applies at this point to the efficacy of the state's control over its own resources and concomitantly to its own power. When a state is unable to manage its resources, through a lack of technical expertise and training, it must sacrifice part of its power to external assistance.<sup>69</sup>

Natural resources, such as oil, have given global priority to some of the Middle Eastern states. Although a number of these states are confined within small territories, the presence of oil has emboldened their position in the international system. These states have undergone rapid development, and their relevance to global matters has become paramount.<sup>70</sup>

Oil has, however, significantly impinged upon the power of these states. The independent power of oil-producing Gulf Arab States reached its apogee in 1973/1974, during the imposition of the oil embargo, but since then the supply of oil has been regular and progressively cheaper.<sup>71</sup> The major powers of the international system exercise power according to their national interests. Their economies have become too dependent upon an inexpensive, uninterrupted supply of oil, and cannot sustain a reduction in the levels of production, or a price hike.

Being a source of power, natural resources can empower or enslave a state. Many of the Third World states exist in the periphery of the global economy. Through policies of economic imperialism, their natural resources have been appropriated, by the core

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<sup>69</sup> A clear cut example of this is the case of the Gulf Arab states which have depended upon migrant labour and Western expertise.

<sup>70</sup> The US-led coalition of the Gulf conflict demonstrated the significance of the Gulf Arab states.

<sup>71</sup> Luard, E., *The Globalization of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 152-153.

states, on unfavourable terms. The dependency of the periphery upon the core is perpetuated by an uneven exchange of natural resources in return for expensive consumer products. Natural resources, therefore, have been a double-edged sword for the Third World.

Evidently, it is easier to perceive geography, population, and natural resources as sources of power whereas history and nationalism are more difficult to ascertain.

### *History and nationalism*

History is a psychological source of power; it plays a major role in constructing *self-perception* and *national identity*. States perceive themselves either as the pioneers and standard bearers of modern history (the US), or the losers of glorious empires (Great Britain). Common historical experiences, founded in culture, religion, and linguistics, produce cohesion within confessions, communities, states, and civilisations.<sup>72</sup> These historical experiences often feed into another ephemeral base of power - nationalism.<sup>73</sup>

Utilised as an instrument of power, nationalism can empower a state, by mobilising a population behind a national cause. It is an esoteric force that can energise a population, often over territorial and economic issues, and can produce dynamic results, such as a propensity for independence, industrialisation, and war.<sup>74</sup> The Germanic expression of nationalism, and the more recent cases in the former Yugoslavia, provide some indication of the power of nationalism.

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<sup>72</sup> See Halliday's rebuff of Huntington's seminar paper on the Clash of Civilisations: Halliday, F., "A New World Myth," *New Statesman*, 4 April 1997, pp. 42.

<sup>73</sup> Hinsley, F., *Nationalism and the International System*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), pp. 11-24.

<sup>74</sup> Stoessinger, J., "The Anatomy of the Nation-state and the Nature of Power," in R. Little, and M. Smith (eds.), *Perspectives on World Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 31.



The relevance of nationalism to state behaviour is open to fluctuation. Nationalism can imbue the state with legitimacy, particularly, when the state's security is under threat. Hence, nationalism cannot be described as a static input; it is subject to the changes that take place in the political environment. For example, nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia has been on the increase since the collapse of Yugoslavia whereas the second Gulf War rang the death knell for any remnants of Arab nationalism. The state's ability to convert the potential of nationalism is dependent upon its potency.

The state can transform the power inputs of geography, population, natural resources, history, and nationalism into power outputs. This allows a state to project its capabilities onto the regional and international political system.

### ***Power outputs***

The conversion of power inputs into outputs has traditionally been perceived within the context of the military and/or security capabilities of the state. Power outputs have served the interests of high politics, especially in areas such as national security.<sup>75</sup> Economic security, and personal security have played subordinate roles to the issues of high politics.<sup>76</sup> The following section will highlight the outputs of power and their contributions to national power. The outputs of power mainly include:

- the military;
- the economy;
- information.

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<sup>75</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 60.

<sup>76</sup> Knorr, K., *On the Uses of Military Power in the Nuclear Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 17-34.

*The military*

The military is the most familiar repository of national power. Military capability, in both quantitative (troops and armaments) and qualitative (high tech weapons systems, training, morale, and cohesion) terms, is the residual power base of any state; it is the ultimate source of diplomacy.<sup>77</sup> The military capability of a state can act as a deterrent, in real terms and in reputation, to a threatening state.

The relationship between the state and the military is critical. In the states of the West, the military forms part of the institutional framework of the state, and is accountable to the public. It is firmly sited in the barracks. The military in the Third World, however, has enjoyed a different experience to its peers in the First World.

The military is more pervasive in the new states of the Third World. Owing to their contemporary role in the formation of states, the leaders of the military often occupy sensitive posts in the regime. The military constitutes the backbone of the regime because of the deficit of legitimacy prevalent in the Third World states. The military in some Third World states has been called upon to support their regimes when facing insurrections or civil wars. Moreover, the military has intervened on numerous occasions in domestic politics without the behest of the state. For example, the military in Pakistan has frequently intervened in political affairs, since independence in 1947;<sup>78</sup> in Algeria, the military and security services overturned the democratic experiment, in 1991/1992.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 176, and Carr, E., *The Twenty Years Crisis: 1919-1939*, (London: Macmillan, 1939).

<sup>78</sup> Ballard, R., "Effects of Labour Migration from Pakistan," in H. Alavi, and J. Harriss (eds.), *Sociology of "Developing Societies": South Asia*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 119.

<sup>79</sup> Ghiles, F., "Algeria Again at the Crossroads," *Middle East International*, no. 417, 24 January 1992, pp. 3-4.

*The economy*

The economy as an output of the state's power can affect the behaviour of other states without incurring or precipitating war. Trade and commerce form a mutual point of contact among states. A buoyant national economy will allow a state to influence the behaviour of its trading partners, especially those within its regional sub-system. The US, for instance, holds considerable sway over the economic policies of its southern neighbours. The competition that emerges among trading states assumes an economic persuasion in their quest for markets.

The competition amongst the imperial powers of Great Britain, Germany, and France, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was motivated by their desire to acquire economic power. This competition intensified their struggle for controlling colonies. These powers sought to acquire resource-rich colonies in order to secure the inputs for their production at home. The exportation of consumer goods to their respective colonies, allowed the imperial states to increase their power base. The military capabilities of the imperial powers enabled them to conquer new territories, then subvert the indigenous economies to their own interests.

Though this form of economic colonialism has passed, its legacy is now manifest in the structure of the global economy. The conclusion of this period of history and the advent of the global economy have transformed economic colonialism into economic imperialism. The use of military force has receded into the annals of history; the rise of Japan as an economic power without a military base provides a clear cut example of this.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Chomsky opines that this hypothesis is based on a false premise. He asserts that the Cold War and the second Gulf War demonstrated that force still guarantees the economic interests of the major powers. This idea is elaborated upon in chapter two.

As the system of states becomes increasingly globalised, and the economies of these states move towards integration, a defining feature of a state's economic power can be found in its ability to compete effectively in the global market. National economies have become dependent upon the ability of states and their respective non-state actors to compete in a rigorous global market. This intensive competition is represented in the activities of TNCs, that have been facilitated by the globalisation of production. Basing their operations in different countries enables TNCs to minimise their costs, by enjoying access to cheap resources, whilst gaining entry to multiple markets.<sup>81</sup>

These TNCs are contained in a global economy which is built upon:

- the expansion of high technology;
- the growth of service industries;
- the information systems revolution.

### *Information*

Information has become an output of state power, in its own right; and yet it contains a potential to circumvent the national power of the state. As a source of power, information can be used to control or mobilise the masses. Alternatively, information can subvert the predominant ideology of the state, expose the fallibility of the government, and challenge the state's monopoly of truth.

Traditionally, information has been open to manipulation by the state to serve its own interests.<sup>82</sup> The control of information has often been exercised by regimes, or states, either in a direct or indirect method. The direct method operates where the state owns

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<sup>81</sup> Chase-Dunn, C., *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 236-237.

<sup>82</sup> McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, (London: Sage, 1989), pp. 56. For more details on this subject see: Gramsci, A., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

the various media outlets. Regulation and censorship guarantee that the subject matter does not contain any subversive references to the state or its leadership. The indirect method of information control was identified by the Frankfurt School. They point to the complex patterns of ownership of the media, and to the ideological content of its information.<sup>83</sup> Althusser writes:

*Ideology, in the form of a distorted definition of reality, the picture of class relationships, and the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence, is not dominant in the sense of being imposed by force or by ruling classes, but is a pervasive and deliberate cultural influence which serves to interpret experience of reality in a covert but consistent matter.*<sup>84</sup>

In this analysis, the media transmits the values of the dominant social group in the society, thus providing legitimacy for the prevailing order.<sup>85</sup>

The history of the press, in nineteenth century England, lays testament to the influence and the potential of the press.<sup>86</sup> It represented a struggle between the state and the society; the state often reverted to seizing and closing printing presses, and the imprisonment of newspapers editors. The state attempted to incorporate the press into the establishment in order to control the flow of information. This rather crude relationship still characterises the dynamics between state and society in some Third World states.<sup>87</sup> Television stations, publishers, and the press are not all state-owned,

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<sup>83</sup> For details of the Frankfurt School see: Marcuse, H., *One Dimensional Man*, (London: Routledge, 1964).

<sup>84</sup> Althusser, L. (ed.), "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (London: New Left, 1971).

<sup>85</sup> Mouffe, C. (ed.), "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci," *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1979), pp. 180.

<sup>86</sup> McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, (London: Sage, 1989), pp. 11-12.

<sup>87</sup> In Syria and Jordan, television is limited to three channels, and each channel appears to be sycophantic to their respective state leaders. Their newspapers are equally subservient to the interests of its leaders.

but they serve the political interests of the ruling elite, and are generally referred to as the *mobilisation press*.<sup>88</sup>

The revolution in information technology has set a challenge to the traditional relationship between the society and the state. Access to information from numerous sources has given populations an alternative source of news. Information can be transmitted through a variety of ways that transcend terrestrial and national control. The proliferation of satellites has contributed to the global flow of information and the delivery of information and intelligence in real time. Electronic mail has started to establish a global network between international and national institutions, governments, interest groups, populations, and individuals. States, therefore, can be made more accountable to their constituencies as their monopoly over information is broken.

Modern information technology as an output of power operates beyond the limits of international boundaries. The dissemination of information is no longer confined to distribution through cassettes, as in the case of Iran, or the Voice of America. Its global impact is immense, particularly in relation to its potential to promote homogeneity over heterogeneity, capitalism over communism, and consumerism over religion. Those countries which are at the pioneering edge of information technology, are able to circumvent the culturally, religiously, and ideologically-specific orientations of states. Their method of achieving this is to disseminate voluminous amounts of information stressing their own values. For example, the US-led information

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<sup>88</sup> Rugh, W., *The Arab Press: News, Media, and Political Process in the Arab World*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 31.

technology played a significant role in combating Soviet influence during the latter stages of the Cold War.<sup>89</sup>

## Security

Traditionally, national security has focused on the physical security of international boundaries. The preoccupation of decision-makers within the state has been the maintenance of secure borders against external threats. From this perspective, national security is tangible and quantifiable as it is concerned with ensuring the territorial integrity of the state.<sup>90</sup>

### *National security vs state security*

National security implies safety for the nation. In the First World, where nation-states are the norm, it is relatively easy to connote national security. The security of the French nation, for instance, corresponds to French territory. However, this is not the case for all nations.

National security is a difficult concept to analyse where *state* and *nation* are not synonymous. In the Arab World, where states are a new creation; the Arab nation encompasses the states of the region giving rise to the Arab system.<sup>91</sup> National security has often been used to refer to the protection of the Arab nation, rather than specific states.

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<sup>89</sup> Nye, J., W. Owens, and E. Cohen, "A Technological Revolution Is Transforming the Nature of Power. And the United States Is Clearly in the Lead," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2, March/April 1996, pp. 20-36.

<sup>90</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 60.

<sup>91</sup> Noble, P., "The Arab System: Pressures, Constraints, and Opportunities," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 49-102.

In the unconsolidated states of the Third World, identifying the recipient of security adds another complication to the notion. As most of these states were artificially created, by the imperial powers, the incumbent states lack legitimacy, and, therefore, their regimes feel insecure. In their attempt to legitimise their existence, these regimes are willing to jeopardise the security of their populations in order to preserve their own survival. This leads one to pose the question: who are the beneficiaries of state security?

### *Security for whom?*

In established democracies, it is reasonable to expect that the state, its institutions, and population are the beneficiaries of national security. The tacit contract between the state and the society is reflected in the faith the population places in the state to conduct affairs.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, this does not apply to the Third World states.

The newly emerged states in the Third World have yet to stabilise their positions vis-à-vis their societies. Unpopular authoritarian or minority regimes often face dissension. From this perspective, a dialectic arises about where and to whom the concept of security applies. For example, in Iraq the regime prioritises its survival over the welfare of the population; in domestic terms, the security of the population is subordinate to the security of the regime while the security of the borders is vital to the survival of the state.<sup>93</sup> State security for the regime of Saddam Hussein does not include the welfare of the Kurds in northern Iraq, or the Shi'as in the southern marshlands.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 115.

<sup>93</sup> Ball, A., *Modern Politics and Government*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 32.

<sup>94</sup> North, A., "Southern Iraq: Flight from the Marshes," *Middle East International*, no. 458, 10 September 1993, pp. 20.



However, conceiving security in terms of the protection of the regime is a very limited approach. Defining security as such does not take into consideration the security needs of the population. Security, in other words, must encompass the welfare of the citizens of the state. Therefore, the definition of security needs to be broadened to include aspects of economic and personal security.<sup>95</sup> Thomas focuses upon economic and environmental issues, such as the quality of life in terms of financial stability, welfare provision, universal education, and social cohesion; all of these factors contribute to a more comprehensive definition of the security of the state.<sup>96</sup> This moves the concept of security beyond safety from violence to safety from the degradation of the quality of life.<sup>97</sup>

In this section, I intend to incorporate this broader definition of security for the purposes of this study. I shall examine the notions of national security (state), economic security (international), and personal security (domestic).

### ***National security (state)***

National security refers to:

- the durability of national borders;
- the ability to maintain the territorial integrity of these borders;
- the maintenance of domestic order;
- the preservation of existing political systems of government.

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<sup>95</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 190. For more information see: Walker, R., "Security, Sovereignty, and the Challenge of World Politics," *Alternatives*, vol. 15, pp. 3-27.

<sup>96</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 182.

<sup>97</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 182.

According to these criteria, national security depends on a state's capacity to defend its borders and institutions either by consensus, or force. Being the repository of power, the state is responsible for national security.<sup>98</sup>

National security is the ultimate responsibility of the state., but weak states are often compelled to join security pacts with more potent allies. Where collective security is organised, for example, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), and the former Warsaw Pact, its prime objective is to deter aggression against member states. Collective security can adopt a regional and/or international characteristic.<sup>99</sup>

During the Cold war, the organisation of these pacts was determined by the interests of the superpowers. The superpower conflict between the Soviet Union and the US was reflected in the balance of power between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Some theorists, however, are doubtful about the efficacy of collective security. They point out that the durability of such collective security units cannot be guaranteed, as ultimately state interests prevail over collective interest of those units.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Economic security (international)***

Economic security has become dependent upon the global economy. Many Third World states, often debt-laden, as recipients of international loans are being encouraged to implement programmes of economic liberalisation recommended by the

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<sup>98</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 57-58.

<sup>99</sup> Couloumbis, T., and J. Wolfe, *Introduction to International Relations: Power and Justice*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), pp. 87.

<sup>100</sup> Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations 1648-1815*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 29-33.

IMF.<sup>101</sup> As these programmes demand the removal of subsidies from staple products, states are losing control over the provision of welfare for their populations. These states are being forced to trade their economic autonomy for the guarantee of loans. The economic determinants of the global economy often work to the detriment of social security, and help to polarise the divisions within society.<sup>102</sup>

The inclusion of economic factors into the formulation of national security should take heed of the experience of the states of the South. It should also pay attention to the regularity of secure systems of food, and health. The gross structural inequality between the North and the South, preserved by international capitalism, according to Wallerstein, can only exacerbate the insecurity of the South, thereby infringing upon the security of the North.<sup>103</sup>

The interdependent features of the global economy have integrated the economies, and, thus, the fortunes of the Southern and Northern states. The states of the North are exigent upon Southern markets to sell their products, and evidently, if the Southern states are economically insecure, eventually, they will not be able to purchase the produce of the North. A principal known in economics as *beggar thy neighbour*.

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<sup>101</sup> Bienefeld, M., "Is a Strong National Economy a Utopian Goal at the End of the Twentieth Century?," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 421-422, and Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 129.

<sup>102</sup> Bienefeld, M., "Is a Strong National Economy a Utopian Goal at the End of the Twentieth Century?," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 422-425, and Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 39-43.

<sup>103</sup> Gilpin, R., *The Political Economy of International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 270.

*Personal security (domestic)*

The quality of life cannot be solely measured by material means; Falk suggests that security in one's personal life is fundamental to the quality of life. Falk implies that the state is responsible for providing sufficient security to engender a high quality of life for all its citizens. In this respect, the security of the individual will enhance social cohesion, and, therefore, improve national security. The security of the individual is not confined to personal safety. It is also dependent upon other factors, such as, race, class, and gender, which reach across state, regional, and international boundaries.<sup>104</sup>

Falk further claims that the creative energy for reformulating the concept of security, in less exclusive terms, is coming from social movements which operate between and across national and international boundaries. Issues such as feminism, environmentalism, and freedom from structural violence have bridged elements of societies that share common beliefs or interests.<sup>105</sup> They have arisen from areas where personal insecurities are particularly high. They have originated from groups that are more concerned with *human security* than national security.<sup>106</sup>

The discipline of international relations has been forced, by current events, to reconsider the more narrow versions of the character of security. To appreciate the complex nature of security in the late twentieth century it is important to recognise its multidimensional character. The interdependent features of global organisation have demonstrated how security may exist in numerous forms. Thus, the focus of national security has moved away from the purely military perspective, and is beginning to

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<sup>104</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 190-192.

<sup>105</sup> Mishra, R., "The Welfare of Nations," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 328.

<sup>106</sup> Tickner, J., "Re-visioning Security," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 190.

concentrate more on the security of individuals within the state, and the structural inequalities of the international system.

Having explained the concepts of the state, power, and national security we are now, in a position to deal with the three basic paradigms of international relations theory, realism, pluralism, and globalism.

## The Paradigms of International Relations Theory

### *Realism*

Realism is considered to be a timeless study of power politics; it proffers a universal and conclusive understanding of international relations. Power is central to realism: it exists in the three levels of analysis, the *individual*, the *state*, and the *system*.<sup>107</sup> For the realist, power is accumulated, monopolised, and exercised by the state. The presence of power in realism has often been sighted as generating a self-fulfilling prophecy in the eyes of policy makers.<sup>108</sup> It is folly, though, to dismiss the role of power in international relations as power is an omniscient feature of human activity.

### *The balance of power*

The balance of power theory belongs to realism.<sup>109</sup> There are many definitions of the balance of power. Ernst Haas proposed eight meanings,<sup>110</sup> Hans Morgenthau made use

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<sup>107</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

<sup>108</sup> Waltz, K., "Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 117.

<sup>109</sup> The author recommends this book: Sheehan, M., *The Balance of Power, History and Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>110</sup> Haas, E., *Beyond the Nation-state*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

of four different notions,<sup>111</sup> and Martin Wight identified nine variants of the theory.<sup>112</sup> Of the numerous definitions of the balance of power, the most appropriate one to this study is codified as *the distribution of power in the international political system*.<sup>113</sup>

The balance of power theory operates from the assumption that the structure of the international political system is anarchic; "self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order".<sup>114</sup> States are motivated by their national interests, and naturally compete with each other for resources both within a regional and international context. Morgenthau identified two modes of balance of power:

- pattern of direct opposition;
- pattern of competition.<sup>115</sup>

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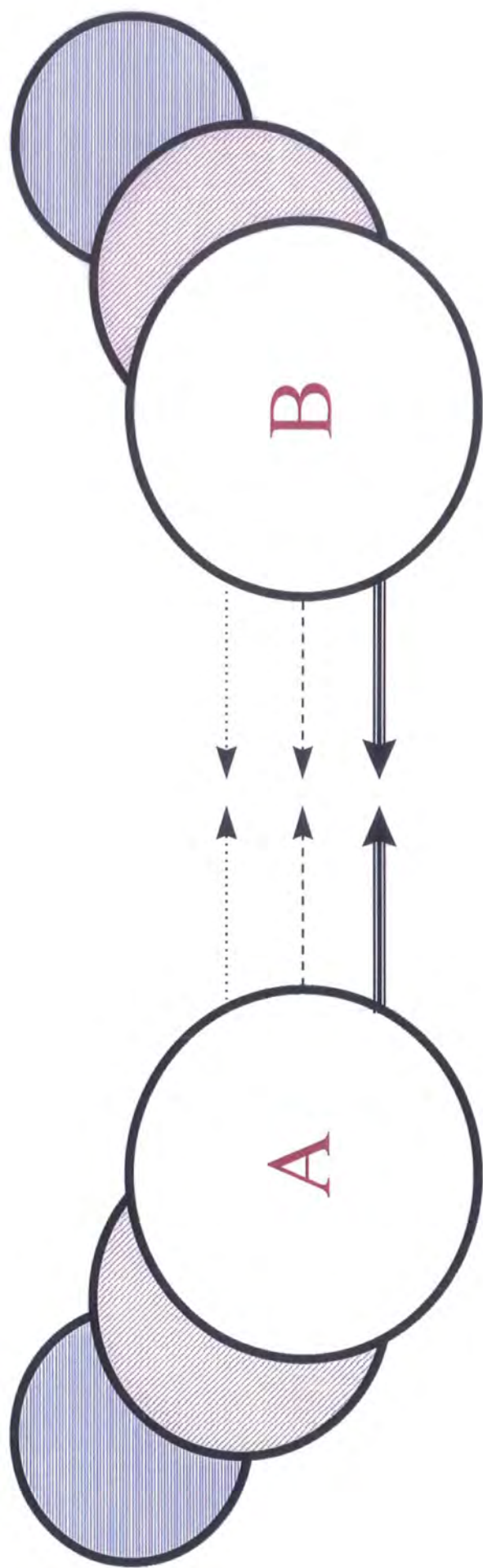
<sup>111</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 168.

<sup>112</sup> Waltz, K., "Anarchic Order and Balances of Power," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 116.

<sup>113</sup> Waltz, K., "Anarchic Order and Balances of Power," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 117.

<sup>114</sup> Waltz, K., *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 111.

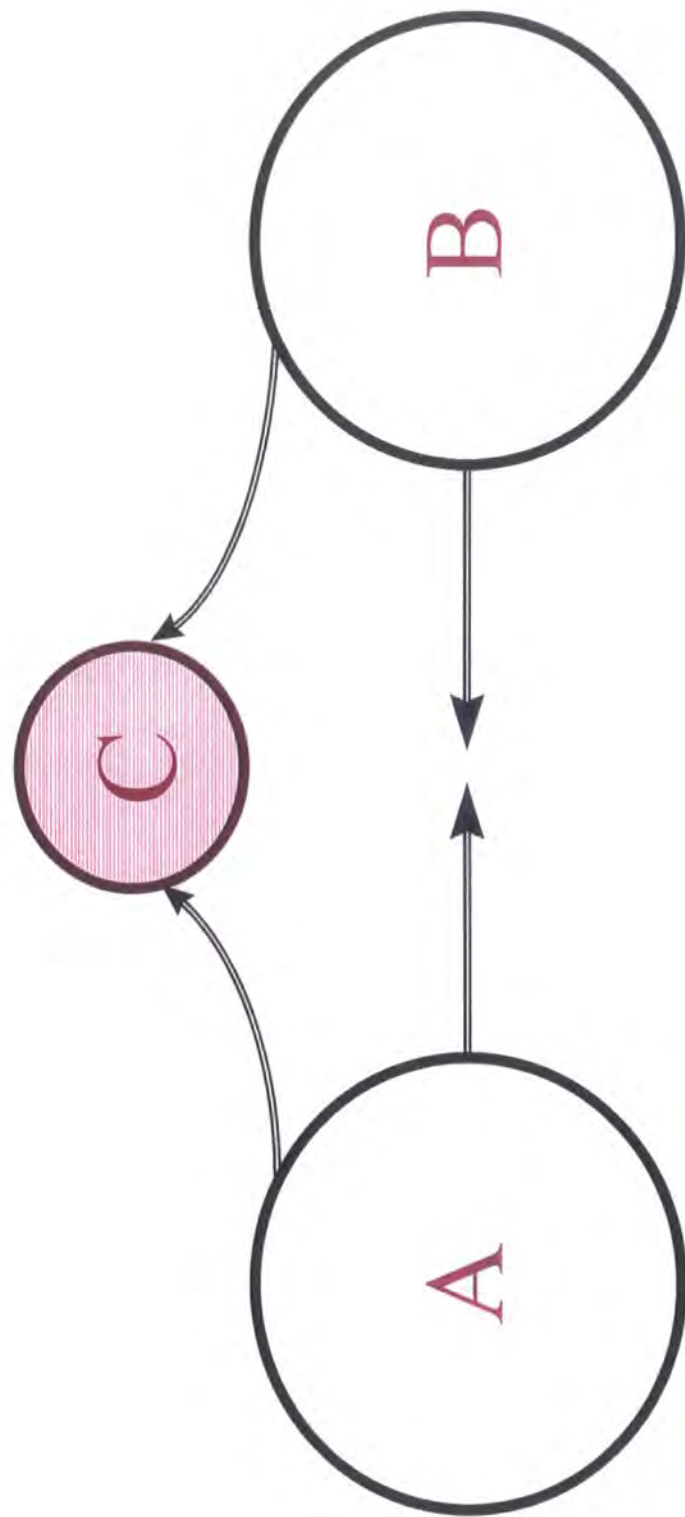
<sup>115</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 166-171.



Nation A may embark upon an imperialist policy with regard to Nation B, and Nation B may counter that policy with a policy of the status quo or with an imperialistic policy of its own.

Figure 1.2

Source: Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 168.

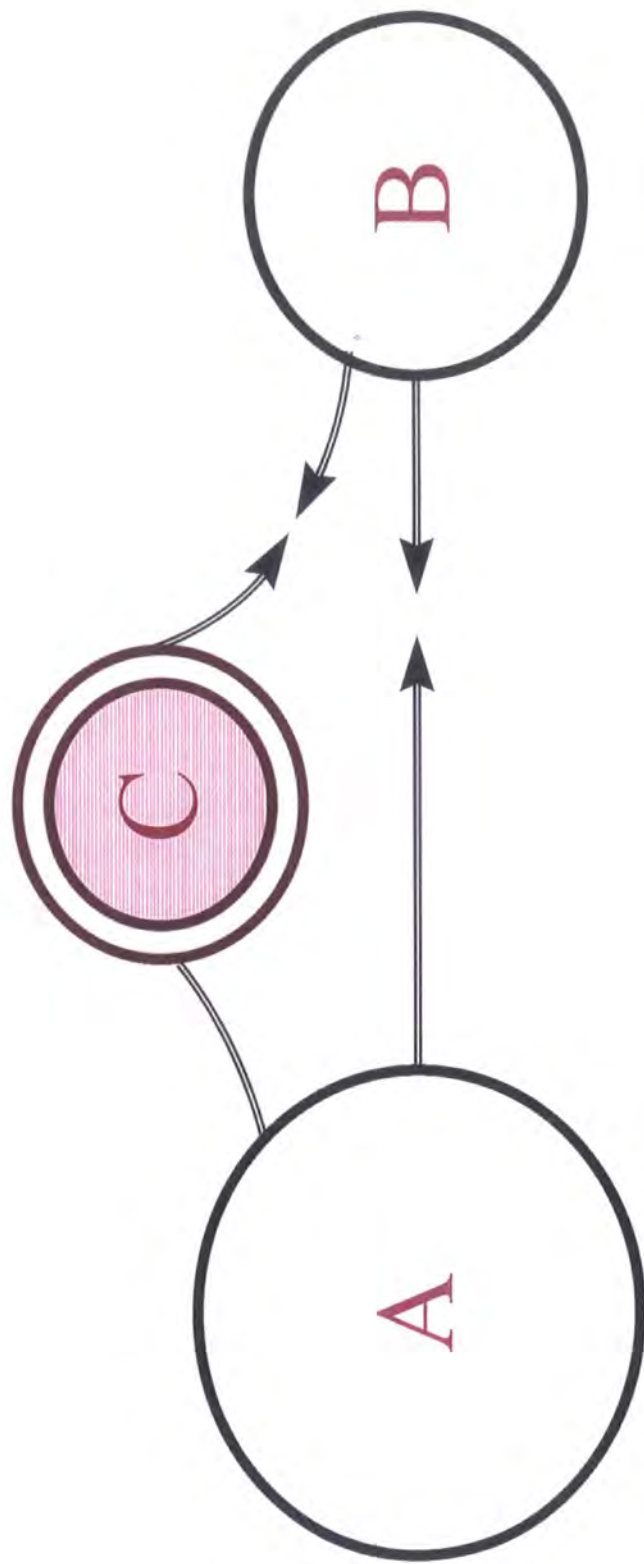


The domination of C is a goal of A's policy. B, on the other hand, is opposed to A's policy because it either wants to preserve the status quo with respect to C or wants the domination of C for itself.

The independence of C is a mere function of the power relations existing between A and B.

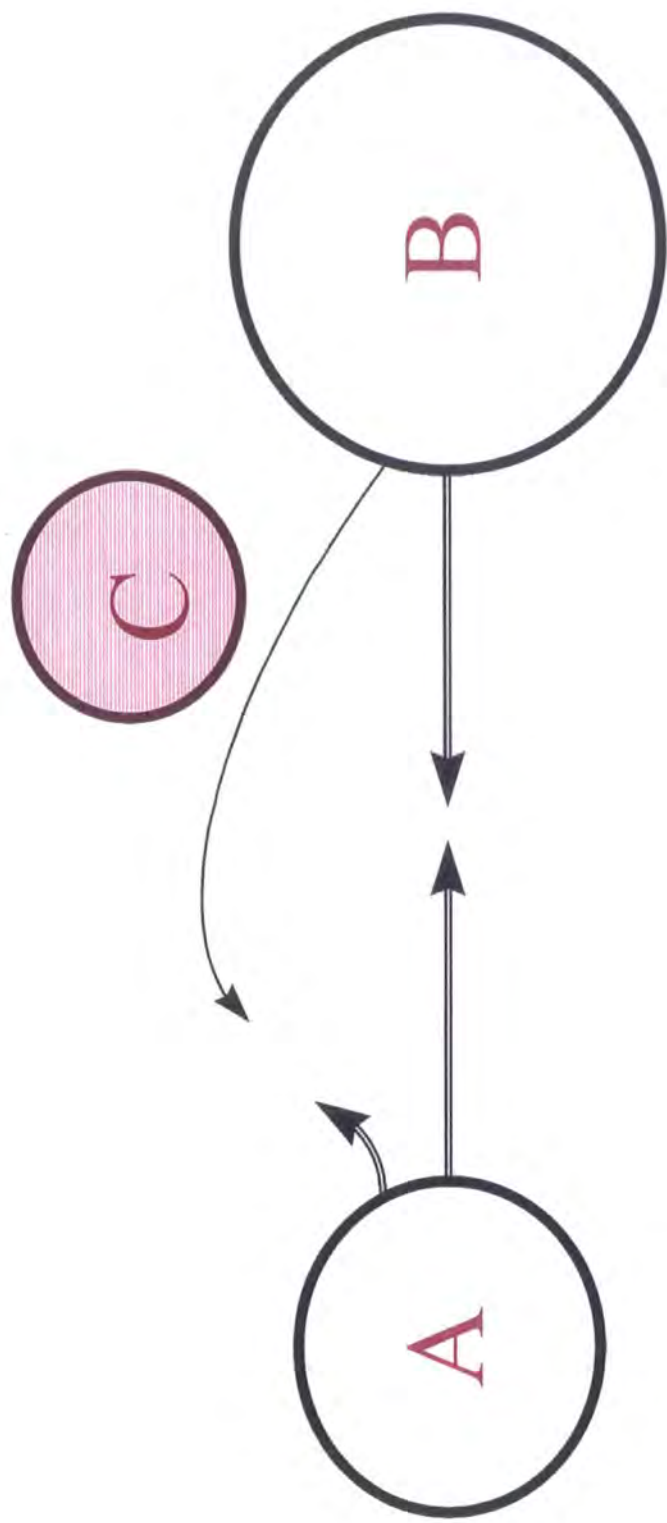
Figure 1.3





If these relations take a decisive turn in favour of the imperialistic nation  
- that is, A - the independence of C will at once be in jeopardy

Figure 1.4



If the status quo nation - that is, B - should gain a decisive and permanent advantage,  
C's freedom will be more secure in the measure of that advantage

Figure 1.5

At the international system level, the balance of power is believed to deter war, as it governs the distribution of power. The functions of the balance of power have been summarised by Hedley Bull as:

- the existence of a balance of power throughout the international system as a whole has served to prevent the system from being transformed, by conquest, into a universal empire.
- the existence of local balances of power has served to protect the independence of states, in particular areas, from absorption or domination by a locally preponderant power.
- both general and local balances of power have provided the suitable conditions for other institutions,<sup>116</sup> on which international order depends, to operate.<sup>117</sup>

As a perfunctory instrument for governing the world and regional orders, the balance of power has fulfilled these functions.

Bull and Hoffman, however, suggest that not only is the balance of power theory a crude tool of analysis, but also it has been responsible for the numerous wars that have taken place since 1945.<sup>118</sup> Although there is considerable debate about the utility of the balance of power, it will become clear later that the balance of power, as a concept, is critical to this study. The balance of power is recognised by realists as a policy-making instrument utilised by those who exercise power within each state. It is considered to

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<sup>116</sup> These institutions refer to diplomacy, war, international law, and great power management.

<sup>117</sup> Bull, H., "The Balance of Power and International Order," in R. Little, and M. Smith (eds.), *Perspectives on World Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 115.

<sup>118</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 165.

be the most effective instrument for averting war or checking the hegemonic pretensions of emerging states.<sup>119</sup>

As a regulating instrument, the balance of power is exclusively concerned with states. The acquisition of power, which is a transmutable product, remains rooted at the state level. In other words, the distribution of power within the international political system resides with the state.

The emphasis placed upon the central role of the state, and the primacy given to power acquisition make realism the most appropriate paradigm to this study. However, before one can debate the applicability of realism, it is necessary to provide a basic outline of its tenets. There are four main assumptions in the realist paradigm that can be summarised as follows:

- (i) the state is the principal actor in international relations;
- (ii) the state is unitary;
- (iii) the state is a rational actor;
- (iv) the state is pre-occupied with national security.<sup>120</sup>

### ***The state is the principal actor***

The realist considers the state to be the main actor in international relations. The state is responsible for all the activities that take place within its territories. As a sovereign entity, the state organises and conducts its foreign policy according to its national

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<sup>119</sup> Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations 1648-1815*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 1-29.

<sup>120</sup> Keohane, R. (ed.), "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 164-165.

interest. Domestic and international organisations are regulated according to the rules of the state, and are subordinate to its decision-making process.<sup>121</sup>

### ***The state is unitary***

According to realism, states exist in an international political system that is governed by anarchy. The system lacks a central authority or supranational government to impose international law upon the state. In this environment, the state is compelled to become unitary in order to counter the potential threat from other states. The inherent insecurity of the state, a derivative of the international political system, serves as a common interest to unify the actors within the state.<sup>122</sup> Differences within the state are necessarily resolved in order to evade the threat to national security.

### ***The state is a rational actor***

The state is ordered and organised according to the pursuit of its national interest. The process of decision-making within the state, determined by national interest, is achieved through the employment of a rational process. A rational foreign policy decision-making process would include:

- a statement of objectives;
- the consideration of all feasible alternatives in terms of the existing capabilities of the state;
- the possibility of attaining these objectives using the alternatives under consideration;
- the benefits and costs associated with each alternative.

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<sup>121</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 6.

<sup>122</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 6.

The rational determinants of the decision-making process are an expression of national interest concurring with the concern for national security.<sup>123</sup>

### *National security*

Anarchy is inherent in the international political system; it produces the enduring competition for the balance of power. A transition in the balance of power provides the aggressor state with puissance, and increases the national insecurity of the lesser state. A significant shift in the balance of power produces an environment for contagious war. War, it is deemed, is an inevitable feature of the state of anarchy.<sup>124</sup>

National security is critical to the paradigm of realism. Determined by the requisites of national interest, national security takes precedence over all aspects of domestic policy. This introduces the useful distinction between high politics (military security and strategic issues) and low politics (economic and social issues). Realism asserts that low politics is subordinate to the interests of high politics in the field of international relations.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 6-7.

<sup>124</sup> Brown, S., *International Relations in a Changing Global System: Toward a Theory of the World Polity*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 62, and Waltz, K., "Anarchic Orders and Balances of Power," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 111-115.

<sup>125</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 7.

### *Realism and Neo-realism*

The study of realism has been attributed to numerous historical thinkers, such as Thucydides<sup>126</sup> and Machiavelli,<sup>127</sup> thus providing realism with an ahistorical pedigree. Realism is grounded in a basic understanding of human nature. As a timeless and universal constant, human nature is depicted by realists as *egoistic*. Self-preservation and self-interest motivate human behaviour. Human destiny is, therefore, marked by the struggle for survival through a competition for finite resources.<sup>128</sup> Throughout their competition, individuals have formed themselves into organisational units to maximise their potential. The historical progress of human organisation has led to the complex form of the state.

The state and the international political system are constructs of human endeavour. The behaviour of states and the nature of the international system owe their characteristics to the blue-print of human nature. According to this perception, human nature pervades the Second and Third Images of international politics.<sup>129</sup>

Neo-realism is based on the same assumptions as realism, but rather than locate human nature as the source of state behaviour, neo-realism places its emphasis on the structure of the international political system. Neo-realism, or structural realism, identifies the natural state of anarchy, within which states exist, as the main determinant of state

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<sup>126</sup> Thucydides wrote his memoirs of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC); he identified the balance of power as a source for regulating relations between states. See Coulombis, T., and J. Wolfe, *Introduction to International Relations: Power and Justice*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), pp. 167.

<sup>127</sup> Machiavelli, N., *The Prince*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1986). Machiavelli's handbook for Princes was based upon the central tenets of what Morgenthau has termed *political realism*.

<sup>128</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 85-86.

<sup>129</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State and War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

behaviour. Survival is the primordial reason for the state, where behaviour is governed by self-help in a system of states.<sup>130</sup>

Neo-realism avers that the behaviour of states is dictated by universal laws that emanate from the structure of the system of states. The differentiation among states in terms of size, population, and geopolitics affects the power-ratio of relations, nevertheless, all states function according to the determinants of the international political system. Consequently, the behaviour of states is codified by the system rather than domestic concerns.

Both realists and neo-realists agree that the internal dynamics of states, such as the domestic political system, are not relevant to the formulation of foreign policy. Foreign policy should be based upon a rational set of objectives if the state is to survive in the anarchic arena. The balance of power presents the opportunity for states to protect their sovereignty.

### ***Pluralism***

Pluralism owes its legacy to a combination of idealism and liberalism. Unlike in realism, power is not the central theme in pluralism, it is more concerned with the notions of *co-operation*, *co-existence*, and *interdependence*. The role of co-operation and interdependence in pluralism places the stress away from the state of anarchy and towards the notion of peaceful co-existence. For the realists, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*<sup>131</sup> provided an insight into human nature, social organisation, and

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<sup>130</sup> Brown, S., *International Relations in a Changing Global System: Toward a Theory of the World Polity*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 61.

<sup>131</sup> Hobbes, T., *Leviathan*, (London: Penguin, 1985).



international relations. Pluralists, on the other hand, regard Rousseau's social contract theory<sup>132</sup> as more apposite to understanding international relations.

Pluralists stress the interdependent nature of the global economy. The success of global capitalism is considered to be an inevitable triumph for the common good; in fact, it was thought to mark the end of history.<sup>133</sup> Fukuyama applauds the globalisation of capital, and sees this development as the end point of a rational working out of historical forces.<sup>134</sup> The demise of the Soviet Union was the indicator that capitalism had subdued the evils of communism: "It was the struggle for recognition ... of the world-wide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination and idealism".<sup>135</sup>

The pluralist image of international relations is based on four main assumptions:

- (i) non-state actors are important;
- (ii) the state is not an unitary actor;
- (iii) the state is not a rational actor;
- (iv) the agenda of international politics is extensive.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Rousseau, J., *The Social Contract*, (London: Penguin, 1987).

<sup>133</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 78.

<sup>134</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 62.

<sup>135</sup> Booth, K., "Dare Not to Know: International Relations Theory versus the Future," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 338.

<sup>136</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 192-193.

*Non-state actors*

Protagonists of the pluralist school recognise that non-state actors can play an important role in international relations. TNCs, international agencies, and international organisations have emerged as major players in world affairs.<sup>137</sup> TNCs can circumvent the constraints placed upon them by host states, through their substantial economic powers. They have managed to invert the power relationship by using the threat of withdrawal, from the host state, if they are not offered adequate concessions.<sup>138</sup> In some cases, states have become hostages to the will of TNCs.<sup>139</sup>

Non-state actors have risen in prominence in the global economy during this century.<sup>140</sup> One only has to consider the function of the IMF and the World Bank to appreciate how non-state actors have shaped the policies of the global economy. Many Third World economies have been unable to resist global capitalism and its prescription of economic liberalisation.<sup>141</sup>

From a political perspective, many states have lost a degree of their autonomy, due to the activities of non-state actors. Political decisions have become more accountable to

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<sup>137</sup> In fact Chomsky calls TNCs "de facto world government," as they own and control one-third of the world's private capital. See: Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 181.

<sup>138</sup> Krasner, S., "Power Politics Institutions, Transnational Relations," in T. Risse-Kappen (ed.), *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 267-276, and Petrella, R., "Globalization and Internationalization: The Dynamics of the Emerging World Order," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 74-75.

<sup>139</sup> Dunning, J., *The Globalization of Business*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 309.

<sup>140</sup> The TNC of the twentieth century is not a new phenomenon; its precursor could be identified as the East India Company, which started trading in the seventeenth century. See Chase-Dunn, C., *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 72

<sup>141</sup> Penrose, E., "From Economic Liberalization to International Integration: The Role of the State," in T. Niblock, and E. Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp. 3-25.

the requisites of economic policy, especially for Third World states where autonomy is limited, and economic policy is determined by the policies of international agencies, such as the IMF. Non-state actors cannot be ignored in light of an increasingly integrated global economy, and the concentration of communication systems that remain outside the orbit of state control.<sup>142</sup>

### *The state is not an unitary actor*

A familiar interpretation of pluralism rests on the assumption that the state is composed of competing pressure groups.<sup>143</sup> The state is the mediator among these various groups, and remains autonomous from any one dominant interest group. To the pluralist, the state cannot be considered as unitary, as this would fail to appreciate the multiplicity of actors that constitute the state. This characteristic model of the state suggests that foreign policy decisions are determined by *competition*, *compromise*, and *coalition-building*.<sup>144</sup> Non-state actors can participate in this process by lobbying governments and political parties.<sup>145</sup>

### *The state is not a rational actor*

Pluralists contend that the competitive nature of the interest groups, within the state, do not create an environment where rational decision-making can take place. The competition among interest groups, the compromises, and coalition-building processes detract from a coherent and rational foreign policy being formulated. Foreign policy is issue-led and open to the influence of apposite interest groups and public opinion.

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<sup>142</sup> I shall address this issue later in this chapter when referring to information as a major output of power.

<sup>143</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 115.

<sup>144</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 37-38.

<sup>145</sup> Falk, R., "State of Siege: Will Globalization Win Out?," *International Affairs*, vol. 73., no. 1, January 1997, pp. 123-136.

Public opinion can act as a restraining order on policy decisions if they are deemed to contravene the perceived national interest.<sup>146</sup>

### *Agenda of international politics*

Pluralists believe that states are becoming progressively interdependent. As involuntary subscribers to the dominant economic system, state economies are organised through an international division of labour. Economic issues have gained primacy in determining international relations as economic security has acquired a universal character in the diminishing world. Issues, such as national security, are losing their relevance as economic interdependence ties the economies of each state to the success of the global economic order.<sup>147</sup>

Non-state actors and state actors are both playing a role in the integrated global economy. Interdependence, according to this paradigm, will promote co-operation amongst all actors, and will reduce the necessity for war. As states lose their autonomy to international agencies and organisations, and information systems encourage social integration, the prospect of war further decreases.<sup>148</sup>

### *Globalism*

The last paradigm to be used in this study can be termed 'globalism'. It shares some features with both realism and pluralism, but is distinguished in its perception of the world capitalist system. The emphasis of globalism can be found in its study of

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<sup>146</sup> Hague, R., and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 36-38.

<sup>147</sup> Keohane, R., and J. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1977), pp. 6-8.

<sup>148</sup> Halliday, F., "International Relations and Its Discontents," *International Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 4, October 1995, pp. 743.

dependency. Whereas pluralists consider the global economy in terms of *interdependence*, globalists view the global economy in terms of *dependence*.<sup>149</sup>

Globalists contend that the structure of the world capitalist system perpetuates an inequitable relationship between the North and the South.<sup>150</sup> Wallerstein demarcates the organisation of the global economy into *the core* and *the periphery*. In this model, the periphery serves the interests of the core; and the inequitable level of exchange ensures that the core remains the dominant partner in the relationship. He identifies a transition belt between the two poles, known as the *semi-periphery*, that accommodates NICs, such as: Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong.<sup>151</sup> Japan has been elevated to the core group although its military power base does not reflect its economic power.<sup>152</sup> Mobility between the poles, however, is strictly limited, and this ensures that the states of the periphery remain dependent upon the states of the core.<sup>153</sup>

Globalists use systems analysis as their mode of enquiry. They perceive the economic relations between the North and the South as dependent. The outcome of the structure and processes of global capitalism represents the next stage of imperialism. Wallerstein approaches the succession of capitalism from a diametrically opposed position to the pluralists. He denotes that global capitalism perpetuates dependency and oppression.

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<sup>149</sup> Hopkins, K., and I. Wallerstein (eds.), "Patterns of Development of the Modern World-System," *World-System Analysis: Theory and Methodology*, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982), pp. 72.

<sup>150</sup> Wallerstein, I., "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 16, no. 4, Autumn 1974, pp. 387-415.

<sup>151</sup> Ehteshami, A., "The Rise and Convergence of the 'Middle' in the World Economy: The Case of the NICs and the Gulf," in C. Davies (ed.), *Global Interests in the Arab Gulf*, (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1992), pp. 141.

<sup>152</sup> Wallerstein, I., "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 16, no. 4, Autumn 1974, pp. 389.

<sup>153</sup> Chase-Dunn, C., *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 238.

His work concentrates on identifying anti-systemic forces that will initiate the next systemic phase of global economic and political organisation.<sup>154</sup>

Globalists adhere to four main assumptions:

- (i) economic globalism defines the international system;
- (ii) the international system defines the level of analysis
- (iii) historical analysis is relevant;
- (iv) dependency is perpetuated by mechanisms of economic domination.<sup>155</sup>

### ***Economic globalism***

Globalism characterises the international system through the role of the global economy. Economics is regarded as the currency of the international system. Instead of analysing global politics in terms of a bipolar or a unipolar system, protagonists of globalism opine that *global capitalism* is the defining feature of a hegemonic economic order. Global capitalism is the dominant system to which all states belong. There are alternative ideologies and economic systems that are considered anti-systemic, but they do not constitute a threat to the dominant system. Moreover, anti-systemic forces are unable to resist the centripetal force of the global economy.<sup>156</sup>

### ***The international system***

The level of analysis for globalists resides in the international system. Whereas realists perceive the state to be the principal actor in the international system, and pluralists

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<sup>154</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 62-63.

<sup>155</sup> Viotti, P., and M. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 9-10.

<sup>156</sup> Wallerstein, I., "The World System versus World-Systems: A Critique," in A. Gunder Frank, and B. Gills (eds.), *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 295, see also: Wallerstein, I., "Crisis as Transition," in S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A. Frank, and I. Wallerstein (eds.), *Dynamics of Global Crisis*, (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 11-54.

conceive that non-state actors are important, Wallerstein, as a world systems analyst, like neo-realists, believes in the primacy of the international system for explaining state behaviour. In this instance, the state is not considered to be the primary unit of analysis, nor the only receptacle of power. The structure of the system and the processes that characterise it are fundamental to understanding the behaviour of states.<sup>157</sup>

### *Historical analysis*

Scholars, such as Wallerstein,<sup>158</sup> and Marx,<sup>159</sup> devoted considerable time to understanding the historical process, and the evolution of the international system. Wallerstein's conception of the global system differs fundamentally from that of the neo-realists. Through his study of the evolution and ascent of capitalism, Wallerstein characterised the global system not according to the division of the world into a bipolar order, but by the succession of a hegemonic economic order.<sup>160</sup> In contrast to the realist interpretation of the bipolar structure,<sup>161</sup> Wallerstein viewed the Soviet Union and the US as being both incorporated into the dominant economic system.<sup>162</sup> The balance of power theory, therefore, is not relevant to understanding the bipolar period.

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<sup>157</sup> Galtung, J., "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," in R. Little, and M. Smith (eds.), *Perspectives on World Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 295-300.

<sup>158</sup> Wallerstein, I., *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*, (London: Verso, 1996), and Chase-Dunn, C., *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 203.

<sup>159</sup> Marx, K., and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (London: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>160</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 82.

<sup>161</sup> The bipolar structure of the world order will be discussed in chapter two.

<sup>162</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 76.

Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not such a remarkable event; it did not represent the termination of an alternative economic system.<sup>163</sup>

### ***Mechanisms of economic domination***

The globalist paradigm identifies institutional mechanisms of domination that are responsible for the uneven development between the states of the North and the South. The mechanisms in the international system serve the interests of those states closer to the core. They can be located in:

- the inequitable distribution and allocation of world resources;
- the terms of the international division of labour;
- the allocation of transferred technology;
- the operation of Western banking systems.<sup>164</sup>

### ***Omnibalancing - the way forward?***

If it is possible to reduce the above paradigms to their absolute minimum, they can be summarised by the following terms:

- realism - power;
- pluralism - interdependence;
- globalism - dependence.

Omnibalancing manages to incorporate components of each paradigm and presents a multidimensional model that is more appropriate to the Third World. Omnibalancing

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<sup>163</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 76-78.

<sup>164</sup> Galtung, J., "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," in R. Little, and M. Smith (eds.), *Perspectives on World Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 295-596.



attempts to bridge the division between the international perspective, which is lodged in systemic or world systems analysis, and the domestic analysis of state behaviour.<sup>165</sup>

Omnibalancing is unique as it links international and domestic politics; the interaction between systemic analysis and domestic politics produces the tenets of omnibalancing. It provides us with a model that can account for the multiplicity of inputs that affects the behaviour of states. It operates from a realist perspective in the international realm, and integrates pluralist and globalist maxims in the domestic field. Omnibalancing is founded on the following assumptions:

- (i) power is the focus of international politics;
- (ii) Third World states are not unitary;
- (iii) the leader of the state is a level of analysis;
- (iv) foreign policy is conducted according to a rational criteria.<sup>166</sup>

***Power is the focus of international politics***

In keeping with realist thought, omnibalancing stresses the centrality of power to governing relations among states. The balance of power emerges as the most effective mechanism available for regulating international relations. The balance of power, however, is considered to provide an inadequate explanation for Third World states behaviour. This is because it is confined to international relations and dismisses the relevance of the internal dynamics of states.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> See David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233-256.

<sup>166</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 236.

<sup>167</sup> David, S. "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233.

*Third World states are not unitary*

Omnibalancing departs from realist and neo-realist analysis when addressing the issue of the state. Unlike in realism, the state in the Third World is not considered to be an unitary actor. The state is divided and open to vociferous competition from a variety of social, ethnic, confessional, and sectoral groups. Competition deviates from that portrayed by pluralists, owing to the turbulence of state-building, survival of the regime is dependent upon the subjugation of one's opponents. In this case, the environment of the domestic arena is perceived as anarchic rather than hierarchical.

Omnibalancing transposes the anarchy present within the international system onto the domestic system. Without an indigenous institutionalised political system to channel opposition, through a political process, Third World regimes have been obliged to balance the interests of competing groups in order to limit domestic unrest. For David then, the balance of power can be used to examine domestic politics, and is an analytical tool for explaining state or regime behaviour.

Regimes of the Third World have tended to be composed of specific ethnic or linguistic groups that benefited from the divide and rule policies of previous colonial powers. These ruling minority groups have depended upon authoritarian rule, and the creation of patrimonial structures to guarantee their survival. With a narrow base of support and a constant threat to regime survival, the policies of such ruling groups have been conducted according to their particular interests rather than national interests. This has been particularly true with the role of state leaders.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 236.

*The leader of the state*

A common result of the independence struggles in the Third World has been the contagion of coups, and the absence of legitimate governments. Due to the recent historical experiences of most Third World states, where states were created artificially and not according to contiguous precedents, social cohesion has tended to be low. Where social cohesion has been low, state-society relations have often lacked an institutional framework to support the role of civil society, and, therefore, a disjuncture between regime and society has developed.<sup>169</sup>

David intimates that leaders constitute one of the levels of analysis. In the Third World, authoritarian rule has been accompanied by the development of personality cults. State leaders have occupied positions that have remained largely uncontested and unaccountable to the public.<sup>170</sup> The decision-making process rotates around the interests of the leader and his closest aides; decisions taken by the regime are supported by the security services and the regime barons to secure regime survival.

Regime survival is the foremost objective of Third World leaders; this can be achieved through balancing the interests of domestic groups, and forming alliances according to the regional balance of power.<sup>171</sup> This has led David to re-assert that state interests, in the Third World, are necessarily subordinate to the requisites of regime survival.

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<sup>169</sup> Smith, B., *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 175-178.

<sup>170</sup> Huntington, S., *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), chapter 8.

<sup>171</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 236.

***Foreign policy - a rational criterion?***

Systemic factors are held partially responsible for the foreign policies of Third World states, but for David, domestic politics play the primary part in shaping the determinants of foreign policy.<sup>172</sup> Despite the importance that David attaches to the role played by domestic politics and the structural forces of the international system in forming foreign policy, omnibalancing recognises that foreign policy is based upon a rational decision-making process. The political elite balance the constraints and the opportunities of the domestic arena against the international system, exercising rational policies to maximise the longevity of the regime. By doing so, they offer the regime a degree of flexibility and autonomy from both domestic and international constraints. David does, however, prioritise the use of internal threats to explain foreign policy over the presence of external threats; in this vein Goode suggests that foreign policy is domestic policy pursued by other means.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 235.

<sup>173</sup> Goode, R., "State Building as a Determinant of Foreign Policy in the New States," in L. Martin (ed.), *Neutralism and Non-alignment*, (New York: Praeger, 1962).

## Conclusion

Within chapter one, I have introduced the tools of analysis that will enable us to understand how Syria has adjusted to the New World Order. From the tool-kit, I have selected to use three principal concepts, the state, power, and national security. These concepts are fundamental to analysing state behaviour, especially the formulation of foreign policy.

The state is crucial to comprehending the dynamics of international relations. It has been the principal actor in foreign affairs, but is being increasingly forced to share some of its responsibilities with other non-state actors, such as TNCs, international agencies, and trans-governmental organisations. In effect, the state may be losing elements of its autonomy to these international forces.

Autonomy is the key to understanding how resilient the state is to dominant domestic interests. If the state enjoys relative autonomy from such interests, it can pursue a rational policy governed by the national interest. Achieving state autonomy, however, does not imply that a state can fulfil its ambitions. In order to pursue its objectives, the state must acquire sufficient power.

Power is central to analysing state behaviour and the international political system. States accumulate power in order to preserve their national security, and to exert influence over their neighbours. Power can be located at the following levels of analysis: the individual, the state, and the system. It exists in at least two forms: potential and realised. When realised, power can be used in a number of ways to exert influence: diplomatic persuasion, economic aid or sanction, and coercion.

States are the foremost repositories of power in the international political system. They are responsible for converting potential power into realised power. In the process of conversion, the state uses tangible and intangible sources of power to enable it to compete in an anarchic environment, and to maximise its national security. In the twentieth century, power has become less unidimensional, and possibly more evasive to state control.

The increase in inter-state relations, and the matrix of interdependence and dependence amongst the world's states has given economic power a new status. Traditionally, where coercion has characterised state relations, complex economic patterns have come to dominate the field of international relations. TNCs, international agencies, and trans-governmental organisations, as the masters of the global economy, have challenged the primacy of the state as the principal power broker in the international political system. Despite this possible diminution of state power, the state remains the cardinal player in the domestic and international areas of politics. This role alone invests the state with the responsibility to harness the tangible and intangible sources of power towards the preservation of national security.

National security is a pre-occupation of states. In a world, where states exist in anarchy, national security is constantly under threat from the ambitions of hegemonic states. It has always been associated with the preservation of national boundaries, and the maintenance of territorial integrity. Power accumulation has served the state in its pursuit to meet the challenge of hegemonic neighbours.

Nevertheless, this perception of national security has certain limitations. In an integrated global economy, the threat to national security may radiate from a less tangible range of sources. Threats to the national security of Third World states, for instance, are just as liable to come from the imposition of economic reforms,

provoking domestic unrest, as from the hegemonic agendas of their neighbours. National security as a concept, therefore, has recently been broadened, by political economists, to incorporate less discernible threats to national security. These include the notions of economic security, and personal security.

The paradigms of international relations theory are constructed from these tools of analysis. Each paradigm offers a different conceptualisation of international relations; they view these tools of analysis through a kaleidoscopic lens.

### ***Realism***

Realism contends that the state is the principal actor in the international political system. It is solely responsible for conducting foreign relations amongst states. It is unitary in form, and extracts power from society, thus enabling it to conduct policies according to the national interest and the pre-requisites of power politics.

Realism asserts that human nature is governed by self-interest. This assessment is superimposed onto state behaviour. The imprint of human nature ensures that states compete for finite resources, and that the international political system is anarchic. Neo-realism, works within the same framework of realism, but claims that the structure of the international political system is responsible for governing the behaviour of states. Both are in agreement that anarchy characterises the relations amongst states, and international politics is an ahistorical process.

The anarchy within the international political system means that national security takes precedence over all forms of foreign policy decision-making. The preservation of international order can only be adequately attained through a balance of power achieved by the main powers of the international system in the form of a multipolar, bipolar, or unipolar structure. The accumulation of power, extracted from intangible and tangible

sources, equips the state with the ability to resist potential invasions. Only a unitary state can perform this function, and this guarantees the longevity of the state as the principal actor in international relations.

According to realists, the impact of the global economy and the information revolution has not managed to circumvent the centrality of the state in international relations. Moreover, the increasing role of TNCs in domestic and international affairs have not constituted a diminution of state autonomy. The state remains the singular sovereign power that conducts the relations among states. International organisations, trans-governmental bodies and TNCs are compelled to negotiate with the state, if they are to operate within its sovereign territory, and as a result are subordinate entities.<sup>174</sup>

### ***Pluralism***

Pluralism offers an alternative approach to the study of international relations. Whereas realism stresses the ahistorical process of international relations and the avaricious character of human nature, pluralism recognises the significance of history to the processes of human development. The essence of human nature is transmutable; the co-operative and benevolent features of human nature can be cultivated and transposed from the domestic arena into the international political system.

Pluralists do not believe that the state is the principle actor in international relations, nor do they agree that the state is unitary. The state has been dislodged as the principal actor, and has been forced to share its international functions with prominent non-state actors. The growth of TNCs, international agencies, and trans-governmental bodies in international affairs have undermined the sovereignty of states in conducting their own affairs.

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<sup>174</sup> Drache, D., "From Keynes to K-Mart: Competitiveness in a Corporate Age," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 53-56.



Pluralists argue that non-state actors are increasingly influencing economic policies, and this is beginning to have a profound effect upon the state's autonomy. States are experiencing a loss of autonomy in the decision-making process to non-state actors. The state then, is in the process of losing its significance, as a principal actor, power broker, and economic administrator.<sup>175</sup>

Protagonists of the pluralist paradigm purport that the global economy is integrating into a system managed by international agencies. In this system, the state can exercise control over its natural resources,<sup>176</sup> but its leverage over the economy is being substituted with non-state actors, such as the IMF, trans-governmental bodies, and TNCs.<sup>177</sup>

The interdependence that has arisen from the role of TNCs is represented, by pluralists, as evidence of historical progression in international relations. Interdependence is fundamental to reducing the constant risk of war. Supported by the information revolution, interdependence has helped to reduce animosity amongst nations, and produce a climate conducive to international co-operation.

### ***Globalism***

Globalists do not share the optimism of pluralists. They substitute the term interdependence with dependence, thus portraying international relations as a manifestation of global dependency based upon the exploitation of the Southern hemisphere by the Northern hemisphere.

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<sup>175</sup> Streeck, W., "Public Power beyond the Nation-state: The Case Study of the European Community," in R. Boyer, and D. Drache (eds.), *States against Markets: The Limits of Globalization*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 308-313.

<sup>176</sup> This is a questionable precept considering the role of oil companies in the Middle East.

<sup>177</sup> Penrose, E., "From Economic Liberalization to International Integration: The Role of the State," in T. Niblock, and E. Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp. 15.

Similarly to neo-realists, globalists identify the international system as the principal determinant of state behaviour. The globalist paradigm is based upon the dependency school, and focuses upon the structural determinants of the world capitalist system.

Globalists, such as Wallerstein and Galtung examine the mechanisms of domination that contribute to the uneven development between the First and the Third Worlds. Their analyses shift the focus of realism and pluralism away from the First World towards the Third World. Their study of imperialism stresses the economic domination of the South by the North, and the permeability of the Third World state to the activities of international state and non-state actors.

### *Omnibalancing*

The three paradigms alluded to above contain relevant assumptions for this study, but they are inappropriate for the following reasons. The emphasis of realism and pluralism upon the First World makes these paradigms too general for our research; realism is the most apposite paradigm, but its Western-centric approach misses the subtleties of our case study. Globalism's focus upon the economy over the role of politics may be suitable for the Third World as a whole, but in the case of Syria, it would fail to accommodate the primacy of politics in the Syrian state.

Omnibalancing represents an integrated paradigm that focuses specifically on the states of the Third World. It pays attention to the link between domestic and international politics, thereby ascertaining their relative influences upon state behaviour. Departing from David's analysis, however, the focus of this study will invert his order of preference. It will place its emphasis upon the international political system, whilst recognising the impact of domestic politics upon foreign policy formulation.

Syria's adjustment to the New World Order will be analysed using the revised omnibalancing model construed from the three paradigms of international relations theory. Owing to Syria's location in the Third World, and in the highly penetrated region of the Middle East, this research will be based upon the following assumptions:

- the state is the principal actor;
- national security dominates the concerns of the state;
- the state balances international politics against domestic politics;
- power accumulation serves the objectives of the state.

Unlike in any other part of the world, the threats, opportunities, and constraints to the states of the Middle East are especially acute. They owe their existence to the continuous presence of international actors in the Middle Eastern state-system. The penetration of the Middle East region by the world's powers has guaranteed that the international political system impinges upon states' foreign policies. In contrast, the lack of institutionalisation in many of the states of the Middle East has made them particularly susceptible to the configurations of power within the domestic realm.

To examine Syria's adjustment to the New World Order, it is necessary to understand the relationship between the Middle Eastern state-system and the international political system. This relationship can be identified in the structure of the international political system. The relationship between the two systems has undergone a transformation with the advent of the New World Order in 1991. We are, therefore, compelled to scrutinise the co-ordinates of the New World Order.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

#### **Introduction**

Before one can ascertain Syria's ability to adjust to the New World Order, it is essential to understand the character of that order. The emergence of the New World Order did not represent a collapse of an ideological system, but it amounted to a radical change in the global balance of power. The new configurations of power have radically altered the patterns established during the Cold War, and they have ushered in a period of uncertainty. Chapter Two will examine the characteristics of the New World Order in order to provide a context in which we can study Syria's role in that world order.

Before proceeding with an analysis of the New World Order, one needs to define the concept of the world order, which will be examined according to the three paradigms of international relations theory, mentioned in chapter one.

#### **The World Order**

World order, for the realist, means the regulation of world stability through the balance of power mechanism. For Gilpin, the distribution of power among states

constitutes the principal form of control in every international system.<sup>1</sup> World order is the product of a stable distribution of power among the major states.<sup>2</sup>

The world order is not governed by international law administered by a supranational government, but by the competition among the world's hegemonic powers, through the balance of power.<sup>3</sup> Realism opines that there are two conditions that militate against the creation of a supranational political entity:

*(i) the structure of the international political system*

The international political system comprises structure, units, and interaction. Neorealists, such as Waltz, consider the structure of the international system to be anarchic.<sup>4</sup> Systemic theory asserts that the behaviour of units, in this case states, is constrained by the structure of the system. In other words, anarchy, as the structure of the international political system, determines the behaviour of states. The absence of a hierarchical system means that states exist in a self-help system, where considerations of security are paramount to survival.<sup>5</sup> States, as the primary units of the international system, compete in an anarchic environment where national interests constitute the mode of interaction.

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<sup>1</sup> Keohane, R. (ed.), "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Waltz, K., "Anarchic Order and Balances of Power," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 104.

(ii) *the national interests of states*

Due to the structural constraints placed upon states, the creation of a world government is not deemed possible. Waltz notes:

*each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways it judges best. Force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of a reconciling of interests that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy.*<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, a stable world order can only be achieved through the impositions of hegemonic actors or through a balance of power among states. The distribution of power and the maintenance of that balance provides the source of world order for the realists.

The pluralist paradigm emphasises a deterministic view of world history. Human civilisation has set upon an historic journey where the elimination of war is a realistic and an achievable goal. Achievements within the domestic realm, for example, the benefits of universal education, can be transposed onto the international realm.

The distinction between international and domestic politics is not as pronounced as in realism. There is a direct correlation between the progressive tendencies of the state and the international political system. For instance, the tendencies of Western states towards democratisation, economic liberalisation, and human rights can be superimposed onto the international political system.

World order is developed through the institutionalisation of processes, inter-state communications and a progression towards an international society rather than an

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<sup>6</sup> Waltz, K., *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 238.

international order.<sup>7</sup> World order derives from the establishment of universal norms, values, and international law. Harmony amongst states is an obtainable objective; pluralists argue that it can be achieved through a world order built upon universal interest. The interest of world government would supersede the national interests of states.

The domination of the Southern hemisphere by the Northern hemisphere is the depiction of the world order by globalists. According to globalists, the world order is a system that owes its identity to the pattern of economic exploitation of the South. In effect, the world order is governed by the spread of global capitalism, and the promotion of free markets which operate against the interests of the indigenous populations of the Southern states. The debt crisis guarantees a relationship of dependency.<sup>8</sup>

The most apposite definition of the world order, for the purpose of this study, is codified as *the global distribution of power*. A change in this distribution of power can lead to a transformation in the world order. The following section will elaborate on this concept, and validate its applicability to this research.

### ***The distribution of power***

The transition from the previous world order to the New World Order can be attributed to the change in the distribution of global power. The change in the balance of power has transformed the international political system from a bipolar system to a unipolar or multipolar system. In order to understand the system of the

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<sup>7</sup> Watson, A., *The Evolution of International Society*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 299-309.

<sup>8</sup> Wallerstein, I., "The Art of the Possible, or the Politics of Radical Transformation," in K. Hador (ed.), *New Perspectives in North-South Dialogue: Essays in Honour of Olaf Palme*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 39-40.

New World Order, I shall examine the three different configurations of the balance of power.

### ***Bipolarity***

Bipolarity is a form of balance of power that polarises the world into two hegemonic camps. The polarisation is based upon the distribution of power between the two main antagonists. It is also a system in which power is distributed in such a way that the two states are so powerful that they can defend themselves against any combination of states.<sup>9</sup>

The distribution of power that characterised the world order between the conclusion of World War II and the breakdown of the Soviet Union was bipolar; it is thought to have produced far more stability than the multipolarity of the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Waltz argues that "the bipolar power structure is best in terms of international security as it is simpler, more stable and less accident-prone than more diffuse systems".<sup>11</sup>

It was asserted that the bipolar system was made more sustainable via the addition of the nuclear option to international politics. The acquisition of a nuclear capacity was considered to have diminished the likelihood of war.<sup>12</sup> The absence of pervasive

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<sup>9</sup> Wagner, R., "What Was Bipolarity?," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 89.

<sup>10</sup> Waltz, K., "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus*, vol. 93, no. 3, Summer 1964, pp. 881-909.

<sup>11</sup> Buzan, B., *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), pp. 162.

<sup>12</sup> Waltz, K., "Toward Nuclear Peace," in R. Art, and K. Waltz (eds.), *The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 600-601.



world war between 1945 and 1989 was a testament to the security that bipolarity had produced.<sup>13</sup>

The hegemonic ambitions of the superpowers were pursued in the states of the Third World, but the central powers, the US and the Soviet Union, were insulated from regional aspects of the zero-sum game. The zero-sum game was not a definitive expression of superpower relations, as there was sufficient flexibility within the system to allow for the loss of some states. The Soviet's loss of Egypt, as a client state, after Camp David demonstrated the flexibility within the system to allow for the loss of superpower influence.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 demonstrated the unwillingness of the superpowers to engage in direct conflict, despite the prospect of gaining or conceding a client.<sup>15</sup>

The balance of power between the superpowers during the Cold War was unique in:

- its definitive separation of Europe;
- the continuing quests for influence in the Third World;
- the enormous acquisition of both nuclear and conventional arsenals.

The conceptualisation of the bipolar political era was reminiscent of previous orders, where the main actors searched for power.

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<sup>13</sup> Waltz, K., "Toward Nuclear Peace," in R. Art, and K. Waltz (eds.), *The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 573.

<sup>14</sup> Hopwood, D., *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 111.

<sup>15</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 136-142.

### *Multipolarity*

The multipolar division of the world implies that power is distributed among a variety of major states; each one contains different sources of power. Through a coalition of alliances, a balance is struck among the states, thus curbing any hegemonic ambitions of expanding states.<sup>16</sup> Where one state develops its capabilities, at the expense of its neighbours, thereby constituting a security threat, a realignment of forces takes place to curtail the power of the aggressor state. Thus, equilibrium governs the anarchic state of affairs that is inherent in international relations. The failure to counter-balance the hegemonic traits of developing regional states leads to an increased prospect for regional war, and potentiality of contagious wars.

As a regulator of global stability, multipolarity is less effective than bipolarity in providing a mechanism for global security. The extensive number of variables that must be taken into consideration before foreign policy decisions are formulated and executed increases the likelihood of errors. The multipolar character of Europe, after the Westphalian peace of 1648, has often been attributed to generating instability in Europe, which has led to two contagious world wars.<sup>17</sup>

Hegemonic theory, alternatively connotes that, the predominance of one power in a system is more conducive to peace. The prevailing power cannot be significantly challenged, hence stability becomes a feature of international relations.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with this theory, the demise of a hegemonic state and the transfer of power into more diverse channels, or the emergence of a new challenger, produces

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<sup>16</sup> Luard, E., *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations 1648-1815*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Nye, J., and R. Keohane, *Understanding International Conflicts: Origins of the Great Twentieth Conflicts*, (Harvard: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 56-57.

<sup>18</sup> Nye, J., and R. Keohane, *Understanding International Conflicts: Origins of the Great Twentieth Conflicts*, (Harvard: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 53.

the potential for an escalated war. The outbreaks of hegemonic struggles, Gilpin comments, have most frequently been triggered by fears of ultimate decline, and the perceived erosion of power.<sup>19</sup>

### *Unipolarity*

Unipolarity is a system of international relations where there is only one dominant power in the world which provides stability for the anarchic system through the processes of regulation. Regulation, in this sense, can be achieved through the traditional methods of control, such as economic assistance, economic threat, and military threat.

Unipolarity places the responsibility of policing the globe upon the hegemonic power. It is incumbent upon the unipolar power to placate the economic tensions among the major states, and to contain the military threats within the Third World. The task is burdensome for a unipolar power, and it is dependent upon the economic support of its allies. Consequently, the unipolar power can share the responsibility of the world order when dealing with the First World, therefore constituting a soft-form of multipolarity, but is assertive of its unipolar hegemony in the regions of the Third World.

## **The Rise of the New World Order**

The Soviet policies of perestroika and glasnost, introduced after 1985, produced a climate for change. They initiated a process that led to the demise of bipolarity as the defining feature of international relations, and resulted in the redistribution of global power. The changes in the structure of Soviet-US relations in the late 1980s signified

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<sup>19</sup>Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 516.

a move away from the period of confrontation of the Cold War. It signalled a movement towards co-operation between the superpowers. The ubiquitous economic crisis of the Soviet Union led its leaders to concede to US political hegemony. The power of the Soviet Union was diffused throughout the international political system.<sup>20</sup>

The reconfiguration of global power gained momentum in 1989. The collapse of the Soviet system throughout Eastern Europe, the Velvet Revolution of Czechoslovakia, the overthrow of Ceausescu in Romania, and the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War.<sup>21</sup> The post-World War II structures, established in Yalta in 1945, fell away, and a new structure of international relations started to rise.

The New World Order, however, did not emerge until August 1990; the intervening period was transitory and lacked any coherent definition. The New World Order was the successor to the bipolar era though its character was not clear until Iraq invaded Kuwait. "Should Iraq be successfully expelled, it would be possible to speak optimistically of a 'new world order'."<sup>22</sup>

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on 2 August 1990, provided the main actors of the New World Order with an opportunity to illustrate the depth of the changes taking place in the international political system. Iraq's behaviour constituted a threat to the ordinates of the New World Order.<sup>23</sup> The Iraqi invasion challenged one of the

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<sup>20</sup> Linklater, A., "Neo-realism in Theory and Practice," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 245.

<sup>21</sup> Young, J., *Cold War Europe 1945-1989: A Political History*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), pp. 224.

<sup>22</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. xxix.

<sup>23</sup> Chomsky, N., "The US in the Gulf Crisis," in H. Bresheeth, and N. Yuval-Davis (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order*, (London: Zed, 1991), pp. 19-20.

foundations of the previous world order, which remained fundamental to the new order. Enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter was the principal of the inviolability of territorial integrity; the invasion of Kuwait was presented as the first challenge to the New World Order.<sup>24</sup>

The concept of the New World Order emerged at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and according to US policy-makers, it marked the triumph of a liberal world order over a world governed by force.<sup>25</sup> The New World Order, according to this perspective, heralded a new era in peaceful relations among nation-states; global relations were undergoing a far-reaching transformation. According to this analysis, the institutionalised conflict of the Cold War was being replaced with co-ordination, co-operation, and mutuality between the Soviet Union and the US. The repercussions upon the world's states were presented in a constructive and positive light; the Third World conflicts were no longer driven by the ideological or strategic interests of the superpowers.<sup>26</sup>

The role of the second Gulf War, as the "defining moment" of the New World Order,<sup>27</sup> will be addressed as a case study in chapter six. In chapter two, however, I shall attempt to define the New World Order. Once an understanding of the New World Order is established, it will be possible to examine how Syria has adjusted to its demands. In order to facilitate this process I have chosen to divide chapter two

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<sup>24</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 9, and Hendrickson, D., "The End of American History: American Security, the National Purpose, and the New World Order," in G. Allison, and G. Treverton (eds.), *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order*, (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 397.

<sup>25</sup> Beschloss, M., and S. Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, (London: LittleBrown, 1993), pp. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 17-19.

<sup>27</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. xxx.

into four sections: an historical perspective; the end of the Cold War; the New World Order; and the New World Order and the paradigms.

## An Historical Perspective

If one intends to understand the dynamics of the New World Order, it is fundamental to appreciate the structure of the previous world order. Bipolarity was the defining feature of the previous world system. The configuration of global power, prior to the end of the Cold War in 1989, was distributed between two competing international actors, the US and the Soviet Union. The Yalta Conference of 1945 set the precedent for the succeeding forty-five years; the world was divided by the two global powers.<sup>28</sup>

The world's spheres of influence were divided between the US and the Soviet Union. A third force sought to project itself into the international political system, the non-aligned movement. However, this group failed to impose its agenda upon the superpowers because it lacked sufficient influence.<sup>29</sup>

The basic division of the globe into two contesting superpowers provided the world with relative stability. As both the US and the Soviet Union contained the capacity (nuclear) to destroy the earth, they arrived at a point of balance and stalemate. Stability was managed at the core of the international system, especially after the Cuba crisis in 1961, whilst low-level conflicts became extensions of superpower influence in the Third World.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Wagner, R., "What Was Bipolarity?," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 81.

<sup>29</sup> See Tadié, B., "The Movement of the Non-Aligned and Its Dilemmas Today," in M. Selim (ed.), *Non-Alignment in a Changing World*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1983), pp. 127-135, and Lassassi, A., *Non-Alignment and Algerian Foreign Policy*, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Kern, M., P. Levering, and R. Levering, *The Kennedy Crisis: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 99-101.

The US and the Soviet Union pursued their contest for international and regional influence through a variety of means: ideology, cultural imperialism, economic systems, Third World porosity, and the military option.<sup>31</sup> The encompassing economies of the two superpowers, combined with their military superiority, allowed them to intervene in Third World affairs.

The competition between the two superpowers took on the form of a Cold War. The Korean War (1950) has traditionally been considered the official starting date of the Cold War,<sup>32</sup> although the Azerbaijan crisis between Iran and the Soviet Union in 1946 initiated the process towards the Cold War.<sup>33</sup> From this point in history, the competition between the superpowers assumed a new dimension.

There are several explanations for the origins and significance of the Cold War; but to all protagonists, this era has represented a modern phenomenon in the annals of world history. The Cold War has been assessed by competing perspectives, namely, orthodox, realist, and revisionist. The following section will endeavour to analyse these perspectives.

### *The orthodox perspective*

The consensus of understanding achieved among the US elite during the 1945-1947 period was mainly shaped by the orthodox perspective.<sup>34</sup> The Pentagon and

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 23-46.

<sup>32</sup> Paterson, T. (ed.), "Introduction: American Critics of the Cold War and Their Alternatives," *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Young, J., *Cold War Europe 1945-1989: A Political History*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), pp. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Thompson, K. *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 2.

Washington policy-makers were persuasive in promoting the Cold War as an ideological war, and their assertions went largely uncontested until the Vietnam War. The Truman doctrine of 1947 reified the US position,<sup>35</sup> and formed the foundation of US foreign policy from 1947 to 1989.

The Cold War, according to the orthodox school, was described in the fatalistic and vivid terms of the US Cold War document, NSC 68, of April 1950.<sup>36</sup> The doctrine was conceived according to an imminent Soviet threat to the peoples of the free world. The document stated: "the Cold War is in fact a real war in which survival of the free world is at stake".<sup>37</sup>

The Soviet Union was depicted, by policy-makers, as an expansionist empire with pretensions of global domination.<sup>38</sup> The orthodox school portrayed the Soviet Union as a major threat to the ideology, institutions, norms, and values of the free world. Laquer and Krauthammer contrasted the motives of the US with those of the Soviet Union by writing: "Unlike the Soviet Union, the US does not want to convert anyone to a specific political, social, or economic system".<sup>39</sup> The global objective of the Soviet Union culminated in the overthrow of the US-led capitalist system, and its

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<sup>35</sup> Bernstein, B., "Walter Lippman and the Early Cold War," in T. Paterson (ed.), *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 39-41.

<sup>36</sup> Berger, H., "Senator Robert A. Taft Dissents from Military Escalation," in T. Paterson (ed.), *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Bernstein, B., "Walter Lippman and the Early Cold War," in T. Paterson (ed.), *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Graebner, N. (ed.), *The Cold War: A Conflict of Ideology and Power*, (Lexington: Heath, 1976), pp. 18.



accompanying democratic features. Hence, US foreign policy was preoccupied with containing the Soviet threat.<sup>40</sup>

Apparently, the orthodox interpretation of the bipolar division of the world was created in response to Soviet expansionism, expressed through the messianic message of communism. The division of the world fell into two competing ideologies, good and evil. The Cold War had, according to this perspective, evolved into a limitless contest between freedom and tyranny, a totally revolutionary struggle propelling history down its final dangerous course.<sup>41</sup>

### *The realist perspective*

For the realists, the Cold War represented another manifestation of the balance of power. They viewed the Cold War as another phase of international politics; power remained the defining feature of the international political system, and the balance of power determined the structure of that system. Bipolarity, as a form of power distribution, replaced the fractious and unstable multipolar balance of power that characterised European relations after 1648.<sup>42</sup> This took place after World War II; it was resolved by the eternal quest for power among states struggling for ascendancy in the natural state of anarchy.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 70-71.

<sup>41</sup> Graebner, N. (ed.), *The Cold War: A Conflict of Ideology and Power*, (Lexington: Heath, 1976), pp. vii.

<sup>42</sup> Nye, J., and R. Keohane, *Understanding International Conflicts: Origins of the Great Twentieth Conflicts*, (Harvard: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 49, and Brown, S., *International Relations in a Changing Global System: Toward a Theory of the World Polity*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 74.

<sup>43</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 30.

The Cold War was based upon the distribution of power between the US and the Soviet Union after the destruction of Germany and Japan. The US and the Soviet Union were the only powers that could enter the contest and achieve a balance of power. In doing so, they locked horns and charged towards the spheres of influence.

Bipolarity was the resulting structure of the international political system. After the Yalta conference, in 1945,<sup>44</sup> the future of Europe was agreed upon, and the semblance of the balance of power was set in motion. The Cold War, then, can be perceived, from the realist perspective, as the maintenance of the traditional balance of power, but with the displacement of the multipolar balance of power by the bipolar balance of power.

### *The revisionist perspective*

The revisionist perspective grew from the aftermath of the Vietnam war; it challenged the prevailing orthodox interpretations of the Cold War, and focused upon the global ambitions of the US. Haunted by the Great Depression of the 1930s, the US sought to control the prevailing economic order. Accordingly, the US foreign policy was thought to be motivated by securing its economic aspirations. The ideological dimension of the Cold War served to legitimise the US' economic prerogatives.<sup>45</sup>

The threat of communism served to legitimise the US decision-making process. The spectre of communism, as an evil ideology, was invoked to instil a sense of paranoia, both within the US and throughout Europe. The period of McCarthyism, in the 1950s, was a symptom of US foreign policy, as it helped to demonise the Soviet

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<sup>44</sup> Thompson, K. *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 27.

Union. Revisionists, such as Chomsky, doubted whether the Soviet Union posed a real threat to the free world. On the contrary, to them the free world was under threat from the dark and authoritative forces of global capitalism and liberalism. He wrote:

*It is true that by its very nature, the USSR constituted an unacceptable challenge. Specifically, its autarkic command economy interfered with US plans to construct a global system based on (relatively) free trade and investment, which, under the conditions of mid-century was expected to be dominated by US corporations and highly beneficial to their interests, as indirect as it was.<sup>46</sup>*

The revisionists acknowledged the threat of the Soviet Union to US interests, but attributed the rhetoric of communism more to the historical insecurity of the Russian state, rather than an expression of its desire to conquer the capitalist world. The Soviets had encountered numerous European sponsored counter-insurgency plans since the 1917 revolution;<sup>47</sup> they had also suffered two invasions emanating through Poland.<sup>48</sup> The geographical, social and political vulnerabilities of the Soviet Union accentuated its sense of insecurity due to the enormous losses, both in human and economic terms, during World War II. Within this context, the discourse between the superpowers was motivated by Soviet vulnerability, and the economic ambitions of the US.

Europe was devastated by World War II, and the US emerged as a dominant actor in world affairs. The economies of the major European powers were destroyed during World War II; this period succinctly concluded the reign of the British and French

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<sup>46</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 27.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, G. (ed.), "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev," *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 5-7, and MacFarlane, S., *Superpower Rivalry and 3rd World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 132..

<sup>48</sup> Young, J., *Cold War Europe 1945-1989: A Political History*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), pp. 3.

empires. The US attempted to compensate for the diminishing roles of the European centres of power.<sup>49</sup> At this stage, the primary concern of US foreign policy, according to Thompson, was to sustain the growth of its domestic economy through access to the world's markets. The competition for influence over Europe appeared to be the first stage in securing markets for the US, and the building of political allegiances for the succeeding world order.<sup>50</sup>

The revisionist writings of Thompson confirm Chomsky's assessment of US aspirations. In order to replace the vacuum of the multipolar world, they opine, the US was required to expand its political and economic hegemony through the management of the global capitalist order. The achievement of hegemony required an underlying ideology to legitimise US foreign policy initiatives.<sup>51</sup>

The promotion of a pervasive and persuasive global ideology, one based on traditional US liberalism, was achieved via two means. The first was the vilification of a mortal enemy. The demonisation of the Soviet Union, aided by the ruthless regime of Stalin,<sup>52</sup> fulfilled this aspect. The second means was the promotion of the interests of the free world, a pejorative concept with resonance to the liberal-democracies of Europe, and the states of the Third World. Colonialism and

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<sup>49</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 43.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 43.

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Tucker, R., *Stalin in Power, The Revolution from Above 1928-1941*, (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 479-526.

imperialism belonged to the previous era; capitalism became the ideology of the free peoples of the world.<sup>33</sup>

The end of World War II pronounced the end of colonialism. The states of Western Europe rescinded from their Third World ventures, and internalised their national struggles. They became dependent upon US aid, and were incorporated into the economic strategy of the US. The ideology that accompanied US economic aid was utilised to counter the socialist ideology of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the free Third World, the US presented itself as the guarantor of newly independent states. In accordance with US ideology, it was incumbent upon the US to preserve the independent states from socialism. The US was the central power of the West, and liberating force of the Third World.<sup>34</sup>

Thompson challenges this interpretation, and suggests that the liberation of independent states, based on the premise of liberal and democratic values, was a myth designed to extend the economic ambitions of the US.<sup>35</sup> The containment of the Soviet Union became a vital concern to the maintenance of US political and economic hegemony. The US capitalised upon its hegemonic position within the Middle East and systematically attempted to displace the more traditional interests of Britain and France.

The Middle East, as a regional sub-system, became a natural obsession for the US as the region's oil had been responsible for the rapid reconstruction and industrialisation

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<sup>33</sup> MacFarlane, S., *Superpower Rivalry and 3rd World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 198-206.

<sup>34</sup> MacFarlane, S., *Superpower Rivalry and 3rd World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 198-206.

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 44.

of Western Europe. The US State Department described the region "as a stupendous source of power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history ... probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment".<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the advent of US aid to Europe and its support of the newly-independent states were not based on humanitarian motives.<sup>57</sup> The propagation of US influence was determined by the economic opportunities found in each region or state. The cultivation of the world market was fuelled by the prerogatives of US economic hegemony and the interests of the US elite.<sup>58</sup>

Chomsky opined that US foreign policy was guided by the interests of the political and economic elite. After the self-imposed destruction of Europe, the US became a global power. Not surprisingly, the state and corporate managers of the US hoped to use their power to design an economic order that would serve the interests they represented.<sup>59</sup>

The contradiction between liberal ideology and the implementation of capitalist economic policy illuminated the dichotomy amongst the decision-makers of the US political elite. America's economic expansion and its quest for free markets clashed with the demand for the political and economic independence of other states.

*Due to the irresistible pressures of US capitalism and the power of economic elites in the shaping of foreign policy, the US pursued a*

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<sup>56</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 53.

<sup>57</sup> Radosh, R., and L. Liggio, "Henry A. Wallace and the Open Door," in T. Paterson (ed.), *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 93.

<sup>58</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 44.

<sup>59</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 45.

*policy of imperial anticolonialism rationalised in the language of humanitarianism and national self-determination, but motivated by the quest for free markets essential to US prosperity.<sup>60</sup>*

The ideological content of the Cold War was convincingly deconstructed by the revisionist historians. For them, ideology was used to cultivate economic opportunities for the US. The state socialism of the Soviet Union conflicted with US interests in developing the global capitalist order. The US drive for markets and free trade could lead one to the conclusion that socialist forms of national development and state control were inimical to the global design of the US.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the US opposed the economic strategy of the Soviet Union, and vilified its ideology in order to extend its sphere of influence through the new markets in Europe and the Third World.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Summary of the perspectives***

Although the three perspectives operate from a different premise, they are all united in their evaluation of power. Power appears to be central to all three perspectives. The orthodox analysis focuses upon the competition between the ideologies of communism and capitalism. The orthodox perception of the Cold War focused on the ideological war between the US and the Soviet Union. Specifically, the Soviet Union was seeking power in order to impose its totalitarian system of government on the

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<sup>60</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume 1, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 44.

<sup>61</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume 1, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 48.

<sup>62</sup> MacFarlane, S., *Superpower Rivalry and 3rd World Radicalism: The Idea of National Liberation*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 199-200.

free peoples of the world. For the orthodox school, the ideological division of the world represented a unique moment in world history.<sup>63</sup>

Realists focused on the ahistorical character of power politics in international relations. Working from this perspective, realists placed the primacy of national interests above ideology. They perceived the contest between the US and the Soviet Union as a struggle of national interests. The structure of the international political system was bipolar, and was governed by the omniscient balance of power.

The Cold War, for the realists, was characterised by the pursuit of power. The distribution of power after World War II was transformed from multipolarity, based in Europe, to bipolarity between the Soviet Union and the US. The division of the world was maintained as each actor sought to maximise its power.

The revisionists also challenged the role of ideology in the superpower contest. Their analysis was based upon a critical enquiry of the US agenda. Revisionists sought to demystify the ideological aspects of the Cold War.<sup>64</sup> Revisionist historians suggest that the Cold War was engineered and fostered by the US economic elite as it provided suitable justification for:

- the development of a US-led capitalist economic order;
- the expansion of US economic interests across the globe;
- the subjugation of the former European colonies by economic imperialism.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was embedded into the US psyche, and the expansion of guaranteed markets through the Cold War was the option chosen to

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<sup>63</sup> Thompson, K., *Cold War Theories: Volume I, World Polarization, 1943-1953*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), pp. 36-38.

<sup>64</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 45.



eliminate any chance of a return to the 1930s. The reconstruction of Europe and Japan was the first stage of ensuring US survival, predominance, and hegemony.

In examining the Cold War, I am working from the assumption that the global order is defined by the distribution of power, rather than the utopian goals of freedom or the contest of ideology. It is possible to identify the distribution of power as the main feature of the bipolar era. The Soviet Union and the US were the successors to an imploded multipolar order; their assertion in world affairs moved the orientation of global politics towards two mutually exclusive political and economic systems under-written by the pursuit of power.

The hegemonic struggle between the Soviet Union and the US ended due to the Soviet's economic over-extension, and a New World Order was born without a name.<sup>65</sup> The collapse of the Soviet system throughout Eastern Europe led to the end of the Cold War.

## **The End of the Cold War**

There was not a definitive end to the Cold War. The process of its demise was symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This process culminated on the eve of the liberation of Kuwait in January 1991. Bartley is most dogmatic in his observation: "On November 9, 1989, our era ended. The breaching of the Berlin Wall sounded the end of, not merely, the Cold War, but an epoch of global conflict that started with the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 516.

<sup>66</sup> Bartley, R., "The Case for Optimism: The West Should Believe in Itself," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 15.

The end of the Cold War cannot be attributed to any one event. The string of events that marked the end of the bipolar era were:

- the fall of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe;
- the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact;
- the ultimate breakdown of the Soviet Union.

The structural causes of the end of the Cold War can be identified within the changing structures of the international political system. Between 1985 and 1991 the US-Soviet relationship was redefined. President Gorbachev was forced, by structural constraints, to attend to the compressed economic problems of the Soviet Union. Unlike his predecessors, he confronted the economic constraints faced by the Soviet economy, and embraced the policies of economic reconstruction.<sup>67</sup> The Soviet economic system could no longer sustain the challenge of global capitalism, and it was compelled to accede to the prevalent global economic order.

Gorbachev's implementation of *new thinking* into international relations initiated a restructuring of the bipolar relationship of world power. *New thinking* in Soviet foreign policy energised a process that led to a distinct improvement in East-West dialogue. The development of the programme for nuclear disarmament (START I & II), and the gradual liberalisation of the ailing Soviet economy arose from the policies of perestroika and glasnost.<sup>68</sup>

The cessation of the Cold War was greeted with euphoria throughout the West. It sounded the death knell of a political structure that had forcibly separated Europe,

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<sup>67</sup> Halliday, F., "The End of the Cold War and International Relations: Some Analytic and Theoretical Conclusions," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 40-44.

<sup>68</sup> Gorbachev, M., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (London: Fontana Press, 1987).

and polarised the peoples of the world. The future remained precarious, but after the evils of communism had been overcome, it looked brighter. The proliferation of global communications, the role of TNCs, and the prospect for international institution-building resembled the spirit of the post-World War I era.<sup>69</sup>

The denouement of the Cold War and the birth of the New World Order did not occur simultaneously. The transitory period was filled with uncertainty, particularly when the Soviet Union was rocked by the attempted putsch of 1991. The attempted seizure of power by the Emergency Committee indicated the level of resistance present in the Soviet Union. The intentions of the Soviet leadership and the contention among policy-makers and policy implementors remained illusory for Soviet observers. The ambivalence and apparent collision course between the Baltic states and the Soviet Government provided an example where the more familiar features of the Cold War appeared to be returning.<sup>70</sup> The birth of the New World Order was, therefore, long in gestation, as the determinants of the bipolar era showed resistance to succession.

The term the New World Order entered into the official US lexicon in August 1990 when National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft told a CNN reporter: "Tell them we just can't let Iraq get away with this - there is a New World Order developing".<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 84.

<sup>70</sup> Gerner, K., and S. Hedlund, *The Baltic States and the End of the Soviet Empire*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 8-12.

<sup>71</sup> Hill, E., "The New Order and the Gulf War: Rhetoric, Policy, and Politics in the United States," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 184.

Kuroda casts doubt upon the coherence of the concept or its value as an anchor for policy formulation at that stage, in retrospect, he believes the philosophy came later.<sup>72</sup>

For Kubursi and Mansur, the New World Order did not begin until the second Gulf War. The Gulf War defined the "moment in international politics of a major transition, when the old order that had begun to fall apart was finally pushed aside and a glimpse of the new emergent order was for the first time clearly discernible".<sup>73</sup>

## The New World Order

President George Bush pronounced on 11 September 1990:

*A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars have raged across the span of human endeavour. Today, that New World Order is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we have known, a world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle, a world in which nations recognise the shared responsibility for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respects the rights of the weak.*<sup>74</sup>

President Bush made his pronouncement of the New World Order after Iraq had invaded Kuwait, and before the US-led coalition liberated the Gulf state. The language of his speech was evocative and reminiscent of Wilsonian optimism.<sup>75</sup> The

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<sup>72</sup> Kuroda, Y., "Bush's New World Order: A Structural Analysis of Instability and Conflict in the Gulf," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 184.

<sup>73</sup> Kubursi, A., and S. Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, Fall 1993, pp. 15.

<sup>74</sup> Cochran, M., "The New World Order and International Political Theory," *Paradigms*, vol. 8, no. 1, Summer 1994, pp. 107.

<sup>75</sup> For a good account on the Wilsonian period consult: Ambrosius, L., *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I*, (Wilmington: SR, 1991).

emergence of the New World Order inspired hope, as it represented an end to the years of confrontation and the dawn of a new era.

As previously mentioned, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait set the first challenge to the emerging world order. It provided a pretext for the world's powers to cooperate and implement a set of policies based on the principles described above. The central role played by the US was fundamental to the organisation and orchestration of the diplomatic and military initiatives that resulted in the liberation of Kuwait.

This New World Order signified the succession of liberal ideology.<sup>76</sup> Capitalism, as the universal economic mode of life, surpassed the experiment of communism, and was reinforced with its complementary tenets of freedom and justice. Democracy and human rights were also built into the terminology of the New World Order. The rule of law would deter and repel aggression against sovereign states.<sup>77</sup> Sovereignty and self-determination became the buzz words of the Bush administration, as it chartered the waters of the New World Order.

At the beginning of the crisis, Bush had remarked that US interest and involvement in the Gulf were not transitory. US interest in the area had predated the invasion. There would be, Bush said, "a lasting role for the United States in assisting the nations of the Persian Gulf".<sup>78</sup> Kuroda comments: "the New World Order was thus

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<sup>76</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. 21.

<sup>77</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 39-41.

<sup>78</sup> Hill, E., "The New Order and the Gulf War: Rhetoric, Policy, and Politics in the United States," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 187.

not so new after all. It was to be a continuation of past interests and involvements."<sup>79</sup> This distinction became most obvious in the Spring of 1992, when a Pentagon document, under discussion, was leaked to the press. The document entitled, the Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999, proposed to renege on US obligations towards collective action (delineated by the UN); furthermore, it suggested a dependence upon the military superiority of the US to maintain the New World Order.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the New World Order reflected the contemporary realities of the global distribution of power. The US adopted the cloak of a liberal ideology to disguise the underlying presence of force in defining the New World Order.

The official US definition of the New World Order, however, does not conform to the interpretations of the three paradigms of international relations theory. In order to complete the theoretical framework of this study, I shall elucidate upon the proclivities of realism, pluralism, and globalism.

## **The New World Order and the Paradigms**

### ***The realist perspective***

For the realist school, the New World Order signified a reconfiguration of global power after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Bipolarity itself had become institutionalised, and neo-realists such as Waltz, accepted the permanence of bipolarity as the system of international order.<sup>81</sup> There had been few signs of

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<sup>79</sup> Kuroda, Y., "Bush's New World Order: A Structural Analysis of Instability and Conflict in the Gulf," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 187.

<sup>80</sup> Kubursi, A., and S. Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, Fall 1993, pp. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Waltz, K., "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus*, vol. 93, no. 3, Summer 1964, pp. 881-909.

structural flexibility as the status of bipolarity was underwritten by the prospect of nuclear conflict.<sup>82</sup> The bipolar distribution of power was thrown into a state of disequilibrium, with the collapse of the Soviet system; this produced a period of instability and uncertainty. The sudden displacement of the bipolar system, and the potential change in the structure of the international political system, seemed to obviate a return to multipolarity.<sup>83</sup>

### *Multipolarity and the New World Order*

It is possible to characterise the poles around which a multipolar order could develop. The US is the world's largest power; its function in a multipolar order would be critical to the formation of alliances. Europe, Japan, China, and Russia appear to be other potential centres of gravity around which a multipolar balance of power could exist.

At present, Europe and Japan cannot form alternative poles to the US. They remain subordinate in economic and military terms to the US. The experience of the Cold War and the effect of the Marshall Plan to incorporate the European economies into the global capitalist economy has integrated the interests of Europe and the US. A concert of powers between Japan, Europe, and the US could form a possible alignment countered by a coalition of China and Russia. It is difficult, however, to treat Europe as a single political unit.

Despite the progress of economic integration, Europe has not resolved the issues of its members competing foreign policies. National interests still tend to dominate the collective interests of Europe, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait provided an

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<sup>82</sup> Waltz, K., "Toward Nuclear Peace," in R. Art, and K. Waltz (eds.), *The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 573-601.

<sup>83</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1991, pp. 22.

illustrative example of this. During the Gulf crisis the divisions within Europe prevented the formulation and implementation of a unified foreign policy.<sup>84</sup> France and Britain, in particular, pursued their national interests, and in the British case the Thatcher/Major government tried to re-activate the potency of the US-UK axis.<sup>85</sup>

For Germany and Japan to participate as full partners in a multipolar world, they would be required to revoke their constitutions and to rebuild their military capacity.<sup>86</sup> Krauthammer is very dismissive of the Japanese and European roles in the New World Order:

*The most striking feature of the post-Cold War world is its unipolarity. No doubt, multipolarity will come in time. Only a few months ago it was conventional wisdom that the new rivals, the great pillars of the new multipolar world, would be Japan, and Germany (and/or Europe). How quickly a myth can explode. The notion that economic power inevitably translates into geopolitical influence is materialist illusion.*<sup>87</sup>

A coalition between Russia and China is unlikely to occur in the near future. Russia is recovering from the loss of its republics, and is engaged in re-building its regional role. Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Russia has become dependent upon economic aid from the US and its allies, thus its global ambitions are constrained.

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<sup>84</sup> Buettner, F., and M. Landgraf, "The European Community's Middle Eastern Policy: The New Order of Europe and the Gulf Crisis," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 83.

<sup>85</sup> Buettner, F., and M. Landgraf, "The European Community's Middle Eastern Policy: The New Order of Europe and the Gulf Crisis," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 94.

<sup>86</sup> Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 519.

<sup>87</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1991, pp. 24.



Furthermore, the ideological and strategic rivalry between the Soviet Union and China may prevent a convergence of interests forming betwixt Russia and China.

Although China is gaining a critical role in the Far East, and will indubitably play a future role in world affairs, its process of inward industrialisation is still taking place. This will delay its entry into the global game. In the meantime, in the absence of substantial competition, the US remains a unipolar power in world politics.

### *Unipolarity and the New World Order*

As the world's predominant power, the US has been considered, by some commentators, as the apex of the international political system. The structure of the New World Order is depicted as unipolar, and focuses around the US. Krauthammer suggests, however, that this state of affairs is transitory, as the US cannot assume global responsibility for the world's affairs.<sup>88</sup>

In a unipolar system, the US would take on the burden of the world's policing duties to guarantee the stability of the global economy. In the bipolar system, the power of the US and the Soviet Union, compared to the power of their allies, became so overwhelming that through their preponderant weight they determined the balance of power between them.<sup>89</sup> In the unipolar system, the US would not be able to fill the vacuum left by the Soviet Union. This would require the US to extend its access to the global markets, through more aggressive economic policies in order to sustain its dominant role. Such a move would entail the grave risk of over extending itself.<sup>90</sup> In

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<sup>88</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1991, pp. 22.

<sup>89</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 336.

<sup>90</sup> Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 46.

1990, Kubursi and Mansur noted how the US slipped economically to a position no longer unassailable by its immediate industrial and financial rivals; the US' global hegemony rests precariously on one pillar, notably, the military.<sup>91</sup>

The relationship between military power and economic power is stressed by Kennedy. He notes:

*Wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth. The relationship between wealth and military power, which is at the heart of strategic thinking and decision-making, becomes a problem either when a state allocates a greater portion of its resources to military purposes over investments needed to generate more wealth, or when a state overextends itself as a result of military conquests, or the need to control vital resources outside its territory.*<sup>92</sup>

At present, US economic hegemony guarantees its domination of the world's markets, but as the emerging competition from the East imposes itself upon the US economy, the US may resort to a dependency upon military intervention to secure markets.

Chomsky's analysis of the New World Order would seem to confirm this possibility.<sup>93</sup> In addition, it also accounts for the inflated role of the UK during the second Gulf War. In the world system of the New World Order:

*there is one very powerful military force (US) and a lieutenant (UK)  
... However, neither of them is dominant economically and both are*

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<sup>91</sup> Kubursi, A., and S. Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, Fall 93, pp. 6.

<sup>92</sup> Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 46.

<sup>93</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994).

*very weak politically. This means that they tried to shift the confrontation to the arena in which they are strong, that is they move the thing over into an arena in which they are likely to win, and in the process, show that force is the way you rule the world. That's the New World Order.*<sup>94</sup>

Economists have long noted that if the largest consumer of a collective, such as order, does not take the lead in organising its production, there is little likelihood that the good will be produced by others.<sup>95</sup> If the US intends to secure access to world markets, it is incumbent upon it to provide the necessary global order. As the most potent military state, the US can police the globe, but not without damaging its domestic economy.

As a unipolar power, the US needs to cultivate Europe and Asia through a two-fold strategy. Firstly, the US has an interest in promoting a secure and prosperous Western Europe that would incrementally absorb the East European economies. The rationale behind this is that as East European economies become more integrated into the global economic order, their potential for challenging US hegemony dissipates. Secondly, to ensure stability at the centre of the international political and economic systems, the US needs to develop a strategy to incorporate the rise of Japan's economic power into mutually constitutive channels that will support international institutions rather than destabilise regional military investments.<sup>96</sup> The inclusion of Europe and Asia into a power sharing scheme, in the form of multipolarity or

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<sup>94</sup> Hill, E., "The New World Order and the Gulf War: Rhetoric, Policy, and Politics in the United States," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 197.

<sup>95</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 95.

<sup>96</sup> Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 519.

institution-building, would devolve the responsibility and economic burden shouldered by the US.<sup>97</sup>

It follows from the above argument that the vacuum left by the Soviet Union cannot be adequately filled by any of the medium powers. In realist terms, the US will remain the world's largest power until Europe, Japan, Russia, and China are sufficiently developed to share the responsibility of global management, or are ready to challenge the US.

### *Multipolarity vs unipolarity*

The contemporary debate between multipolarity and unipolarity is inconclusive. The current status of the international political system may be called unipolar, but this is only a period of transition. The US cannot sustain its hegemonic status without undermining its own economic position. An over extension of resources will enable the middle powers to secure their location at the centre of the global economy, but at the expense of the US.

Until this transformation has taken place, international relations will be governed by the unipolar system. The term 'governed' is dependent upon the active role played by the US. US intervention in regional and international conflicts is not guaranteed, and US response may be confined to strategic interests. As Nye implies "the implications for stability and welfare depend heavily upon whether the largest state takes a lead in organising collective action among other states, or simply allows a feudalism to

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<sup>97</sup> Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 519.

develop".<sup>98</sup> The Middle East, however, is one area where the US will continue to maintain an influential presence because of its strategic interests in the region.

### *The pluralist perspective*

The New World Order was distinct from the previous orders, based on European multipolarity and Soviet-US bipolarity. The pluralist perspective of the New World Order is based on the framework of Wilsonian utopianism, but was founded on a more secure platform than the utopian ambitions of the Wilsonian era.<sup>99</sup> Historic lessons have been learnt from the failures of the previous multipolar periods.

The basic premise of pluralism intimates that there is an historic and developmental progression within the international political system that will supersede the political divisions of the past. The succession of global capitalism in 1991, and the subsequent collapse of the bipolar world order, appeared to be a crucial moment in history when progression looked to be a distinct possibility. The fundamentals of international relations were in a state of transformation, as the era of superpower rivalry passed, and peaceful co-existence gained momentum.

The New World Order represented a break from the requisites of the previous world order. It connoted a significant movement towards a change in the international political system. International cooperation, communication, and social/political integration provided the foundations of the new order. The discourse that emerged from the pluralist camp started to identify global organisation, and world order, through the operations of TNCs and international agencies. These agencies have

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<sup>98</sup> Nye, J., "American Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 517.

<sup>99</sup> Halliday, F., "The Cold War as Inter-systemic Conflicts - Initial Theses," in M. Bowker and R. Brown (eds.), *From Cold War to Collapse: Theory and World Politics in the 1980s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 21-34.

diminished the role of the state as the primary ordinate of analysis.<sup>100</sup> The pluralist perspective of the New World Order works from a different set of assumptions to the realists, as noted in chapter one.

Whereas realists have stressed factors, which have helped sustain the independence and autonomy of the state, pluralists have been more conscious of the interdependent factors that characterise international relations. Interdependence, a feature of the global economy, reinforced by information technology, has tied the economies and welfare of the world's states together. The integration of the world's political and economic units is believed to have reduced the inevitability of war and increased the prospect of achieving global harmony.<sup>101</sup>

The New World Order, according to pluralism, presented the world's powers with the opportunity to realise the rule of international law without the intervention of competing superpowers.<sup>102</sup> It initiated a movement towards a system established on the basis of human rights, democratisation, and liberty. Pluralists, in the tradition of Woodrow Wilson and Jimmy Carter, focus upon relations among peoples, as well as states.<sup>103</sup> They saw a sustainable world order arising from broad values, such as democracy and human rights, found within societies.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Booth, K., "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice," *International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, July 1991, pp. 539.

<sup>101</sup> Chase-Dunn, C., *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 343-345.

<sup>102</sup> Russett, B., and J. Sutterlin, "The UN in a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 69.

<sup>103</sup> Luard, E., *The Globalization of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 98.

<sup>104</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 84.



***Pluralists: power and the New World Order***

Power within the international system is still of primordial importance to pluralists; but its nature is fundamentally different to that epitomised by realists. Power, according to pluralists, is multidimensional and resides in a multitude of forms, and at varying locations within the international system.<sup>105</sup> Power originates in the units of human society; its existence extends from the individual in society to TNCs, international agencies, and trans-governmental organisations, at the apex of international society. The individual forms the basic unit of humanity; at this level, the pluralist assumes that human interaction is based upon co-existence.

Pluralism works from the assumption that people are inherently benevolent and co-operative. Its traditions belong to the philosophies of Kant, who considered human experience to be universal.<sup>106</sup> The advent of the information revolution and the conclusive expansion of the global capitalist economy are thought to have universalised a human experience. They were also believed to have homogenised cultural determinism and personal economic aspirations. All factors affecting human existence have been reduced to the concept of providing familial economic security based on a system of fair exchange.<sup>107</sup>

Information technology has permeated state borders and allowed direct communication among the populations of states; thus, reducing the power of the state as the principal mediator between the domestic population and/or business community, and international society. The distribution of power, within the

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<sup>105</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 83.

<sup>106</sup> Kant, I., *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, N. Smith (trans.), (London: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 42-44.

<sup>107</sup> Luard, E., *The Globalization of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 189-191.

international political system, is not restricted to state power, as in realism, but is allocated according to a more diffuse pattern at a variety of levels and amongst various international, national, and local actors and agencies.<sup>108</sup>

Working with this more diffuse understanding of power, pluralists have labelled the New World Order as a multi-levelled interdependent order, where no single hierarchy adequately describes the world order.<sup>109</sup> Nye portrays the New World Order as a layered cake. The distribution of power is unipolar in a military sense, and multipolar in an economic sense. In this perception of the New World Order, the US is still the predominant military power, but Europe and Japan are the emerging economic centres in the international political system. Hill confirms this analysis with the observation that power in the New World Order will be a nexus of political, military, and economic assets. Accordingly, the US will, be one power among others that are emerging in Asia and Europe.<sup>110</sup>

The distribution of global capital and global markets have created an interdependence amongst the states of the world. Relations amongst these states are regulated by national and international institutions in an attempt to achieve the required co-ordination. The New World Order, from the pluralist perspective, assumes a very distinctive character through its adoption of interdependence and international integration.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Krasner, S., "Power Politics Institutions, Transnational Relations," in T. Risse-Kappen (ed.), *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 277.

<sup>109</sup> Nye, J., "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 88.

<sup>110</sup> Hill, E., "The New World Order and the Gulf War: Rhetoric, Policy, and Politics in the United States," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 195.

<sup>111</sup> Keohane, R., and J. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1977), pp. 3.



*The forces of integration*

Pluralists purport that the integration of societies reduces or eliminates the security dilemma.<sup>112</sup> The forces of integration can be identified as the flow of ideas, commodities, capital, and people across international boundaries.<sup>113</sup> The succession of global capitalism, at the expense of the socialist economic system, has ensured that the forces of integration promote global interdependence. This interdependence will diminish the propensity for war, and promote the prospect of peace by integrating the interests of states.<sup>114</sup>

Rosenau claims that the New World Order and the forces of integration are manoeuvring international relations into a post-international politics era. States have become permeable to a proliferation of transnational activities which include:

- the flow of international capital markets;
- the spread of information technology;
- the growth of culture hegemony;
- the formation of trans-state interest groups;
- the expansion of TNCs.

Consequently, the sovereignty of the states is disintegrating under the strains of two forces:

- (i) an ethnic-national force from within the state;

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<sup>112</sup> Keohane, R., and J. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1977), pp. 7-8.

<sup>113</sup> Gaddis, J., "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 104.

<sup>114</sup> Keohane, R., and J. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1977), pp. 8.

- (ii) expanding and more demanding transnational linkages.<sup>115</sup>

States are becoming less able to perform their traditional functions as the power of trans-national actors is increasing. The autonomy enjoyed by the state in conducting its traditional functions is receding. The provision of welfare, domestic security, and employment still fall under the jurisdiction of the state, but the state's ability to affect the provisions of these services is limited.<sup>116</sup> Global factors are impinging upon the decision-making process of the state and eroding its status.

As the level of interdependence increases and the role of the state diminishes, according to Bull and Watson, the international political system will be incrementally replaced with an international society. In the international political system, the primary units are states; the modes of interaction among these states include war, diplomacy, trade, the flow of ideas, and migration.<sup>117</sup> As global migration continues and as people re-assert their primordial ties, whilst demanding access to universal commodities, identity patterns are becoming increasingly complex.<sup>118</sup> These form the ingredients for the new international society. Bull and Watson define international society as a group of independent communities that systemise their patterns of

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<sup>115</sup> Cochran, M., "The New World Order and International Political Theory," *Paradigms*, vol. 8, no. 1, Summer 1994, pp. 106-107.

<sup>116</sup> Luard, E., *The Globalization of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 189-190.

<sup>117</sup> Buzan, B., "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 331.

<sup>118</sup> Booth, K., "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice" *International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, July 1991, pp. 542.

relations through institutions, according to a criteria of common rules, behaviour, consent, and a common interest in maintaining these arrangements.<sup>119</sup>

Watson has observed that the evolution of the international system into an international society occurs as "the regulating rules and institutions of a system usually, and perhaps inexorably, develop to the point where the members become conscious of common values and the system becomes an international society".<sup>120</sup>

The New World Order viewed from this angle departs radically from realism. Pluralism operates from an institutional framework; it suggests that a harmonious world order can be achieved through integration. The roles of national and international institutions are fundamental to incorporating the interests of states and their citizens.<sup>121</sup> The institutional framework, adopted by the Western European states after World War II, provides an illustrative model for the pluralist approach. This analysis also assumes that the progressive tendencies within states will mirror institutional development and create an international society based on common norms, rules, where identities are held by individuals across the system.<sup>122</sup>

Although pluralists stress the positive and creative aspects of integration, they recognise new forces of fragmentation that have been unleashed since the end of the Cold War. The bipolar division of the world froze many historical conflicts among

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<sup>119</sup> Buzan, B., "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 330.

<sup>120</sup> Buzan, B., "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 335.

<sup>121</sup> Falk, R., "State of Siege: Will Globalization Win Out?," *International Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 1, January 1997, pp. 128-130.

<sup>122</sup> Buzan, B., "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organisation*, vol. 47, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 339.

nations and communities. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, a symbol of the end of the Cold War,<sup>123</sup> was accompanied by the thawing of many hidden conflicts and disputes.

### *The forces of fragmentation*

Between the end of the Cold War and the declaration of the New World Order, the forces of fragmentation started to emerge throughout Eastern Europe. Gaddis recognised the end of the totalitarian threat, associated with the bipolar era, but meanwhile identified a pernicious threat emanating from the forces of fragmentation.<sup>124</sup> He commented:

*Another form of competition has been emerging that could be just as stark and just as pervasive as was the rivalry between democracy and totalitarianism at the height of the Cold War: it is the contest between the forces of integration and fragmentation in the contemporary international environment.*<sup>125</sup>

Gaddis denotes two forces of fragmentation, namely, *nationalism* and *religion*. The vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union has been filled by numerous disenchanted groups and communities, motivated either by a fervent nationalism or a religious crusade.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London :Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 1.

<sup>124</sup> Cochran, M., "The New World Order and International Political Theory," *Paradigms*, vol. 8, no. 1, Summer 1994, pp. 108.

<sup>125</sup> Gaddis, J., "Towards the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 104.

<sup>126</sup> Gaddis, J., "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 105-107.

*Nationalism*

There has been a substantial rise in nationalism since the end of the Cold War. Many of the nations that re-emerged from the former republics of the Soviet Union have reasserted their national identity. Nationalism and its revisionist manifestations were responsible for:

- the civil war in Yugoslavia;
- the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan;
- the Ossetian demands for independence from Georgia;
- the rise of neo-Nazism in East Germany;
- the conflicts in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Nationalism, as a forceful and aggressive assertion of identity returned to the former Soviet Union, satellite, and client states of the Soviet Union after 1989. A rediscovery of nationalism, based on economic insecurity, operates against the universal spirit of integration. When nationalism is defined by common heritage, common language, and territorial co-ordinates, it focuses upon the nation-state as the natural home. The state, in this case, becomes invested with national unity and a national mandate. In short, it is a primary unit of interest, and the natural vehicle for mobilisation and organisation.<sup>127</sup>

One could argue that the states of the Soviet Union lacked sufficient autonomy from their centre power, Russia. The dissolution of the Soviet Union divested the centre of its power, and devolved a new lease of power to the newly-independent states. The states of the former Soviet Union became the primary units of power again.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Gaddis, J., "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 106-107.

<sup>128</sup> Smith, G. (ed.), "Nationalities Policy from Lenin to Gorbachev," *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 12-17.

*Religion*

The resurgence of Islamist activism in Iran in 1979, Gaza in 1982, Algeria in 1991, Egypt in 1992, and Turkey in 1996, provides a testament to the hypothesis that fragmentary religious forces are operating within the international system. The rise of Christian fundamentalism in the US and Europe reinforces this perception of fragmentation based on religion.

The public of Middle Eastern states is disenchanted with the promises and the failures of national liberation movements, and the secular programmes of modernity imposed by their Western oriented elite. The imported ideologies and philosophies of nationalism, socialism, liberalism, capitalism, and secularism have failed and were rejected. Widespread disaffected communities within Iran, Gaza, Egypt, and Algeria have found personal and economic salvation through an indigenous path. Islam, as a faith, a system of government, and a way of life is believed to contain the solution to the alienation found within these post-colonial states.<sup>129</sup>

The Islam prescribed by Iran, FIS, GIA, Hizbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad offers an alternative to the Western inspired capitalist system. These groups represent the forces of fragmentation and are located around the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. They challenge the hegemony of economics, culture, power, religion, and morality of the West.<sup>130</sup>

However, their methods of challenging Western hegemony do not comply with the established patterns of compromise and diplomacy. They are, by definition, anti-

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<sup>129</sup> Hardy, R., "Is Islam a Threat to the West?," lecture in Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies on Wednesday 19 February 1997.

<sup>130</sup> Hardy, R., "Is Islam a Threat to the West?," lecture in Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies on Wednesday 19 February 1997.

systemic forces that exist outside the system of states. The inequitable nature of global capitalism has fostered disenchantment among those communities, and other states existing on the periphery of the global economic order.<sup>131</sup>

Pluralists insinuate that the universal familial needs of social and political stability are realised through economic security. They reason that economic security would be attained in the New World Order as a result of the dominance of global capitalism. Global capitalism, nevertheless, does not necessarily have the capacity to fulfil this demand for economic security.<sup>132</sup> This is because the structures of global capitalism serve the interests of the states at the centre of the global economy, and operate against the economic fortunes of the Southern states. In other words, economic organisation of the globe functions through institutionalised patterns of inequality.<sup>133</sup>

In effect, global capitalism could lead to the formation of an amalgam of anti-systemic forces that seek to subvert the prevailing economic and political order. These anti-systemic forces could potentially coalesce around the existing pariah states, such as Iran, Iraq, Cuba, Libya, and North Korea.<sup>134</sup> Together, they could represent an alternative axis to the prevailing hegemonic order.

Christian fundamentalism is also returning to the fore, especially in the US. The issue of abortion has demonstrated the strength and fanaticism of pro-life groups. Doctors

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<sup>131</sup> Wallerstein, I., *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*, (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 60-61.

<sup>132</sup> Wallerstein, I., *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 11.

<sup>133</sup> Gereffi, G., "Power and Dependency in an Interdependent World: A Guide to Understanding the Contemporary Global Crisis," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1&2, 1984, pp. 509.

<sup>134</sup> See: Najem, T. and N. Quilliam, "Issues in Political Economy of the Middle East: The Assimilation of Pariah States into the Hegemonic World Order: A Case Study of Syria and Lebanon," Conference at the University of Coventry, unpublished manuscript.

performing abortions are being persecuted or, in some cases, even murdered.<sup>135</sup> The Waco siege and the recent discovery of cults observing racial and anti-establishment sentiments give an indication of the fragmentary forces working within the US.<sup>136</sup>

The Oklahoma bombing<sup>137</sup> linked the two religious forces of Islamic activism and Christian fundamentalism together. Islamic and/or Arab militants were immediately implicated in the bombing directly by the US media machine, and indirectly by the Clinton administration.<sup>138</sup> Ignoring the racist overtones of their assumptions, the disclosure that Tim McVeigh, who belonged to a radical cult, was the perpetrator of the crime,<sup>139</sup> connotes that both international and domestic fragmentary forces are considered to be pursuing an anti-systemic agenda.

### *Forces of integration and fragmentation*

According to Gaddis, the forces of integration and fragmentation will be the proponents of the next configuration of power. Importantly, it is not state power, but the processes transcending states, in the forms of extreme integration and fragmentation that will determine the world order. These extremes cannot be entirely divested from states, as they share domestic and international characteristics.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> "US Moves on Protesters," *Financial Times*, Tuesday 25 January 1994, pp. 5, and "Two Shot Dead at US Abortion Clinic," *Financial Times*, Saturday 31 December 1994, pp. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Martin, J., "International Patience Paid Off, Say FBI: Peaceful End to Montana Seize as Authorities Learn Lessons of WACO," *Financial Times*, Saturday 15 June 1996, pp. 4.

<sup>137</sup> Martin, J., "Political Extremes Dance on Dark Side of the Moon: Revolutionary Left and Right in US Sometimes Share Anarchic Hatreds," *Financial Times*, Thursday 6 June 1996, pp. 3.

<sup>138</sup> Gaddis, J., "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 107.

<sup>139</sup> "Oklahoma Bombing Incident," *Financial Times*, Friday 11 August 1995, pp. 4.

<sup>140</sup> Gereffi, G., "Power and Dependency in an Interdependent World: A Guide to Understanding the Contemporary Global Crisis," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1&2, 1984, pp. 114.



The pluralist vision of a fully integrated world would depict a world, where states forfeit control over their borders; mutual dependence among states would guarantee the flow of resources and capital, and access to open markets. As envisioned by Rosenau, sovereignty would be surrendered, identity consumed by the international society, and security emboldened to include psychological, physical, emotional, and economic needs.<sup>141</sup> Global capitalism will satisfy those needs and bring about peace and harmony in the international political system.

The more ominous aspect of this interpretation of the New World Order recognises the diffusion of threats, that were released with the collapse of bipolarity, and their inherent anti-systemic motivations. These threats contain the potential to aggravate the harmony of the emerging world order. In particular, some theorists believe that the clash of civilisations may characterise the nature of the New World Order.<sup>142</sup>

### *The Clash of Civilisations?*

Huntington's prophetic paper "The Clash of Civilisations?"<sup>143</sup> utilised the concepts of fragmentation and integration in an alternative way. He wrote: "In the politics of civilisations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilisation no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonisation but join the West as movers and shapers of history."<sup>144</sup> The civilisations, that Huntington identifies, fall

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<sup>141</sup> Roseau, J., "Normative Challenges in a Turbulent World," *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, pp. 16.

<sup>142</sup> Huntington, S., *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

<sup>143</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

<sup>144</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 23.

into the following categories: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African.<sup>145</sup>

Due to the rise of these civilisations, Huntington attests that the state will diminish as the principal unit of identity; and organisations as groups defined by kinship will form new poles of power. For Huntington, the foundation stones of these civilisations will be based upon the *kin-country syndrome*,<sup>146</sup> where political ideologies and the traditional balance of power will be superseded by the broader parameters of common anthropological and historical experience.<sup>147</sup> Binyan contests this view; he claims that in most states of the late twentieth century, their assignment is not to reinforce civilisational divisions, within their borders, rather their functions are to assimilate, and aggregate them into a loose homogeneity.<sup>148</sup>

Civilisations, in Huntington's scenario, will form alliances and oppose counter-alliances based upon an assimilation of historical or religious compatibilites. Huntington observes the origins of a Confucian-Islamic relationship, and annotates it as a formulaic military alliance designed to undermine Western hegemony.<sup>149</sup>

McCurdy, whilst acknowledging the apparent alliance between North Korea and China, and Iran, offers an alternative interpretation. He intimates that the relationship owes its origins to the renegade status of these states. They are accidental members of a heterogeneous group that oppose the global hegemony of the West. Their

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<sup>145</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 25.

<sup>146</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 35.

<sup>147</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 37.

<sup>148</sup> Binyan, L. "Civilisation Grafting: No Culture an Island," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 19.

<sup>149</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 29.

membership in the group is neither permanent nor grounded in cultural and/or religious compatibility, but is founded on a common oppositional plane.<sup>150</sup>

In accordance with Huntington's hypothesis, the second Gulf War was a manifestation of a New World Order that derived its character from the clash of civilisations. The liberation of Kuwait was framed as an East versus West confrontation. Kirkpatrick dismisses this analysis and resorts to realist accounts by writing that the liberation of Kuwait was no more a clash between civilisations than World War II, the Korean, or Vietnamese Wars. The actions of the US-led coalition were not dictated by civilisational imperatives; they were simply motivated by the universal pursuit of self-interest.<sup>151</sup>

Ajami concedes that civilisations are a permanent feature of international relations, "there is an astonishing measure of permanence about them, but the hypothesis that their ability to supplant the organisation of state power is made without foundation".<sup>152</sup> In his retort to the "Clash of Civilisations?", Ajami claims that civilisations do not control states; states control civilisations. The pre-eminence of states in the international political system continues; in fact, the disorder in the contemporary world order has rendered the state more important than international organisations, such as the UN.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Huntington, S., "The Clash of Civilisations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 37.

<sup>151</sup> Kirkpatrick, J., and others, "The Modernising Imperative: Tradition and Change," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 23.

<sup>152</sup> Ajami, F., "The Summoning," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 9.

<sup>153</sup> Ajami, F., "The Summoning," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 4, September/October 1993, pp. 9.

*The UN and the New World Order*

The UN was set to be the main beneficiary of the New World Order. With the conclusion of the bipolar division of the world, the role of the UN had been elevated. The UN was invested with a coalition of support from the members of the Security Council. The rise of the New World Order appeared to mark the optimum moment for the UN to redefine its position in international relations, and to fulfil its mandate.<sup>154</sup>

The New World Order provided the occasion to reinforce and reinvigorate the ambit and jurisdiction of the UN. The UN had the opportunity to divest itself of the competitive climate, that had immobilised it during the years of the Cold War. The invasion of Kuwait was the first significant test of the UN's authority, after the collapse of the bipolar order. Hence, the invasion of Kuwait presented a threshold for UN action; it was thought to be the primary moment, in contemporary times, when the management of global affairs would be presided over by the legitimate global institution.<sup>155</sup>

Pluralists supported the actions of the UN in the liberation of Kuwait, as it was seen to fulfil its institutional obligations. The liberation of Kuwait demonstrated the utility of global organisation through the legitimate body of the UN. Springborg detected, with some irony, the thinly-veiled hypocrisy of US realists and isolationists towards the role of the UN. The UN's acquiescence to Washington's diplomatic persuasion

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<sup>154</sup> Russett, B., and J. Sutterlin, "The UN in a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 69.

<sup>155</sup> Parsons, A., "The United Nations Comes into Its Own," *Middle East International*, no. 382, 31 August 1990, pp. 29.

brought forth praise and admiration from those US circles that had berated the UN as an agent of Third World excesses.<sup>156</sup>

Though the UN's original response to the invasion was welcomed, the imposing guidance of the US appeared to undermine the independence of the UN. The confusion between US foreign policy and UN co-ordination became acute, and to critics such as Falk, the UN's position was subverted by a strident US policy. The subordinate status of the UN became apparent and was crystallised on 29 November 1990, when Security Council Resolution 678 was adopted. The resolution which sanctioned the use of military force, after the deadline of 15 January 1991, was engineered and pursued by a rapacious US administration.<sup>157</sup>

In retrospect, it is difficult to consider the UN as a legitimate body that represents the interests of its constituent members, and processes decisions according to an independent institutional framework. The resistance to rotate the residency of the permanent seats on the Security Council, among constituent members of the General Assembly, reflects the function of the UN as a post-World War II institution designed to serve the interests of the victors.

### *The globalist perspective*

Globalists understand the term, New World Order, as a reference to the political ramifications of 1989. Proponents of world systems analysis, allege that the Soviet Union did not represent an alternative economic system to global capitalism. Furthermore, the Soviet Union existed in the semi-periphery of the global economic

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<sup>156</sup> Springborg, R., "The United Nations in the Gulf War," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 40.

<sup>157</sup> Falk, R., "Reflections on the Gulf War Experience: Force and War in the UN system," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 26.

order.<sup>158</sup> The succession of global capitalism over state socialism, therefore, did not fundamentally alter the configurations of economic power in the global economy. The globalist perception of the Cold War located the Third World at the periphery of the bipolar system. The Third World served as a reservoir from which natural resources were procured. It was also a site for the zero-sum game contest between the superpowers.<sup>159</sup>

The New World Order has not radically affected the economic circumstances of the Third World. The structure and processes of dependence, cultivated by the global capitalist economy, have remained in place. In fact, the situation of the latter has deteriorated due to the granting of loans to Russia and Eastern Europe.<sup>160</sup>

The political and economic distinction between the Northern and Southern hemispheres have been pronounced owing to their colonial and imperial histories. Despite the rhetoric of the US and its commitment to self-determination, the Third World gained prominence due to its vulnerability to superpower penetration.

Buzan suggests that the Third World will decline in importance in the twenty-first century as there will be little ideological or strategic incentive for the great powers to compete for Third World allegiance.<sup>161</sup> This analysis deserves qualification as there are areas of the Third World, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab states, where the strategic interest of the West remains paramount.

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<sup>158</sup> Little, R., "International Relations and the Triumph of Capitalism," in K. Booth, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 80.

<sup>159</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 55.

<sup>160</sup> Graham, G., "Account Offers Credit to Countries in Economic Transition," *Financial Times*, Friday 16 December 1994, pp. 4.

<sup>161</sup> Buzan, B., "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," *International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, July 1991, pp. 439.

Buzan's analysis implies that the security of those states in the Third World, where there are border disputes and resources are scarce, would come under threat. Security, in the traditional sense, was provided by the superpowers during the Cold War. Threats to security, in the New World Order, would not, however, necessarily come from the great powers, they would emerge from regional and domestic instability.<sup>162</sup> Snow identified three sources of continued instability and conflict in the Third World:

- (i) the continued presence of internal grievances both within and among Third World states;
- (ii) the absence of formal constraints;
- (iii) the limited resources required to ameliorate the conditions that cause conflict.<sup>163</sup>

The internal grievances in the Third World, according to Buzan, would emanate from the legitimacy of their one party states systems being undermined by the collapse of the old world order. Additionally, the failures of the post-independence nationalist parties to fulfil their promises have led to a potential increase in instability. The Soviet and American support for the authoritarian regimes of the Third World often guaranteed the survival of regimes built upon fractious foundations. The change in the world order has withdrawn the contract between patron and client, thus undermining the relationship between regimes and their domestic constituencies.

Formal constraints, operative under the bipolar system, may no longer dominate the nature of relations between the major powers and the Third World states. In the state

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<sup>162</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 43-47.

<sup>163</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 19.

of transition, the unipolar character of the world order may not be sufficient or ambitious enough to thwart the regional ambitions or domestic turbulence of the Third World states. The US and Western policies will most certainly be formulated in accordance with their national interests. According to this analysis, the code for intervention would be determined by three kinds of situations:

- conflicts among and within Third World states (South-South) that clash with the interests of the First World;
- newly emerging problems, such as the flow of narcotics from South-North;
- the continuing North-South debate over economic and political development.<sup>164</sup>

There is a danger, however, that if the Northern states neglect their international responsibilities, the regional changes within the Third World may escalate and result in a segregation of the globe and the disruption of the global economy.<sup>165</sup>

The absence of the East-West division of the world has led some globalists to postulate that the global division has moved towards a North-South dimension. It is difficult, though, to envisage such a competition due to the asymmetrical nature of the relationship. The South cannot set a co-ordinated challenge to the North; the most they can achieve is to create a negative-sum game in which all parties involved lose.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Snow, D., *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 19-22.

<sup>165</sup> Ravenhill, J., "The North-South Balance of Power," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 4, October 1990, pp. 742.

<sup>166</sup> Ravenhill, J., "The North-South Balance of Power," *International Affairs*, vol. 66, no. 4, October 1990, pp. 742.



Krauthammer, using the example of Iraq, alluded to the prototype of the new strategic threat to the Northern hemisphere, the so-called 'weapon state'.<sup>167</sup> The proliferation of states acquiring and developing intercontinental and ballistic missiles poses a threat to both regional and global stability. Advances in military technology and technological transfer have removed the insulation of the North from the vagaries of the South; hence, the regional conflicts of the South cannot be ignored.

In conclusion, the New World Order has not produced a significant change in the economic order of the Third World. The global economy remains entrenched in the economics of inequity, and the levels of dependence are deepening. The economic implications of the New World Order, therefore, have been stable. In political terms, the withdrawal of Soviet and US support might create a vacuum, where instability results.

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<sup>167</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1991, pp. 30.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have alluded to the various interpretations of the New World Order offered by three schools of thought, realists, pluralists, and globalists. The concept of the New World Order was conceived in pluralist terms and espoused by the Bush administration on the eve of the liberation of Kuwait. The connotations of the term conveyed a new era in international relations, cast in hope and optimism. The conclusion of the Cold War and the emergence of the New World Order were presented as a progression in international relations. Fukuyama claimed that the world had reached the *End of History*.<sup>108</sup>

There existed, however, a large gulf between rhetoric and reality. Bush's New World Order sought to liberate the world from dictatorship, communism, and repression. Capitalism, democracy, and liberalism triumphed at the failure of communism. Nevertheless, the actions of the Bush administration during the second Gulf War contradicted the liberal ethic of the New World Order and illustrated the predominant role of force in international relations.

Realists work from the perspective that international relations are governed by forces that are universal to history. Wight denied that progression was possible in international relations.<sup>109</sup> Anarchy is the natural state for inter-state relations, and a variety of mechanisms based on the balance of power are arrived at to produce equilibrium and avoidance of war. The balance of power manages global and regional affairs, but it cannot produce a permanent solution to the competition among

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<sup>108</sup> Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, (London: Penguin, 1992).

<sup>109</sup> Booth, K., "Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice," *International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, 1991, pp. 512.

states. Motivated by the security dilemma, states are cast into an endless race for security.

The New World Order for realists represents a reconfiguration of global power. The implosion of the Soviet Union created a significant power vacuum, and the US attempted to accommodate the change. In pluralist language, the dislodging of the Soviet Union from its global role was portrayed as an ideological victory. Realism, avoiding the lexicon of the Cold War, recognised a traditional change in the balance of power brought about through the demise of one hegemonic power and the succession of another. The US became the unipolar power in the 1990s.

Unipolarity is the feature of the existing realist model of international relations, but this will be replaced by a more fractious multipolar balance of power. The primary position of the US can only be guaranteed by its military superiority. Without a decisive industrial edge, the US will be challenged by the emerging economic centres of Europe, Japan, and China. The New World Order, cast in this mould, refers to the transition from a bipolar organisation, of international relations, to a multipolar one.

Globalists were aware of the unipolar position of the US before the announcement of the New World Order. Their conceptualisation of international relations, based on the model of dependency, located the states of the Third World in the periphery of the global economy. The arrival of the New World Order confirmed the supremacy of the US as the economic and military leader in global affairs. The unprecedented succession of the US has not, however, directly affected the levels of dependence endured by Third World states.

Owing to a shift in global affairs, Third World states are confronted with significant political implications, not from the ideological perspective of the New World Order,

but from the consideration of the realignment of power. US and Soviet favoured regimes were supported throughout the Cold War despite some of their precarious domestic positions. The demise of the Soviet Union has led to an era where this support is no longer guaranteed. Two possible scenarios can arise from this denouement of assistance:

- (i) The US and emerging centres of power will try to compensate for the withdrawal of Soviet support through policies of economic assistance;
- (ii) these Third World states will be consumed by their dissatisfied domestic constituencies.

Globalists believe that the constraints of the global economy will continue to produce discontent within these Third World states, and may result in a breakdown of domestic order. Anti-systemic forces arising in the Third World may try to challenge the hegemony of the US order. Alternatively, they will be segregated from the First World until they form another pole that centres around a regional player such as China.

The second Gulf War and the role played by the UN in the post-Cold war period demonstrates that the institutional features of the New World Order have not significantly changed. The UN is still dominated by the permanent members of the Security Council, that founded the UN after World War II.

The New World Order cannot be defined as a humanitarian moment in history. De Tocqueville captured the essence of the misplaced optimism, and the rhetoric that accompanied the language of the US administration when he wrote:

*It is unbelievable how many systems of morals and politics have been successively found, forgotten, rediscovered, forgotten again, to reappear a little later, always charming and surprising the world as if*

*they were new, and bearing witness, not to fecundity of the human spirit, but to the ignorance of men.*<sup>170</sup>

The New World Order is most accurately portrayed as a systemic flux in the configuration of global power. The world is still governed by the balance of power. Although this may manifest itself through the forces of integration and fragmentation, the author supports the notion that states are still the primary units of analysis.

The succession of the US as the unipolar power dictates the momentum of contemporary international relations, but the US cannot continue to perform this task alone, or for a sustained period. A sentence in the "Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999" captured the substance of the US interpretation of the New World Order when it stated: "We will retain the pre-eminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests, but those of our allies or friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations."<sup>171</sup>

Consequently, the New World Order within which Syria finds itself, is a world order that is dominated by the US, its culture, politics, military and economic system. A system where US interests remain paramount and under the protection of its military superiority and hegemony.

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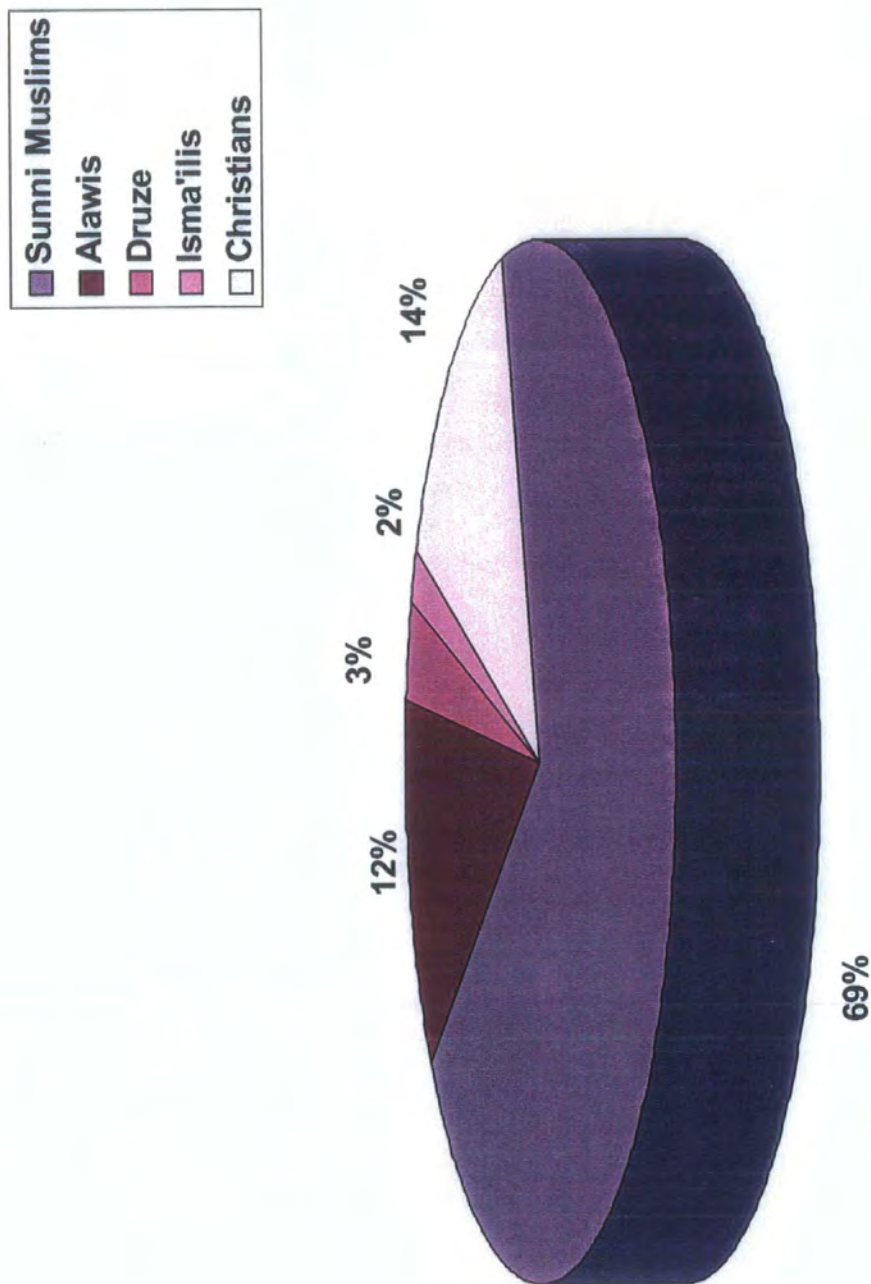
<sup>170</sup> Roberts, A., "A New Age in International Relations?," *International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, July 1991, pp. 509.

<sup>171</sup> Kubursi, A., and S. Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, Fall 1993, pp. 15.



SYRIA





## Religious Minorities in Syria

Figure 3.1

Source: Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'ith Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1-14.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SYRIA: THE COMPONENTS OF POWER

#### Introduction

Historically, Syria has been a victim of the various regional and international balances of power in the Middle East. In their attempts to extend their hegemony, the empires of the past have battled over Syria as a key to maintaining their political authority, hence producing the protracted struggle for Syria.<sup>1</sup> Since Asad seized power in November 1970, Syria has extracted itself from this struggle and engaged in a broader struggle for the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapters, according to realism, the balance of power is a universal mechanism for regulating international relations within a state-system. Syria's role in the contemporary Middle Eastern state-system has been determined by the balance of power in two regional sub-systems:

- Arab-Israeli sub-system;
- the Persian Gulf.

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<sup>1</sup> Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988).



The foreign policy of Syria has been guided by the conflicts that have arisen from both sub-systems. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, once Asad came to power, Syria's *raison d'état* became the recovery of the Arab territories lost in the June War of 1967, and the restoration of Palestinian rights. With a foreign policy conceived in realist terms, Asad has tried to maximise Syria's power potential in order to balance the power of Israel. Asad has inscrutably aspired to balance Israel's military, political, and economic power before engaging in limited wars or peace negotiations.

In the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Iran constitute the major powers around which the region's states coalesce; they form the poles of the balance of power. The states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) are geographically encased by both middle powers, and have remained vulnerable to their regional aspirations. Syria's eastern border with Iraq has guaranteed it a role in the politics of the Persian Gulf. Its involvement in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988, allowed it to counter-balance the impinging power of Iraq through its support of Iran. The balance of power was instrumental to Syria's decision to intervene against its Arab neighbour.

In the above cases, the balance of power defined Syria's self-perception, within the region, and the course of its behaviour. Power is the currency of politics; and Syria's position in the Middle Eastern state-system is largely dependent upon its power, and its power projection.<sup>3</sup> Syria's tangible power base is small when compared to the region's large powers, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, or compared to Israel's military and economic foundations. In spite of this, Syria has attained a middle power status beyond its natural resources through skilful politicking.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ma'oz, Z., "The Evolution of Syrian Power 1948-1984," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 3.

Despite its small, heterogeneous population, and the lack of substantial natural resources, Syria has been able to exert considerable regional influence since 1970. Syria's disproportionate role in the region can largely be attributed to its unique geographical location, and historical experience. This chapter will examine the factors that have enabled Syria to play a role beyond its capabilities.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to establish a context within which Syria's foreign policy capabilities can be identified.

Chapter Three will provide an insight into the components of Syria's tangible and intangible power base. Any analysis of Syria's power or power projection must study the following repositories of power:

- geography;
- natural resources;
- history;
- population;
- the military;
- the economy.

Chapter Three will focus upon these elements of Syria's power. The term Syria, however, requires further definition before we can proceed.

## **Defining Syria**

The term Syria entails a number of differing meanings; it carries both historical and contemporary connotations. Historical Syria refers to the region rather than the modern state, and is commensurate with the land along the Eastern Mediterranean

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<sup>5</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 3.

between the Sinai Peninsula and the mountains of Southern Turkey. The Arabs labelled historical Syria as *Bilad al-Sham*, which included the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan.<sup>6</sup> The role of Bilad al-Sham was considered to be crucial to the formation and proselytisation of Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century, where Syria represented the *beating heart* of Arabism owing to its location as the historical capital of the Umayyad empire.<sup>7</sup>

Greater Syria is the conceptualisation of Syria used by the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP). Greater Syria incorporates the states mentioned above, in addition to Cyprus. As a concept, it is more exclusive than Arab nationalism as it envelopes a pan-Syrian nationalism.<sup>8</sup> It is more of a regionalist idea than a pan-Arab idea. It should not be confused with the Fertile Crescent (Iraq) or Greater Syria (Trans-Jordan) schemes of the Hashemite families during the struggle for Syria.<sup>9</sup>

The Syria of this thesis is defined by the term *modern Syria* which refers to the state of the Syrian Arab Republic, so named in 1961. The republic is coextensive, except for Alexandretta, with the League of Nations Mandate of 1923-1946.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kessler, M., *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power*, (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 377.

<sup>8</sup> Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) pp. 64-72.

<sup>9</sup> For more details of this period see Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>10</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 203.

## Geography

### *Physical geography*

The land area of Syria amounts to 185,180 sq. km, and comprises six distinctive natural regions:"

- [1] The Mediterranean coastal plain extends along the length of the country's seacoast. The plain is agriculturally productive, and includes the base for the main port of Latakia, the oil-export terminal at Baniyas, and the port of Tartous.
- [2] To the east of this coastal plain lies the mountain range that characterises Syria. In the northern region, one can find Jabal al-Nusayriyah; in the centre, the Anti-Lebanon range delineates Syria from Lebanon; and in the south, Mount Hermon impinges upon the landscape.
- [3] Beyond the mountain ranges, there is an extensive plateau which is divided by a south-west and north-east zone of complex folds and faults associated with the Palmyra Folds.
- [4] To the west of the Euphrates and north of Palmyra, there is the steppe land that produces the bulk of the country's grain. Aleppo, Hama, and Homs are situated within this region.
- [5] Jabal al-Druze, south-west of Palmyra, is surrounded by the cultivated plain - Hawran.

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" Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1993/94*, pp. 2.

- [6] The north-east of Syria, Deir al-Zor, was empty desert inhabited by nomads; the discovery of oil in the 1970s has transformed the region into Syria's main source of income.

The majority of the population, 80%, live in the western 20% of Syria.<sup>12</sup>

### *Political geography*

Syria has been the keystone of the Middle East for over 3,500 years. Lying between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates, it has served as the trade route between the Occident and the Orient. As pointed out by Hourani: "Syria's geographical and strategic position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and near the convergence of three continents established its political importance long ago."<sup>13</sup> Damascus and Aleppo, the two competing trading centres of the region, have been located on the main trade corridors. The control of these corridors, through the Palmyra oasis and the Turkish mountain wall, gave successive administrations power over their neighbours.

Throughout history, Syria has been subjected to the endless invasions and political machinations of great empires and regional powers. Syria has been part of the Assyrian, Chaldean, Persian, Greek, Roman, Islamic, Seljuk, Mongolian, and Ottoman empires. Egypt and Iraq, the region's major players, have continually competed for influence over Syria in order to extend their hegemony.<sup>14</sup> Due to its

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<sup>12</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 203.

<sup>13</sup> Antoun, R., "Ethnicity, Clientship, and Class: Their Changing Meaning," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Kessler, M., *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power*, (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. 3-14.

strategic location, Syria has continuously played a pivotal role in the regional, and more recently, international dynamics of religious, economic, and political affairs.

The termination of the French mandate, in 1946, the last period of external rule, did not end Syria's subjugation to external players. The ensuing struggle for Syria was extended during the era of the Cold War, when the US and the Soviet Union were competing to assert their global hegemony through the Middle Eastern state-system. Syria was one of the key pieces for the Soviet Union in the zero-sum game.<sup>15</sup>

Syria's geographic location at the centre of the Levant has helped to shape the orientation of Syrian foreign policy towards the Arab World.<sup>16</sup> Syria's relatively small population and lack of strategic depth has rendered it vulnerable to the contingencies of the region. Its contiguous borders with Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Israel have made it inherently vulnerable, as each of these states has at some stage, posed a threat to Syrian national security. The dominance of Syria's regional environment by threats and constraints makes security a prime pre-occupation for the Syrian regime and population.<sup>17</sup>

## Natural Resources

Syria is not endowed with the quantity of natural resources, such as land and oil, in the proportions enjoyed by its neighbours. One third of Syria's land is agriculturally productive. Of the total cultivable area, of 6 million hectares, 93% was cultivated in

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<sup>15</sup> Chomsky, N., *Deterring Democracy*, (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 47.

<sup>16</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 377.

<sup>17</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 375.

1992.<sup>18</sup> Cyclical variation and seasonal distribution in rainfall are critical factors in the western Fertile Crescent, as they are primarily responsible for producing enormous swings in grain production. Since virtually all of the country's grain crop is subject to such variations, the average yield is low. Consequently, the average income of grain farming families is also low.<sup>19</sup>

Oil was first discovered in Syria in 1956, by the Menhall Company, at Karachuk-Hamzah oilfield. New fields were discovered at various locations in the north-eastern region of Syria under the auspices of West German and Soviet guidance. Since Syrian crude contained high levels of sulphur, its value was reduced. It was not until 1986, when the Tayyim field started its production, that Syrian oil could be mixed domestically to produce a sweeter more profitable oil. The output of crude oil had been steady and in the 1980s averaged 9.4m tons/year, but it increased quite suddenly in 1987 to 11.9 million tons. In 1995, Syrian crude production reached its peak at 610,000 b/d in the second part of the year. Syria's domestic requirement for oil was around 220,000 b/d in 1993,<sup>20</sup> and its total proven oil reserves are around 2.5 billion barrels.<sup>21</sup>

Phosphate extraction started in 1974 at the Homs plant, but the Syrian phosphates are of a lower quality than those of its neighbouring states. Since the early days of production, exports have risen from \$19.3 million in 1978 to a peak of \$54.8 million

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<sup>18</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1994/95*, pp. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 212.

<sup>20</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1994/95*, pp. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1996/97*, pp. 16.

in 1987. It is estimated that phosphate reserves in Syria amount to 1 billion million tonnes, but production is set to decline in the following years.<sup>22</sup>

## History

Syria's ancient and modern history has been shaped by its regional location. It has been subject to constant regional and international competition, it has for most of its political existence remained under the tutelage of foreign powers. Since achieving independence in 1946, Syria has remained at the centre of a regional and international competition. Unlike the past, however, Syria is no longer the subject of external control, as it has consolidated its regional position and asserted its regional hegemony.

### *Ancient History*

The northern and western sections of Syria contain some of the earliest villages discovered with settlements dating back to the ninth millennium BC. Its capital, Damascus, is considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. Late in the second millennium, the Syrian region became an area contested for among the great empires.

Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persians, in 334-326 BC, was followed by the inclusion of the Syrian realm into the Selucid empire for 200 years. After Rome had supplanted the Selucids and made Syria a Roman province in 64 BC, the evolving Greco-Roman culture became infused with Christianity. The new sect gained its first major urban foothold in Antioch, and flourished under the eastern Roman Empire

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<sup>22</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 215.



and the successor Byzantine Empire. In AD 540, the contest between the Byzantines and the Persians erupted and created considerable destruction to the Syrian society.<sup>23</sup>

The Arab Muslim invasion took Syria in AD 636; the impact of this particular invasion has left an indelible imprint on Syria and the region as a whole. Damascus became the capital of the Umayyad Empire during the Golden Era of the Islamic Age. The centre of power shifted to Baghdad, in AD 750, when the Abbasid dynasty became the principal family of the Muslim order. For the ensuing 800 years, the region of Syria became open to contest between the Abbasids, the Ayubids, Mamluks, Seljuks, Crusaders, and the Mongols. The Ottomans conquered Syria in 1516, and had administered it for the following 400 years until the Sick Man of Europe imploded in 1918.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Modern history***

Syria's modern history started with the collapse of Ottoman rule in 1918, and the establishment of the French mandate over Bilad al-Sham in 1922. Unlike the British authorities, the French authorities were suspicious of the potency of Arab nationalism; they believed it to be a tool of the British empire.<sup>25</sup>

*The French postulated that Britain encouraged, if not inspired, Arab nationalism and helped to translate it into a political movement in order to weaken French influence in the Arab East and eventually to drive the French out of the region altogether.*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 206.

<sup>24</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 207.

<sup>25</sup> Khoury, P., "Syrian Political Culture: A Historical Perspective," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 21.

<sup>26</sup> Khoury, P., *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 53.

In order to inhibit Arab nationalism from developing potency and challenging their administration, the French authorities operated an imperial policy of divide and rule.<sup>27</sup>

The dismemberment of Historical Syria into artificial statelets signified a policy that sought to thwart the appeal of Arab nationalism.<sup>28</sup> As the region is full of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, the dismemberment followed a logical pattern that generated structural problems for the future. Mount Lebanon was detached from Syria with the surrounding Muslim environs of Sidon, Tripoli, and Beqa'. The remaining territory was sub-divided into four mini-states: Aleppo, Damascus, Latakia, and Jabal al-Druze,<sup>29</sup> thus disrupting the coherence of Arab nationalism within Bilad al-Sham. In 1925, Damascus and Aleppo were united to form what is now known as Syria.<sup>30</sup> But it was not until the end of World War II, under Britain's insistence, that Syria officially became an independent state.<sup>31</sup>

The new leaders of Syria inherited a truncated state without a coherent nation. Modern Syria was a state surrounded by artificial borders; even its constituent parts, namely, Aleppo, Latakia, and Jabal al-Druze, resisted centralisation after France had encouraged regional autonomy. French policy had divided Syria into convenient regional and ethnic compartments. Sub-national loyalties, engendered by the French,

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<sup>27</sup> Antonius, G., *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), pp. 248.

<sup>28</sup> Khoury, P., *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 43.

<sup>29</sup> Khoury, P., *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 57.

<sup>30</sup> Khoury, P., *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Saunders, B., *The United States and Arab Nationalism: The Syrian Case, 1953-1960*, (London: Praeger, 1996), pp. 5.

formed pockets of resistance to the ambitions of the post-independence leadership.<sup>32</sup> The one point of unity that had pulled the population together was the struggle for independence. Arab nationalism provided the Syrian leadership with the cement to adhere the Syrians to one cause. This cause was pan-Arab in character, and circumvented the issue of the central authority of the Syrian state.

Arab nationalism, with its broad appeal, invested its leaders with social and political leverage over the French and British occupying powers. As a revolutionary force, it cohered the Arab population behind a single cause. The Great Revolt in Syria, between 1925 and 1927, was a manifestation of Arab nationalism, and encapsulated the essence of the Syrian resistance to the French rule. It gave the political leaders of the movement a pretext to challenge the authority of their imperial counterparts. The project of national construction was aided by the potential offered by Arab nationalism.

Arab nationalism had been a central doctrine for the disparate communities of Syria and the Arab states of the Middle East. It united the Arab communities of the Mashreq and the Maghreb through a common linguistic and cultural prism. Arab nationalism found its expression, at the turn of the twentieth century, in Bilad al-Sham.<sup>33</sup> It started as a response to the exclusive nationalist policies of the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman empire. It was originally conceived in secular terms, and was guided by a messianic message to restore the dignity and the glory of the Arab civilisation.

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<sup>32</sup> Van Dusen, M., "Political Integration and Regionalism in Syria," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3, Spring 1972, pp. 123.

<sup>33</sup> Khoury, P., "Syrian Political Culture: A Historical Perspective," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 19.

Through the ambit of Arab nationalism, Syria's national leaders, in the form of the National Bloc and People's Party, started to construct the Syrian state. They attempted to integrate the constituent parts of Syria with Arab nationalism as their legitimising theme. One of the first steps taken by the Syrian government after independence, as part of the trend towards national integration, was to reduce communal representation in parliament. Between 1947 and 1949, the parliamentary representation of the Christian communities was reduced from 19 to 14 delegates, the 'Alawi from 7 to 4, and the Druze from 5 to 3.<sup>34</sup> The French legacy of divide and rule, however, left a segregated society rife with the animosities of minority privilege. The ossification of regionalism, and the wider attraction of Arab nationalism beset the emerging Syrian state with problems of authority. In the midst of establishing its authority, the state received a more direct challenge from the creation of Israel in Palestine.

### *The creation of Israel*

The creation of Israel in May 1948 represented the most immediate threat to the states of the Middle East in general and Syria in particular. After only two years of independence, Syria was confronted by a new form of imperialism, with the creation of a colonial-settler state in its midst. As Israel was carved from Bilad al-Sham, in Palestine, and created under the auspices of the imperial powers, it constituted a double-edged challenge to Syria:

- (i) With the support of the world's imperial powers, the US and the Soviet Union, Israel managed to establish a foothold in the region at the expense of Syria and the indigenous Palestinians.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ma'oz, M., "The Emergence of Modern Syria," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Rodinson, M., *Israel and the Arabs*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), pp. 29-40.

- (ii) The failure of the Syrian bourgeois elite to prevent the creation of Israel and to liberate Palestine gave rise to a generational rift between the radical and conservative Syrian nationalists.<sup>36</sup> This division gave credence to the Arab Socialist Ba'th party, whose ideological foundation rested upon the revitalisation of the Arab World.

### *The Ba'th party and Israel*

The Ba'th party, founded in 1947, represented a more visionary form of Arab nationalism.<sup>37</sup> Its appeal, as a revolutionary movement, far exceeded the chivalrous objectives of the early leaders of Arab nationalism, whose acceptance of the Arab state-sub-system, and their acquiescence to the creation of Israel was habitually denounced.<sup>38</sup>

The ideology of the party was expounded in the constitution, which saw the Arab World as a single eternal nation.<sup>39</sup> As an ideology, Ba'thism called for:

- the renaissance of Arabism;
- a regeneration of the great Arab empires;
- the eradication of all occupying powers.<sup>40</sup>

Michel Aflaq, one of the founders of the Ba'th party, established the core ideology of the party and wrote that: "The ultimate objective of the Party was embodied in its

<sup>36</sup> Lapidus, I., *A History of Islamic Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 647.

<sup>37</sup> Rabinovich, I., *Syria under the Ba'th 1963-66: The Army-Party Symbiosis*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), pp. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Ma'oz, M., "The Emergence of Modern Syria," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Rabinovich, I., *Syria under the Ba'th 1963-66: The Army-Party Symbiosis*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), pp. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Rabinovich, I., *Syria under The Ba'th 1963-1966: The Army-Party Symbiosis*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), pp. 6-11.

very name, Ba'th, meaning renaissance or rebirth."<sup>41</sup> This term referred to effecting a fundamental change in the spirit of the Arab people, which would lead to a reconstruction of the glorious Arab civilisation.

In conjunction with the spiritual element of Ba'thism, *freedom, socialism, and unity* formed the political trinity of the party. The goal of freedom was fundamental to the spiritual renaissance of the Arabs, and it called for the rejection of imperial tyranny. The socialist component of Ba'thism was devised to remove the means of production from the bourgeois class and the landed elite. Regeneration required the levelling of social and economic distinctions within the Arab society. The final encompassing element of Ba'thism espoused by Aflaq was unity. Arab unity was the key factor to the realisation of Arab civilisation. Freedom and socialism were dependent upon the fruition that Arab unity would deliver to the Arab World. The trilogy of the party was the essence of Ba'thism, and it offered the Arab World a system for reclaiming its glorious past.

Between 1958 and 1961, Syria embarked on a unity scheme with Egypt. Whereas the union with Egypt served its original purpose of forestalling a communist coup in Syria, the hegemonic pretensions of Nasser's Egypt offended the Syrians.<sup>42</sup> After three years of dominance by Egypt, rather than equal partnership, Syria withdrew from the UAR, and has not acceded to any similar relationship since then.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Betz, D., *Conflict of Principle and Policy: A Case Study of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Power in Syria, 8 March 1963-23 February 1966*, Ph.D. Thesis, (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1976), pp. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Hopwood, D., *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 60.

<sup>43</sup> Kienle, E., *Ba'th v. Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), pp. 13.

The Syrian Ba'th party seized power in 1963. As part of its rhetorical foundation, the party called for the destruction of Israel, and the breakdown of the Arab state-sub-system. At the sixth National Congress, the party revealed its radical political and social agenda.<sup>44</sup> The ideology was composed of Marxist-Leninist thought infused with Aflaq's romantic vision of Arab nationalism. Revolution was to emanate from Syria before fulfilling its pan-Arab mission.<sup>45</sup>

Damascus became the revolutionary centre for social and political transformation of the region. Through constructing a Leninist party-state, the Ba'th party mobilised the Syrian rural population in support of its radical programme. The socialist transformation of the state entailed a process of nationalisation and land reforms. The power of the urban and land-owning elite was destroyed as the leaders of the Ba'th started a policy of national integration through social and economic levelling.<sup>46</sup>

The proclaimed enemies of the Ba'th party, and their brand of Arab nationalism, were Israel and the Western-supported regimes in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Conflict between Syria and Israel became an inevitable and enduring feature of the Middle East.<sup>47</sup> Syria's first direct confrontation with Israel, under the leadership of the Ba'th party, exploded on 6 June 1967.

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<sup>44</sup> Abu Jaber, K., *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 80-81.

<sup>45</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 19-20.

<sup>46</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 82-84.

### *The Six Day War*

The Six Day War erupted when Israel launched its encompassing offensive against Syria, Egypt, and Jordan in June 1967. Israel occupied the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza. The event represented a watershed in the Middle East, as Israel scored a resounding military victory and established its military superiority over the Arab states. The extent of the Arab defeat changed the face of the region's dynamics. Israel's existence could no longer be denied.<sup>48</sup>

As a consequence of the Six day War, Arab nationalism lost much of its resonance as a revolutionary ideal. The revisionist message of Arab nationalism had failed to fulfil its historic requisite; unity had not prevailed, moreover, Palestine was unequivocally lost to Israel. As a result of the defeat, the Arab state-system became more established. State leaders refuted the efficacy of Arab unity whilst reinforcing the role of the state in the regional environment. Although the high levels of inter-state communications and co-ordination continued, the political differences among the state elites ossified, and their foreign policies became more state-centric.

In Syria, the Ba'th party was held responsible for the disastrous performance in the war. The revolutionary leadership had not produced the fruits of its rhetoric. Despite receiving the military and political support of the Soviet Union, the Ba'th leadership had increased the vulnerability of the state. The repercussions were manifest in the internal challenges set by the military wing of the Ba'th party against the civilian wing of the party.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 103.

<sup>49</sup> Kienle, E., *Ba'th v Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), pp. 51-58.



The military coup of November 1970 saw Asad assume office as the leader of the Ba'th party and the Syrian state.<sup>50</sup> The new regime implemented a set of domestic and foreign policies based upon *realpolitik*, rather than ideological imperatives. The change in the policies of the regime was reflective of the changing regional environment, and the primacy of the state in conducting regional relations.

From this brief review of Syria's history, it is possible to see that its power potential is inextricably linked to its geopolitical position. Syria has been the focus of numerous regional and international struggles. Its historical experience has left an indelible scar on the demographic composition of Syria.

## Population

Population is another tangible source of a state's power. However, population alone is not enough to embolden a state's power, as a large population can be burdensome to a state with a small resource base. The cohesion of the state determines how effective the population is as a source of power. Cohesion can be founded through the existence or creation of a national purpose. The national purpose of a state often emanates from the presence of a constant external threat. The potential threat from a hegemonic neighbour serves to heighten the sense of unity. Where traditional rivalries and insecurities exist, in states such as Turkey/Greece, Serbia/Bosnia, Iran/Iraq, and Syria/Israel, national unity is critical.

As alluded to above, Syria's ancient and modern history have militated against the formation of a cohesive population. The policies conducted during the period of the French mandate reinforced the social and ethnic divisions that existed in the

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<sup>50</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 65-66.

artificially created states of the Levant.<sup>31</sup> The complex social and ethnic cleavages that characterised modern Syria presented the central authorities with an insurmountable problem. The regional autonomy granted to the different minorities, during the mandate era, generated a series of confrontations between the state and the regions. The creation of Israel acted as an antidote to Syria's social ailment. It yielded a national mission for the Syrian state and population, notably, to channel their energies towards a national purpose.

According to Tilly, war is the crucible for creating nation-states.<sup>32</sup> The Syrian-Israeli conflict has produced an environment conducive to occasion a Syrian nation-state. The centralisation of the political process, exacerbated by the conflict with Israel, has engineered a centripetal force that has propelled the population towards unity. Arab nationalism, as a source of regime legitimacy and a broader reference to national identity, nevertheless, has circumvented the evolution of a Syrian nationalism. The impasse between the two competing nationalisms produced a flourishing environment for minorities. Adding to the paradox, the legacy of French rule cultivated a climate in which the 'Alawi and Druze minorities extracted themselves from social degradation, and elevated themselves towards the centres of political and military power.

The dissension among the pursuit of social cohesion in the Syrian state, the fulfilment of Ba'th (Arab nationalist) ideals, and elevation of minorities in the state

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<sup>31</sup> Ma'oz, M., "The Emergence of Modern Syria," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Tilly, C., "War Making and State Making as Organised Crime," in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 169-190.

leadership has led to the Syrian paradox.<sup>53</sup> To appreciate this dynamic nature of Syrian society, it is rudimentary to examine its composition.

The current population of Syria is 16.5 million.<sup>54</sup> The traditional population concentration axis, along the humid steppe belt, Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, has more recently extended into the Latakia and Tartous areas. Although Syria's population is small in absolute terms, it doubled between 1963 and 1987, and its current birth-rate, 3.4%, is one of the highest growth rates in the world. The population is set to rise to 18 million by the year 2000; and the demographic composition of Syria (currently 59% of the population is under the age of 20), is likely to undergo a radical transformation.<sup>55</sup> The distribution of the population throughout the provinces of Syria is as follows:

*Population of provinces in 000*<sup>56</sup>

|          |       |             |     |
|----------|-------|-------------|-----|
| Aleppo   | 2,677 | Tartous     | 644 |
| Damascus | 2,824 | Latakia     | 783 |
| Hama     | 1,046 | Suwaida     | 281 |
| Hassaka  | 965   | Deir al-Zor | 565 |
| Homs     | 1,209 | Deraa       | 568 |
| Idlib    | 870   | Ragga       | 485 |
| Quneitra | 41    |             |     |

<sup>53</sup> Ma'oz, M., and A. Yaniv (eds.), "The Syrian Paradox," *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 254-255.

<sup>54</sup> Butter, D., "Special Report: Syria," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 39, no. 39, 29 September 1995, pp. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1993/94*, pp. 12.

<sup>56</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1993/94*, pp. 12.

### ***A heterogeneous society***

The Syrian population, despite a measure of cultural uniformity, continues to lack cohesion and a cogent universal identity. The Syrian population was most accurately portrayed by Hourani when he described Syrian society as:

*composed of a large number of groups, local, tribal, linguistic, and religious. On the whole, these groups formed closed communities. Each was a world, sufficient to its members and exacting their ultimate loyalty. The worlds touched but did not mingle with each other; each looked at the rest with suspicion and even hatred. Almost all were stagnant, unchanging, and limited; but the Sunni world, although torn by every sort of internal dissension, had something universal, a self confidence and sense of responsibility which the others lacked. They were all marginal, shut out from power and historic decision.<sup>57</sup>*

The ethnic composition of Syria has become the focus for several academic studies of the region, where horizontal and vertical stratification are counterpoised to each other. Van Dam provided one of the most detailed insights into the ethnic composition of Syria.<sup>58</sup> He identified the following factors as contributing to the multi-ethnic fabric of Syrian society:

- (i) Syria (Bilad al-Sham) has been the cradle for the three major monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- (ii) The Fertile Crescent, as a region, has always been the centre for tribal movements and the focus of empire contests.
- (iii) Syria has been an area of refuge for displaced peoples.

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<sup>57</sup> Hourani, A., *Minorities in the Arab World*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996).

- (iv) The differences in tribal and national set up have become infused with religious diversity leading to a reinforcement of distinct community identity.
- (v) The religious, tribal, and linguistic differences have been accentuated by the physical separation of the communities by geographical features.
- (vi) Due to their physical isolation, the communities have enjoyed substantial autonomy from the central government. <sup>59</sup>

The population can be divided according to language, religion, or ethnic groups. Approximately 82.5% of the population speak Arabic as their first language. The dominant group has, for more than 1,000 years, been Syrian Arabs, who constitute nearly 90% of the population.<sup>60</sup> The great majority of the Syrian Arabs are Sunni Muslims. However, other Arab sub-groups, especially religious confessions, form alternative constellation centres. These subgroups are: the 'Alawis 11.5%, Druze 3%, Isma'ilis 1.5%, Christians 14.1%, of whom 4.7% are Greek Orthodox Christians,<sup>61</sup> and Jews 0.78%.<sup>62</sup> The majority of the population, 68.7%, are Sunni Muslims.<sup>63</sup> The ethnic minorities include: Armenians 4%, Kurds 8.5%, and Turcomans 3%. The

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<sup>59</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Kessler, M., *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power*, (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Khuri, F., "The Alawis of Syria: Religious Ideology and Organisation," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Policy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1.

Kurds and Turcomans, though ethnic minorities, are Sunni Muslims, thus, they belong to the majority of the population.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1.

### *The 'Alawis*

The largest, and probably the most significant of the confessional groups, in Syria, is the 'Alawis. The 'Alawis originate from the Jabal al-Nusayriyah region of western Syria, they are an off-shoot of the Shi'a family of Islam. Their creed is very secretive, and is reputed to incorporate elements of Islam and Christianity.<sup>65</sup>

Due to their religious deviation from orthodox Islam, they were traditionally persecuted by the Sunni majority, who believe that the 'Alawis "have strayed so far from Sunni (Orthodox) Islam that they are no longer truly Muslims." <sup>66</sup> As they were suppressed for their beliefs, their social status within Syrian society was low; they found employment as agricultural workers and domestic servants to Sunni landlords.<sup>67</sup> Since the mid-1960s, however, the 'Alawis have dominated the political and military apparatus of Syria, and the system of political and social patronage has been inverted. There are concerns within the state, especially from other minorities, that the ruling 'Alawis will be overthrown by the majority of Sunnis. The 'Alawis, however, have showed no fear for their sect as they function according to the broader Syrian national interest.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Khuri, F., "The Alawis of Syria: Religious Ideology and Organisation," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Policy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 49-61.

<sup>66</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 204.

<sup>67</sup> For a good analysis of the 'Alawi community and its rise to power see: Drysdale, A., "The Alawis of Syria," in G. Ashworth (ed.), *World Minorities*, vol. II, (London: Quartermaine House/Minority Rights Group, 1978), pp. 1-5, Drysdale, A., "The Syrian Armed Forces in National Politics: The Role of the Geographic and Ethnic Periphery," in R. Kolkowicz, and A. Korbonski (eds.), *Soldiers, Peasants and Bureaucrats*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 52-76, and Faksh, M., "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, April 1984, pp. 133-153.

<sup>68</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 206.

### *The Druzes*

The Druzes' faith is based on *Isma'lyya*; it emerged at the time of the Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, whom they expect to return.<sup>69</sup> "Their beliefs are a mystical offshoot of Shi'a Islam combined with features of other religions."<sup>70</sup> They have secret doctrines and they believe in reincarnation. Their community is very closed as they do not accept inter-marriage.

The Druzes are primarily located around Jabal al-Druze and form 90% of the population in the al-Suwaida province.<sup>71</sup> The Druzes also benefited from their role in the military. They frequently confronted the authorities during the French Mandate and gained a reputation for their resilience. As a minority they seized the opportunity to rise through the military ranks although they were later to be purged with the succession of the 'Alawi leaders.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Isma'ilis*

The Isma'ilis are an off-shoot of the Shi'a branch of Islam. According to Glassé, Isma'ilism is a manifestation, within Islam, of ancient Persian religious systems.<sup>73</sup> Historically, Isma'ilism seemingly began as a splinter from the Twelver Shi'a sect.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "Druzes," *Islamic Desk Reference Compiled from the Encyclopaedia of Islam* by E. Van Donzel, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 89.

<sup>70</sup> Butter, D., "Lebanon," *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 369.

<sup>71</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 48-61.

<sup>73</sup> Glassé, C., "Isma'ilis," *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (London: Glassé, 1989), pp. 194.

<sup>74</sup> Glassé, C., "Isma'ilis," *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (London: Glassé, 1989), pp. 196.



Since the mid nineteenth century there have been two groups of Isma'ilis in Syria: one located in the Qadmous-Masyaf west of Hama, and the second in Salamiyah. In the ninth and tenth centuries Salamiyah had been the centre of Isma'ili activism.<sup>75</sup> Since the eleventh century, in terms of their access to political power, the fortunes of this group have passed their zenith.<sup>76</sup>

Isma'ili fortunes have slowly improved in Syria since the Ba'th party seized power in 1963. As a vehicle for promoting minorities, the military academies within Syria helped the Isma'ilis to achieve some upward social mobility in society.

Many Isma'ilis now hold positions in the bureaucracy, and the education sector. The traditional rivalry between the Isma'ilis and the 'Alawis in the Latakia region has, however, prevented the descendants of the Assassins from acquiring an independent power base.<sup>77</sup>

### *The Christians*

Syrian Christians have a longer tradition than any other Christian group, and their ancestors pre-dated the Muslim Arabs by 500 years. Syrian Christians subscribed to Arab nationalism at the turn of the century and identified their interests with the Arab World. Christians, apart from the Armenians, all belong to the broader Arab family.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Lewis, N., "The Isma'ilis of Syria Today," *Royal Central Asian Society Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1, January 1952, pp. 69-77.

<sup>76</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 11-12.

<sup>77</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 11-12.

<sup>78</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 209.

### ***The Kurds***

The largest ethnolinguistic minority in Syria is the Kurds. They have their own distinctive culture, language, and history, which foster their tribal identity. They are located in the northern region of Syria across the mountains of the north-west and north-east. In addition to the main Kurdish belt in the north, where they are primarily agriculturists, several thousand Kurds live in the cities, especially in Damascus.<sup>79</sup>

### ***The Armenians***

The second largest ethnolinguistic minority is the Armenians. They are the least assimilated group in the country due to their strong Armenian identity. They fled Turkish persecution in Armenia, during the 1920s and 1930s, and settled in and around Aleppo. They are responsible for a lot of Aleppo's small industries, as they concentrate on skilled craftwork, especially gold.<sup>80</sup>

### ***The Jews***

The Jews had been present in Syria for over 2,000 years. Under the various Muslim empires, as people of the book (*ahl al-kitab*), they enjoyed a similar status to the Christians. Jews, in a similar fashion to the Armenians, lived and worked in Aleppo and Damascus. They amounted to 30,000 before the advent of the World War II. The position of the Jews, in Syria, became ambivalent after the creation of the state of Israel. In 1992, under pressure from the US and as a concession for confidence building measures, Syria declared that any of the remaining 4,000 Syrian Jews were free to emigrate. By the end of 1992, 2,600 had received exit visas, and of the 1,400 left, about 400 indicated a desire to stay in Syria.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 204.

<sup>80</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 209.

<sup>81</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 210.

Irrespective of the ethnic or religious divisions within Syria, the constant threat posed by Israel has been an issue of national unity since 1948. The threat of an external power has congealed the aspirations of Syrian society. The state has been able to channel the insecurities of its citizens into a state-building programme. This programme has sought to develop Syria's military into a formidable counter-threat to Israel.

The preponderance of the armed forces, however, in the state-building programme produced a dialectic between the civil leaders of the state and its military officers. A dichotomy arose where the interests of the military, a minority dominated institution, clashed with the interests of the Sunni political elite. This led to a period of instability as both groups jostled for power; the army, with coercion as its weapon managed to seize power in 1949.<sup>82</sup>

The composition of the army was not representative of the ethnic or religious divisions within the state. Whilst Sunni power could be identified in the form of land ownership and mercantile trade, the minorities, especially the 'Alawis and the Druze, started to occupy prominent posts in the military.<sup>83</sup> The military provided the only vehicle through which the minorities could elevate their social status, and improve their standard of living. The combination of domestic and regional insecurities promoted the interests of the minorities as they gravitated towards the pillars of power. The rise of the 'Alawis and the Druze in the Syrian military<sup>84</sup> indicated a shift

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<sup>82</sup> Nevo, J., "Syria and Jordan: The Politics of Subversion," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Asad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 142..

<sup>83</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 34-47.

<sup>84</sup> For a comprehensive study of the minorities in Syria see: Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), Batatu, H., "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling Military Group and the Causes of Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3, Summer 1981, pp. 331-344, and Van Dam, N.,

away from the traditional centres of power in the suqs, towards the military academies throughout Syria.<sup>85</sup>

The centre of power within Syria rests firmly in the hands of the military and the security services. Through its direct access to the state apparatus, the military has gained a crucial role in the state-building process. Instead of dislocating the power of the Syrian state, the sectarian nature of society has enhanced its power. The population of Syria has constituted a source of potential power for the state.<sup>86</sup> The state has converted this potential together with geography, history, and nationalism into power outputs. Power outputs are manifest in the form of the military and the economy. The next section addresses the outputs of the power ratios.

## The Military

The military provides Syria with its most tangible and quantifiable source of power. By expanding its military, through the auspices of its geopolitical position, Syria has managed to dominate the policies of Lebanon, circumvent the threat of Iraq, and confront, to a limited extent, the ambitions of Israel. Despite the constraints Syria has faced, Asad has successfully managed to transform the Syrian state into a middle power in the region. This has been achieved in two ways:

- (i) constructing a strong state;
- (ii) enjoining the regional and international balance of power.<sup>87</sup>

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"Middle Eastern Political Clichés: 'Takriti' and 'Sunni' Rule in Iraq; 'Alawi' Rule in Syria, A Critical Appraisal," *Orient*, vol. 21, no. 1, January 1980, pp. 42-57.

<sup>85</sup> Van Dam, N., *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 34-47.

<sup>86</sup> The process of state-building is addressed in chapter four.

<sup>87</sup> I shall address the first variable in chapter four, and the second variable in chapters five and six.

Syria's domestic and foreign policies owe their origins to the intervention of the military in political affairs since the early days of independence. Since the first coup of 1949, when Zaim seized control of the state apparatus, the military has played an instrumental role in state affairs.<sup>88</sup> The confrontation between Jadid, Syria's ruler,<sup>89</sup> and Asad, Minister of Defence and Commander of the Air Force, in November 1970, marked the ascendancy of the military in political affairs, and the subordination of the civilian sector in determining state policies.<sup>90</sup>

The efficiency of the military and security apparatus has served to maintain the life of the incumbent regime. Additionally, it has enabled Syria to engage in the regional competition for hegemony. This is because the security of the state has been a preoccupation of the Syrian regime.<sup>91</sup> The domestic and regional vulnerability of the Syrian state has made military intervention a feature of post-independence life.

Since its independence in 1946, the Syrian state has been forced to balance the complexities of a truncated and ethnically divided country, against the imminent threat posed by the creation of Israel, and by the ambitions of its irredentist neighbours, in the form of the Fertile Crescent and the Greater Syria schemes, as previously mentioned. Domestically, the centrifugal force of the minorities and their semi-autonomous status rendered centralised rule impractical and improbable.

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<sup>88</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 20-25.

<sup>89</sup> As leader of the secret Military Committee, Jadid was Syria's ephemeral ruler between 1966-1970. See: Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 105.

<sup>90</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 116-119.

<sup>91</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 375.

Disillusioned with civilian rule and the debacle of the 1948 war, the army leaders considered themselves as the natural repository of state power.<sup>92</sup>

The military intervened in Syrian politics in 1949, and maintained an intermittent presence in political affairs through a myriad of coups and counter-coups. The disillusionment of the military with the political leadership of the state took on a new form after the 1967 war. Although both the civilian and military leaderships belonged to the ruling Ba'th regime, the military divested the civilian wing of the party of its power and took full control of the state.<sup>93</sup>

The size of the 1967 defeat rocked the military establishment in Syria as a new era of purges began. The failure of 1948 was revisited, and only a few leading military men escaped without loss of rank or position. Defence minister, Asad, was one of the few who managed to excuse his role in the war, and even enhanced his position in the military junta.<sup>94</sup> Upon seizing control of the state, in November 1970, Asad inherited a truncated state, as a result of the loss of the Golan Heights, and a severely defeated army. The new regime set about re-equipping the army to secure its own position at home, and to avenge the humiliation of 1967. From the defeat emerged a new military doctrine based on the accumulation and maximisation of power. Henceforward, realist politics dictated Syria's role in the Middle East.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Torrey, G., *Syrian Politics and the Military*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), pp. 104.

<sup>93</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Political Recruitment and Socialization in Syria: The Case of the Revolutionary Youth Federation," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1980, pp. 143-174.

<sup>94</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 148.

<sup>95</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

As a relatively small state with few resources, compared to its larger neighbours, Israel, Turkey, and Iraq, Syria's critical power projection can be located in its military. Asad was aware of this fact; accordingly, he tried to accumulate military power as this was the only possible route to secure Syria a role in both the regional and international political systems.<sup>96</sup> The energies of the state have been directed towards national security from a domestic, regional, and international perspective.

The military came to be the most visible and dominant output of Syria's power. This can be attributed to the fact that in Syria, the distinction between high and low politics is still pronounced. Although, in general, the economy of a state is a valuable output of power, in Syria, it remains subordinate to the interests of security.<sup>97</sup>

## The Economy

The Syrian economy is most accurately described as state capitalist, where the state exercises control over strategic industries, but allows the private sector to operate in a controlled market.<sup>98</sup> Endowed with limited natural resources, a small population, and an unstable political heritage, Syria has faced many constraints in the path of its economic development. Apparently, economic growth has been constrained due to two main factors:

- (i) natural factors;
- (ii) government economic policies;

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<sup>96</sup> Syria's military power will be discussed in more detail in chapter five when we examine its regional balance of power.

<sup>97</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 292.

<sup>98</sup> Robinson, L., "Rentierism and Foreign Policy in Syria," *Arab Studies Journal*, vol. iv, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 38.

(iii) political instability in the region.<sup>99</sup>

The Ba'th leadership of the 1963-1970 era introduced radical economic reforms that transformed the existing liberal economy into a socialist oriented one. Land reform and nationalisation epitomised the socialist character of the Syrian economy under the Ba'th rule.

Although the Syrian economy experienced some growth between independence and 1970, mainly in industries controlled by the state, such as textiles, food processing, and tobacco, the pace of this growth was hindered by the socialist orientations of the state.<sup>100</sup> In addition, Syria's recent history has shaped its economic policies, and wherever possible, the economy has remained subordinate to foreign policy. In other words, the Syrian economy has been held hostage to the fortunes of the regime and the successes or failures of Asad's foreign policy.

The policies of economic liberalisation, otherwise known as *infitah*, followed by Asad in the 1970s resulted in growth; gross domestic product (GDP) grew by more than 150%.<sup>101</sup> Infitah served two purposes: firstly, it was used to embolden the legitimacy of the regime. By attracting the support of the disaffected bourgeoisie, Asad could strengthen the state.<sup>102</sup> Secondly, the incorporation of the business class into the economy could provide an engine and a platform through which Syria could

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<sup>99</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 206.

<sup>100</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 206-207.

<sup>101</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 207.

<sup>102</sup> The relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie had been disrupted through the radical policies of the Ba'th party after 1966. This relationship is explored in chapter four.



challenge the economic superiority of Israel and balance its economic advantage.<sup>103</sup> The project of national integration, followed by the Syrian Ba'th party, dictated that the economy served the reconstruction of Syrian society, and helped to sustain the Syrian state in its conflict with Israel.

The role of the public sector in the economy has somewhat diminished since the mid-1980s. The state's ability to lead the economy and to determine the course of socio-economic development has receded due to the austerity budgets of the 1980s, and the rationalisation programme introduced to reduce inefficiency within the bureaucracy.<sup>104</sup>

The private sector experienced new growth between 1986 and 1990. Its share of foreign trade was reduced to 10% in the first part of the 1980s, but reached 20% in 1986, and 45% in 1990.<sup>105</sup> The manufacturing industries benefited from the incorporation of the private sector into the national economy as they contributed 43-44% to net domestic product in 1990, compared to 30-35% in the early 1980s.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 207.

<sup>104</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 62.

<sup>105</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 61.

<sup>106</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 61.

By 1990, the private sector contributed an estimated 55% of Syria's GDP. The private sector had employed 60% of the industrial labour force in the 1970s and the 1980s; this figure had reached a remarkable 75% by 1991.<sup>107</sup>

The introduction of economic liberalisation measures in 1972, 1986, and 1991, expressed a change in economic policy. Though the changes were precipitated according to differing circumstances, they indicated a new flexibility within the Syrian political system.<sup>108</sup> They also connoted the impending influence of the global economy and the vulnerability of the Syrian state.

### *Sources of income*

The four main sources of income for the modern Syrian economy are:

- agriculture;
- mineral industries;
- manufacturing;
- foreign aid.<sup>109</sup>

### *Agriculture*

Traditionally, agriculture has been a major component of the Syria economy. The development project of the Euphrates Dam system has revolutionised Syrian

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<sup>107</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 61.

<sup>108</sup> The liberalising measures of 1972-1977 were introduced to broaden the base of the regime and to mobilise the capital of the estranged business community to the national effort. In 1986 another set of liberalising measures was induced by the foreign exchange crisis (due to the precipitous drop in the price of oil), and the diminishing rent from the Gulf Arab states. The most recent measures, such as investment Law 10 of 1991, were adopted to help Syria acclimatise to the transition in the world order. For more information on this topic consult: Kienle, E. (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), and Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995)

<sup>109</sup> Syria - Country Report 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1996*, pp. 23.

irrigation systems and electricity generation. Like the Aswan High Dam project in Egypt, the project was financed by the former Soviet Union. The power station, inaugurated in 1978, generated over 90% of Syria's electrical energy for several years; its significance, however, is decreasing due to the introduction of new thermal power plants. An equally significant long-range purpose of the Euphrates Dam is the irrigation of 640,000 hectares of land along the Euphrates and its east-bank tributaries. This undertaking will require the rest of the century and will, when complete, more than double the area under irrigation in Syria.<sup>110</sup>

The programme of land reform implemented during the brief unity scheme of Syria and Egypt, between 1958 and 1961, has continued to characterise Syrian agricultural production. A large share of the capital invested in economic development, after the late 1960s, went into:

- land reclamation;
- land improvement;
- irrigation schemes;
- agricultural programmes.<sup>111</sup>

Presently, there are 20 state collective farms, and a co-operative organisation that contains 570,000 members.<sup>112</sup> The size of land holdings has changed during the period 1963 to 1995, depending upon the political and economic climate. Despite state intervention, private-sector farming has remained the dominant force in agricultural

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<sup>110</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 213.

<sup>111</sup> Syria - Country Report 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1996*, pp. 23.

<sup>112</sup> Syria - Country Report 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1996*, pp. 23.

production, and between 1987 and 1991 it accounted for two thirds of the cultivable land.<sup>113</sup>

The liberalisation programme of the 1990s has altered the relationship between the farmer and the state. The private sector has started to assume greater control over production, pricing, and the marketing of commodities.<sup>114</sup> Despite the agrarian character of the economy, Syria has continued to be a net importer of foodstuffs.<sup>115</sup> The economic plan of 1991-95 sought to return agriculture to the core of the economy with the aim of securing long-term self-sufficiency.<sup>116</sup>

With the impact of the oil boom, and the stress on industrial production, by the end of the 1970s, the emphasis of the economy gravitated towards a manufacturing and commercial base. Although the Syrian economy has become more diversified, a brief look at the country's macro-economic indicators show that a structural transformation from an agrarian to an industrial economy has not taken place.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Mineral industries***

Syria's main mineral industries are oil and phosphate extraction. Mining and manufacturing contributed 28.1% to Syrian GDP in 1993, with petroleum and its derivatives forming 66.7% of Syria's principal exports.<sup>118</sup> From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and again from 1992 onwards, oil exports made-up some 70%, or more,

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<sup>113</sup> Held, C., *Middle East Patterns*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 212.

<sup>114</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 91.

<sup>115</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 29.

<sup>116</sup> Syria - Country Report 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1996*, pp. 18.

<sup>117</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 29.

<sup>118</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1994/95*, pp. 31.

of Syria's total export value, which rendered the country heavily dependent on world-market oil prices.<sup>119</sup>

### ***Manufacturing***

For many centuries, Damascus was famous for its metalwork, fabrics, muslins, linens, silk brocades, tapestries, and carpets. All of these crafts have survived to the present time, but they are an inadequate basis for a national manufacturing complex in the modern technological world. The Third Five-Year Plan (1971-75) was designed to upgrade manufacturing industry; and 46.3% of public investment was directed towards the emboldening of the established industries. Heavy industry was the recipient of public investment, as phosphate and fertiliser plants were developed in conjunction with chemical and engineering plants.<sup>120</sup>

The main manufacturing industries in Syria are state-owned and include: food, sugar, textiles, chemicals, engineering, cement, and building materials. Although mining and utilities have remained under the jurisdiction of the state, the private sector contributed 40% towards manufacturing output in 1991. The private sector is most active in the production of textiles, food, leather, paper, chemicals, electrical goods and machinery.<sup>121</sup>

### ***Foreign aid***

With its small resource base, the economic development of Syria has been constrained by natural factors. By way of compensation, Syria's unique geopolitical position in the Middle Eastern sub-system has enabled it to extract aid and rent from

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<sup>119</sup> Bannerman, M., "Syrian Arab Republic," in D. Long, and B. Reich (eds.), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 207.

<sup>120</sup> Syria - Country Profile 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1994/95*, pp. 37.

<sup>121</sup> Syria - Country Profile 2nd Quarter, *Economist Intelligence Unit 1994/95*, pp. 37.

its Arab and Iranian neighbours. Syria's support for Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, and Syria's participation in the liberation of Kuwait, proved to be two cases where Syria's political orientations generated disposable income for the regime. This was made possible by being a Bonapartist state. The Bonapartist state, as defined by Marx, is able to conduct a rational and coherent policy conceived away from the constraints of the dominant social forces in the domestic arena.<sup>122</sup> The unique position occupied by the state vis-à-vis society, has allowed the state to subjugate the domestic necessities of the economy to achieve its political ends both from a domestic and regional perspective.

Foreign aid and rent have contributed substantially to the Syrian economy. The fact that foreign aid, as a source of state revenue, has risen by an estimated 400%, in recent years, suggests that a form of rentierism has dominated the characteristics of the economy.<sup>123</sup> This rent can be attributed to the critical role played by the Asad regime in the region's two arenas of conflict: the Arab-Israeli dispute; and the Iran-Iraq war.

As a front-line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria has been the recipient of foreign aid from the Gulf Arab states; foreign aid accounted for 40.9% of state revenues in 1979.<sup>124</sup> Receiving foreign aid has afforded Syria the opportunity to maximise its limited resource and to concomitantly increase its power projection. It has achieved this via two means:

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<sup>122</sup> Magraw, R., *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeoisie Century*, (London: Fontana Press, 1987), pp. 165.

<sup>123</sup> Robinson, L., "Rentierism and Foreign Policy in Syria," *Arab Studies Journal*, vol. iv, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 36.

<sup>124</sup> Robinson, L., "Rentierism and Foreign Policy in Syria," *Arab Studies Journal*, vol. iv, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 36.

- (i) Through balancing the interests of the Gulf Arab states with Iran, Syria managed to seize the role of regional mediator, hence promoting its own diplomatic and political agenda. Syria's accumulation of diplomatic credit with the GCC states and Iran gave it the pretext to extract rent from both parties, whilst Syria's main Arab rival, Iraq, was engaged in a putative war with Iran. With Iraq effectively removed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria became the central actor and requested further economic aid from the Gulf Arab states.<sup>125</sup>
- (ii) Through the support of the Gulf Arab states, Iran, and the Soviet Union, Syria was able to embark on its quest for strategic parity.

One could contest, that due to Syria's relatively poor resource base, it has been necessary for the Syrian regime to utilise its geopolitical position to ascertain rent in the form of aid. Sometimes the state has implemented unpopular foreign policies to secure rent.<sup>126</sup>

The state's careful balancing of domestic and international interests carries a high risk and cost. As long as there is a margin for political manoeuvring and there is sufficient aid to prop up the Syrian economy, the state can manipulate regional insecurities. A consequence of Syria's rentierism, is that the economy has, at times, become hostage to the fortunes of Syria's political role.

To recap, the Syrian economy is tied to two factors: the fortunes of the region's major oil producers, and the regional configurations of power. The combination of these factors have guaranteed that Syria could remain economically strong and seek

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<sup>125</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 91.

<sup>126</sup> The second Gulf War, which will be discussed in chapter six, provides a clear cut example of this.

its regional objectives. Syria's economy flourished during the 1970s after the oil boom, and particularly after Syria had become the only front-line state in 1979. The crisis of the 1980s, however, reflected how the Syrian economy had become dependent upon the region's economic position as it suffered a foreign exchange crisis in 1986.<sup>127</sup> Soviet and Iranian aid did not alleviate Syria's economic ailments; the gradual move towards economic liberalisation appeared to present the most viable option for reviving its economy.<sup>128</sup>

### *The economy and foreign policy*

Despite its structural adjustment programmes, the Syrian economy is still dependent upon the security of the regime and the success of its foreign policy. Although domestic industry and agriculture formed part of Syria's economic power base, the largest component of economic strength has appeared to emanate from Syria's ability to extract rent for its military services and alliance potential.

The Syrian state has managed, to date, to insulate itself from the determinants of the global economy. Whereas most of the states on the periphery of the global economy have traded part of their autonomy for aid, loans, and international investment, Syria has, to a large extent, insulated its autonomy. This has been achieved through two ways: the subjugation of economics to power politics; and the extraction of geo-political rent.

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<sup>127</sup> Sukkar, N., "The Crisis of 1986 and Syria's Plan for Reform," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 27-28.

<sup>128</sup> Sukkar, N., "The Crisis of 1986 and Syria's Plan for Reform," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 31.



The area of low politics, within Syria, has been relegated to the field of high politics.<sup>129</sup> The stability of the state has taken precedence over economic policy. Unlike in most Third World states, prescribed economic policies to cure Syria's ailments have been introduced independently of external pressure. The introduction of piecemeal reforms was designed to alleviate the immediate economic problems, meanwhile maintaining the over-staffed public services. The continuation of these inefficient services offered the state a residual base of legitimacy and support.

Even during the crisis of 1986, Syria did not apply for standby credits or other IMF facilities that could have involved economic reforms. Neither did it conclude any agreements with the World Bank that could have demanded the implementation of structural adjustment programmes.<sup>130</sup>

Syria's debt with the World Bank, which amounted to \$400 million in 1993, has not forced it to concede to World Bank pressures.<sup>131</sup> The most the World Bank has been able to achieve is the provision of advice; the World Bank, IMF, and the European Union have all conducted economic studies that offer recommendations to revive the economy.<sup>132</sup> The withdrawal of credit facilities has effected Syria's ability to borrow, yet Syria's geo-political position has enabled it to receive rent or loans from the Gulf Arab states. The Gulf Arab state loans have not been made conditional upon the implementation of economic reform, as their own economies might prove to be susceptible to the destabilising force of regional change.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Waldner, D., "More than Meets the Eye: Economic Influence on Contemporary Syrian Foreign Policy," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 4, May/June 1995, pp. 35.

<sup>130</sup> Sukkar, N., "The Crisis of 1986 and Syria's Plan for Reform," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 26-43.

<sup>131</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 204.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with a Syrian economist, 26 June 1994.

<sup>133</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 205.

The pattern of dependency between the peripheral and core states has not been reproduced in the Syrian case. By exploiting its geopolitical position, Syria has resisted the incremental loss of autonomy to the global economy and non-state actors. Pre-empting the policies of perestroika, Syria administered an ad hoc package of economic reforms that awarded the state some room for political manoeuvring.

During the Cold War, the international political system had provided Syria with enough leverage over the Soviet Union to avoid encasing itself in internationally administered debt relief.<sup>134</sup> The demise of the Soviet Union and the advent of the New World Order granted Syria with the fortuity to attract Gulf Arab aid and international loans.

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<sup>134</sup> Syria's estimated debt of \$10 billion in 1991 has largely been written off the by Soviets, in return for hard currency payments, and access to the Aleppine markets.

## Conclusion

Syria's physical resources are the most tangible sources of its power, and they can be identified as: geography, natural resources, and population. However, they have not been sufficient to endow the Syrian state with adequate power in its contention with its neighbours. The intangible sources available to the state, especially nationalism, appear to have offered the most potent form of power.

Syria's geographical location, at the keystone between the Orient and the Occident, has subjected it to endless invasions throughout its history. The history of Syria has been dominated by the rivalries amongst the region's major powers. Consequently, the Syrian state, inherited by its post-independence leaders, was fractious and lacked credible legitimacy from its society. History had denied the state a coherent nation, and implanted centripetal forces that tore at the very heart of Syrian society.

Geography and history have weakened the Syrian state. The matrix of ethnic and religious communities that compose Syrian society has often undermined the authority of the state. Challenged by several ideologies, such as *Arabism*, *Ba'thism*, and *socialism*, Syrian society has had to consider its primordial and supranational loyalties. Syrian society has been under pressure since independence to foster their Syrian Arab identity above their other religious or ethnic identities. Arab nationalism has proven to be the most effective vehicle for conveying a national purpose for the Syrians.

Utilising Arab nationalism, the Syrian state has attempted to convert its population, from a *potential* source of power, into *realised* power. A growing population, united by a national purpose, has proffered the seed for development. A cohesive and

educated population offered the state a firm foundation to build a strong economy. As urbanisation has taken place, the potential for industrial growth has risen.

Arab nationalism, as a source of power, provided the adhesive for Syria's heterogeneous society, and empowered the state to implement a state-building process. The conflict with Israel has intensified Syria's national insecurity, and provided a crucible in which the state could forge a national identity. The state, however, has remained vulnerable to the existence of an external threat, and it was malleable to the activities of Syria's civilian and military leadership.

The succession of the military leadership over the civilian leadership in 1963, when the Military Committee of the Ba'th party seized power, marked a significant change in the vulnerability of the Syrian state. The ensuing struggle between the two wings of the Ba'th party, the military and the civilian, produced the climate for the 1967 War against the Israelis.<sup>135</sup>

The defeat of the 1967 War was devastating for the whole Arab World. Not only did it rupture the dream of Arab nationalism, but it also indicated the permanence and pre-eminence of the state of Israel. The qualitative edge of the Israeli military hardware and its superior military organisation led to a resounding defeat for the Arabs.

After the humiliating defeat, Hafez al-Asad moved into position to occupy the post of state leader. The emergence of Asad as the ruler of Syria in 1970, represented a climax to Syria's arduous road to stability. Asad initiated a policy of state consolidation, a prerequisite to balancing the power of Israel.

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<sup>135</sup> Lawson, F., *Why Syria Goes to War? Thirty Years of Confrontation*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 34-50.

Despite its rupture, Arab nationalism has remained a source of power for the Syrian state. The dream may have lost some of its resonance, but it did not lose its appeal as a mobilising force. Arab nationalism has afforded the state the opportunity to coalesce the interests of the society into a national form. The advent of the October War in 1973 rallied the Syrians behind their state, and the relative success of the war restored some of the dignity lost in the June War of 1967. With an injection of legitimacy, accumulated through the war, Asad embarked on a state-building project that sought to transform the vulnerability of the Syrian state.

As a front-line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria managed to attract rent from the Gulf Arab states. Being the beating heart of Arabism, Syria became a major recipient of financial aid. In other words, Syria was able to change its main source of weakness, notably, its strategic position as the keystone in the Middle East, into a military, political, and diplomatic advantage. This transformation has enabled the Syrian state to develop a military doctrine based on attaining a balance of power with Israel.

The military has proven to be one area where Syria's geographical position, as a tangible source of power, combined with the potential of its population, has translated itself into a quantifiable output of power. The expansion of the Syrian military owed its roots to the unique position occupied by Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict and Middle Eastern sub-system of states. Syria's vulnerable location in the heart of the trade routes between:

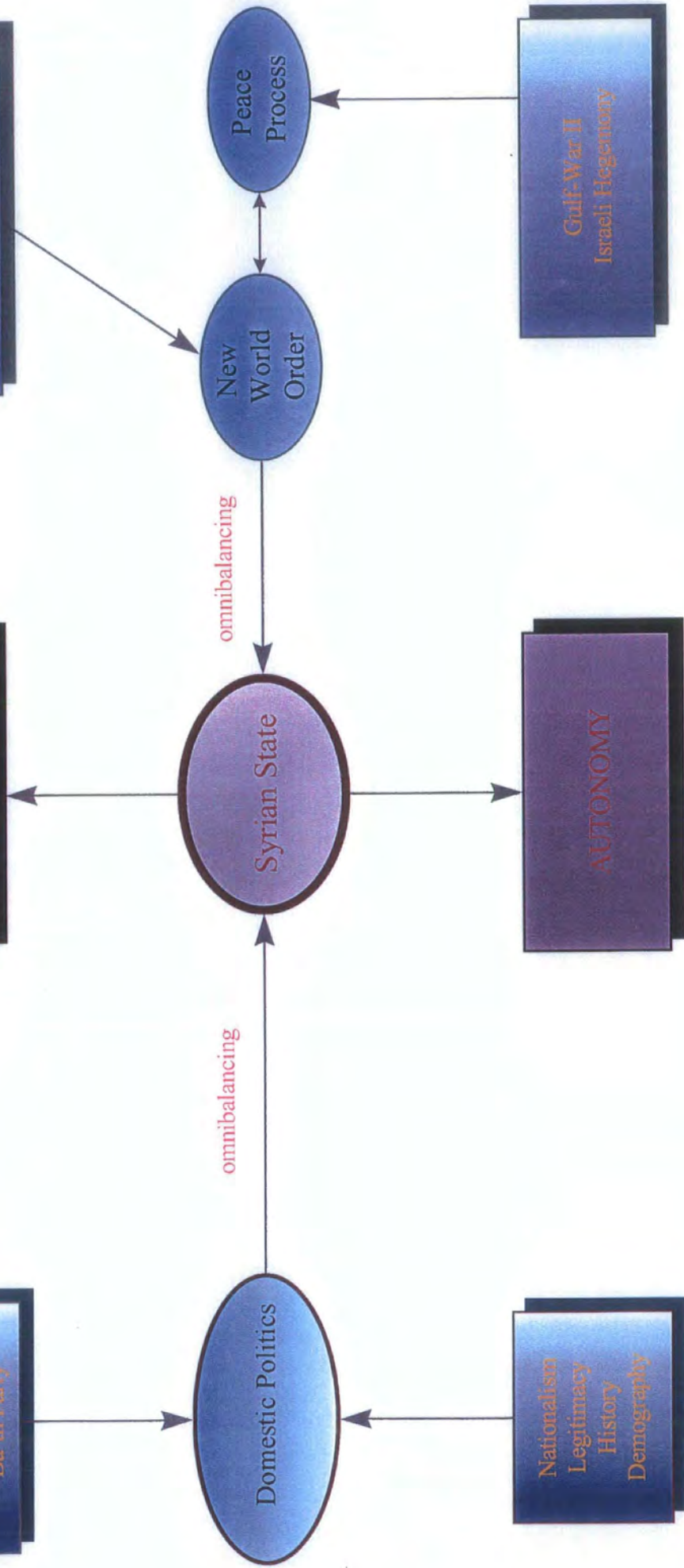
- the East and the West;
- the competing zones of Egypt and Iraq;
- the imperial contest of the French and British governments;
- and the interests of the Soviet Union and the US;

has been transformed into a source of power as the Syrian state has gained in resilience. The policies of Asad have successfully insulated the Syrian state from the domestic, regional, and international interventions of the past. In conclusion, although the endowment of the Syrian state is limited in natural resources, the appeal of Arab nationalism, and the skilful politicking of its political elite has enabled Syria to assume a regional role beyond its capabilities.

## Domestic Factors



## International Factors



## Notional Factors



## Regional Factors

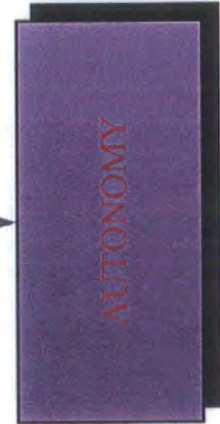


Figure 4.1

# Omnibalancing: The International System and Domestic Politics

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SYRIA: THE CENTRES OF POWER

#### Introduction

The hypothesis of this research acknowledges the primacy of the international political system in affecting state behaviour; meanwhile, it endorses the role played by domestic factors in foreign policy formulation of Third World states. Syria's adjustment to the New World Order, which has amounted to a change of strategy in foreign policy, has been facilitated by the structure of its domestic political process. The state in Syria is sufficiently insulated from domestic social forces to orchestrate a radical change in foreign policy. Its resilience to domestic challenges has been incorporated into the structures of the state and the political process. Under Asad, the orientation of the state changed decisively from an instrument of class revolution to a machinery of power in the service of *raison d'état*.<sup>1</sup>

Since he came to power, President Asad has instituted a process of state consolidation. The consolidation of the state has enabled Syria to engage in a protracted regional struggle with Israel. The pursuit of regional hegemony, manifested through its

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<sup>1</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 15.



competition with Israel, particularly in Lebanon, has been Syria's *raison d'état* since 1970.<sup>2</sup>

The national interest, in other words the regional competition with Israel, has been central to the consolidation of the state. Asad has consolidated the Syrian state into a quasi-corporatist state that serves the national interest. He has constructed a state that is construed from a patrimonial system and an institutional form of government.

Without a cohesive social and political entity, the consolidation of the state has been governed through the balancing of interests within Syria. One can identify three main centres of interest within Syrian society:

- the Ba'th party;
- the Armed Forces and Security Services;
- the bourgeoisie.

These centres of interest have become centres of power in Syria; they command their own constituencies through the allocation of patronage. The Ba'th party and the Armed Forces have dominated the state apparatus and the decision-making process, since Asad's ascent to power, whilst a reconstructed bourgeoisie has remained subordinate to the state.<sup>3</sup>

In more recent times, the permutation of power amongst the three centres of interest has reconfigured. Set within the context of the global reconfiguration of power, and the succession of capitalism, the bourgeoisie has started to gain in stature at the

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<sup>2</sup> Seale, P., "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 45-48.

expense of the Ba'th party. Before charting the rise of the bourgeoisie and the decline of the Ba'th party, I intend to examine the structures of the state and illustrate their impact upon the decision-making process within Syria.

## **Realism and the Decision-making Process**

Power in Syria is personalised through the politics of Asad. His stamp on Syrian politics and his omnipresence in the life of Syrians cannot be ignored. Asad's portrait adorns the buildings of Damascus, his statues remind the citizens of each province of his paternal leadership, and the press serves to reinforce his persona upon the public psyche. Despite these symbols of Asad's primary role in Syria's decision-making process, there is a danger of oversimplifying the chain of command within the Syrian political system. Beneath the role of the president lies a state built upon corporations of interest. They constitute agencies of communication and support between the president and the populace.<sup>4</sup>

The forging of the state, through balancing the interests of the dominant social actors, has produced a unitary state that is responsible for the conception and implementation of domestic and foreign policies. Existing above the dominant social forces, Asad has conducted policies based upon rational considerations. The president has not been held hostage to the dominant social actors; moreover, he has sown a layer of insulation around the decision-making process. Insulation, protected by the state's resilience, the means of coercion, has produced an environment for autonomous decision-making. From the domestic perspective, the state is the principal actor in Syria's foreign relations.

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<sup>4</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 223-226.

This coincides with the realist paradigm, which suggests that the state is unitary and the principal actor in international relations. Realism is the most apposite paradigm to understanding international relations when the state is a consolidated and legitimate feature of its own political environment. In neo-realist thinking, the state is governed by the structures of the international political system. The adoption of neo-realism's emphasis upon the international political system makes realism a more appropriate model to this study. Realism is a universal paradigm, but its weakness lies in its Western-centric perceptions. In its universality, it fails to address the peculiarities of the Third World.<sup>5</sup>

Realism is suitable to the study of the First World, where states have evolved through a protracted historical struggle. We can charge realism for being too Eurocentric in its approach to international relations. Its utility to this study is limited as it does not address the issue of the unconsolidated states in the Third World.<sup>6</sup>

Many new states were created as the era of imperialism receded after the major world wars of the twentieth century. The new states belonged to the pole of the Third World, which represented a constellation of modern independent states. Although these states enjoyed their new found independence, the legacy of imperialism left a pattern of economic dependency and ethnically fractured societies. Many of these states were created across ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic boundaries; each factor deprived the new states of common legitimacy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nickolson, M., *Causes and Consequences in International Relations: A Conceptual Study*, (London: Pinter, 1996), pp. 173-176.

<sup>6</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 235.

<sup>7</sup> Huntington, S., *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 117.

Without a historical legacy of their own, many of the states of the Third World were unable to consolidate their positions vis-à-vis their societies. Imported political systems were used to govern state-society relations, but the absence of a legitimate framework caused the states to depend upon the military to maintain social order. The use of coercion has remained an instrument of control in many Third World states.<sup>8</sup>

After 1945, neo-realism asserts, the international political system continued to govern the behaviour of the world's states. The bipolar division of the world incorporated the states of the First, Second, and Third Worlds. Third World states, such as Syria, were drawn into the competition for international hegemony between the superpowers. The Soviet Union built its alliance with Syria through the transfer of arms in an attempt to counter the imperial designs of the US. Syria's behaviour, in other words, was guided by the structure of the international political system.<sup>9</sup>

The structure of the international political system, and its sub-systems, have continued to shape the formulation of states' foreign policies. In the newly independent states of the Third World, however, the evolutionary phases of state consolidation have thrown up domestic anomalies that affect the formulation and implementation of these policies.

If one is to assess the determinants that influence the foreign relations of Syria, it would be negligent to omit the internal dynamics within the Syrian state. The Syrian state followed the pattern described above. With its fractious past, the Syrian state was open to the influences of the imperial powers and the dominant domestic actors. The

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, B., *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 246-247.

<sup>9</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 3-4.

state was shackled to the interests of international forces, and the ethnic and religious cleavages present within society.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1946 and 1970, the Syrian state lacked legitimacy and was exposed to a period of social and political instability. Due to the complex ethnic composition of Syrian society, the state was unable to compel allegiance from the populace to the new Syrian state. A combination of the distrust between the ethnic cleavages, amongst the states of Bilad al-Sham, and the autonomous enclaves of Jabal Druze, Latakia, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo undermined the national function of the state and the central rule of Damascus. This effectively invited the military to intervene in state affairs in 1949.<sup>11</sup> Its involvement in Syrian politics has continued to define the nature of the relationship between the state and the society.

Military intervention has proven to be an endemic feature of Third World states. Where states have not been able to assert their authority, through an institutional political process, they have often depended upon the military for support; alternatively, they have been subordinated to the authority of the military.<sup>12</sup> In both cases, domestic politics has tended to impinge upon the autonomy of the state. The decision-making process has been subjected to the competition that has arisen among the dominant actors within the state.

With its emphasis on the unitary nature of the state, realism fails to capture the impact of domestic actors upon the Third World state. The lack of consolidation in many states of the Third World have rendered them malleable to the influences of dominant

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<sup>10</sup> Longrigg, S., *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Petran, T., *Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 96-97.

<sup>12</sup> Clapham, C., *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 137-139.

ethnic and/or religious groups. We are obliged, therefore, to adopt the features of another paradigm that can account for the effect of the international political system, and is more sensitive to the impact of domestic politics.

## Omnibalancing

The concept of omnibalancing allows us to bridge the difference between the domestic politics model and the rational actor model, and to gauge their respective effects upon the state. The key to omnibalancing is the degree to which a state enjoys autonomy from the structural determinants of the international political system, and from the constraints present within the domestic system.<sup>13</sup>

In modern Syria, the state has been said to be semi-autonomous from the interests of one group.<sup>14</sup> Asad has successfully constructed a Bonapartist state, that is balanced between the interests of competing social forces, namely, the Ba'th party, the Armed Forces and Security Services, the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. Hinnebusch has suggested that Asad sits above the corporate agencies and balances their demands and interests.<sup>15</sup>

Asad's programme of state building sought to free the state from the undue influence of domestic forces, and to elevate the decision-makers of the state above those forces. From this position, the coterie of the regime could enact unpopular policies, but deemed to be taken in the national interest. This degree of autonomy in decision-

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<sup>13</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233-256.

<sup>14</sup> Daneels, I., R. Hinnebusch, and N. Quilliam, "Omni-balancing Revisited: Syrian Foreign Policy between Rational Actor and Regime Legitimacy," *BRISMES*, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>15</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria under the Ba'th: State Formation in a Fragmented Society," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 3, Summer 1982, pp. 184.

making has been achieved through the creation of a quasi-corporatist state whose origins lie in the aftermath of the June War of 1967.

### *State-building in Syria*

The June War of 1967 significantly altered the regional order of the Middle East. The Arab regimes were faced with a resounding defeat in their contest with Israel. The extent of the loss was far reaching, as Israel extended its regional hegemony through the occupation of the Sinai, West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights.<sup>16</sup>

Post-independent Syria had been enfeebled by numerous military coups and counter-coups ultimately resulting in the humiliation of the 1967 war.<sup>17</sup> Against this background, Hafez al-Asad, as the Minister of Defence, seized power through an internal-coup from within the existing Ba'th regime, on 14 November 1970.<sup>18</sup> The new leadership, faced an immediate task, notably, the survival of the new regime. Security of the regime and the state, both from a domestic and external perspective, herein took precedence over all policies of the state. Security has since then been pursued through the maximisation of power. The survival strategy of the regime was built upon three tiers:

- (i) coercion;
- (ii) the struggle with Israel;
- (iii) a state-building programme.

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<sup>16</sup> Diab, M., "Have Syria and Israel Opted for Peace," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 2, 1994, pp. 79-81.

<sup>17</sup> For more details of Syria's tumultuous past see: Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), and Rathmell, A., *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 23, see also: Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria, and Israel. The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 103.

Coercion has provided the backbone of the regime; it has sustained the regime, especially, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Syria was engulfed by internal dissension. Without the intervention of the Security Services, namely, Rif'at Asad's Defence Companies, civil war would have enflamed Syria, and threatened the leadership of the state.<sup>19</sup>

The state's legitimacy has been built upon insecure foundations. As the cement of Arab nationalism has fallen away, the state's legitimacy has dissipated. Economic shortfalls have served to weaken the state's allocative abilities, and exposed the vulnerability of the state's institutions. Lacking sufficient legitimacy, the state has depended upon coercion to maintain its authority, and implement unpopular policies, especially in its taciturn struggle with Israel.<sup>20</sup>

The struggle with Israel has been the primary concern of the new regime. The regional competition with Israel took on the form of a balance of power contest. The balance of power between Israel and the collective Arab states unduly impinged upon Syria's foreign policy. Despite Arab nationalism losing much of its political resonance after the 1967 war, it had helped to legitimise Syria's rejection of the Arab Cold War. Syria was able to do so by engaging in alliances with both the radical and conservative Arab states.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This will be discussed later in the chapter when I deal with the Hamah massacre to illustrate the potential of instability in Syria.

<sup>20</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 151-152.

<sup>21</sup> See Kerr, M., *The Arab Cold War 1958-1964: A Study of Ideology in Politics*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).



Asad sought to consolidate the gains and losses of the June War, and pursue a more realist path in foreign policy.<sup>22</sup> The grand goals of pan-Arabism were tailored according to the realities of Arab capabilities. In effect, Syrian aspirations were curtailed to:

- the recovery of the Arab territories lost in 1967;
- the restoration of Palestinian rights;
- the incorporation of Lebanon into Syria's sphere of influence.<sup>23</sup>

To achieve these ambitions, Syria had to balance the military potential of Israel. Balance could be found through the expansion of regional alliances, especially with the oil-rich Gulf Arab states. Another route to balancing the power of Israel was through the consolidation of the Syrian state, and the cultivation of a Syria-centric base of power. In a new state, without a definitive national identity, the prospect of war proved to be a crucible for state-building. The perpetual threat posed by Israel invoked a preoccupation with security and superimposed, albeit temporarily, a national Syrian consciousness.

State-building was inextricably linked to securing Syria's regional status. The conflict with Israel provided justification for the regime's departure from the political and economic policies of the radical wing of the Ba'th party.<sup>24</sup> This radical wing had believed in "the primary need to replace the old guard's reformist socialism with a

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<sup>22</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Revisionist Dreams, Realist Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 380.

<sup>23</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 145.

<sup>24</sup> Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria, and Israel. The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 103.

radical social transformation to improve socio-economic conditions in Syria".<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the policies of Asad's regime were motivated by Arab nationalism, but their perception was less exclusive than the radical wing of the Ba'th party, as it included all sectors of society. The regime sought to mobilise the energies and assets of the Ba'th constituency and the merchant class. The struggle with Israel required a united effort, and Asad's task was to engender a sense of loyalty to the Syrian state.<sup>26</sup>

Evidently, there was a distinct break from the ideological policies of the 1966-1970 period; Israel was still a central feature of Syrian foreign policy, but the new strategy was based on the balance of power instead of ideology. State-building was the first step towards the realisation of this goal. This required that the base of the regime was broadened through an appeal not only to the traditional followers of Ba'thism, but also to those sectors of society who had opposed Ba'thi rule and had suffered under it. The socialist content of Ba'thism was diluted as elements of the Syrian bourgeoisie were brought into the state-building project.<sup>27</sup>

The most immediate concern of Asad was to construct a durable state in order for Syria to fulfil its regional ambitions. The priority of the new Syrian regime turned towards domestic matters. This required a restructuring of state-society relations imbued with a national agenda, and was attained through the creation of a new governing system.

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<sup>25</sup> Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria, and Israel. The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, 1995, pp. 306.

<sup>27</sup> Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria, and Israel. The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 111.

## The Governing System

The contemporary Syrian political system was implemented soon after Asad had seized power in 1970. It has been construed from two forms of governance:

- institutional system,<sup>28</sup>
- a neo-patrimonial system.<sup>29</sup>

The decision-making process in Syria has existed somewhere between these two competing systems.<sup>30</sup>

The institutional model assumes that state structures are organised according to a society's norms, values, rules, and functions.<sup>31</sup> Hinnebusch suggests that the institutional system exists beyond the exigencies of personal or primordial motives. He comments:

*authority of office; routinized ideology; political skills and procedures and votes in assemblies and bureaus become crucial resources in the political process, subordinating or at least channelling and checking the role of societal resources such as wealth and kinship.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Weber refers to the institutional system as the *legal authority*. See: Weber, M., *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 329-341.

<sup>29</sup> Weber, M., *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 346-358.

<sup>30</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 98.

<sup>31</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 5.

The institutional policy-making model can be seen to operate in the states of the First World, where the political process has been institutionalised through a long historical process. A rational policy, according to Huntington, derives from an institutional decision-making system that contains a series of checks and balances.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, patrimonialism is incapable of delivering consistent policies based upon a rational set of objectives, as there are often more pressing concerns emerging from the domestic arena. Where patrimonialisation deepens, the coherence, rationality, and popular base of the state are all increasingly at risk. A rational decision in Syria, as well as in many Third World states, must include a calculation of regime survival. The relationship between the state and the regime, in the Third World, is often ambiguous especially where the primordial interests of a ruling minority coincide, or conflict, with the national interest.<sup>34</sup>

With the advent of oil wealth in the Middle East, the patrimonial state, founded upon traditional forms of patronage, has been replaced with the neo-patrimonial state.<sup>35</sup> In the neo-patrimonial state, the distribution of favours, in return for support, has been exchanged for the allocation of economic rewards. Hence, the patrimonial state has been transformed into a neo-patrimonial state as the state has gained a more allocative role.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Huntington, S., *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 160.

<sup>34</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 236.

<sup>35</sup> Leca, J., "Social Structure and Political Stability: Comparative Evidence from the Algerian, Syrian, and Iraqi Cases," in A. Dawisha, and W. Zartman (eds.), *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State*, (London: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 164-202.

<sup>36</sup> Richards, A., and J. Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 321.

The neo-patrimonial system allows the state to finance a network of support, usually built upon ethnic, cultural, social, or religious ties. It fosters patterns of patronage and cronyism throughout society, in return for rent, thereupon stabilising the support of the state. In the Middle East, where states have assumed control over considerable natural resources, the state plays an allocative role. This acts as a source of empowerment, as the allocation of contracts entails building layers of support and allegiance. The Gulf Arab states have successfully transformed their patrimonial states into neo-patrimonial states through the auspices of oil.

Syria has been less successful in cementing patronage through the allocation of state contracts and favours based upon oil rent. The ideology of the Ba'th party has acted as a substitute for the lack of rent oiling the political system. The extensive network of the Ba'th party in the rural districts of Syria has ensured the longevity of the Asad regime. Counterpoised to the efficacy of the institutional model, is the loyalty paid to the Asad regime by the system of neo-patrimonialism. "The Ba'ath recruited from all those who were outside the system of connections, patronage or kin on which the old regime was built: the educated sons of peasants, the minorities, the rural lower middle class, the 'black sheep' from lesser branches of great families."<sup>37</sup>

Functioning between institutionalism and neo-patrimonialism, the resulting system of governance has been based upon three overlapping structures:

- (i) the political system;
- (ii) the Ba'th party and its corporate bodies;
- (iii) the Armed Forces and the Security Services that constitute the shield of the regime.

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<sup>37</sup> Richards, A., and J. Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 313.

This system of governance can be conceptualised as a quasi-corporatist structure.<sup>38</sup>

### *The political system*

Asad sought to stabilise and consolidate the state through a carefully designed political system. The system operating in Syria has remained unchanged in character since 1970, despite the limited alterations of 1990.<sup>39</sup> The political system includes a presidency, parliamentary chamber, formal political parties, and a constitution.

The political system in Syria comprises two main national institutions: the Presidency and the People's Council. The president resides above the political system and oversees its functions; all of the political bodies of the state are subordinate to the president. The location of the presidential palace, set high above Damascus and isolated from the social contagion of Syria's capital city, is symbolic of Asad's relationship to the Syrian state and people: the presidential monarch rests above the domestic forces of Syria.

The presidential monarchy is instrumental in the foreign policy decision-making process, but it would be folly to ignore the role of the state institutions and their impact on this process. It is very tempting to oversimplify the influence of the president because the modern state of Syria is in part a creation of Asad. As Asad claims to be a man of institutions, he has set to endorse the institutional foundation of the Syrian state.<sup>40</sup> There is, however, a contradiction between Asad's proclamations and his

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<sup>38</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalisation in Syria," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 18.

<sup>40</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 99.

actions. A closer examination of the president's powers will enable us to perceive this contradiction and the prevailing chain of command in Syria.

### *The Presidency*

At the apex of the political system, the bureaucracy, the Ba'th Regional Command, the Armed Forces and the Security Services stands the President. The President has the right to:

- appoint the prime minister;
- appoint the speaker of the People's Council;
- make laws when the Council is not in session;
- legislate without the Council's consent,<sup>41</sup>
- veto parliamentary laws;
- dismiss the People's Council.<sup>42</sup>

On 31 January 1973, the People's Council approved a new constitution which limits the president's term of office to seven years, but bestowed upon him (Asad) the rank of Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, the power to declare war, instigate a state of emergency, and to legislate when the parliament was in recess.<sup>43</sup> The powers of the President are constitutionally absolute. The constitution was ratified by a referendum on 12 March 1973.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council On Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 252.

<sup>43</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 1, February 1973, pp. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1973, pp. 2.

Despite its approval by 88.9% of the electorate, the Constitution provoked a series of riots in Homs and Hama. The traditional Islamic communities of Homs and Hama rejected the secular disposition of the constitution, especially as it described Syria as a democratic, popular, and socialist state.<sup>45</sup> It did not stipulate that the head of state had to be Muslim. Although the military was the tool of the regime to exercise social control, it did not prevent the outbreak of riots in Homs and Hama. Consequently, the constitution was amended declaring that the head of state had to be Muslim.

As an 'Alawi, Asad existed outside the community of the Sunni majority. The 'Alawis were not recognised by Sunnis or Shi'as, moreover, they were maligned as heretics.<sup>46</sup> For Asad to be head of state, he had to belong to an official branch of Islam. Asad tried to satiate the religious establishment by persuading Musr Sadr, the spokesman for the Shi'a community in Lebanon, to issue a *fatwa*, declaring 'Alawis as Shi'as in 1973.<sup>47</sup>

The amendment of the constitution and the issue of the *fatwa* demonstrated two points:

- (i) the resonance of religion in the traditional sectors of Syria and its resistance to secular rule;
- (ii) Asad's pragmatic approach to state-building.

By appeasing the religious sector of the population, Asad sought to defuse a potential problem, by adapting the constitution to incorporate the Islamic essence of Syrian and Arab culture.

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<sup>45</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1973, pp. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup> Kramer, M. (ed.), "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism," *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 245-249.



Asad has clearly concentrated the power in the presidency; the institutions of state, such as the People's Council and the Progressive National Front, were created to conduct the more mundane business of state. These institutions allowed the regime to divest itself of some of its daily responsibilities. They were designed to broaden the base of the regime without soliciting power.

### *The People's Council*

After taking the final step in seizing power, in mid-November 1970, Asad, enforced the authority of the military wing of the Ba'th over the civilian wing. On 21 November, Asad formed a cabinet, which included fifteen Ba'thists, six Nasserists, two Communists, two Independents, and supporters of Akram Hourani.<sup>48</sup> Asad assumed the portfolios of prime minister and defence minister.

In February 1971, Asad established a parliament, the People's Council, where members were originally appointed, and after 1973, they have been elected by universal mandate.<sup>49</sup> The Syrian parliament was composed of 195 members until May 1990. From 1990 onwards, the number of obtainable seats was increased to 250.<sup>50</sup>

The People's Council most closely resembles a *majlis al-shura*, in the traditional Islamic sense; it does not possess sufficient power to preside over high politics, or legislate without the permission of the President.<sup>51</sup> Parliamentary discussion has been

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<sup>48</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 1, February 1971, pp. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 50.

<sup>50</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 253.

confined to the non-political issues of state, such as government performance in the fields of economy and services.<sup>52</sup> It is a discussion chamber that serves as a forum for functional groups within Syrian society.

The main function of the assembly is to represent the different interest groups, rather than constitute a sovereign body that generates and implements policies.<sup>53</sup> The President is responsible for submitting bills to the parliament, he promulgates laws that the parliament has passed, but he has the right to veto these laws. Technically, the parliament is invested with the power to over-rule his veto by a two-thirds majority, but this situation has never arisen.<sup>54</sup>

The People's Council is not an autonomous component of a democratic political system. In its current form, it owes its legacy and allegiance to the President, who has granted it nominal powers. The creation of the People's Council was not a derivative of class consciousness or a demand for greater democratisation, rather, it was an imposition from above.<sup>55</sup> The establishment of the political system served the interests of the elite by broadening the base of support, incorporating members perceived to be outside the immediate boundaries of the Ba'th party, but it did not necessarily serve the interests of democracy. As a consultative, quasi-corporatist body, the People's Council

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<sup>52</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 252-253.

<sup>53</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 139.

<sup>55</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 19.

is an integral part of the process that governs the relationship between state and society.<sup>56</sup>

### *The local government*

There are fourteen provinces in Syria. Each province is sub-divided into administrative areas, districts, and municipalities. At the head of this local structure is the governor, who consults with a local council of one hundred members; these members are elected every five years.<sup>57</sup>

The local governments are invested with powers to attend to local affairs. They are responsible for the everyday running of provincial affairs, and need only to defer to Damascus when seeking project approval or the acquisition of budgets.<sup>58</sup>

It is at the local level that we can see the three institutions of the state interacting. In each province there is a close liaison amongst the governor, the security chief, and the Ba'th party secretary. Each officer observes the policy decisions and actions of their counterpart, as a mechanism for regulating provincial affairs and for engendering loyalty and accountability to the state.<sup>59</sup>

The balance of power amongst the three provincial leaders is often dependent upon the political environment of the province. Seale alludes to the primacy of the security chief

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<sup>56</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria," *International Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, 1995, pp. 306.

<sup>57</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 102.

<sup>58</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 102.

<sup>59</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 103.

in a province such as Deir al-Zor, due to its proximity to Iraq, whereas in Raqqa', where industry takes priority, the governor would take pre-eminence.<sup>60</sup>

The interplay amongst the various governing structures allows the state to incorporate the interests of its constituencies, both within the provinces and the urban centres. The policy of incorporation has been a distinctive feature of Asad's rule. In the People's Council, the creation of the National Progressive Front (NPF) allowed the state to envelope the diverse sentiments of the left wing parties.

### *The National Progressive Front*

In the provincial elections, which took place on 3 and 4 March 1971, the Ba'th party suffered a number of unexpected setbacks. In a series of public speeches, Asad promised to restore some of the public liberties abolished by the previous regime. This reinforced the necessity to develop a wider base of support.<sup>61</sup> On 7 March 1971, the President divested the Ba'th party of some of its nominal powers by establishing the NPF with an 18-member central leadership consisting of President Asad, 9 other Ba'thists together with 2 members from each of the four non-Ba'thist parties, including the Syrian Communist Party (SCP), and the Arab Socialist Union (ASU).<sup>62</sup>

The formation of the NPF signified a change in direction. The inclusion of the left-wing and Nasserist groups coalition into the governing establishment incorporated a

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<sup>60</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 103.

<sup>61</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1972, pp. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1972, pp. 2.

level of opposition into the state apparatus.<sup>63</sup> Incorporating the above mentioned political parties, the NPF represented the only official channel of opposition.

However, the role of the NPF was dominated by the Ba'th party. The Ba'th programme and its conference resolutions, according to the NPF charter, provided the political direction of the NPF. The charter of the Front also disqualified all parties, except the Ba'th, from recruiting amongst students and from the Armed Forces.<sup>64</sup> The parties themselves, by accepting the conditions of admission, were divested of their powers as centres of criticism.<sup>65</sup> The agenda was firmly set from a top-down perspective. Accordingly, constitutional power sharing did not result from the creation of the NPF. It provided the regime with an inflated sense of legitimacy, and, hence, further increased its exercise of central power.

The NPF provided a forum for formal parties, recognised by the regime, to participate in selected matters of state, and under these circumstances the Ba'th party controlled and orchestrated the agenda. Besides members of the NPF, independent candidates were allowed to stand for election, but only after ratification had been granted by the regime.<sup>66</sup> There was no significant competition among the political parties operating in the system; they formed a joint list for each province and issued a common election manifesto.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1972, pp. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 27.

<sup>65</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 16.

<sup>66</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 27.

<sup>67</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 16.

The functions of the People's Council and the actions of the NPF have been largely cosmetic. Although a coalition of interests is represented through the parties, the NPF, according to Hinnebusch, has "never constituted more than a transparent attempt, by the regime, to disguise the Ba'th's monopolisation of power."<sup>68</sup> The inclusion of legal parties was only an attempt to legitimise Ba'th rule through the co-option of small but compatible interest groups.

### *The Ba'th party*

The Ba'th party is one of the foundations of the Syrian state. It was originally built as a party of opposition during the period of the French mandate. It was constructed from the inspiration of Michel Aflaq and the organisational skills of Salah al-Bitar.<sup>69</sup> Although the Ba'th party was formed as an opposition movement, after it had taken power in 1963, it became a party of government.

Before addressing the dynamic between the Ba'th party and the state, we should review the organisation of the party. The ideological component of the party has been referred to in chapter three, but the organisation of the party requires further definition.

### *The organisation of the Ba'th party*

The organisation of the party is very distinct and it pervades all sectors of Syrian society. The National Command is the highest authority of the Ba'th party and is an inter-Arab and trans-state body. The Regional Command is responsible for the party in each state. It is composed of 21 members and meets once a week.<sup>70</sup> The organisational

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<sup>68</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Abu Jaber, K., *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 143.

<sup>70</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 99.

aspect of the party was construed after the Communist model of the Soviet Union resembling a pyramidal structure. The party cell is the smallest unit of the party structure. Between 4 and 7 members belong to each cell, and they are most operative in the workplace or amongst friends. There are five levels between the party cell and the National Command and they include: cell, company, division, branch, Regional Command, and the National Command.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Abu Jaber, K., *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 140.

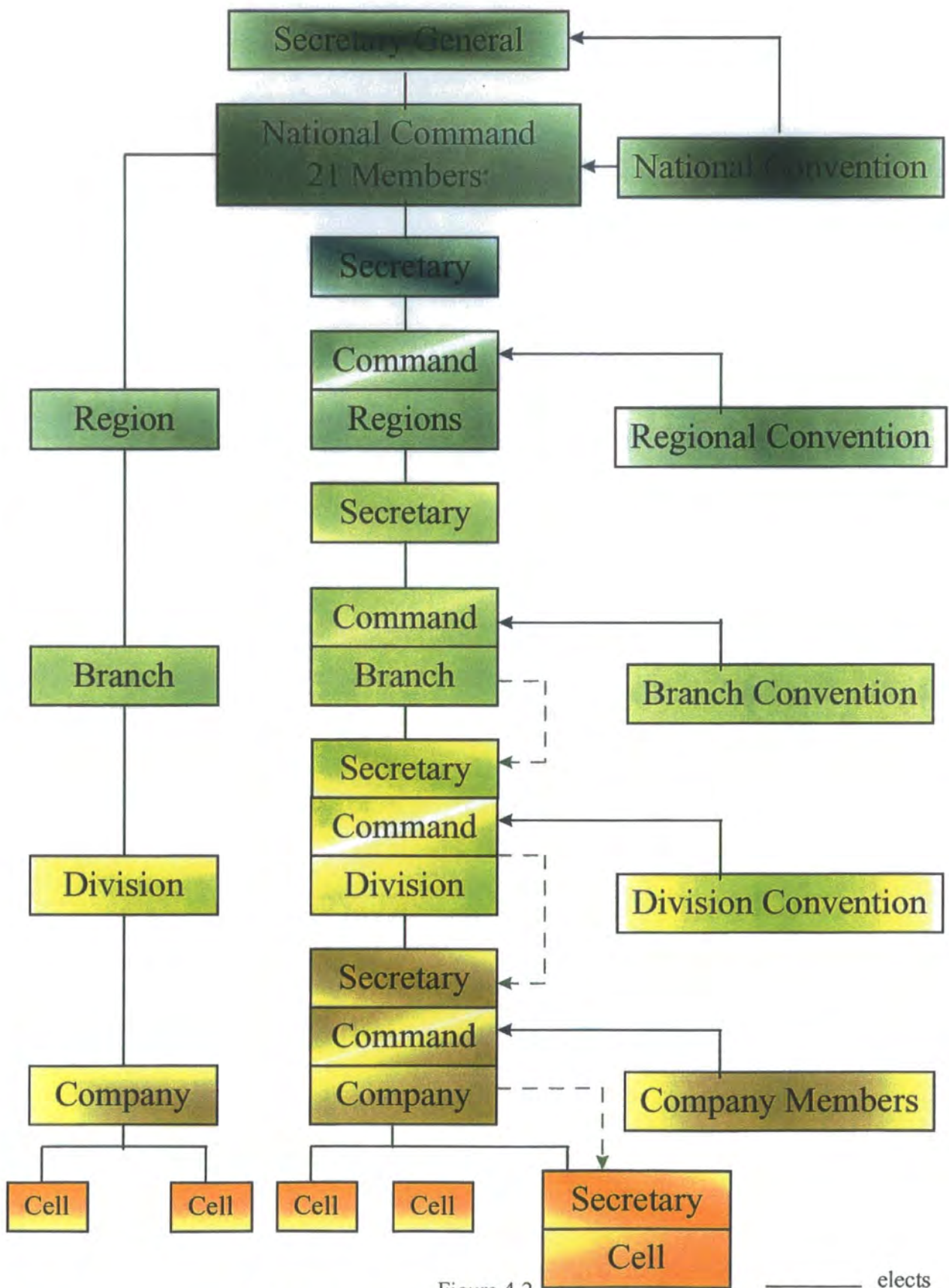


Figure 4.2  
**Ba'th Party Organisation Chart**

— elects  
- - - appoints



The structure of the party was carefully designed so that communication flowed from the junior body to the parent body, for example, from the company to the division. The system of authority within the Ba'th party was originally based on democratic socialism, but since Asad took power, the flow of information has been displaced and flows from top-down.<sup>72</sup> The revolution from above has ensured that policy decisions emanate from the Regional Command, and then radiate throughout the Ba'th party organisation. High politics remains in the domain of the Regional Command and the president's close advisers. The party, therefore, approves the decisions taken by the party elite, rather than proposes or challenges the leadership.

Adjacent to the hierarchy of levels in the Ba'th party are the corporatist bodies. They are organised according to sectoral interests within Syria. They comprise the Peasants', Students', Workers', Women's, and Youth unions. These syndicate agencies were constructed to articulate the interests of each group. As corporate bodies they are granted access to the decision-making process via representation on policy issues.

Patrick Seale suggests that the secretary of each sectoral body acts as the conduit between leadership and membership. The secretary can voice the concerns of the membership on policy matters, hence transmitting some form of party sentiment, but policy initiatives transcend from the party leadership to the designated corporate body. The influence of the syndicate bodies is, however, limited. For instance, when a faction of the trade union proposed to pull out of the Ba'th system because of the

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<sup>72</sup> Abu Jaber, K., *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), pp. 143.

regime's economic policies, the president warned that freedom had to be understood within the framework of responsibility and not contradiction and fragmentation.<sup>73</sup>

Populist corporatism, as a system of state management has been effective since Asad's rise to power. It includes the incorporation of political elite groups, popular organisations and organised business.<sup>74</sup> The corporations are "divided into compulsory, non-competitive, functionally differentiated, hierarchic associations which are considered to be representative for their members and the membership of the functional groups within society."<sup>75</sup> Each group enjoys some access to the decision-making process, but these privileges are dependent upon the political and economic environment.<sup>76</sup> In this form then, the corporate bodies of the Ba'th party serve two purposes:

- (i) they are conductors of party opinion; thereby, they indicate levels of legitimacy within the party;
- (ii) they act as agents of socialisation for the party.

The relationship between the bodies and the party leadership remains somewhat ambiguous, depending on the directional flow of information and decisions.

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<sup>73</sup> Lawson, F., "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process: Fillip or Hindrance?," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 148.

<sup>74</sup> The function of organised business has tended to be arbitrary in Syria, its role though has become increasingly enhanced since the economic reforms of 1991.

<sup>75</sup> Perthes, V., "Syria's Parliamentary Elections: Remodelling Asad's Political Base," *MERIP*, January/February 1992, pp. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 197.

*Dynamism between the Ba'th party and the state*

The Ba'th party is one of the state's principal sources of power. It has been responsible for political recruitment, indoctrination, education, and mobilisation of the population. More recently, the party has become a ladder of upward mobility providing access to positions of influence. In this sense, it has become more of a bureaucracy, a power broker, and a source patronage than a revolutionary movement.<sup>77</sup> To quote Sadowski:

*Twenty-two years in power have changed the Ba'th from a revolutionary movement into a virtual appendage of the state. But this transformation did not destroy the party's influence. Along with the army and the bureaucracy, it remains one of the foundations of the Asad regime.*<sup>78</sup>

The state and the Ba'th party are ultimately linked in the governing of Syria through the parallel structures of the state and Ba'th party. The president, the prime minister, the speaker, and the officers of the state are all members of the Syrian Regional Command of the Ba'th party. The Ba'th party is dominant in the People's Council, and the state bureaucracy; additionally, it operates alongside the provincial assemblies.<sup>79</sup>

The Ba'th party has also provided the state with a supply of legitimacy. It has appealed to those groups previously omitted from access to the state, such as: unionised workers, public employees, agricultural workers, and peasants. These groups have

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<sup>77</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 99.

<sup>78</sup> Sadowski, Y., "Cadres, Guns and Money: The Eighth Regional Congress of the Syrian Ba'th," *MERIP*, no. 134, July/August 1985, pp. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Seale, P., "Asad: Between Institutions and Autocracy," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 100.

remained loyal to the Ba'th and provided some legitimacy for the regime.<sup>80</sup> In trying to establish and maintain legitimacy, the Ba'th party has "redistributed income, promoted growth, spread literacy, and in general improved the economic lot of their citizens".<sup>81</sup>

The Ba'th party established its credentials with the peasantry, the minorities, and the urban youth as a national party with a radical agenda for change.<sup>82</sup> The socialist and nationalist aspects of the party attracted the disenchanted minorities who had suffered from the urban politics of the political elite. The party offered the opportunity of advancement in a system otherwise determined by the patronage of the notable families of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo.<sup>83</sup> The families of the political elite were less inclined to join the party as it challenged the foundations of their heritage and wealth. This produced an environment where peasants and minorities could rise through the ranks of the party, and influence the direction of its politics. The Ba'th party also represented a political and national alternative to the enervated struggles of the National Bloc and the People's party.<sup>84</sup>

The status of the relationship between the Ba'th party and the state has become less certain since 1985. There has been a qualitative down-grading of the party's influence

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<sup>80</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 99.

<sup>81</sup> Richards, A., and J. Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 314.

<sup>82</sup> Batatu, H., "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3, Summer 1981, pp. 339.

<sup>83</sup> Batatu, H., "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3, Summer 1981, pp. 339-340.

<sup>84</sup> Khoury, P., *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 605-606.

in the decision-making process. Three occasions have suggested that a transition may be taking place in the balance of interests in Syria's domestic arena:

- Syria's admission into the US-led coalition without prior consultation with the Regional Command;
- The pressure placed upon the political and economic interests of the party from the economic liberalising measures introduced in 1986;
- The failure to convene a Regional Congress, which should take place every five years, since 1985.

These occasions are indicative of change in the substance of the relationship between the party and the state.<sup>85</sup> According to Hinnebusch, the Ba'th party has been "downgraded, de-ideologised and turned into a patronage machine with little capacity for independent action."<sup>86</sup>

### *The Ba'th party and Syrian society*

The distinctive pyramidal chain of command gave the Ba'th leadership access to a class-based clientele that had been excluded from influencing the policies of the traditional Syrian leadership. The Ba'th party invested the inhabitants of the provinces with the power of organisation, and the chance to mobilise their support in exchange for legitimacy.

Although it penetrated Syrian society, the Ba'th party never became a mass party. The emphasis of the party between 1940 and 1966 was to recruit an active membership.

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with a Syrian academic, 10 September 1995.

<sup>86</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1995, pp. 78.

Despite its popularity in the provinces and amongst the poorer sections of Syrian society, the leadership of the Ba'th party came from the Syrian middle classes. The philosophy of Aflaq was based in the moderate language of the middle classes, which proved to be a cause of antagonism between the Aflaq mindset and the more radical peasantry.

The division between the peasantry and the middle class, within the Ba'th party, manifested itself through the two wings of the party. The peasants and the minorities captured the military wing of the party whilst the urban middle class retained leadership through the civilian wing of the party.<sup>87</sup> The leaders of the rural and urban centres were polarised. The civilian leadership, and the middle class, were opposed to the nascent leadership of the radicals within the Ba'th party.

A contest for leadership erupted, on 23 February 1966, when the military wing, under the guidance of Jadid and the Military Committee, usurped the civilian wing of the party.<sup>88</sup> Their social and political agenda were more strident than their successors, as they sought to base the Ba'th party on a Leninist model of organisation. This regime could well have been described as a dictatorship of the petite bourgeoisie. Land reforms, nationalisations, and government control over the market struck at the bases of the bourgeoisie.<sup>89</sup>

The radical regime transformed the class composition of the state. The Ba'thisisation of the army replaced the Sunni upper-class and middle class officers with ones of

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<sup>87</sup> Rabinovich, I., *Syria under the Ba'th 1963-66: The Army-party Symbiosis*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), pp. 182.

<sup>88</sup> Rabinovich, I., *Syria under the Ba'th 1963-66: The Army-party Symbiosis*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), pp. 204.

<sup>89</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Class and State in Ba'thist Syria," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 35.

plebeian, rural, and minority origin. The Ba'thists had seized power by military coup, but not at the head of a broad cross-classed movement. Their road to power dictated the omnipresence of the military in political affairs and culminated in the overthrow of the civilian wing. Asad's ultimate manoeuvre into position from Minister of Defence to secretary-general of the Regional Command signified a permanent role for the military through the Ba'th party.

### *The Armed Forces and Security Services*

The Armed Forces and the Security Services have remained the most durable repositories of state power. These sectors have been responsible for projecting Syria's power in its conflict with Israel, it has also guaranteed the survival of the regime.

These corporate bodies have become distinct centres of power. Their access to the state and the regime is underwritten by their indispensability to state and regime security. They are directly accountable to the president. Unlike the People's Council, and the NPF, the relationship between the military centres of power and the president is not one of subordination. Both parties are mutually dependent upon each other for their existence. The president requires a pervasive network of Security Services to guarantee his rule against insurrection; the Security Services need the authority of the president to maintain their power.<sup>90</sup>

The intimate marriage between the military and the regime had taken place prior to the action of the Corrective Movement in November 1970. As a student leader, with a successful career in the airforce, and as the Minister of Defence for the Jadid regime, Asad had cultivated a bedrock of support within the military establishment. The

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with a Syrian businessman, 2 July 1994.

disproportionate number of 'Alawis in the military and the Ba'th party enabled Asad to cement his ties through the system of patronage.<sup>91</sup>

Systems of patronage are most apparent in the appointment of sensitive posts in the armed and Security Services. As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the President is responsible for appointing the key positions within the military establishment, which is the main guarantor of the regime.<sup>92</sup> Appointments have traditionally been awarded to the diktat of alliance building. Neo-patrimonialism, instead of meritocracy, has governed the advancement of officers. The levers of control rest firmly in the hands of Asad's loyal commanders, known as *regime barons*, most of whom derive from the 'Alawi community. The following list of officers are all 'Alawis and hold critical posts in the armed services:

|                |                                            |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Shafiq Fayyad  | Division commander                         |
| Ibrahim Safi   | Division commander                         |
| 'Ali Aslan     | Deputy Chief of Staff                      |
| 'Ali al-Salih  | Missile Corps                              |
| 'Ali Duba      | Head of Military Intelligence (until 1993) |
| 'Ali Haydar    | Special Forces                             |
| 'Adnan Makhluf | Presidential Guard                         |

It has not been in Asad's interest to alienate the Sunni officers within the Armed Forces and the Security Services. Motivated by power politics, Asad has balanced the interests of the Sunni officers against the pre-dominance of the 'Alawis. Asad's selection of

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<sup>91</sup> The 'Alawis occupy key positions in both the military, and the Security Services, such as: security chiefs, party bosses, divisional commanders, and links to the business community.

<sup>92</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 23.



senior Sunni military officers has been effective in preserving a semblance of non-sectarianism within the regime elite.<sup>93</sup> The presence of key Sunni officers, such as Hikmat al-Shihabi, the Chief of Staff, and Mustafa Tlas, the Minister of Defence, has served to strengthen the regime, thereby reducing the likelihood of a Sunni-led coup.<sup>94</sup>

### *The Armed Forces, Security Services and the state*

The Armed Forces and the Security Services are the least accountable corporate bodies of the Syrian state; there are no constitutional mechanisms to govern their activities. Whereas there are institutional processes that govern the functions of the constitutional political system and the Ba'th party, the omniscient Security Services exist above institutional reproof. The commanders of each security service exercise some autonomy from the state. One result of this, has been the growth of military fiefdoms that exercise influence over security, the bureaucracy, and social affairs. The power base of these fiefdoms emanates from their access to the regime, and more independently, through the accumulation of capital in the parallel economy.<sup>95</sup>

Syria's continuous role in Lebanese affairs, since 1976, has created an environment for a flourishing parallel economy. The army's role in Lebanon has enabled many officers and regular soldiers to amass small fortunes through practices of corruption involving smuggling and drug-trafficking.<sup>96</sup> Working as the co-ordinators and agents of the black market, the regime barons have been free to trade in consumables, otherwise unavailable, irrespective of the harsh penalties of the law. The operation of

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<sup>93</sup> Batatu, H., "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 35, no. 3, Summer 1981, pp. 343.

<sup>94</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 146.

<sup>95</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Class and State in Ba'thist Syria," in R. Antoun, and D. Quataert (eds.), *Syria: Society, Culture, and Polity*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 43.

<sup>96</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 1, January 1977, pp. 9.

protection rackets in the suqs, and the military warehouse sales in Damascus, are clear demonstrations of the independent power bases of the regime barons.

In return for guaranteeing the survival of the Asad regime, the regime barons enjoy special privileges. These privileges represent negative manifestations for the state as they form a major obstacle to institutionalising the political system. When the regime barons live outside the confines of the law, they can circumvent the domestic policies of the state. In conjunction, they can contribute to the de-legitimisation of the regime by contradicting state policy without penalty. Such a case occurred in 1977, when the Islamists openly rebelled against the state's policy in Lebanon, and the illicit accumulation of wealth by the 'Alawi regime barons. The barons were extorting monies in smuggled trade from Lebanon and rackets working within the state bureaucracy.<sup>97</sup>

After June 1977, Syria had been besieged with assassinations, riots, and public executions. Public figures from the 'Alawi sect became targets for the Islamic opposition. In order to appease public unrest, Asad ordered a crack down on corruption in October 1977. The anti-corruption drive aimed at improving the efficiency of the state machinery, and satisfying public demand that the state would work for the national good. Asad criticised the bureaucracy for ineptitude and inefficiency, and appointed the Committee for the Investigation of Illicit Gains.<sup>98</sup>

The Committee was granted wide ranging powers which incorporated the power of attorney, arrest, detention, and the sequestration of money. To eliminate the corruption, however, the Committee would have had to penalise the regime barons.

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<sup>97</sup> Sadowski, Y., "Cadres, Guns and Money: The Eighth Regional Congress of the Syrian Ba'th," *MERIP*, no. 134, July/August 1985, pp. 7.

<sup>98</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, November 1977, pp. 7.

This would have challenged the backbone of the regime, the security and military interests, including the Defence Companies of the president's brother, Rif'at Asad.<sup>99</sup> The de-facto power of the Committee, therefore, was very limited. Evidently, it had been designed to produce nominal figure-heads to alleviate the regime of responsibility.

Asad's dependence upon the regime barons has set a constraint upon his freedom of action. They are a source of support, and at the same time represent an obstacle to reform. It is in the interests of the regime barons, entrenched in the Armed Forces and Security Services, to maintain the domestic and regional status quo. The prospect of change in the domestic arena, for instance, the upgrading of the People's Council, or a transition in the regional environment, the conclusion of a peace deal with Israel, could threaten the fiefdoms of the regime barons. As a consequence, Asad's leverage over the barons has been constrained, but this has not prevented him from emasculating them when necessary. The rotation of military positions has given Asad the initiative in preventing the barons from congealing their fiefdoms into independent bodies. There are two cases which illustrate this point:

In 1993, it was thought that 'Ali Duba was removed from his office of military intelligence. After an internal dispute with his co-equals, he was *kicked upstairs* as one of three assistant chiefs of staff.<sup>100</sup> His fiefdom was disbanded as his clients were displaced by new recruits, although some of the clients dismissed were appointed by Rif'at Asad, such as Muhammad Nassef and General 'Abboud who were also

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<sup>99</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, November 1977, pp. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with a Damascene, 4 July 1994.

powerful people in their right. Nevertheless, the fiefdom of 'Ali Duba was not able to reconstitute itself into an independent centre of power.<sup>101</sup>

In an earlier case, Asad effected a Syrian Military High Command reshuffle. In August 1974, General Yussef Shakur, the Chief of Staff during the October War was forced to retire. Despite Shakur's popularity and considerable power base, the president dispersed his foundations of support and appointed a new chief of staff, hence, removing the potential threat of Shakur's centre of power.<sup>102</sup>

The patrimonial appointment of commanders in the Armed Forces and the Security Services has ensured that the state is caught between the two forms of governance, patrimonialism and institutionalism. Although Asad continues to reside above the Bonapartist state, balancing the interests of the competing structures, he cannot afford to alienate the support of the regime barons. Thereupon, he has become encased between the demands of an institutional base and a hostage to his past.

The New World Order presented Asad with more room for manoeuvre between the patrimonial and institutional systems. The advent of *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and *new thinking* in Soviet foreign policy, precipitated change in the world order. Due to the failure of state-led economic policies, the foreign exchange crisis of 1986, and the monumental changes that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989, the Syrian state altered the course of its domestic policies. Asad was presented with the opportunity to counter-balance the primacy of the regime barons through the cultivation of the

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with a Damascene, 4 July 1994.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with a Syrian journalist, 26 September 1995.

bourgeoisie. Although its role has never been institutionalised beyond the Chamber of Commerce, the succession of global capitalism added weight to Syria's bourgeoisie.<sup>103</sup>

The lack of an institutionalised decision-making process in Syria has meant that the process is governed by the balance of power. As in all balances of power, the flow of power amongst the main actors is not constant. The flux in the system allows some actors to gain at the expense of others. A zero-sum game can exist amongst various domestic actors, who are perceived in the polarised forms of the public and private sectors. In the case of Syria, until recently, the bourgeoisie has been a subordinate partner in the state. The dominance of the Ba'th party, the Armed Forces, and Security Services throughout the political system and the corporate structures of the state has ensured that the power of the bourgeoisie has stayed negligible.<sup>104</sup>

## The Bourgeoisie

During the Ottoman rule and the French mandate, Syrian society was classified according to the interlocking features of vertical and horizontal stratification. As Syrian society became increasingly urbanised, the land-owning class, which formed the political elite, cohered into a bourgeoisie. The nationalist struggle against the Ottomans and the French helped to reinforce the bourgeoisie's class identity and further defined their relationship with the rural peasants and the urban proletariat. The policies of the state were conducted through the auspices of the Syrian notables in the form of intermediaries between the foreign administration and the Syrian population.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Interview with a Damascene, 28 June 1994.

<sup>104</sup> Longrigg, S., *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 117, and Petran, T., *Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 68-73.

<sup>105</sup> Betz, C., *Conflict of Principle and Policy: A Case Study of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Power in Syria*, Ph.D. Thesis, (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1976).

The dominance of the bourgeoisie in Syrian politics ended abruptly with the Ba'thist coup in 1963. As described earlier, the power of the bourgeoisie was destroyed by the policies of land reform and nationalisation. The policies of social levelling removed the threat posed by the bourgeoisie to the new state. It allowed the state to free itself from the constraints of the old class, and to pursue an autonomous path. The bourgeoisie were the declared enemy of the Ba'th party and the Syrian state.<sup>106</sup>

Asad's overthrow of the Jadid regime and his ascent to power was welcomed by the surviving elements of the bourgeoisie.<sup>107</sup> Throughout his term as president, Asad has tried to balance the interests of the various groups in Syria. The alienation of the bourgeoisie by the Ba'th has been tentatively reversed throughout Asad's tenure of office.

On assuming power, Asad's priority became national development. Development of the state became synonymous with national strength. All aspects of the national economy, wherever possible, were harnessed to boost the power projection of Syria: "Defence of the homeland, steadfastness, and victory, Asad time and again told his compatriots, were impossible without development".<sup>108</sup> He wished to circumvent the harmful policies of his predecessors who restricted the activities of private enterprise.

Accordingly, Syria embarked on a more mixed economic path to development. In order to combat economic stagnation, the flight of capital, and the ensuing brain-drain,

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<sup>106</sup> Interview with a Syrian bureaucrat, 1 October 1995.

<sup>107</sup> Kanaan, G., "Syria and the Peace Plan: Assad's Balancing Act," *MERIP*, no. 65, March 1978, pp. 10-11.

<sup>108</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 41.

Asad inaugurated a number of liberalising measures in 1971.<sup>109</sup> Import restrictions on certain goods were lifted, and registered importers became entitled to import certain quantities of goods which were effectively banned from importation.<sup>110</sup> In 1972, imports without foreign exchange transfers were permitted, thus enabling merchants to repatriate some of their wealth. An amnesty on capital flight was declared to facilitate the return of capital, and other offences against economic laws were transmuted.<sup>111</sup>

Asad recognised the potential of allying the state with components of the bourgeoisie. Such an alliance would not adversely affect the regime's strategic interests, but enable the entrepreneurial skills of the bourgeoisie to energise the economy under the auspices of the regime.<sup>112</sup> The bourgeoisie represented a useful engine for developing the national economy as long as it refrained from making political demands. Realising this, he dispensed with the levelling philosophy and policies of the Ba'th, and implemented a strategy of limited incorporation.<sup>113</sup>

The demise of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the East European regimes, and the termination of the socialist economic systems have had a resounding effect upon the domestic balance of power within Syria. The reconfiguration of the international

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<sup>109</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 49.

<sup>110</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 47.

<sup>111</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 50.

<sup>112</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 106.

<sup>113</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 74-75.

political system and the succession of global capitalism have produced a shift in the interplay amongst Syria's corporate actors.<sup>114</sup>

Up till now, the state is still dominated by the Ba'th party and the security apparatus, but a visible down-grading of their importance has been identifiable since 1990. The recipients of the political advantage belong to the bourgeois class. This does not, however, represent a simple transition of power from the public sector of the state to the private sector. The zero-sum game analysis bears little fruit, as the interests of the new bourgeoisie are synonymous with the interests of the regime elite.<sup>115</sup> Before examining the dynamics of the military-mercantile complex, it is necessary to identify which groups constitute the bourgeoisie.

### *Constituents of the bourgeoisie*

Bahout advises against using the term 'bourgeoisie', for it connotes that this group has developed into class-for-itself. He acknowledges that there are splinters of the old bourgeoisie and a newly emerging business class in existence, but they have not coalesced to constitute a class. Their interests have remained separated from each other, and tied to those of the state. The state has fostered a dependency between the various parts of the business community and itself.<sup>116</sup> Bahout identifies four main groups that make up the business community in Syria:

- the old bourgeoisie;
- the infitahi;

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<sup>114</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Asad's Syria and the New World Order: The Struggle for Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 1, May/June 1993, pp. 14.

<sup>115</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Asad's Syria and the New World Order: The Struggle for Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 1, May/June 1993, pp. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 72, and 79-81.



- the nouveaux riches;
- the state bourgeoisie.

A brief description of these four groups will enable us to understand their relationship with the state, and their role in the balance of power.

### *The Old Bourgeoisie*

The old bourgeoisie is that element of the landed-class who managed to survive the policies of the Ba'th party. They come from the notable families of the Syrian cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. They carry the values of the Syrian upper classes and perceive themselves as the natural heirs of Syrian leadership. Due to their enduring influence, they were able to recycle their economic surplus through trade and medium scale industry.<sup>117</sup>

### *The Infitahi*

The infitahi resemble the petite bourgeoisie in economic activity and political culture, although they are not organised into a political or social unit. They are a group of actors responsible for light industry, manufacturing, commerce, and services. The infitahi have grown from the early policies of the Asad regime, and, therefore, owe their allegiance to the Syrian state. Articulating political or economic demands has not developed as part of their repertoire or political culture.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 73.

<sup>118</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 73-74.

### *The Nouveaux Riches*

The most immediate beneficiaries of the 1973 oil-hike, and the subsequent economic development, have been the nouveaux riches. Since then, they have played an important role in the national economy. They are different from the two previous cases in that they are intimately connected to the state. Their relationship with the state has cultivated a mutually constitutive alliance expressed in the allocation of contracts.

The contracts allocated to the nouveaux riches, financed by external rent received from the Gulf Arab states, have engendered an intractable loyalty between the *contractors' bourgeoisie* and the state. One result of this has been the movement of this group into the privileged areas of real estate, construction, tourism, and transportation, which are reserved for the exclusive preserve of the state's dependent business sector.<sup>119</sup>

### *The State Bourgeoisie*

The state bourgeoisie refers to the select club that guides the implementation of state policies. This group has been able to use its privileged access to the state to proffer favours upon selected contractors. Their links to the children of the regime have proved to be particularly lucrative, and instrumental, in forging links between the state and business classes.<sup>120</sup>

The children of the leaders of the present regime are reputed to have entered business, instead of following their fathers' paths into the military or security apparatus. They are playing a conciliatory role in binding the fortunes of the state to the interests of the

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<sup>119</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 74.

<sup>120</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 75.

indigenous business class. This shift in orientation bears many consequences as the children of the regime, many of whom are 'Alawis, are undergoing the experience of *embourgeoisment*. The transition in the social class of the new political elite from peasant, to soldier, to bourgeoisie, has started to cement the future of the state with the old and new bourgeoisie.<sup>121</sup>

### *The bourgeoisie and the state*

Having identified the four components of the Syrian business class, it is possible to recognise the dependency that each group owes to the state. Asad's regime has successfully incorporated the energies of the business class, and tailored their demands for political expression through a relationship based upon patronage and subordination.

After 1970, the ideological motivation of the regime was replaced with the priority of power accumulation. As part of the struggle with Israel, Asad attempted to construct a national economy that channelled the energies of both the private and the public sector into a national project. The rehabilitation of a compliant business class, operating alongside the public sector, was perfunctory to upon achieving the national purpose. The role of the business community, however, was secondary to the Ba'th party, the Armed Forces, the Security Services.<sup>122</sup>

The bourgeoisie has remained a lesser corporate interest in the state apparatus. Its access has been very limited owing to the ideological disposition of the Ba'th party and

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<sup>121</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 77.

<sup>122</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 75.

the origins of the regime. The relationship between the bourgeoisie and state has remained volatile and unreliable since Asad's advent to power. The state granted the bourgeoisie a role in the national economy through the implementation of economic liberalising measures. The policies of the state have taken heed of capital accumulation and the specific role played by the bourgeoisie in generating it. Their role, however, was not protected by the rule of the law; it was governed by the rule of the domestic and regional climate.<sup>123</sup>

Politics has dominated the economic realm since 1970. Decisions determined according to political preferences have allowed the regime to protect its autonomy in decision-making, but prevented it from creating a viable, dependable, and sustainable economy. Due to the precarious nature of the regime's legitimacy, society needed to be insulated from the failures of economic policy. The regime has had to cushion diminishing support, from the populace, through the provision of services.

The self-imposed economic reforms of the first *infatih*, in 1971, were designed to broaden the base of the regime and to extend its legitimacy.<sup>124</sup> The state's economic policies were instrumental in harnessing the support of the urban population, with whom the Ba'th party had traditionally failed to establish a stronghold.

The first *infatih* ended in 1977. The state started to reverse some of its liberal policies due to political and economic reasons. The *infatih* had led to widespread corruption. Importing without foreign exchange transfers had encouraged illegal currency exports.

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<sup>123</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 75.

<sup>124</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Syria's first *infatih*, see: Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), and Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria Under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

Economic security courts were established to erase the culture of corruption, that sought to circumvent the policies of the state. Both the private sector and the regime barons had seemingly abused the liberalising measures. As the growth and independence of the private sector was deemed to be a threat to the state, the privileges granted through liberalisation were removed.<sup>125</sup>

Syria's Lebanon policy also proved to be problematic for the state. The disillusionment with the secular activities of the Syrian state, and the predominant 'Alawi composition of the regime, fuelled an environment sensitive to Syria's policies in Lebanon. The response of the traditional sectors of Syrian society, and the disaffected youth, found its expression in a series of attacks against high-ranking members of the government and the Ba'th party. The 'Alawis were deliberately targeted by the Muslim Brotherhood. The domestic repercussions of Syria's role in Lebanon caused the pace of economic reform to stall, and, eventually, to retract towards state-led socialism. The focus of the regime turned away from economics and towards the maintenance of the state against an assault from the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>126</sup>

With the failings of the socialist model of development, the dramatic fall in the price of oil, and the ensuing foreign exchange crisis of 1986,<sup>127</sup> Asad reinstituted the programme of economic liberalisation. These moves did not allow the former bourgeoisie to reconstruct itself or institutionalise its relationship with the state,

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<sup>125</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 53.

<sup>126</sup> Batatu, H., "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *MERIP*, no. 110, November/December 1982, pp. 12-23.

<sup>127</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 245.

nevertheless, some entrepreneurs were granted informal admission to the decision-making process.<sup>128</sup>

The private sector was granted controlled access to the economic decision-making process.<sup>129</sup> The appointment of Muhammad al-Imady to the post of Minister of the Economy, in 1987, signified a new economic direction for the state. Imady's ability to reform the structure of the economic system was limited due to the entrenched interests of the regime in the existing state apparatus. He did, however, have the approval of the president to test the waters and proceed at an incremental pace.<sup>130</sup>

The Syrian economy was steered between those domestic forces which supported a more socialist-oriented policy, and those forces that promoted a more progressive programme of economic liberalisation. The economic policies that emerged from these two opposing factions were carefully selected and applied in accordance with the variety of interests balanced by the regime.

In an economy where the state purchases part of its legitimacy, the loss of state revenues inflicts a severe handicap upon the state to service its loyalists. The elite that steers the state, therefore, are not insulated from economic failures. Although the state may be resilient and flexible in the political realm, it is, nevertheless, vulnerable if it fails to fulfil its basic economic agenda. In this instance, the state turns to the bourgeoisie to compensate for the economic gap. Once this occurs, Heydemann observes:

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<sup>128</sup> Butter, D., "Syrian Business Makes a Comeback," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 38, no. 20, 20 May 1994, pp. 2-3.

<sup>129</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 102.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with the Minister of the Economy, Muhammad Imady, 4 July 1994.

*economic reform no longer represents the leading political threat. Increasingly, the continued erosion of domestic production, of capital accumulation, and thus of prospects for extraction, undermine the regime's ability to reproduce its system of rule. Under these conditions, the logic of politics becomes, in some measure, the logic of reform.*<sup>131</sup>

This time, the economic measures were more far-reaching than the earlier period, and have been deemed to be irreversible. In return, the state had to undertake to offer concessions to the business community; semi-institutional access to the economic policy process assuaged the interests of the growing private sector. As Hinnebusch suggests:

*The door of liberalization was thus opened, but liberalization cannot go very far without the reconstruction of an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie which, being willing to invest, can provide a viable alternative to the public sector.*<sup>132</sup>

To reconstruct and rehabilitate the business community, the state created several openings to the economic decision-making process, which took the form of:

- independent representation in the People's Council;
- the creation of a quasi-corporate body, the Prime Minister's Committee for the Guidance of Imports, Exports, and Consumption.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Heydemann, S., "The Political Logic of Economic Rationality: Selective Stabilization in Syria," in H. Barkey (ed.), *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 15.

<sup>132</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 101.

<sup>133</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 108.

In 1990, one third of the seats in the People's Council were reserved for independent candidates, who essentially emanated from the private sector.<sup>134</sup> The independents have not formed a bloc to thwart the dominance of the Ba'th party, but their relevance to the institutional process is gaining precedence. In May 1990, a member of the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce, and two from the Damascus Chamber of Commerce were elected to the People's Council. They were the first agents of the private sector to serve a term in parliament since 1963.<sup>135</sup>

In the election of 1994, the tone of the election address indicated the new respectability accorded to private enterprise and the business community. Ihsan Sankar campaigned on the election platform to repeal populist measures, such as land reform ceilings, and progressive taxation.<sup>136</sup> Understood against the background of Ba'th ideology, the call for these measures illustrated the flexibility of the state and the increasing gravity of the business community in Syrian economic life. This was also a sign that the Ba'th party, though still a patronage-generating entity, was beginning to lose its ideological leadership and its pivotal role in the policy process.<sup>137</sup>

The business community has gained through the policies of economic liberalisation. Notwithstanding, one should not conceive of the state as losing out in a zero-sum

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<sup>134</sup> Gold, D., "The Syrian-Israeli Track - Taking the Final Step: What Sacrifices Will Assad Make to Get Back the Golan?," *Middle East Insight*, vol. x, no. 6, September/October 1994, pp. 15.

<sup>135</sup> Heydemann, S., "The Political Logic of Economic Rationality: Selective Stabilization in Syria," in H. Barkey (ed.), *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 20.

<sup>136</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1995, pp. 82.

<sup>137</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 253.



game. The state, managed by Asad, has existed above the various social forces in Syrian society. As Heydemann points out, the state must:

*simultaneously persuade the private sector of its sincerity and commitment to reform, without which it would abstain from investing, while persuading its clients and beneficiaries that their positions are secure, that they will be protected from the demands of stabilization, and that economic reform will not interrupt their privileges and benefits.*<sup>138</sup>

By selecting a programme of economic restructuring the state has stood to benefit from economic reform. As an economic system, state-led socialism had failed to alleviate the paucity of the Syrian economy. The state remained partially dependent upon a diminishing flow of rent, and the cessation of soft loans from the Soviet Union served to exacerbate Syria's ailing economic situation.

Through a carefully managed process, the state began to incorporate a reconstructed business class into the economic realm. This class has yet to develop an appetite for political power. Stability and state protection from the external markets continues to occupy the interests of this group. A comment by a prominent industrialist and trader from Damascus was very revealing when he said: "All we want is economic freedom and political stability; for us, democracy often means a coup d'état every two years."<sup>139</sup>

The emerging mutuality of interest between the state and the business class has meant a zero-sum loss to the Ba'th party and its loyalists working in the public sector. The

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<sup>138</sup> Heydemann, S., "The Political Logic of Economic Rationality: Selective Stabilization in Syria," in H. Barkey (ed.), *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 21.

<sup>139</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 80.

regime's natural constituency looks set to lose out in the domestic realignment of social forces. Balancing the interests of the two groups has produced competition between the Ba'th party and the business class.

This competition has started to manifest itself in the dialogue between Muhammad al-Imady, the Minister of the Economy, and 'Izz al-Din Nasser, who is a member of the Ba'th party Regional Command and head of the Trade Union Confederation. Both figures represent the interests of ideologically opposed groups. The minister's remit to liberalise the economy, according to the needs of the state, has been challenged by Nasser's attempted reforms of the public sector.<sup>140</sup>

Power-sharing between the public and private sector has become a feature of Syrian politics. In fact, the recent change in the economic direction of the state can be traced to the Eighth Ba'th party Regional Congress, in 1985, when Asad bestowed honour upon the private sector and called for a wider but responsible role for this group. The balance between the Ba'th party and the business community has not altered radically because the Ba'th party has remained the more institutionalised of the two, but the elevation of the private sector has indicated a shift in the internal balance of power.<sup>141</sup>

Whilst the state has been balancing the forces of the Ba'th party and the private sector, the relationship between the state and its corporations has been changing. The formerly populist-dominated corporatist system, where workers and peasants had access to the decision-making process, has been opened to the private sector through the offices of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Consequently, the business class and the

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with the Minister of Economy, Muhammad Imady, 4 July 1994.

<sup>141</sup> An indication of this shift has been the incorporation of the al-Shallah family, led by patriarch Badr al-Din Shallah, head of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, who is perceived by the Sunni community as incorruptible. See Hinnebusch, R., "Asad's Syria and the New World Order: The Struggle for Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 1, May/June 1993, pp. 6.

new political elite, have started to tie their fortunes and futures together in a new alliance referred to as the military-mercantile complex.<sup>142</sup>

### *The military-mercantile complex*

The forging of a new bourgeoisie is taking place in Syria. The new alliance between the state elite,<sup>143</sup> and the rising business community is transforming the social order of Syria. The state is still the dominant partner in this relationship, and resides above all social forces in Syria, but the incremental transfer of its loyalties towards a capital-generating class is in evidence.<sup>144</sup> The children of the political elite have facilitated this transfer by entering the business world, and engaging their interests with the business community.

The children of the regime have taken a leading role in the civilianisation of the state elite. The new 'Alawi generation, raised in a privileged environment, consider themselves to be part of Syria's upper class.<sup>145</sup> The incessant fear of the Sunni majority and the threat of revenge is starting to lose credence as the binding of economic interests holds them together. The sons of high-ranking officers have started to establish flourishing businesses. The sons of 'Ali Duba and Khaddam, for instance, belong more to the business association than to the officers' club,<sup>146</sup> thus congealing the alliance of the state to the new class.

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<sup>142</sup> Picard, E., *Espace de Reference et Espace d'Intervention du Mouvement Rectificatif au Pouvoir en Syrie 1970-1982*, (Paris: These de III Cycle, 1985).

<sup>143</sup> The state elite includes the bureaucracy, the Armed Forces, and Security Services.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with an economic officer in the US Embassy, 28 June 1994.

<sup>145</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 104.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with a Syria businessman, 30 June 1994.

The pace of economic globalisation is proving to be an irresistible force to the young generation of Syria. The extensive network of global communications has put the Syrian youth in touch with a global youth culture.<sup>147</sup> The arrival of satellite television, the significant improvement of the telephone system, and the legalisation of fax machines have helped to free the youth from their ideological isolation.<sup>148</sup> The universal youth culture, a hegemonic force radiating from the US, is changing Syrian self-perceptions, and attitudes towards the West. The ideology of the past is being surpassed by the lowest common denominator - the American factor.<sup>149</sup>

The global emphasis upon the primacy of capitalism as the dominant economic system rests easily upon the shoulders of the new elite. Receiving their university education in the US and Europe, the children of the political elite are more disposed to the philosophy of capitalism than socialism. Seduced by the excesses of Western consumerism, the young generation has started to adopt a new lifestyle. Music, fashion, and cuisine are unduly influenced by the West, indicating a rejection of their indigenous culture and the austerity measures imposed by Ba'thism.<sup>150</sup>

The former antagonism between the state and the private bourgeoisie is being bridged as the political elite acquire a stake in the new economic system. This finds an expression in the intermarriage between the political elite and the new bourgeoisie.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with the First Secretary of the British Embassy, 28 September 1995.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with a Syrian artist, 29 September 1995.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with a Syrian businessman, 30 September 1995.

<sup>150</sup> Interview the First Secretary of the British Embassy, 28 September 1995.

<sup>151</sup> Bahout, J., "The Syrian Business Community, Its Politics and Prospects," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 77.

The business community and the political elite are reaching a *modus vivendi*. Their interests are beginning to coincide, but the terms of their co-operation remain firmly in the hands of the political elite. Neither social actor is interested in comprehensive economic liberalisation. Such a move would hurt the state's original constituency. The state cannot afford to alienate its public sector support, as it credits the state with legitimacy. Extensive economic liberalisation would create widespread dissatisfaction amongst the Syrian population. The state's ability to insulate itself from unpopular sentiment would be severely restricted as unemployment, the removal of basic food subsidies, and a diminution of welfare services would erode legitimacy.

On the other hand, comprehensive economic liberalisation would not benefit the bourgeoisie as it would expose it to intense competition. Incremental liberalisation protects the bourgeoisie from domestic, regional, and international competition. Sharing the spoils, therefore, with the political elite is a minimal cost for establishing flourishing businesses and quasi-monopolies.<sup>152</sup>

As Hinnebusch has suggested: "A *modus vivendi* may be shaping up between a state which needs a wealth generating, conservative social force, and a bourgeoisie which needs the economic opportunities and political protection provided by the state."<sup>153</sup> The bourgeoisie looks set to inherit the privilege once enjoyed by the Ba'th party, as the balance of interest swings towards the private sector.

The swing in the business community's favour, at the expense of the Ba'th party, was symbolised by Asad's endorsement of independent candidates during the 1994

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with a Syrian bureaucrat, 1 October 1995.

<sup>153</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 108.

elections. His appearance at the Damascus Chamber of Commerce received wide coverage in the state-controlled press, further reinforcing his support of the business community. The autonomy enjoyed by the state has enabled it to nurture the economic potential of a reconstructed bourgeoisie whilst ensuring that its political aspirations are minimal, and its future is inextricably linked to the fortunes of the state.

### **The State: Balancing the Interests**

The dependence of the Ba'th party and the bourgeoisie upon the state has given the state a large degree of autonomy in the decision-making process. Asad has been able to balance the interests of each group against the other, according to the demands of their constituency. The regime barons, who control the Armed Forces and the Security Services underscore the autonomy of the regime. Their role has yet to be institutionalised.

The state's relative autonomy from domestic social forces enhances its freedom of action. The decision-making process exists above the centres of power; the Ba'th party, the bourgeoisie, or the Security Services cannot impose their interests upon the state. Foreign policy decisions, in particular, are essentially insulated from overt domestic influences. Chapters six and seven provide two resounding examples where the state has pursued policies, otherwise, considered to be inimical to domestic interests.

It would be incorrect, of course, to suggest that the centres of power do not exert influence, but the degree of influence is the crucial factor. More recently, we have witnessed a decline in the Ba'th party's role in the decision-making process, and the

elevation of the bourgeoisie in the economic field. The state's preoccupation with security naturally gives precedence to the Armed Forces and Security Services.<sup>154</sup>

Although the Asad regime has proved to be the most durable one in modern history, the flux between institutional and patrimonial rule serves as a flashpoint of instability for Syria. The state's dependence upon the Security Services to preserve civil order, and the Armed Forces to meter Israel's military threat has militated against social cohesion and the prominence of civilian rule. Security still dominates the political realm, and Asad's dependence upon the 'Alawi generals and commanders to guarantee the survival of the regime and state prevents the institutional process from ossifying.<sup>155</sup> As the Security Services are called upon to contain and repress the possibility of domestic instability occurring,, it is difficult to determine the level of opposition to the state. Nevertheless, opposition does exist.

The following three examples illustrate the potential for domestic instability within Syria.

### *The Islamic uprising*

During the period between 1979 and 1982, Syria experienced serious domestic repercussions from its policy in Lebanon, and was on the edge of falling into a civil war. Throughout this period, the future of Asad's regime looked precarious. Syria's regional isolation, resulting from its support of Iran, in the Iran-Iraq War, added to the insecurity of the state.

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<sup>154</sup> Perthes, V., "The Private Sector, Economic Liberalization, and the Prospects of Democratization: The Case of Syria and Some Other Arab Countries," in G. Salame (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 218.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Patrick Seale, Durham, November 1994.

On 16 June 1979, over 60 cadets at the Aleppo artillery school were massacred by adherents of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>156</sup> The majority of those killed belonged to the 'Alawi sect; the massacre seemed to be part of an anti-'Alawi campaign. The most worrying aspect of this event for the regime was the role played by Ibrahim Yussef, who was a captain and a high-ranking member of the ruling Ba'th party. He was implicated in the plot, and was thought to have facilitated the operation. As a result, 300 dissidents, including a number of high-ranking officers, were rounded up and executed.<sup>157</sup>

A proliferation of car bomb attacks on government and Soviet buildings marked the return of civil confrontation. The most significant attacks took place in August, September, and November 1981. In August, three members of the prime minister's team were killed in their offices; in September, a car bomb exploded outside the airforce command headquarters in Damascus killing 20 people; and in November another car bomb exploded outside a school killing a further 90 people.<sup>158</sup>

The institutions of the political process had failed to contain the dissension expressed by the Muslim Brotherhood. The regime relied upon coercion to quell the riots. The repressive tactics against the opposition elicited an equally violent response from the Muslim Brotherhood pushing the country towards a violent civil war. Homs and Hama remained the centres of anti-regime activities. The regime engaged in the first of a series of massacres in Hama in April 1981. The defence units, operating under the leadership of Rif'at Asad, were responding to attacks against an 'Alawi village, where

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<sup>156</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 3, August 1979, pp. 5.

<sup>157</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 3, August 1979, pp. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, December 1981, pp. 7.



attendants at a wedding were killed.<sup>159</sup> The sectarian nature of the violence demonstrated the acrimonious tensions existing beneath the surface of Syrian society.

The regime's ruthless massacre of the civilian population at Hama, throughout February 1982, has left an indelible mark upon Syria's modern history. The town of Hama lived through a month of outright civil war which culminated in the destruction of the town and the eradication of the Muslim Brotherhood's opposition to the regime.<sup>160</sup>

The Hama massacre eliminated the opposition to the regime. Asad imposed his rule through coercive means illuminating the backbone of his support. The political process was unable to accommodate the discontent of the Muslim Brotherhood's opposition. Opposition, according to this model of governance, requires incorporation and management. The post-Hama domestic policies of the state sought to eliminate the radical voices of the Brotherhood whilst assimilating the interests of the less combative elements of the Muslim opposition.<sup>161</sup>

With the memory of the Iranian Revolution fresh in its mind, the Syrian regime routed the opposition through a relentless massacre in Hama that reverberated throughout the region. This massacre indicated the president's determination to remain in office, and

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<sup>159</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, December 1981, pp. 6.

<sup>160</sup> Drysdale, A., "The Asad Regime and Its Troubles," *MERIP*, no. 110, November/December 1982, 3-11, and Fisk, R., *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 181-187.

<sup>161</sup> A peaceful Islamic movement focused on pious personal behaviour is starting to spread again, and so long as it does not challenge the regime, this safety valve will be tolerated. The regime knows that under political liberalization the Islamists, the main beneficiaries of the ideological vacuum, would widen their base. It is unlikely to allow them to operate politically unless they support the regime. Moderate conservative Islamic leaders who have cooperated with the government, such as Muhammad Said Rahman al-Buti, professor of *shari'a*, and the *mufti*, Ahmad al-Kaftaro, have some followings in Sufi brotherhoods and old quarters like al-Midan.

maintain control over the levers of power. The next significant threat to the regime, however, emerged from within the regime elite in the form of Rif'at Asad and his defence units.

### *The intra-elite struggle*

President Asad's heart-attack, in November 1983, provided the pretext for another assault on the Syrian state. This time it arose from within the regime's political elite in the form of a struggle between the president's chosen coterie and the president's brother, Rif'at, and his allies.

From his hospital bed, Asad instructed the following men to form a committee of command:

- Defence Minister, Tlas;
- Chief of Staff, Shihabi;
- Foreign Minister, Khaddam;
- Prime Minister, Kasm;
- assistant secretary-general of the Ba'th Regional Command, 'Abdallah al-Ahmar.<sup>162</sup>

Rif'at Asad was excluded from the ruling committee.

As an entrenched baron of the regime, with his interests ultimately tied to the health of the Defence Companies and the 'Alawi generals of the regime, Rif'at was persuaded to jockey for a leading position in the case of succession. A full meeting of the Regional Command was then convened without the President or the Information Minister,

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<sup>162</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 1, March 1984, pp. 9.

Ahmed Iskandar Ahmed.<sup>163</sup> The Regional Command voted to replace the six-man committee appointed by Asad with Rif'at Asad. A showdown between the recovering president and his ambitious younger brother determined the fate of Syria. The political elite looked intent on pursuing a course of self-destruction.<sup>164</sup>

Asad's full recovery led to a muted military confrontation amongst the forces loyal to both brothers. The president, in a personal showdown with Rif'at, asserted his authority over his younger brother. As a result, the Defence Companies were reduced in size and importance. The appointment of three vice-presidents: Foreign Minister, Khaddam, the assistant regional secretary of the Ba'th party, Zuhair Masharqa, and Rif'at Asad, constituted a new chain of command designed to accommodate the succession problem. Rif'at Asad and his rivals 'Ali Aslan, the Commander of the Special Forces, and Shafiq Fayyad, the Commander of the Third Division, were part of a delegation sent to the Soviet Union to cool off.<sup>165</sup>

Asad's appointment of the six-man committee displayed two features:

- (i) the absence of an institutional process to accommodate the death of the president;
- (ii) the extent of praetorianism within the state.

Although the Ba'th party constitution provides the Regional Command with forty days to select a new president, who in turn must be elected according to universal franchise, this incident illustrated the fragility of the institutional process. The institutions of the

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<sup>163</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 424.

<sup>164</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 424.

<sup>165</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 424.

state have not been invested with the sufficient authority to sustain a transition of presidency. If Asad's institutions cannot command respect from his closest aides, it is unlikely that they have taken root within Syrian society.<sup>166</sup>

The true nature of power in Syria was revealed through the succession crisis. The patrimonial system of government, reinforced through the creation of military units loyal to regime barons, removed the pretensions of the institutional process, and exposed the military authority of the regime. The ensuing struggle amongst the political elite indicated the divergence of opinions, and the potential for conflict between the interested parties of the regime. The political process, in this instance, was underpinned by the various military divisions and their cross-cutting loyalties to the barons of the regime.

### *International pressures and political change*

The advent of *new thinking* in Soviet foreign policy wrought new changes in Syria's domestic political situation. Its impact was not felt until the fall of Ceaucescu's regime, in the final days of 1989. Graffiti appeared on the walls of Damascus drawing comparisons between Asad and Ceaucescu.<sup>167</sup> The regime was forced to take action as the sweeping reforms and silent revolutions of Eastern Europe did not bode well for the regime. Syria embarked upon a process of political decompression.<sup>168</sup>

Political decompression was introduced to accommodate the rising tensions within the state, provoked by the change of political systems throughout the Soviet bloc. The

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<sup>166</sup> Notes from Hinnebusch's interview with Seale, London, May 1994.

<sup>167</sup> Perthes, V., *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 138.

<sup>168</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 107.

structural changes within the Soviet bloc could not have gone unnoticed by Asad's regime. The Syrian state had illustrated its resilience to the Islamist uprisings of the 1980s, but its corporatist structures were modified to coalesce the more moderate critics of the regime, and to isolate the radical elements within society.<sup>169</sup>

Asad expanded the People's Council and gave the bourgeoisie a semi-institutional role. As previously mentioned, the members voted to the People's Council in 1990 was increased from 195 to 250. One third of these seats were reserved for independent candidates, who essentially came from the bourgeoisie, hence guaranteeing them a significant voice in the parliament.<sup>170</sup> Although the Ba'th party still held the majority in the People's Council, the presence of independent candidates signified a labefaction in the role of the Ba'th party, and the elevation of businessmen in the low politics of state.<sup>171</sup>

The expansion of the People's Council, in May 1990, and the creation of the prime minister's Committee for the Guidance of Commerce and Industry were political concessions to the regime-friendly bourgeoisie. These moves, however, did not imply that a power sharing programme had been adopted, as the power relationship between the political elite of the regime and the bourgeoisie remained unambiguous. The desire of the bourgeoisie to engage in the political process, as a subordinate partner but with

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<sup>169</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Asad's Syria and the New World Order: The Struggle for Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 1, May/June 1993, pp. 11-12.

<sup>170</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 66.

<sup>171</sup> Perthes, V., "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 66.

access to the economic decision-making process, meant that a *modus vivendi* was arrived at with the state.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Liberalization in Syria: The Struggle of Economic and Political Rationality," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 108.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this research recognises the primacy of the international political system in determining state behaviour. State behaviour is governed by the inherent anarchy that characterises the international political system. The absence of hierarchy within the international political system means that states are pre-occupied with the issue of national security. As a result, states are conditioned to act according to a set of rational criteria.

Omnibalancing refers to the balance, attained by the state, between domestic interests and the determinants of the international political system. The reservation of the author with omnibalancing lies in its priority of the domestic arena over the international political system. Working from the assumption that the international political system provides the prime motivation for state behaviour suggests that states must attain a degree of relative autonomy from domestic forces to pursue a rational policy.

Following a policy of balancing domestic forces within Syria, the state has been able to acquire relative autonomy from society. Between 1966 and 1970, the Ba'th state destroyed the economic and social base of the bourgeoisie. This gave it the possibility to free the state from interests of dominant social actors. The Syrian state, therefore, was able to elevate itself above the social classes in society.

Autonomy from the bourgeoisie has enabled the state to engage in a regional struggle with Israel in accordance with a set of rational principles. The accumulation of power, pursued in its competition for regional hegemony, has remained a priority of the state since 1970. In order to balance the power of Israel, Syria needed to consolidate and develop its power base. This process required the incorporation of the domestic centres of power into a state-building project.

Asad initiated a process of state-building after assuming power; this project set out to restructure state-society relations in service of the national interest. The resulting quasi-corporatist state was built upon three pillars: the Armed Forces and Security Services, the Ba'th party, and the institutional political system. Owing to the transitory nature of state-society relations, the state was governed by two systems, namely, *neo-patrimonialism* and *institutionalism*.

The Syrian president has forged a state around the issue of national security, and the national interest. The struggle with Israel has formed the basis of Syria's national interest, and invested it with a historical mission. The responsibility assumed by the Syrian state towards Palestine has helped to legitimise the authoritarian nature of the state. Furthermore, it has granted the state a chance to rise above the competition amongst domestic forces, and to preserve exclusive rights to the area of high politics.

The decisions of high politics are formulated within the Regional Command of the Ba'th party, and amongst Asad's closest advisers. Policies are then justified *downstream* through the party apparatus.<sup>173</sup> Relative autonomy from domestic forces has allowed the Syrian state to exercise a foreign policy based upon rational considerations, rather than class or sectarian interests.

The Syrian state, lacking comprehensive legitimacy, has remained dependent upon the gel of patrimonialism to sustain its longevity. To date, the Syrian state has managed to circumvent the overt influence of dominant social forces. The pre-eminence of the corporate structures of the state has prevented the political process from being fully institutionalised. The state's autonomy has been supported by its extensive patronage

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<sup>173</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/1131, A/3, 23 July 1991.

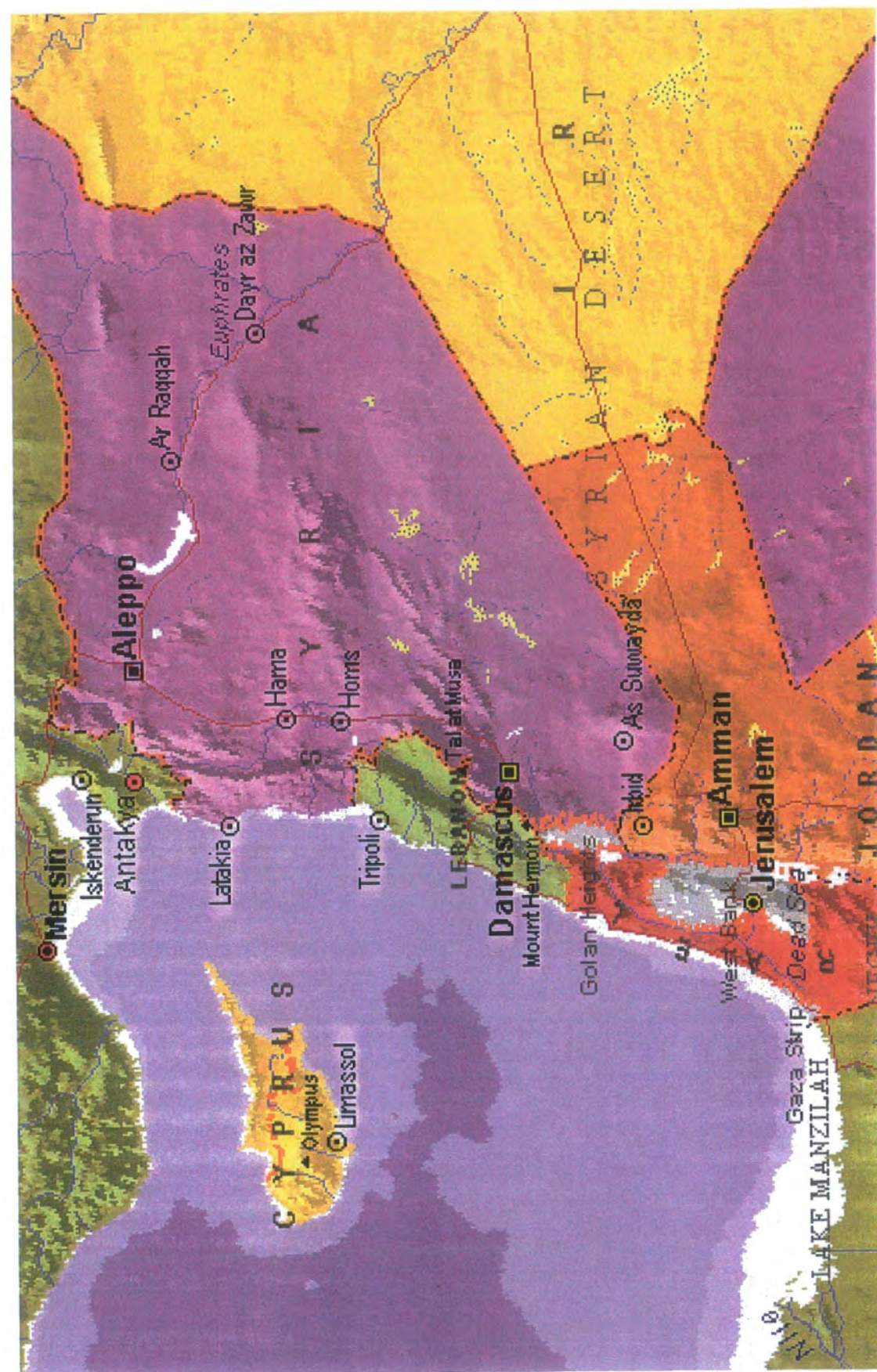


networks. The state's vulnerability, one could contend, lies in its dependence upon patronage, and its reluctance to empower the political institutions of the state.

The Armed Forces and the Security Services have constituted the backbone of the Ba'th state. They have guaranteed the longevity of the regime, in particular when the state was threatened with civil war between 1979 and 1982. The rebellion in Hama posed a serious threat to the security of the state. The state's resilience to this challenge was underwritten by its monopoly over the means of coercion. The reliance upon the Armed Forces and the Security Services illustrated the failure of the state's political institutions to pre-empt or contain the grievances of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Balancing the interests within the state, Asad has provided the state with a degree of autonomy that has enabled it to make decisions based on rational set of principles. The decision to join the US-led coalition against Iraq in 1990 represents one incident, where the state's action was founded upon a rational criteria, whilst appearing to contradict the common Arab interest. The state enjoyed enough autonomy to disregard public opinion, and follow a policy determined by national interest. Syria's decision was portentous, as it elevated its national interest over the Arab interest, and risked its own legitimacy.

The risk to the domestic legitimacy of the Syrian state, in this case, was subjugated to the demands of the international political system. The change in the distribution of global power compelled Syria to adjust to the New World Order. Residing above the domestic arena, the Syrian state was insulated enough to adjust to the New World Order without precipitating domestic unrest, and without having to legitimise its decision beforehand.



THE LEVANT

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER

### Introduction

Syria's foreign policy has been consistent for the past twenty-five years. Comprehensive peace with Israel has been an obtainable and desired goal of the Syrian regime since the early 1970s, but the structural determinants within the region, pushed the Syrian state to pursue a balance of power before taking a place at the negotiating table.

The consolidation of the state, forged through the policies of Asad, have afforded it the opportunity to pursue a rational foreign policy. Syria's foreign policy can be mainly accounted for by the realist paradigm of international relations. It is based upon:

- preserving the security of the state;
- following the national interest;
- maximising the available amount of power.

Syrian foreign policy has been guided by this set of principles; despite its tactical flexibility, Syria has remained committed to securing the state and maintaining its sphere of influence in the Levant.

Commentators such as Pipes<sup>1</sup> and Lawson<sup>2</sup> cast doubt over Syria's consistency in the execution of foreign policy. Their analyses, which belong to the domestic politics model, attributes Syrian foreign policy to satisfying the demands of its various domestic constituencies. Thus, an irrational pattern of behaviour emerges. As a Third World state, Syria's domestic constraints impinge upon the state's room for manoeuvre. Foreign policy is open to the centrifugal forces inherited from the period of colonialism; the state is not unitary, nor is it the principal actor due to the fractious and permeable nature of society.

In the following section, I shall present the arguments coined by the domestic politics model and the rational actor model of foreign policy analysis. It is the contention of the author that the rational actor model, put forward by the realist paradigm, is the most appropriate explanatory model for the Syrian case.

## **Domestic Politics Models**

The domestic politics model places its emphasis upon domestic interests in the formulation of foreign policy. It stresses the role of classes or interest groups and their access to the decision-making process. In this instance, the state is subjected to a loss of its autonomy. They refute the primacy of the international political system as the major determinant for the actions of a state. Conversely, they focus upon the domestic configurations of power.

Domestic politics models are the dominant form for analysing the foreign policies of Third World states. The onus of the domestic politics models is placed upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Pipes, D., *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Lawson, F., *Why Syria Goes to War? Thirty Years of Confrontation*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

instability that characterises Third World states.<sup>3</sup> Their foreign policy is portrayed as irrational by this school of thought.<sup>4</sup>

Third World states are considered to lack legitimacy and autonomy from their societies; the regimes are notoriously authoritarian and depend upon foreign policy to cohere otherwise divisive social and political communities. The utility of an external threat provides a locus of attention for the population of a state. According to Goode, foreign policy is domestic politics pursued by other means.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Goode suggests that the continuous presence of an external threat to security is a useful device to generate allegiance to unconsolidated states. Regimes exaggerate the significance of security threats as a method of diverting attention away from domestic problems.

Calvert adds another dimension to this analysis when he highlights the intra-elite struggles that also characterise poorly consolidated states. He asserts that, where this is a prominent feature of Third World states, foreign policy loses any sense of coherence as it becomes an instrument in the hands of warring factions. The result is a belligerent and largely irrational foreign policy often grounded in anti-imperial rhetoric.<sup>6</sup>

Pipes and Lawson apply the domestic politics model in their analysis of Syrian foreign policy. Pipes emphasises the sectarian nature of the Syrian regime ('Alawi), and contrasts it with the majority (Sunni) interest of the population. He portrays Syrian foreign policy as irrational and founded upon two principles that support the 'Alawi-dominated regime:

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<sup>3</sup> Clapham, C., *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 40-41.

<sup>4</sup> Calvert, P., *The Foreign Policy of New States*, (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Goode, R., "State Building as a Determinant of Foreign Policy in the New States," in L. Martin (ed.), *Neutrality and Non-alignment*, (New York: Praeger, 1962).

<sup>6</sup> Calvert, P., *The Foreign Policy of New States*, (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1986).

- the perpetuation of the state of war with Israel;
- the irredentist ambition to recreate Greater Syria.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, Syrian foreign policy serves the minority interests of the 'Alawis in the following way: the state of war with Israel provides a pretext to maintain a strong domestic military presence in the cities. Basically, foreign policy acts as a tool to legitimise an unpopular regime. Furthermore, the promotion of Greater Syria envelopes and hides the sectarian character of the 'Alawi regime.<sup>8</sup>

The domestic politics model accounts for a foreign policy that is grounded in praetorian politics (mosaic model) or economics (Marxist analysis). The use of the mosaic model to explain Syria's foreign policy is valuable as it enables us to correlate the execution of foreign policy decisions with domestic policy.<sup>9</sup> It is, however, limited in its applicability as it is too unidimensional. To say that the Syrian regime is sectarian is tautological. The sectarian composition of the regime is self-evident; the mosaic approach cannot account for the complex operations of the state. The 'Alawis hold the key positions in the security apparatus of the state, but the business community and the Ba'th constituency are functional in the decision-making process.

Lawson works with a model where foreign policy is instrumental to managing class cleavages.<sup>10</sup> The perpetual threat of war creates an environment which allows the state to enjoy a degree of autonomy from domestic social forces. Lawson suggests that

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<sup>7</sup> Pipes, D., *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 175.

<sup>8</sup> Pipes, D., *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 184-185.

<sup>9</sup> Bill, J., and R. Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), pp. 98-105.

<sup>10</sup> Lawson, F., *Why Syria Goes to War? Thirty Years of Confrontation*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

Syria goes to war when the dominant ruling coalition is faced with a serious domestic threat that pre-eminently comes about through economic crisis.<sup>11</sup> War provides the solution to unifying the deep social divisions within the Syrian society and the fractures within the dominant ruling coalition. This approach refutes the ability and ambitions of the regime to reach a peace agreement with Israel.

There is an economic variant of the domestic politics model which has been applied to the Syrian case.<sup>12</sup> Economic crisis is believed to force the regime to sell foreign policy decisions for economic rent needed to service patronage networks on which its survival depends.<sup>13</sup> This is a familiar explanation of Syria's entry into the Gulf War coalition and its engagement in the Madrid peace process. In chapters six and seven, I intend to show otherwise; Syria's participation in both events was more determined by politico-strategic reasons.<sup>14</sup>

Although domestic politics models may apply to many Third World states, their suitability to the Syrian case is limited. The three most salient features of the Syrian case, namely, the durability of the Asad regime, the intensity of the Syrian-Israeli conflict, and its consistency in foreign policy refutes the basic assumptions of the domestic politics models. The Syrian regime has indubitably used external threats and foreign policy performance to legitimise its rule. It is difficult, however, to discount

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<sup>11</sup> Lawson, F, *Why Syria Goes to War? Thirty Years of Confrontation*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 179-181.

<sup>12</sup> Brand, L., "Economics and Shifting Alliances: Jordan's Relations with Syria and Iraq, 1975-81," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, 1994, pp. 393-413.

<sup>13</sup> This is a familiar explanation for Syria's addition to the Gulf War coalition and its entry into the Madrid peace process. In chapters six and seven, I intend to show otherwise; Syria's participation in both events was determined by politico-strategic reasons. For more details see: Sarkees, M., and S. Zunes, "Disenchantment with the 'New World Order': Syria's Relations with the United States," *International Journal*, vol. XLIX, no. 2, April 1994, pp. 361.

<sup>14</sup> Sarkees, M., and S. Zunes, "Disenchantment with the New World Order: Syria's Relations with the United States," *International Journal*, vol. XLIX, no. 2, Spring 1994, pp. 361.



the threat posed by Israel. Israel's invasion of Lebanon, in 1978 and 1982, presented a direct challenge to Syria and its role in the Levant.<sup>15</sup> Syria's pursuit of balancing the power of Israel is a testament to the real threat it feels from its southern neighbour.

Internal politics cannot be de-linked from foreign policy, but their explanatory power in the Syrian case is far more limited and indirect than domestic politics models suggest. The one quantitative study of linkage politics, which was conducted by Burrows and Spector, found that there was no direct link between the domestic and foreign policy behaviour of Syria.<sup>16</sup> Evron intimates that realist (deterrence) analysis is most useful for explaining Syria's quest for strategic parity with Israel.<sup>17</sup>

## The Rational Actor Model

According to the rational actor model, which belongs to the realist and neo-realist paradigms, foreign policy is determined primarily by security.<sup>18</sup> Survival in an anarchic arena requires all states, over the long run at least, to adopt certain rational behaviour, such as power maximisation and balancing strategies. In the realist paradigm, foreign policy is substantially dictated by the international system, regardless of ideology and internal politics.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hopwood, D., *Syria 1945-1986: Politics and Society*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 60-72.

<sup>16</sup> Burrows, R., and B. Spector, "The Strength and Direction of Relationships between Domestic and External Conflict and Cooperation," in J. Wilkenfield (ed.), *Conflict Behaviour and Linkage Politics*, (New York: David McKay, 1973), pp. 294-321.

<sup>17</sup> Evron, Y., *War and Intervention in Lebanon: The Syrian-Israeli Deterrence Dialogue*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Allison, G., *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1971), pp. 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Waltz, K., *Theory of International Relations*, (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).



The rational actor model explains the behaviour of states according to international events and by recounting the aims and calculations of states.<sup>20</sup> The value of this method, according to Morgenthau, is that:

*it provides for rational discipline in action and creates astounding continuity in foreign policy ... (which) appears as an intelligible, rational continuum ... regardless of the different motives, preferences, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen.*<sup>21</sup>

Cross national studies have tended to support the realist case intimating that inter-state conflict is more closely associated with variations in international circumstances than domestic affairs. No strong consistent association was found between foreign policy and internal factors, such as authoritarian regimes and ethnic heterogeneity.<sup>22</sup> Where external threats are high, as in the Middle East, the realist paradigm is deemed particularly apposite.<sup>23</sup>

One proposition of the realist model is that adaptation to the external arena is best achieved in a strong state where the foreign policy machine is a unified autonomous rational actor. In this case, the foreign policy machine is able to put policy in the service of an historically or geo-politically shaped national interest. The state is sufficiently autonomous to pursue foreign policy goals based on rational criteria. The state is also unitary and able to execute a coherent policy without accounting for the

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<sup>20</sup> Allison, G., *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Boston: LittleBrown, 1971), pp. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, H., *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1968), pp. 5.

<sup>22</sup> McGowan, P., and H. Shapiro, *The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy: A Survey of Scientific Findings*, (London: Sage, 1973), pp. 75-124.

<sup>23</sup> Yaniv, A., "Alliance Politics in the Middle East," in A. Braun (ed.), *The Middle East in Global Strategy*, (London: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 133-152.

intra-state interests of dominant social actors or groups. Seale and Hinnebusch apply this analysis to Syria.<sup>24</sup>

The realist paradigm, with its focus on systemic variables, takes a leader's ability to mobilise domestic resources for external objectives as non-problematic. This is where the realist paradigm is weak in its analysis. Without an analysis of state-society relations, the realist paradigm invites criticism, especially when applied to the Third World. Protagonists of the domestic politics models, are dismissive of realism; they discount the possibility that Third World states can act according to a set of rational considerations because they often lack:

- legitimacy;
- strong state institutions;
- a national agenda.<sup>25</sup>

It is the contention of the author that Syria's foreign policy has been tempered by the international political system and the peculiarities of the regional state sub-system of the Middle East. The Syrian state, as has been illustrated in chapter three, is particularly vulnerable due to its recent history, demography, and geopolitical position. Located on one of the major trading routes between the Occident and the Orient, Syria's fortunes have been ultimately tied to the political machinations of the region.

Syria's foreign relations have traditionally been dependent upon external factors. Consequently, Syria has been a pawn amongst the regional hegemons, often

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<sup>24</sup> See Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Goes Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn, 1996, pp. 44-46.

<sup>25</sup> David, S., "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 235-237.

constituting a sphere of influence for regional actors, such as Iraq and Egypt.<sup>26</sup> The struggle for Syria intensified after independence. Syria became a prize in the regional contest between the two tributary states Egypt and Iraq, which competed for influence in the fractious state of Syria.

Belonging to the Arab nation, and dissected from its regional base, Syria's own political identity was unclear. The pan-Arab appeal of Arab nationalism, and the pan-Islamic call of Islam contradicted the notion of Syrian state-hood. Cross-state loyalties undermined the sovereign base of the new Syrian state, and allowed its centrifugal forces to disrupt a cohesive central polity. The state was porous to the covert interventions of the region's main power centres. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq all played instrumental roles in subverting the independence of Syria, whilst promoting their own political agendas.<sup>27</sup>

On the international level, Syria became a cornerstone in the zero-sum game between the Soviet Union and the US.<sup>28</sup> The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was also reputed to have undertaken covert operations in order to dissuade local actors from cultivating ties with the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> As a small, ethnically divided and vulnerable state, Syria could not emerge from its passivity without significant internal changes.

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<sup>26</sup> Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 46.

<sup>27</sup> For more details of this protracted struggle see Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>28</sup> Saunders, B., *The United States and Arab Nationalism: The Syrian Case, 1953-1960*, (London: Praeger, 1996), pp. 15.

<sup>29</sup> Rathmell, A., *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), pp. 36-37.

The new state of Syria, struggling to construct its own identity, was beset with regional and international actors intervening to assert their hegemony.<sup>30</sup>

The creation of Israel has been considered, by Syrian regimes, to be an extension of imperial rule.<sup>31</sup> In other words, Israel represented a combined regional and international threat to the indigenous peoples of the region. Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, orchestrated through the channels of the Great Powers, engendered a permanent agenda for war. The struggle between Syria and Israel set a precedent that determined the orientation of Syrian foreign policy. Syria's foreign policy has been based on security, national interest, and power maximisation since 1970. The security of the state has been a preoccupation of the political elite; the occupation of the Golan Heights has served as a constant reminder of the threat posed by Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Asad's rise to power in 1970 marked a distinctive change in Syria's role in the region. The centralisation of the decision-making process, the institutionalisation of the political process, and the suppression of inter-state activists enabled the regime to consolidate its domestic position. Through this process of state-building, infused with an acute sense of power politics, Asad started to translate Syria's inherent vulnerability into a source of power. This was achieved through a policy of alliance-building, and breaking, with the region's hegemonic powers.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Rathmell, A., *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria 1949-1961*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), chapters 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>31</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 54.

<sup>32</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 104.

<sup>33</sup> Syria's détente with Iraq, after Egypt's defection, was short lived due to the rivalry between the two states. Motivated by geopolitics and the need to balance Iraq's power, Syria entered into an alliance with Iran.

Instead of remaining the pawn, Syria began to exploit the presence of Israel in the region, and the presence of other revolutionary forces within the Arab world, in order to extract political, military, and economic assistance from Egypt, the Gulf Arab states, and the Soviet Union. Syria has since then attempted to free itself from the constraints imposed by the superpowers, or other regional actors, in order to pursue an independent foreign policy.

### **Syria's Foreign Policy**

Syria's foreign policy has been driven by its recent historical experience. The amputation of Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan from historical Syria, left the Syrian regimes of the post-independence period, with an irredentist vision of recreating Greater Syria as a constituent of the wider Arab nation. Thus, Syria's foreign policy has been caste and justified by Arab nationalism since independence.

Pan-Arabism as a concept, has ceased to be the foremost determinant of Syria's foreign policy. Its foreign policy is now shaped primarily by assessments of how best to defend and enhance the power and prestige of Syria within the regional state system.<sup>34</sup> Seale labelled Syria's foreign policy as the Levant Security Doctrine, and it incorporated the following:

- The security of the Arab East is indivisible, and any defection from the Arab front against Israel would undermine the chance for peace.
- Peace in the region is only possible through unity. Separate agreements between Arab states and Israel would weaken the common front and result in settlements that hurt the Arab side.

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<sup>34</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 57.

- Syria and Israel are engaged in an on-going competition for hegemony over the western buffer zones.
- Syria must fight any policy that, intentionally or not, impinges upon its front-line defences.<sup>35</sup>

Seale's analysis is based upon Syria's desire to provide the state with security from external threats. There are numerous threats to Syrian security owing to its geopolitical location. They can be found on Syria's northern, southern, eastern, and western flank. Israel represents the most significant and dynamic threat to Syria. Thereupon, it has been the focus of Syrian foreign policy since 1948. Israel's separate peace deals with Egypt, the PLO, and Jordan have increased the extent of Syria's insecurity.<sup>36</sup> Iraq's contention for the leadership of the Arab world has posed a dynamic threat to Syria's security, and ensured that inter-Arab rivalry has focused upon the Syrian-Iraqi relationship.<sup>37</sup>

In order to balance the threats imposed by Iraq and Israel, the Levant Security Doctrine set out to incorporate the potential of the Lebanese, Jordanians, and the Palestinians. In an effort to extract Syria from the struggle among the regional powers, Asad sought to develop a base from which to challenge the hegemonic pretensions of its neighbours. This would enable Syria to maximise its power projection.

The envelopment of the Levant states' foreign policies into a unified polity could have provided a counter-balance to the power projections of Iraq, and Israel. Asad's

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<sup>35</sup> Brand, L., "Asad's Syria and the PLO: Coincidence or Conflict of Interests?," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XIV, no. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 23-24.

<sup>36</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 273.

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed account of the rivalry between Syria and Iraq see: Kienle, E., *Ba'th v Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990).

objective, however, was not the territorial annexation of Syria's neighbours, but their incorporation into its sphere of influence.<sup>38</sup> The tangible objectives of Syria's foreign policy can be translated into:

- recovering the territories lost in the 1967 War, which included Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai;
- the restoration of Palestinian rights.

The signing of the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, and the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO curtailed Syria's ambitions.

Syria's goals were contained in UN Resolution 242 which had constituted a basis for comprehensive peace talks prior to the Oslo Accords of 1993.<sup>39</sup> Dispensing with the rhetoric of his predecessors, Asad implicitly accepted UN Resolution 242 when he agreed to Resolution 338, on 15 October 1973, which called for a cease-fire between Syria and Israel and the implementation of Resolution 242.<sup>40</sup>

Seale and Hinnebusch assert that Syria's foreign policy has been consistent since 1972, and has been founded upon a set of rational principles. Asad relegated the role of ideology in the decision-making process, and formulated foreign policy according to Syria's power potential. Since coming to power, Asad has employed various strategies, and has effected numerous culpable tactical moves that have alienated large sections of the Syrian population. Syria's foreign policy has, however, remained anchored to the Levant Doctrine, but the transmuting international and regional

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<sup>38</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 60.

<sup>39</sup> For more details and discussion of UN Resolution 242, Madrid Peace Conference, and the Oslo Accords see chapter seven.

<sup>40</sup> Lorenz, J., *Egypt and the Arabs: Foreign Policy and the Search for National Identity*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 49.

configurations of power have pushed Syria towards unpopular tactics and new strategies.<sup>41</sup>

The balance of power has determined the strategies employed by the Syrian state in its competition with Israel. These strategies have taken three distinct forms since 1970:

- the Egyptian axis: 1970-1978;
- strategic parity: 1979-1988;
- strategic deterrence: 1989-1996.

The following section will explore the content of Syria's strategies, and its pursuit of foreign policy goals.

### ***The Egyptian axis: 1970-1978***

As soon as Asad seized power in Damascus, he started to court the financial and political support of the conservative Gulf monarchies whilst reinforcing the symbiotic military relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> Although Asad was not an ideologue, he understood the significance that the Soviet Union could lend the Arabs in terms of military aid and strategic depth.<sup>43</sup>

The advent of the 1967 war appeared to signify that the Arab effort to eradicate Israel retreated into the annals of history. A new sense of realism emerged amongst the front-line Arab states. Between 1970 and 1978, Syria's military doctrine was cast within the rubric of Arab military and economic co-ordination.

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<sup>41</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 187.

<sup>42</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Peasant and Bureaucracy in Ba'thist Syria: The Political Economy of Rural Development*, (London: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 5-8.



The Middle Eastern equation, according to Asad and Sadat, required Syria and Egypt to co-ordinate their military manoeuvres, under the auspices of the Soviet Union, in order to balance the power of the Israeli military. Achieving a balance of power determined Syria's and Egypt's potential to:

- strike Israel;
- reclaim the territories lost in 1967;
- recover diplomatic prestige.<sup>44</sup>

The Syrian-Egyptian axis operating with the support of the Soviet Union appeared to offer a realist strategy to recover the lost lands of 1967 war and deliver a political advantage. The two-front strategy received economic support from the Gulf Arab states. This represented a new era in the Middle East based on the balance of power.

Developing the two front strategy entailed a commitment from the Soviet Union to re-arm and train the Syrian and Egyptian military. By June 1973, according to Ramet's source, Syria had acquired 300 fighter aircraft, which meant an additional 200 to the stockpile of the 1967 War. Syrian military expenditures per capita increased quite substantially from \$115 in 1972 to \$148 in 1973, and \$151 in 1974.<sup>45</sup> The armed forces also started to grow in strength throughout this period. The numerical strength of the armed forces per 1,000 people increased from 17.2 in 1972, to 18.1 in 1974.<sup>46</sup>

The consolidation of the Soviet-Syrian ties, and the improvement in the quality and quantity of the military hardware transferred, were not sufficient, however, to sustain a

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<sup>44</sup> Lorenz, J., *Egypt and the Arabs: Foreign Policy and the Search for National Identity*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 46.

<sup>45</sup> These figures are calculated at constant 1981 dollars.

<sup>46</sup> Ramet, P., *The Soviet-Syrian Relationship Since 1955: A Troubled Alliance*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 95-6.

prolonged offensive against Israel. Although the Soviets re-supplied the Syrians and the Egyptians during the October War, the disjointed approach to the war caused Syria and Egypt to concede their early military and territorial advantages.<sup>47</sup> After 72 hours, Israel was able to mobilise its reserves and concentrate upon its northern border. The initial gains were lost as Israel pushed Syria back towards Damascus, and the war was effectively lost.<sup>48</sup>

The different objectives of Asad and Sadat were considered to be largely responsible for the failings of the Syrian-Egyptian axis. Seale suggests:

*Asad went to war because he believed there could be no satisfactory negotiation with Israel until the Arabs had snatched back some of their lost land. Peace-making, he believed, could be a product of war, but not a substitute for it. Sadat went to war because the peace diplomacy he was already conducting, covertly as well as overtly, had faltered. He thought a shock would revive it.*<sup>49</sup>

Egypt's limited military strategy, dubbed High Minarets, was ultimately tied to Sadat's political ambitions. The tactical delay employed after seizing control of the Suez Canal, during the first phases of the war, allowed Israel sufficient space and time to re-direct its aggression towards the more threatening Syrian advances.<sup>50</sup> The initial gains of the October War were lost as Egypt pursued a cease-fire with Israel, through the secret diplomatic offices of Kissinger.<sup>51</sup> Apparently, Sadat was more willing and ready to

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<sup>47</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 12-13, and Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 196.

<sup>48</sup> "The October War and Its Aftermath," *Middle East Economic Digest Annual Review 1973*, vol. 17, no. 52, 28 December 1973, pp. 1498.

<sup>49</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 195.

<sup>50</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 198.

<sup>51</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 208.

accept the imposition of a cease-fire than Asad, but the military failure of the two-pronged attack led to the US-brokered Disengagement Agreements of 1974.<sup>52</sup>

The climax to the division of Syrian and Egyptian objectives culminated in Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977, and the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979. This signified the end of the Syrian-Egyptian alliance. Egypt was effectively removed from the Arab-Israeli conflict through its peace treaty with Israel, thus forcing Syria to adopt a new strategy.<sup>53</sup>

### *Strategic parity: 1979-1989*

The regional environment of the Middle East during 1979, which witnessed: the signing of the Camp David Accords, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, impinged upon Syria's room for strategic planning and tactical manoeuvring.

The absence of Egypt from the theatre of war forced Syria to seek alliances elsewhere. The temporary rapprochement between Syria and Iraq, through the formation of the Front for Steadfastness provided Syria with strategic depth. Nevertheless, its effectiveness was limited. The traditional competition for regional hegemony between these tributary states, expressed in the balance of power, determined the transitory nature of their alliance.<sup>54</sup> Syria's support of Iran in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 demonstrated the intense rivalry between Syria and Iraq, which emanated from two sources:

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<sup>52</sup> Israelyan, V., "The October 1973 War: Kissinger in Moscow," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2, Spring 1995, pp. 262.

<sup>53</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 45.

<sup>54</sup> Kienle, E., *Ba'th v Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), pp. 149-151.

- (i) the balance of power;
- (ii) Syria's quest for regional leadership.

Syria's support of Iran during the Iran-Iraq War offered a classic example of the balance of power in operation. Syria's interests were enhanced through its alliance with Iran.<sup>55</sup> The perpetuation of the conflict enabled Syria to pursue its goal of regional leadership through its offices in Lebanon, and over Palestinian activities through Saiqa and Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC).<sup>56</sup> There were a number of other factors that reinforced Syria's decision to oppose Iraq in its conflict with Iran, such as Syria and Iraq's claim to Ba'th party authenticity, and the personal animosity between presidents Asad and Hussein.<sup>57</sup>

Syria's policy towards Iraq, its endorsement of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and its continuing intervention in Lebanon drew it into a period of regional isolation.<sup>58</sup> This set of conditions produced an environment which led to the development of the Syrian doctrine of strategic parity.<sup>59</sup>

Syria's search for strategic parity was initiated by the conclusion of the Camp David Accords and the deflection of regional attention towards the Iran-Iraq war, which implied that the balance of power between the Arabs and Israel worked in favour of

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<sup>55</sup> Goodarzi, J., "The Syrian-Iranian Axis: An Enduring Entente?," *Middle East International*, no. 522, 29 November 1996, pp. 19, and Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Power in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 112-115.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with, Press Secretary of the DFLP, Maher Hamdi, 10 October 1995.

<sup>57</sup> Saddam Hussein's accusation that the High Command of Syria had played an instrumental role in an attempted coup against him exacerbated the personal rivalry between the two leaders.

<sup>58</sup> Rabinovich, I., "The Foreign Policy of Syria: Goals, Capabilities, Constraints and Options," in C. Tripp (ed.), *Regional Security in the Middle East*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 40-41.

<sup>59</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 186.

Israel. Strategic parity was a doctrine that implied that Syria would reduce the military, societal, and political imbalance between Israel and itself. In other words, strategic parity signalled an expansion of Syrian power.<sup>60</sup>

Strategic parity was designed to provide Syria with the capability of building a credible deterrent to Israel. The deterrent capability rested upon two interrelated notions:

- Syria could not enter into a full-scale war with Israel, but by expanding its delivery systems (SS-21s), coupled with the potential of carrying chemical warheads, Syria could inflict devastating damage on an Israeli society acutely sensitive to civilian targets.<sup>61</sup>
- In order to participate in an international peace conference, and to negotiate from a position of strength, Syria was required to compensate for the loss of its regional allies by developing its armed forces.<sup>62</sup>

Only through developing its military capabilities could Syria enter the peace process in pursuit of a durable and honourable peace. The achievement of a balance of power alone, Hinnebusch suggests, would not be a sufficient reason to initiate an offensive: "Decisions to go to war are rarely based only on a calculus of the balance of power, but are also shaped by frustrations".<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Freedman, R., "The Soviet Union and Syria: A Case study of Soviet Policy," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 171.

<sup>61</sup> Sayigh, Y., "The Middle East Strategic Balance: Capabilities for Waging War," *Middle East International*, no. 378, 22 June 1990, pp. 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 189.

<sup>63</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 141.

Strategic parity represented a radical departure from previous functional military co-operation structures, as it implied that Syria would seek to achieve a balance of power with Israel.<sup>64</sup> The concept, itself was far reaching as it aimed at equating Syria with Israel, in military and diplomatic terms.<sup>65</sup>

### *Syria's military expansion*

The doctrine of strategic parity prescribed that the Syrian forces required upgrading in both qualitative and quantitative terms. The central tenet of the doctrine focused on the inadequacy of the Syrian military.<sup>66</sup> Syria's technological home was situated in the latter cycles of the technological revolution, and in order to move closer to the *cutting edge* (enjoyed by Israel), it was required to formalise its relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup>

Mutual Soviet and Syrian vulnerability propelled the two states towards a more intense patron-client relationship, enveloped in the terms of the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in 1980.<sup>68</sup> The Soviet's loss of Egypt as their major client in the region served to elevate Syria's importance; this resulted in a new arms policy attempting to secure Syria's allegiance.<sup>69</sup> Soviet-Syrian relations, from the Syrian perspective, were instrumental to establishing its quest for strategic parity. Syria needed to equip itself in

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<sup>64</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 135.

<sup>65</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 141.

<sup>66</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 53-54.

<sup>67</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 135-136.

<sup>68</sup> Ramet, P., *The Soviet-Syrian Relationship Since 1955: A Troubled Alliance*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 263-267.

<sup>69</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 52-53.

order to compensate for the absence of Egypt, and to balance the military power of Israel.

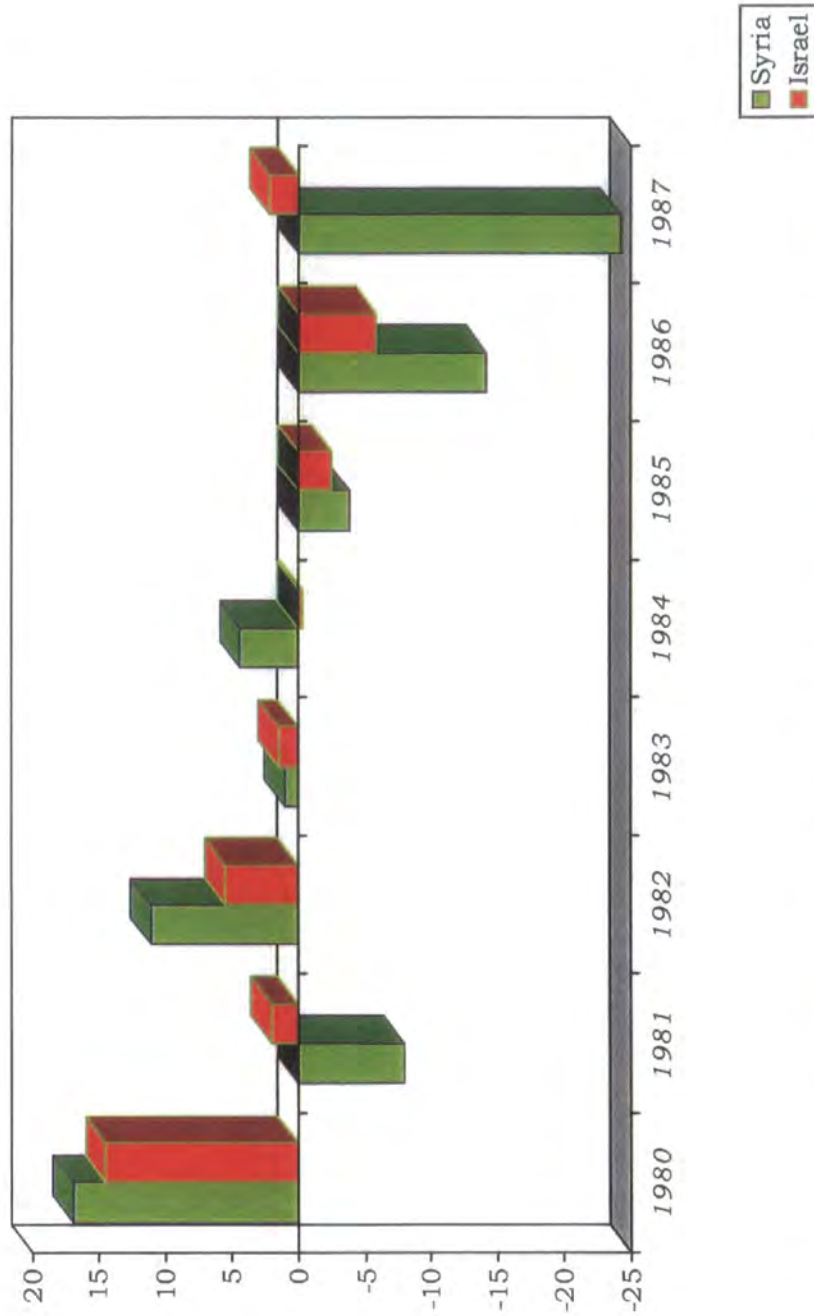
Syria's military experienced a period of intense and rapid expansion between 1982 and 1989. These quantitative increases are detailed below:

- an 80% increase in the regular armed forces from 240,000 to 400,000
- a 50% increase in the armoured and mechanised divisions from 6 to 9
- a 35% increase in the number of MBTs from 3,200 to 4,200
- a 200% increase in the number of tactical ballistic missile launchers from 33- 100
- a 50% increase in the number of surface-to-air batteries from 100 to 150
- a 45% increase in the number of combat aircraft from 440 to 650
- a 150% increase in the number of attack helicopters from 40 to 100
- a 40% increase in the number of missile attack craft from 20 to 28
- an absolute increase in the number of submarines from 0 to 3.<sup>70</sup>

If one examines the quantitative statistics of Figure 5.1, it is possible to identify the extraordinary expansion of Syria's armed forces during the 1980s.

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<sup>70</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 192.



## Syria's Annual Rates of Change in Military Spending, 1980-1987

Figure 5.1

Source: Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 56.



Syria's military power also increased from a qualitative perspective between 1982 and 1989. The Soviets' commitment to Syrian ambitions, linked to Soviet vulnerability in the region, ensured that higher quality hardware was exchanged on soft-terms.<sup>71</sup> The following weapons systems entered the Syrian inventory after 1982:

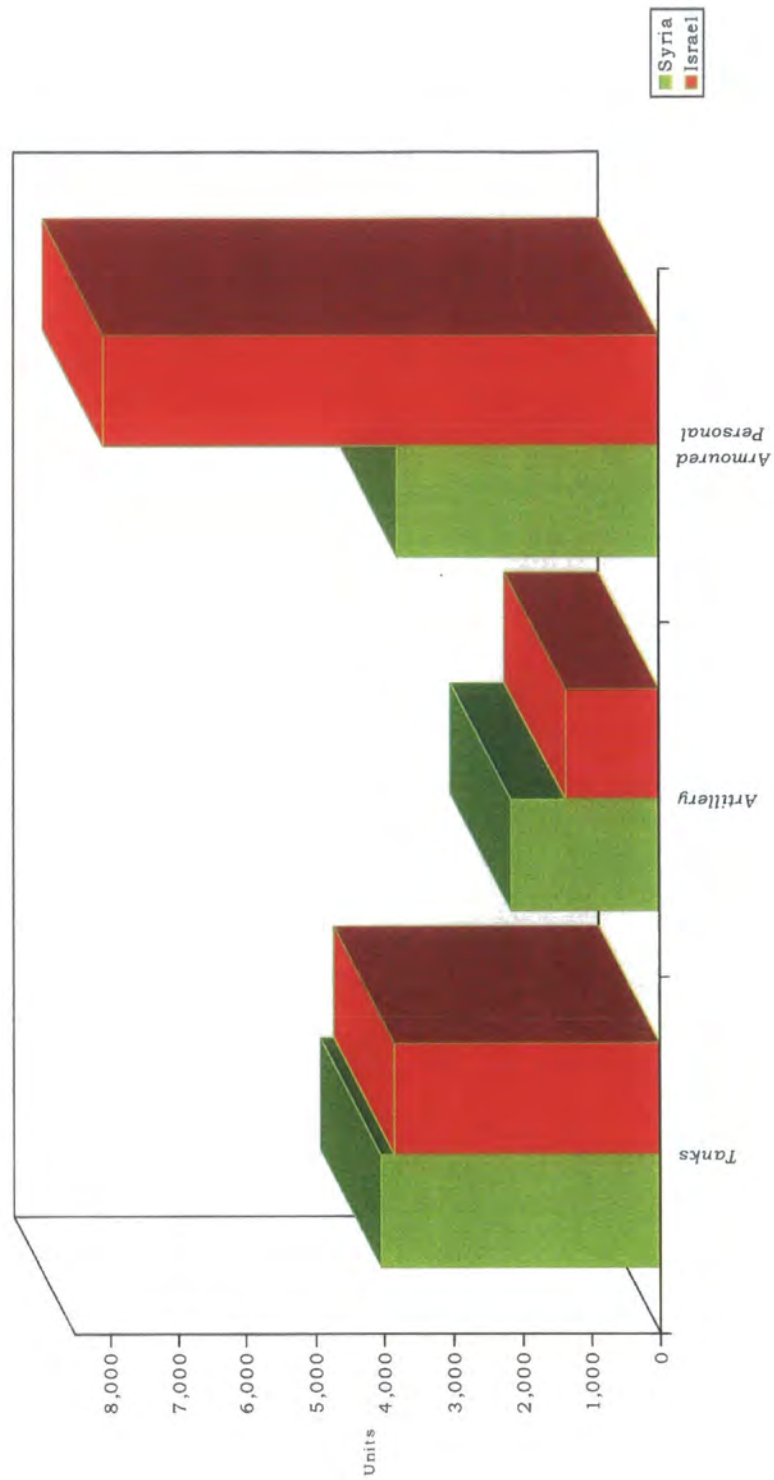
- SS-21 tactical ballistic missiles
- SAM-5, SAM-11, SAM-13, and SAM-14
- T-80, T-72M, T-74 MBTs
- BM-27 220-millimetre multiple rocket launchers
- MiG-29 counterair fighters and MiG-23MF/Flogger-G
- AA-7 Acrid and AA-8 Aphid air-to-air missiles
- new tactical C3I and electronic warfare systems, including DR-30 and UR-1, remotely piloted drones (RPVs), and Mi-17 Elint helicopters
- chemical warfare delivery systems.<sup>72</sup>

Looking at Figures 5.2 and 5.3, one could see that the balance of the armed forces was in favour of Syria in 1989.

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<sup>71</sup> Cordesman, A., "United States Power-projection Capabilities in the Gulf and South-West Asia: Changing Forces for a Changing World," in C. Davies (ed.), *Global Interests in the Arab Gulf*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), pp. 249.

<sup>72</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 193.



## Syrian-Israeli Military Balance 1988-1989

Figure 5.2

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*, (London: Brassey's, 1988), and Gazit, S., *The Middle East Military Balance: 1988-1989*, (Boulder: Westview, 1989).

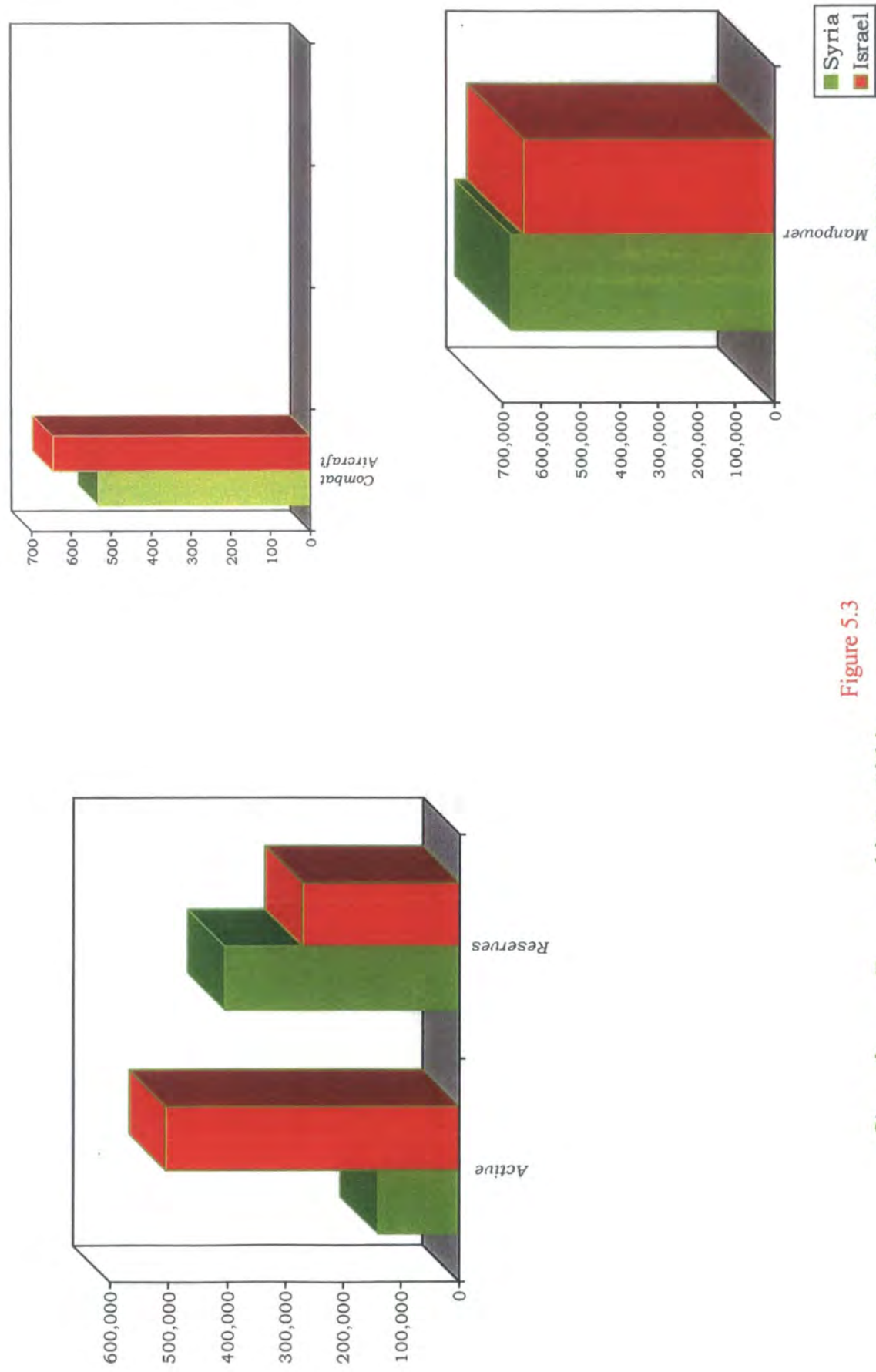


Figure 5.3

# Syrian-Israeli Military Personnel 1988-1989

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988-1989*, (London: Brassey's, 1988), and Gazit, S., *The Middle East Military Balance: 1988-1989*, (Boulder: Westview, 1989).

The expansion of the armed forces had improved radically between 1982 and 1989; the armed forces increased from 250,000 in 1982 to 404,000 in 1989.<sup>73</sup> The change in ratio from reserve to regular forces indicated a more responsive action force. It was estimated that Israeli mobilisation would take at least 24-72 hours,<sup>74</sup> thus offering Syria the opportunity to seize the Golan without conceding defeat.<sup>75</sup>

Syria started to close the quantitative gap with its combat aircraft between 1982 and 1989. Nevertheless, Syrian air power, remained subordinate to Israeli air power as the pace of technological advancement accentuated Israel's superiority. During the period in question, Syria possessed 65 high quality combat aircraft from its airforce of 650 whilst Israel maintained 200 high quality aircraft in its airforce.<sup>76</sup>

Israel's alliance with the US guaranteed its superiority in:

- air-to-air and air-to-ground operations;
- modern command, control, and communication systems;
- combat aircraft.<sup>77</sup>

Syria did manage to improve its air defences through an increase in SAM batteries, radar, electronic jammers, and an advanced command and control system, thereby,

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<sup>73</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 54.

<sup>74</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 193.

<sup>75</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 140.

<sup>76</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 54.

<sup>77</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 195.

creating an air defence system deployed by the Soviets.<sup>78</sup> Israeli and US technology rapidly outmanoeuvred these initiatives with the development of the Arrow missile and the tested Patriot anti-missile system.<sup>79</sup>

The technological gap between Syria and Israel ensured that Israel continued to enjoy the military advantage. Wherever the gap in technology seemed to recede, the next cycle extended Israel's disproportionate advantage. For example, the delivery of MiG-29s to Syria was met with the arrival of the Agile Falcon, the advanced tactical fighter (ATF), in Israel.<sup>80</sup>

Evidently, Syria's dependence on the Soviet Union was crucial to strategic parity. Syria could not have acquired its sizeable arsenal without the assistance of the Soviet Union. Although Syria sought to diversify its military suppliers, it was severely restricted due to the European and US ban on military exports.<sup>81</sup> Syria's principal suppliers remained the Soviet Union (90%), Eastern Europe, China, and North Korea.<sup>82</sup>

### *Patron-client relations*

Israel's advantage over Syria was not confined to technology; there was a discernible difference between the status of the US-Israeli alliance and the Soviet-Syrian

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<sup>78</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 137.

<sup>79</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 197.

<sup>80</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 197.

<sup>81</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 54.

<sup>82</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 200.

relationship. The US-Israeli and the Soviet-Syrian patron-client relationships were formulated according to two distinct sets of principles.

### *The US and Israel*

The US-Israeli alliance has been built on more sustainable foundations than the Soviet-Syrian relationship. Both states are cemented through the relationship between the Jewish lobby and the US administrative system. Although it seems rather crude, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the US-Israeli relationship is guided by the aspirations of the multifarious Jewish associations in the US.<sup>83</sup> The influence of the Jewish lobby is well-documented in both domestic policy and foreign policy articulation.<sup>84</sup> This instrumental presence of Israel supporters in the US operates in complete contrast to the avenues open to the Syrians in the Soviet Union.

The durability of the US-Israeli alliance can be periodically displayed with the exchange of the US administration or ruling coalition in Israel. In each case, the alliance remains unchallenged as the fundamentals of the relationship are constant. There may be a teething-period, as each new team settles into position, but the core of the allegiance is protected. For instance, Bush's resistance to provide the \$10 billion loan guarantees, in 1991, owing to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, marked a period of troubled-relations between the US and Israel. Bush's reluctance,

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<sup>83</sup> Chomsky, N., *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel & the Palestinians*, (Boston: South End Press), pp. 13-17.

<sup>84</sup> Dallal, S., "The Zionist Bureaucracy in the US Government," *Middle East International*, no. 381, 3 August 1990, pp. 16-17. Due to the limitation of space, it is not possible to develop this idea here, but the following readings are recommended by the author: Rubenburg, C., *Israel and the American National Interest*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), Tillman, S., *The United States in the Middle East*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), Kerr, M., *America's Middle East Policy: Kissinger Carter and the Future*, (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1980), and Curtiss, R., *Stealth PACs: How the Israeli-American Lobby Took Control of US Middle East Policy*, (Washington: American Educational Trust, 1990).

though, failed to prevent the expansion of settlements taking place upon Israeli receipt of the loan guarantees.<sup>85</sup>

### *The Soviet Union and Syria*

In the zero-sum game of the Cold War, the Soviet Union became increasingly marginalised in the Middle East. The conservative and monarchical states of the region resisted the ideological orientations of Soviet Communism as they were deemed more pernicious than the liberal ideologies of the West. Realising this, the US adopted a policy that successfully incorporated the inimical interests of the conservative oil-rich Arab states, Israel, Turkey, Iran (before 1979), and Egypt (after 1973).<sup>86</sup>

The loss of Egypt to the US, as a client state in 1972, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan represented a further diminution of Soviet influence and a concomitant increase in US prestige in the Middle East. Although the Iranian revolution, in 1979, disengaged Iran from the US sphere of influence, the Soviet Union did not become a beneficiary in the zero-sum game. Iran's post-revolutionary foreign policy was governed by the neither East nor West policy.

Soviet access to the states of the Middle Eastern region was limited; Syria and Iraq were the two radical/revolutionary states of the Mashreq that turned to the Soviet Union, but extracted a high price for their allegiance. The limited Soviet penetration in the Middle East state-system provided Syria and Iraq with some autonomy to pursue

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<sup>85</sup> Neff, D., "The Bruising Battle between Bush and Shamir," *Middle East International*, no. 404, 13 September 1991, pp. 3-4.

<sup>86</sup> Bercovitch, J., "Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 22-23.

their regional goals, even to the detriment of Soviet interests.<sup>87</sup> Bercovitch has labelled this style of patron-client relationship as *interdependent*.<sup>88</sup>

In the zero-sum game, Syria formed part of the Soviet Union's strategic chess plan. The Soviets lent the Syrians military, political, and diplomatic support for their regional designs. As part of the reciprocal bargain, Syria allowed the Soviet Union to use its ports at Latakia and Tartous, giving it naval access to the Mediterranean. The interdependent relationship was confined to serving the mutual interests of both superpower and regional state. This leads one to conclude that the Soviet-Syrian relationship was functional and based on its strategic value rather than a cultural, religious, or ideological basis.<sup>89</sup>

The Soviet-Syrian alliance was not sustainable beyond the strategic value that each state lent to the other. This became evident when *new thinking* was introduced into Soviet foreign policy, which challenged the very foundations of the relationship, for it disengaged their mutual interests. *New thinking* dictated a change in the strategic dimension of Soviet international relations, and a focus upon the ailing Soviet economy.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Syria's intervention in Lebanon compromised Soviet directives. For more details of this episode see: Golan, G., *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organisation: An Uneasy Alliance*, (New York: Praeger, 1980), pp. 187. Furthermore Syria's support of the Abu Musa rebellion against Fatah contravened Soviet interests as its two clients were engaged in military confrontation in 1983. See: Cobban, H., *The Superpowers and the Syrian-Israeli Conflict: Beyond Crisis Management?*, (London: Praeger, 1991), pp. 234.

<sup>88</sup> Bercovitch, J., "Introduction," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria and Israel. The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 142-143.

<sup>90</sup> Gorbachev, M., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (London: Fontana Press, 1987).



*New thinking*

The Soviet Union, through the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in 1980, pledged its support for Syria's pursuit of strategic parity. Its relationship with the Soviet Union enabled Syria to adopt its rejectionist stance throughout the 1980s. During the years of its association with the Soviet Union, Syria successfully avoided becoming a satellite of the Soviet Union; in particular, this strategic alliance gave Syria a considerable degree of autonomy of action whilst providing it with a cushion of strategic depth.<sup>91</sup> The arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 was to radically alter the autonomy enjoyed by Syria.

The substance of Soviet-Syrian relations started to disengage after Gorbachev had come to power in 1985. Soviet foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, spelt out the new concerns of Soviet foreign policy: "The *new thinking* logically led us to reject antagonism as the basis for foreign policy, to discard ideological clichés, and to de-ideologise international relations."<sup>92</sup>

Gorbachev's introduction of *new thinking* in Soviet foreign policy changed the nature of international politics. Global issues, such as nuclear arms reduction, the eradication of famine, and the inevitable destruction of the global environment started to take precedence over the bipolar competition between the Soviet Union and the US.<sup>93</sup>

With the shift of emphasis upon global co-operation, the radical states of the Middle East had to acclimatise to a new international environment. The Arab-Israeli conflict required re-appraising according to the new tenets of Soviet foreign policy. In an after

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<sup>91</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 46-47.

<sup>92</sup> Shevardnadze, E., *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), pp. 102.

<sup>93</sup> Gorbachev, M., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (London: Fontana Press, 1987), pp. 102.

dinner speech, Shevardnadze reflected: "The climate, both world-wide and in the Middle East have changed significantly. The antagonism between the Soviet Union and the US in that region has ended. This alone is a factor that affects all of the elements of the Middle East equation".<sup>94</sup>

The immediate impact of *new thinking* upon Syrian foreign policy was severe. Until the advent of *new thinking*, the relationship between the Soviet Union and Syria had existed on mutual dependence and insecurity. Nevertheless, the fabric of the relationship had been sustained due to their mutual isolation. *New thinking* undermined the flexibility of the partnership and removed Syria's margin of manoeuvre.

Although the Soviets pledged their continued support of Syrian interests, Gorbachev seized the political opportunity and initiated a process of redefining relations. The first outcome was the rejection of strategic parity. This signified the end of their intimate military relationship and Syria's need to re-assess its regional strategy.

During the bipolar period of modern history, Syria had been successful in extracting military advantages from the Soviet Union, based on the Soviet's desire to gain a stronghold in the region. *New thinking* liberated the Soviet Union from this necessity, and granted it more freedom to redefine its role in the Middle East.

Gorbachev's address in Syria during 1987 provided an example where the fragility of the Soviet-Syrian bond was under threat. He passed comment on the Soviet-Israeli situation: The absence of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel

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<sup>94</sup> Shevardnadze, E., *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), pp. 108.

cannot be considered normal".<sup>95</sup> During the meeting of Asad and Gorbachev, in April 1987, the Soviet leader stressed the inappropriateness of the military option and placed emphasis upon reaching a political solution.<sup>96</sup> Asad remained resolute and mocked Gorbachev's naiveté:

*Force in today's world, just as in the past, is what determines rights. Everyone speaks about rights and international norms, charters, and resolutions. However, you find that every international event is eventually settled by force.*<sup>97</sup>

As part of the *new thinking*, Gorbachev rejected the military solution in resolving international conflicts; he paid particular attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the role played by the peace process. The option of strategic parity, a policy that had gained momentum after the Camp David Accords, was abruptly abandoned by the Soviets.

The economic crisis of the Soviet Union forced Syria to abandon strategic parity. This was reflected in a change in the pattern of Syrian arms purchases; as Rathmell says: "This drive for strategic parity was undermined by the sclerotic performance of the Syrian economy and the changes in the Soviet Union which ended Moscow's willingness to supply hardware on easy payment terms".<sup>98</sup> The Soviet demand for payment in hard currency altered the flexibility within the relationship.

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<sup>95</sup> Hannah, J., *At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era*, (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), pp. 21.

<sup>96</sup> Gorbachev, M., *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, (London: Fontana Press, 1987), pp. 106.

<sup>97</sup> Hannah, J., *At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era*, (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), pp. 21.

<sup>98</sup> Rathmell, A., "Syria's Search for an 'Honourable Peace'," *Middle East International*, no. 480, 22 July 1994, pp. 16-17.

The bipolar era was passing, a New World Order was forming and Asad had to seek a new strategy or co-sponsor to achieve his regional ambitions. The disjuncture between theory and application in Soviet foreign policy granted Asad a period of grace. The impact of *new thinking* was incremental during its early stages, and the Syrians continued to benefit from the contradiction in theory and application.<sup>99</sup>

After 1985, the trend in arms transfer dropped; it is important, though, not to exaggerate the deterioration in military relations between Syria and the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that the Soviet Union was embarking upon its new philosophy, residues of the former period were still in existence. The geographic and strategic factor of the Soviet-Syrian relationship could not be unconditionally discounted. The Soviet Union continued to share its southern borders with the Middle East, and it still required strategic allies. There were occasions when *new thinking* was relegated to the immediate interests of Soviet security.<sup>100</sup>

The rejection of the military option and the Soviet recognition of the state of Israel signified that Syria's pursuit of strategic parity was over.<sup>101</sup> Syria retreated from its search for strategy parity when Asad restored diplomatic relations with Egypt in December 1989.<sup>102</sup> The functional capacity of the Soviet-Syrian relationship came to its conclusion with the break-up of the Soviet Union in August 1991.<sup>103</sup> The structural

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<sup>99</sup> Hannah, J., *At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era*, (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), pp. 52.

<sup>100</sup> Golan, G., *Moscow and the Middle East: New Thinking on Regional Conflict*, (London: Pinter, 1992), pp. 32.

<sup>101</sup> Sadowski, Y., *Scuds or Butter?: The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1993), pp. 35.

<sup>102</sup> Sadowski, Y., *Scuds or Butter?: The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1993), pp. 37.

<sup>103</sup> Shad, T., S. Boucher, and J. Gray Reddish, "Syrian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1&2, Winter/Spring 1995, pp. 77.

changes in the relationship were responsible for engendering Syria's search for a new strategy.<sup>104</sup>

### ***Strategic deterrence: 1989-1996***

The transition in superpower relations, following the withdrawal of the Soviet support, and the fluidity in the regional configurations of power, after 1988, encouraged Syria to pursue a more inclusive regional strategy. This took two forms:

- engaging in a more constructive dialogue with the US, carried out through Syrian-US complicity in Lebanon;<sup>105</sup>
- getting involved in a more rigorous realignment with the Gulf Arab states and Egypt.<sup>106</sup>

Iraq's respite from the Iran-Iraq War, in 1988, allowed Saddam Hussein to reclaim the central role in the Arab-Israeli conflict; this move set a deliberate challenge to Syria's regional and Levantine role. Asad needed an opportunity to maintain Syria's hegemony in Lebanon, and claim to Arab nationalism.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on 2 August 1990, was fortuitous for Asad. It provided Syria with the opportunity to secure its regional position in the post-Cold War era. Although Asad's decision to join the US-led coalition appeared to contradict Syria's Arab nationalist credentials, the windfall from its support served two purposes, namely:

- to elevate Syria's role in the post-war Arab and global orders;

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<sup>104</sup> Sadowski, Y., *Scuds or Butter?: The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1993), pp. 37.

<sup>105</sup> Muir, J., "Why Asad Turned to Cairo?," *Middle East International*, no. 366, 5 January 1990, pp. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Muir, J., "Why Asad Turned to Cairo?," *Middle East International*, no. 366, 5 January 1990, pp. 3.

- to obtain \$700 million in credits from the Europeans and the Japanese, and over \$2 billion in pledges from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.<sup>107</sup>

Syria accrued a major benefit from its participation in the US-led coalition, as it allowed it to diversify its military suppliers and to purchase more sophisticated weaponry. The build-up of Syria's military hardware was financed with the hard currency earned from the liberation of Kuwait. With the financial rewards, Syria was able to conclude deals with Russia, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. In 1991-92, Syria procured 400 T-72M mbts and 300 self-propelled artillery pieces from these deals.<sup>108</sup> In 1993, it was believed that Syria had placed an order with Russia for 68 MiG-29 combat aircraft, 24 Su-24 bombers with the inclusion of SA-11 Gadfly missile batteries. Syria managed to diversify its military source and obtained the North Korean Scud-C and the Chinese solid-fuel M-9 missile.<sup>109</sup> Ironically, it led some commentators, namely Shahak and Lucas to admit that "the Syrian army is much better equipped than its was when Syria depended on Soviet supplies".<sup>110</sup>

Sadowski, however, disputed some of the above claims when he wrote:

*By late 1992, however, the expected rearmament of Syria had not materialised. Moscow signed no new arms agreement. In 1992 the Czechs announced that they would complete a standing contract for the delivery of T-72 tanks to Damascus but would not make any future sales. The North Korean ship suspected of carrying missiles returned to port without docking in Syria, and in February 1992 a second freighter*

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<sup>107</sup> Sadowski, Y., *Scuds or Butter?: The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1993), pp. 33.

<sup>108</sup> Rathmell, A., "Syria's Search for an Honourable Peace," *Middle East International*, no. 480, 22 July 1994, pp. 16-17.

<sup>109</sup> Ziarati, M., "The Regional Balance of Power in the Air," *Middle East International*, no. 463, 19 November 1993, pp. 21.

<sup>110</sup> Shahak, I., "Israel and Syria: Peace through Strategic Parity?," *Middle East International*, no. 490, 16 December 1994, pp. 18-19.

*supposedly carrying Scuds for Damascus failed to reach the Mediterranean, although it did make port in Iran.*<sup>111</sup>

Sadowski assigned Syria's failure to purchase these items to US pressure on China and North Korea. Syria's failure to conclude a deal to buy military hardware from South Africa in January 1997 illustrates the extensive influence of the US and the limitations Syria faces.<sup>112</sup>

Although it was a casualty of the change in the global and the regional balance of power, Syria managed to pursue an alternative path to achieving a balance with Israel. The new strategy for Syria, engaging the US, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the other Gulf Arab states in a new balance of power formula, enabled it to develop a military doctrine based on a strategic deterrent. Syria's new military doctrine can be identified as "the capability to deter (a regional enemy) through power projection and through suitable alliances with one or more regional players".<sup>113</sup>

Syria's goal of providing a strategic deterrent, whilst participating in the peace process, has been achieved through the possession of ballistic missiles coupled with chemical and biological warheads. But as Sayigh says: "not only does Israel possess chemical weapons, but it is also the only Middle Eastern country to have developed nuclear warheads for its Jericho missiles."<sup>114</sup> Therefore, power projection of Syria can only be conceived in defensive terms.

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<sup>111</sup> Sadowski, Y., *Scuds or Butter?: The Political Economy of Arms Control in the Middle East*, (Washington: Brookings Institute, 1993), pp. 35.

<sup>112</sup> Jansen, G., "South Africa Caves In On Arms," *Middle East International*, no. 543, 7 February 1997, pp. 11.

<sup>113</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 64.

<sup>114</sup> Sayigh, Y., "The Middle East Strategic Balance: Capabilities for Waging War," *Middle East International*, no. 378, 22 June 1990, pp. 15-16.

### *Syria's intervention in Lebanon*

Syria's foreign policy has been determined by the regional balance of power. Its pursuit of strategic parity in the 1980s was a quest for achieving such a balance with Israel. The conclusion of the Camp David Accords relegated Syria's regional importance and circumvented its centrality to the peace process. The signing of a separate peace deal threatened the very notion of Arab unity or at the very least Arab co-operation and, therefore, Syrian security. Egypt's departure, motivated by national interest, was in danger of establishing a precedent amongst the Arab states. In the aftermath, Syria tried to mould the policies of the Arab states to accommodate the Levant Security Doctrine.

The rational actor model helps to explain the strategy of Syria during its tumultuous engagement in the Lebanese civil war. Preservation of Syria's security and the maximisation of its power through extending its hegemony accords with the realist paradigm and most accurately accounts for Syria's actions in Lebanon. Syria entered Lebanon, and broke numerous alliances often trading its traditional allies for less ideologically disposed clients, but each instance can be attributed to the broader goal of Syrian security, and Asad's determination to prevent separate Israeli peace deals from disrupting the prospect for comprehensive peace. At the very early stages of the war, Syria was still smarting from Egypt's defection, and tried to construct an Eastern Bloc.

Syria cultivated the interests of the Eastern bloc states which comprised Jordan, Lebanon, and the PLO. It was designed to counter the effect of the Camp David Accords, by ruling out the possibility of another separate peace agreement. Syria's attempt to create a cohesive bloc also served its security interests, which had become paramount to Syrian foreign policy. At the focal point of the Eastern bloc and Syria's security concerns was Lebanon.



Lebanon has been central to Syria's foreign policy since the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, and has remained a cornerstone of Syria's Levant Doctrine. During the civil war, Lebanon became an intense battleground for the region's interests; it resembled a microcosm of the Middle East's numerous political contests. The Arab-Israeli conflict, the inter-Arab competition, the export of the Iranian revolution, and the superpower zero-sum game all found an expression in Lebanon. Syria has played a pivotal role in each of these conflicts, illustrating its centrality to the political machinations of the Levant.

Syria's interests have been irrevocably intertwined with the fortunes of Lebanon and have manifested themselves in a variety of forms. Syria's historical claim as the parent state of the Levant, its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its contentious relationship with Iran have all served to embroil Syria in the struggle for Lebanon.<sup>115</sup> Syria's role in Lebanese affairs can be accounted for by two factors:

- history;
- security.

### **History**

As the cornerstone of the Levant, Syria has historically played a role in the political organisation and administration of the region. Under the rule of the Ottomans, Aleppo, and Jerusalem were local administrative centres that deferred to Damascus. Syria was the dominant Arab actor in Bilad al-Sham, and drew its allegiance from the indigenous Arab population. The assault of the Arab armies on Damascus in 1918, and their effort to liberate it from Turkey, remains a testament to the parental status of Damascus.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Lawrence, T., *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, (London: Cape, 1990), pp. 515.

The secret agreement between Sykes-Picot in 1916, and the post-war San Remo Conference of 1920, however, undermined Syria as a regional centre of power. The dismemberment of Bilad al-Sham, referred to in chapter three, has left an indelible imprint on the domestic and foreign policies of Syria. The creation of the modern states of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Transjordan, after the First World War, led to the diminution of Syria's power at the centre of the region.

This period in history, from 1920 up till now, fostered a revisionist agenda for the restoration of Bilad al-Sham by the more radical nationalists belonging to the Ba'th party and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP).<sup>117</sup> The ideology and the ambitions of the Ba'th party and the SSNP, however, were incompatible. Whereas the Ba'thists believed that the recreation of Bilad al-Sham was a staging post to achieving comprehensive Arab unity, the SSNP were less ambitious with their intentions to rebuild Greater Syria.<sup>118</sup>

Modern Lebanon was carved from Syria. Both states share a cultural, linguistic, and political heritage. The extraction of Lebanon from Syria has left a psychological scar on the Syrian political landscape. Lebanon was part of the jigsaw puzzle, and according to Arab nationalists, when adhered to Bilad al-Sham, it would have guaranteed Lebanon's Arab character and restored Syria's regional prominence. Hence, Syrian politicians have viewed Lebanon with a covetous eye over the years.

With this common history, it could be fanciful to reunite these two independent states under the dominant supervision of Syria; indeed, it has been suggested that Syria's

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<sup>117</sup> Yamak, L., *The Syrian Social National Party: An Ideological Analysis*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 76-88.

<sup>118</sup> Pipes, D., *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapter 2.

ambitions, under 'Alawi rule, have included the annexation of Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> The complex realities that characterise the Lebanese political system, infused with the existence of seventeen competing confessions within the one state, however, belies the prospect for unity or the possibility of annexation. In addition, the global and regional powers would prevent such a move. One only has to observe Syria's dependence upon the *green light* from the US to intervene in Lebanon during the civil war to realise the limitations placed on Syria by these powers.<sup>120</sup>

Asad's foreign policy has been partially motivated by the historical connection between Syria and Lebanon. He has frequently stressed the historic indivisibility of the two countries. He once commented: "the Syrians and Lebanese are one people. What binds us is stronger than any treaty. Syria is concerned with defending Lebanon and Lebanon is concerned with defending Syria, whether this is written on paper or not."<sup>121</sup> The notion of defence appears to have taken priority in defining their relationship.

### *Security*

The issue of security, has been the most dynamic aspect of the relationship between Syria and Lebanon. As implied earlier, security has been a priority of Syrian foreign policy since 1970. The security of the state has dominated the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. Immersed in a regional contest with Israel, that owes its roots to the imperial policy of the British, Syria's main preoccupation has been securing its borders.

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<sup>119</sup> Pipes, D., *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapter 3.

<sup>120</sup> Rabinovich, I., "The Changing Prism: Syrian Policy in Lebanon as a Mirror, an Issue and an Instrument," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria Under Asad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 182.

<sup>121</sup> Dawisha, A., *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 72.

The rise of Asad to power, in 1970, and the advent of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, have joined the two states in a complex symbiotic relationship. The introduction of realism into Syrian foreign policy in 1970 has placed the Syrian-Lebanese relationship into a context of power politics, where Lebanon has been used to serve the security interests of Syria.<sup>122</sup> As part of the equation, Syria has provided stability, through the use of force, for the weak state. One should not be under the impression that this status quo has been arrived at through a mutual process.

Moreover, the political, confessional, cultural, and demographic contortions of the Lebanese civil war challenged the fabric of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship.<sup>123</sup> Asad colluded with all of the main Lebanese actors of the war, and subsequently dissolved his allegiance with each one. The Syrian president has been consistent in trying to forge a durable alliance to protect Syria's security, but the efficacy of each client has waxed and waned according to local conditions, and the intervention of the US and other regional actors.

The weak state within Lebanon, accompanied by the convulsive nature of its multifarious confessions, was acutely sensitive to any demographic change. The political balance of the confessions was institutionalised in the National Charter of 1943. This form of co-associational democracy was not designed to accommodate the demographic change that was taking place in Lebanon. The political structure was

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<sup>122</sup> Nasrallah, F., "Syria after Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 134.

<sup>123</sup> Nasrallah, F., "Syria after Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 134-135.

particularly susceptible to the influx of the Palestinian resistance movement after Black September in 1970.<sup>124</sup>

Amidst these fluctuations in the composition of the population, Syria sought to balance the interests of each party in order to extend its hegemony over Lebanon. The stability of Lebanon was paramount to Syrian security. To provide security, Syria found it necessary to ensure that:

- the confessional balance, that governed the state, was maintained;
- the Palestinians did not radicalise Lebanon and invite an Israeli invasion;
- the Christian community did not create an alliance with the Israelis;
- Lebanon did not disintegrate into numerous state-lets, inviting Israel and Iraq to foster client states adjacent to Syria's borders.<sup>125</sup>

The history and the structure of the political system in Lebanon made it a tinder box that was waiting to be lit. The influx of the Palestinians after 1970 became the match that ignited the Lebanese civil war, and enflamed the hostilities between the different communities. The Palestinians tipped the balance of forces between the Christians and Muslims, fuelling the emergent animosity. Syria was unable to preserve the status quo, and chose to adopt an interventionist policy. Far preferable for Syria to a radicalised Lebanon was a situation in which it could play the role of balancer between two rival alliances, Christian rightist forces, and the Palestinian and Muslim leftist forces. Hence, Syria would be able to exercise hegemony in Lebanon.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 162.

<sup>125</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 14.

<sup>126</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 6.

With its weak state structure, amorphous demography, and contiguous borders with Syria and Israel, Lebanon became the apogee of Syria's security concerns. In their perennial conflict with Israel, Syrian decision-makers have tended to consider the mountains of southern Lebanon as natural defensive frontiers that could be utilised to stop, or at least crucially delay, an Israeli middle thrust should a war suddenly occur.<sup>127</sup>

Israel's military advance into Syria could take two possible routes:

- through the Golan Heights;
- and/or through Lebanon's Beqa' valley.

The pincer movement would encircle the Syrian capital, thus threatening the very essence of the Syrian state. The security threat has been unquestionably the dominant ingredient in Syria's foreign policy calculations.<sup>128</sup> Consequently, Lebanon's security became concomitant to Syria's security.

For Syria, the Lebanese civil war offered a mixture of opportunities and risks.<sup>129</sup> The opportunity for Syria was the chance to extend its hegemony over Lebanon, and to secure its eastern borders. Lebanon would fall under Syria's sphere of influence enhancing its power in the regional contest with Israel. Lebanon, as the microcosm of the region, also offered Syria the opportunity to contain the PLO, the Leftist National Movement (LNM), the growing disaffected Shi'a population in the south, and the Lebanese Forces (LF).<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Dawisha, A., *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 58.

<sup>128</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 6.

<sup>129</sup> Rabinovich, I., "The Foreign Policy of Syria: Goals, Capabilities, Constraints and Options," in C. Tripp (ed.), *Regional Security in the Middle East*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 41.

<sup>130</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 135.

The risks, however, far outweighed the advantages to be gained. The schizophrenic nature of Lebanon's foreign policy, and its split allegiance between the West and the Arab World, polarised the Lebanese arena. Successfully balancing the forces amongst Lebanon's confessions was destined to be a tempestuous affair, as the Muslims looked towards the Arab fold for support, and the Christians looked favourably towards the Israelis.<sup>131</sup>

### *The Civil War*

At the outset of the civil war, Israel issued the Syrians a warning not to intervene beyond the red-line agreement. Asad remained committed to this warning, as it would have been untimely to enter a conflict with Israel.<sup>132</sup> The balance of power was firmly in favour of the Israelis.

During the course of the Lebanese civil war, Syria was at times pitted against the Palestinian-Leftist alliance and then the Christian-Rightist forces. It was engaged in an indirect conflict with Israel and the US at different stages of the war. It entered a quagmire, which left it regionally isolated and increasingly dependent upon the support of its patron, the Soviet Union.

Syria entrenched its position in Lebanon as a matter of necessity in terms of securing the Beqa' valley against Israeli incursion, and preserving its regional and international prestige. I do not wish to recount the proclivities of the Lebanese civil war, there is not sufficient space here, and any brief account would prove to be a repetition of existing

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<sup>131</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 163-171.

<sup>132</sup> Chalala, E., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon, 1976-1984: Moderate Goals and Pragmatic Means," *Journal of Arab Affairs*, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 1985, pp. 70.

materials.<sup>133</sup> The most relevant point to this thesis is the motivation behind Syria's intervention policy in Lebanon, and the flexibility with which it was pursued.

Syria's intervention was fraught and tortuous; it appeared, on first inspection, to be governed by irrational impulses. Syria's first military engagement in Lebanon was conducted according to the red line agreement brokered by the US, satisfying both Israeli and US interests.<sup>134</sup> Syria unleashed its forces against the Palestinian-Leftist alliance, on 31 May 1976, in order break their emerging dominance in the politico-military balance against the Christian alliance.<sup>135</sup>

This action was difficult to justify to its domestic constituency, particularly as Arab nationalism was the state's main source of legitimacy, and the Palestinians remained symbolic of the Arab cause. Syria's pro-Christian tendency in Lebanon also enflamed the Sunni population in Syria, and the regime was accused of pursuing a sectarian policy; the prospect of an 'Alawi-Christian alliance tainted the regime's Arab credentials.<sup>136</sup>

The intervention in Lebanon produced a number of political dividends in the earlier stages of the civil war. During the Riyadh Conference of October 1976, Syria received another green light to continue its policy in Lebanon; furthermore, it received a financial endorsement from the Arab League to pursue its balanced policy. The creation

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<sup>133</sup> One can find an excellent account of the Lebanese civil war in Fisk, R., *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Adeed Dawisha's *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, (London: Macmillan, 1980) provides an in-depth analysis of Syria's decision to intervene in Lebanon in 1976.

<sup>134</sup> For more details of the red-line agreement see: Schiff, Z., "Dealing with Syria," *Foreign Policy*, no. 55, Summer 1984.

<sup>135</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 283.

<sup>136</sup> Batatu, H., "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *MERIP*, no. 110, November/December 1982, pp. 20.



of the 30,000 strong Arab peace-keeping force was predominantly composed of Syrian soldiers, and financed by the Gulf Arab sheikhdoms.<sup>137</sup>

A change in the political orientation of the regime took place after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978. A switch in policy was activated by Syria's growing impatience with the delaying tactics of the Christian Maronite rightists and their attempts to thwart any political solutions offered or imposed by Syria. Syrian bombardments in July 1978 of East Beirut, where 350 civilians were killed, was an indication of a more aggressive and intrusive policy in Lebanon.<sup>138</sup>

The number of troops in Lebanon rose from the regular level of 28,000, approved by the Arab League, to 40,000-50,000 indicating Syria's broader strategy for containing the conflict.<sup>139</sup> Naturally, US and Israeli interests were at stake through Syria's pervasive intervention in Lebanon. As Syria began to lose international support for its Lebanon policy, Israel colluded with the Lebanese rightists to cement their interests in Lebanon.<sup>140</sup>

Although the Maronites could not hope to re-establish their supremacy in the whole of Lebanon, some of them seemed determined to fall back upon the notion of a smaller Christian Lebanon.<sup>141</sup> Thus, the Maronites overtly aligned with Israel, thereby forming a stubborn obstacle to the reconstruction of a united Lebanon whilst posing a serious

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<sup>137</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 1, January 1979, pp. 7.

<sup>138</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Asad: The Sphinx of Damascus*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), pp. 123-134.

<sup>139</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 3, July 1978, pp. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 3, July 1978, pp. 6.

<sup>141</sup> Rabinovich, I., "The Changing Prism: Syrian Policy in Lebanon as a Mirror, an Issue and an Instrument," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria Under Asad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 181.

threat to Syrian security. By this stage, Israel, assuming the role of protector of the Christians, had, as much as Syria, become the arbiter of Lebanon.<sup>142</sup> Syria's incubus looked like tipping the balance of power, in Lebanon, back in its favour. Consequently, Syria was compelled to return to its traditional allies, and to offer them limited protection against the imperial policies of Israel.

Syria's intervention in Lebanon enabled the Syrian regime to exercise some control over the Palestinian resistance movement. The Palestinians became a useful pawn in the game of international diplomacy; the Syrians, through their increasing military role in Lebanon, could enhance or constrain the activities of the Palestinians. The imposition of a cease-fire on 22 January 1976 acted as a restraining order on the Palestinian resistance fighters, and Asad encouraged the Palestinians to conform with an iron fist.<sup>143</sup>

### *The Palestinians*

The Palestinians were problematic for the Syrians. Their cause was the main source of legitimacy for the Syrian regime. They were strategic allies in the struggle with Israel, but they were also a formidable force that threatened the security of Syria through their presence and opportunistic operations in Lebanon. To serve the Syrian interests, and what Asad considered to be the broader Arab interest, the Palestinians needed to be ordered and disciplined according to Syria's criteria.

Asad's strategy to meld a common Arab position was not shared by 'Arafat and his followers. Their different visions of how to liberate Palestine, and their conflictual *national* interests, prevented the pro-Fatah groups of the PLO and the Syrians from

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<sup>142</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, April 1976, pp. 3.

maintaining a consistent unified policy. Asad wished to discipline the resistance fighters of the PLO, and incorporate them into a projected balance of power formula. Such a formula would enhance Syria's security by restraining the Palestinian's impetuous modes of resistance. Asad's Levant Security Doctrine incorporated the Palestinian movement as an integral element of Syria's regional strategy. For 'Arafat, the solution to the Palestinian question belonged exclusively to the Palestinians.<sup>144</sup>

After the Palestinian resistance movement had been expelled from Jordan in 1970, it re-assembled in Lebanon. Its activities were initially governed by the terms of the Cairo Accords of 1969, in an attempt to avoid alienating its host country.<sup>145</sup> The activities of the PLO under the leadership of Yasser 'Arafat, were not constrained by the Cairo Accords for long. The fomentation of a state within a state was starting to take place as the PLO infrastructure was transferred from Jordan to Lebanon. Not only did the PLO's military operations invite Israeli retaliation, but it also created a distinct imbalance in the composition of Lebanon's confessional mixture.<sup>146</sup>

In Lebanon, the PLO, as an umbrella organisation, was unable to conceal the tensions amongst its factions. All factions were united in their aim to liberate Palestine and/or the occupied territories, but there was a significant disagreement on how to liberate their homeland. The main contenders of the time were:

- Fatah, led by Yasser 'Arafat;
- the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by George Habash;
- the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), led by Nayif Hawatmeh;

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<sup>144</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, April 1976, pp. 6.

<sup>145</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 270.

<sup>146</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 17.

- the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC), led by Ahmed Jibril;
- finally, Saiqa and the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) owed their loyalty to the Syrian Ba'th party.

'Arafat's Fatah was the most dominant faction in the PLO, and was often able to persuade its partners, the PFLP and PDFLP, to support its motions in the Palestine National Council (PNC). Fatah was the least ideologically opposed faction to the existence of the state of Israel. It was more willing to negotiate a final agreement with the Israelis based on a two state solution.<sup>147</sup> Saiqa and the PLA's motivations were less obvious than those of Fatah as they were guided by Syrian national interests.<sup>148</sup>

One can perceive from the factional structure of the PLO that it has been accessible to external forces. This has helped to produce a disparate organisation which has often lacked a co-ordinated policy. Consequently, the lack of consensus has invoked a series of internecine struggles amongst its factions occasionally fuelled by external powers. This was the case in Lebanon when the PLO temporarily disintegrated into its constituent parts.<sup>149</sup>

In May 1983, due to 'Arafat's decision to explore the possibilities of the Reagan Plan, a deep division within the ranks of Fatah occurred. The Abu Musa group, a rejectionist component within Fatah, rejected the adoption of the provisional political programme of 1974, where reconciliation, recognition, and negotiation were welcomed. 'Arafat's

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<sup>147</sup> Brand, L., "Asad's Syria and the PLO: Coincidence or Conflict of Interests?," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XIV, no. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 23.

<sup>148</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 11.

<sup>149</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 13.

autocratic rule also caused consternation amongst his followers. The decision to engage in the Reagan Plan, despite the outcome of the PLO Central Committee's rejection of the Plan, exemplified the multidirectional forces within the PLO.<sup>150</sup>

Asad lent military support to the anti-'Arafat groups and helped to oust the 'Arafat loyalists from the Beqa' valley towards Tripoli.<sup>151</sup> In November 1983, the Syrian backed insurrection against 'Arafat began. Numerous battles took place in the refugee camps of Nahr al-Bared and Badawi camp, where Abu Jihad took command of the loyalist soldiers. Open rebellion against 'Arafat was backed by PFLP and PDFLP, as well as its main protagonists Abu Musa, PFLP-GC and Saiqa.<sup>152</sup> The internecine struggle among the Palestinians added another surreal dimension to the Lebanese civil war; Asad waited to re-order the emasculated Palestinian resistance movement under the auspices of the Damascus regime.

*The PLO, Asad declared, no longer spoke for the Palestinian cause; henceforth, Syria would lead the struggle. Nevertheless, Asad was not prepared to support the resumption of armed struggle by Palestinian radicals, which might have made their strategy a credible alternative to 'Arafat's diplomacy.*<sup>153</sup>

Asad's policies, however, proved to be short sighted as his intervention in the fratricidal fight raised Palestinian consciousness, and provided a reinvigorated mandate for 'Arafat and his loyalists. The PDFLP and PFLP returned to the moderate PLO fold and turned against Syria. Two days after leaving Tripoli, 'Arafat scored a diplomatic

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<sup>150</sup> Brand, L., "Asad's Syria and the PLO: Coincidence or Conflict of Interests?," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XIV, no. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 25.

<sup>151</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, December 1983, pp. 11.

<sup>152</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 3, August 1983, pp. 9.

<sup>153</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 81.

victory against his Syrian adversary by meeting Mubarak, the President of Egypt. It was the first meeting between the Palestinian leader and an Egyptian president since the signing of the Camp David Accords; it was designed to circumvent Syria's role in the Middle East peace process.<sup>154</sup>

Syria claimed a kind of protectorate over the PLO; but in 1982; it failed to fulfil the responsibilities incumbent on this self-assumed role, as the Palestinian resistance movement was expelled from Lebanon.<sup>155</sup> While the immediate object of Israel's invasion of Lebanon was to uproot the PLO from the Lebanese arena, its grander objective was to humble Syria militarily, and dislodge Lebanon from Syria's sphere of influence.<sup>156</sup> The Lebanon-Israel agreement made some headway in diminishing Syria's influence in Lebanon.

### *The Lebanese-Israeli Agreement*

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was comprehensive as it consumed the small Levantine state and its capital within days. The Syrians suffered a humiliating defeat as their airforce was no match for the Israeli Air Force, and the Israelis destroyed Syria's air defence systems. Iran's offer of active support contrasted sharply with the virtual immobility of the rest of the Arab World and the Soviet Union.<sup>157</sup>

Due to the imbalance of power between Syria and Israel, Syria was unable to confront the Israelis directly, and so began a game of spoils. As Syrian influence waned, its forces entrenched themselves in and around the Beqa' valley. Syria and Iran fuelled the

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<sup>154</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, March 1984, pp. 11.

<sup>155</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syrian Policy in Lebanon and the Palestinians," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 11.

<sup>156</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 173-174.

<sup>157</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 15.

activities of their proxies, Amal and the new resilient force that became Hizbollah; they began a campaign of liberation based upon martyrdom and hostage-taking.<sup>158</sup>

In the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Israel installed a regime friendly to their cause. Bashir Gemayel, the leader of the Phalange, was the ideal candidate for the presidency, but his assassination forced the Israelis to deal with his brother, Amin Gemayel.<sup>159</sup>

The Lebanese-Israeli Accord, which constituted a separate peace treaty, was signed by Amin Gemayel. The terms of the treaty opened Lebanon to an exchange of diplomats, military influence, and goods with Israel. Israel would maintain the right to extend and legitimise the role of Haddad's army in the south. The Arab character of Lebanon was to be effaced with Israel providing the initiative for foreign policy, which stipulated the withdrawal of all Arab forces from Lebanese soil. As part of the agreement, Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory was made contingent upon the evacuation of Syrian forces.<sup>160</sup>

Syria was confronted by a triumphant Israel: Egypt had signed the Camp David Accords; an Israeli-friendly regime had been installed in Lebanon; Jordan and Saudi Arabia were accommodating to the Reagan Plan; and Iraq was engaged in a war deflecting its attention away from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Syria's regional position was weakened and capitulation appeared to be a prospect.

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<sup>158</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Power in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 127-129.

<sup>159</sup> Fisk, R., *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 353.

<sup>160</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 126.

Syria naturally rejected the Lebanese-Israeli Treaty and strove to disrupt it. To counter the terms of the treaty, Asad set about constructing a rejectionist front from the alienated parties within Lebanon. A coalition of forces was established around the resentments caused by the exclusive deal between the Maronites and Israel. The National Salvation Front (NSF) was formed after the promulgation of the treaty on 17 May 1983. A coalition of Lebanese Shi'a, Druze, and Palestinian forces joined under the leadership of Syria with the intent of destroying the imposition of the Lebanon-Israel Accord.<sup>161</sup>

An intense period of resistance commenced with the US and the Israeli military experiencing high fatalities from suicide bombers. US support of the Israel-Lebanon Accord was punished, on 23 October 1983, when 236 US marines died in a suicide bombing mission. Although Syria was not directly implicated in the attack, its alliance with the pro-Iranian Shi'a group Amal did not go unnoticed. The Syrian-Iranian connection, perpetuated through the role of Hizbollah and Amal, fomented an alternative bargaining chip for Syria.<sup>162</sup>

The US did not leave the Lebanese problem without amassing its forces off the Lebanese coast, which consisted of three aircraft carriers, forty ships, three hundred aircraft, and 2,000 marines.<sup>163</sup> The subsequent withdrawal of the US marines, and the partial withdrawal of the Israeli forces created a vacuum which the Druze and Muslim militias filled. They defeated the isolated Phalangists in the Shouf mountains and West Beirut.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Power in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 120-122.

<sup>162</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 20.

<sup>163</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, December 1983, pp. 9.

<sup>164</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 4, December 1983, pp. 9.



The strained Gemayel government could no longer withstand the unified resistance to the Lebanese-Israeli Accord, and so annulled it in February 1984.<sup>165</sup> Through a policy of coalition building, military entrenchment, and an extension of Soviet-Syrian ties, Asad successfully unravelled the agreement brokered by the US between Israel and Lebanon.<sup>166</sup>

### *The Ta'if Agreement*

Syria prevented another Arab state from concluding a durable peace treaty with Israel. From this perspective, the Levant Security Doctrine was successful. Throughout the duration of the late 1980s, Syria was able to extend its military presence in Lebanon, as the casualties sustained by the Israelis, inflicted by the martyrs of Hizbollah, forced the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) to retreat to their self-imposed security in south Lebanon. Syria's hegemony in Lebanon was garnered in the terms of the Ta'if Agreement, which eventually delivered Lebanon from the civil war in September 1989.

According to the Ta'if Agreement, an agreement underwritten by Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco, the special nature of the Lebanese-Syrian relationship recognised that future co-ordination and co-operation between the two states would be determined by bilateral agreements in all domains. These domains were to include foreign policy, security and military affairs, economic relations, educational affairs and information.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, Syrian-Lebanese security co-ordination was formalised in a mutual Defence Pact in 1991. This pact made provision for the continued deployment

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<sup>165</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 178.

<sup>166</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 179.

<sup>167</sup> Norton, A., "Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3, Summer 1991, pp. 457-474.

of Syrian troops in Lebanon. They were held accountable to the Syrian state, but enjoyed a large degree of autonomy from the Lebanese authorities.<sup>168</sup>

Although the Israelis have maintained their military presence in southern Lebanon, and still influence the policies of their Christian proxy, the South Lebanese Army, Syria has managed to extend its sphere of influence throughout the remainder of Lebanon. Its hegemony is enshrined in the Ta'if Agreement despite the commitment to troop redeployment contained in chapter four of the agreement. With some irony, Syria's domination over Lebanese affairs was facilitated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Syria received yet another green light from the US to crush the 'Aoun rebellion in reward for its participation in the Gulf war coalition.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Nasrallah, F., "The Treaty of Brotherhood, Co-operation and Co-ordination," in Y. Choueiri (ed.), *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1993), pp. 105.

<sup>169</sup> Nasrallah, F., "Syria after Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 135.

## Conclusion

In chapter five, I have attempted to illustrate that the international political system has been the ascendant variable in determining Syria's foreign policy. Its foreign policy has been consistent since Asad came to power in 1970 and prescribed a dose of realism into the decision-making process.

If one examines Syria's decision-making process, one can identify a consistency in its objectives which derive from national security and the national interest. A tribute to its consistency can be found in the three strategies that have been utilised by the state, since 1970, which engaged Israel in the regional contest for hegemony.

Prior to 1979, Syria participated in the two-front strategy with Egypt. This was designed to empower the diplomatic position of the Arab states in their post-war negotiations with the Israelis. The strategy was based on achieving the balance of power between Egypt and Syria, on one hand, and Israel on the other. The conclusion of the Camp David Accords in 1979 pushed Syria towards a new strategy.

The doctrine of strategic parity encouraged Syria to pursue a bilateral balance of power with Israel.<sup>170</sup> The source of Syria's power, however, was not indigenous as it was dependent upon the strategic support of the Soviet Union. The transformation of Soviet foreign policy from 1985 onwards, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, left Syria without a patron.

The transition in global affairs at the end of the 1980s, rendered Syria's search for strategic parity redundant, and increased its regional and international vulnerability.

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<sup>170</sup> In seeking a balance of power with Israel, Syria and Israel fitted Morgenthau's pattern of direct opposition. See Figure 1.2 on page 38.

Nevertheless, Syria remained constant in its objectives, and endeavoured to find a new strategy. In order to understand the determinants of Syria's foreign policy, I have referred to two explanatory models of analysis.

The rational actor and the domestic politics models offer us two possible alternatives for explaining state behaviour. The rational actor model, noted by Allison, is a useful model for examining the decision-making process within states. It enables us to examine the structural determinants that affect a state's decision-making process, but it is unable to account for the behaviour of Third World states. Belonging to the paradigm of realism, the rational actor model bases its assumptions upon the unitary character of states. Many states of the Third World, however, have yet to consolidate their status, and are open to the protracted domestic struggle for power.

The domestic politics model may be more suitable for analysing the behaviour of Third World states. Instead of attributing state behaviour to the international political system, it ascribes the formulation of foreign policy to the interplay of domestic forces. In this case, foreign policy becomes an outward expression of domestic politics. The inability of many Third World states to achieve a unitary status, and to resist the continual intervention of the military gives this model of inquiry credence. However, this particular model is not apposite to the Syrian case, where the state has managed to elevate itself above the dominant social forces in society. Omnibalancing, with its emphasis on the link between the international political system and domestic politics, appears to be the most applicable explanation for Syrian foreign policy.

The international political system has been the primary determinant in the formulation of Syrian foreign policy. The anarchy of the international political system has compelled the Syrian state to protect its national security, especially in the hostile environment of the Middle Eastern state-system. Syria's foreign policy, motivated by

the national interest and national security, has manifested itself in the struggle for regional hegemony with Israel.

One area where Syria and Israel's regional contest has taken place has been Lebanon. Both states have competed to incorporate Lebanon into their spheres of influence.<sup>171</sup> For Syria, Lebanon's strategic value is paramount, and its shared history symbolises the destiny of both states. Syria's tenacity in Lebanon, notwithstanding Israel's invasions and US intervention, demonstrated its value to Syria. In the regional balance of power, Lebanon constituted a critical piece in Syria's game plan.

The balance of power has determined Syria's pursuit of regional hegemony. Syria has tried to achieve this balance employing the different strategies described above. The end of the bipolar era dictated a search for a new strategy. In the ensuing reconfiguration of global power, Syria tried to anchor a new strategy to the epicentre of the New World Order. In other words, Syria's adjustment to the New World Order presaged a propitious move towards the US.

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<sup>171</sup> The case of Syria and Israel's attempts to extend their hegemony over Lebanon is an illustration of Morgenthau's patterns of competition in attaining a balance of power (see Figure 1.3 on page 39). The Ta'if Agreement signifies another model of Morgenthau's patterns of competition, where Syria manages to assert its hegemony over Lebanon (see Figure 1.5 on page 41). It was able to do so due to contingencies with the New World Order.





## CHAPTER SIX

### SYRIA AND THE GULF WAR: ADJUSTING TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER

#### Introduction

Chapter six will provide an illustration of how Syria has adjusted to the New World Order. The New World Order represented a change in the configuration of global power, and precipitated a new international climate. It marked the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of a global order based on the succession of global capitalism underpinned by force.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the tribute paid to the morality of global capitalism, the nature of the New World Order did not alter beyond recognition. Force, secured by the unipolar power remained the defining feature of international relations. Irrespective of its multipolar features, global capitalism could only be guaranteed through the military force of the US and its allies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 25.

The ascent of US political power, within the new climate, challenged the status of the former client states of the Soviet Union. The future of those states, such as Libya, Cuba, Iraq, and Syria, started to look uncertain. Nevertheless, Syria has managed to adjust to the New World Order. The combination of the state's relative autonomy from domestic forces, and its unique geopolitical position has allowed Syria to adjust without substantial difficulty. By omnibalancing the domestic and international interests of the state, Syria has altered its regional strategy.<sup>3</sup>

Omnibalancing has rewarded the state with a considerable degree of autonomy. In turn, this autonomy has enabled the state to pursue a rational foreign policy, determined primarily by systemic factors, whilst domestic constraints have assumed a subordinate role. The security of the Syrian state, and the national interest were essentially responsible for shaping Syria's decision to join the US-led coalition forces in the second Gulf War.

The second Gulf War provides us with a paradigm case to understand the nature of the New World Order, and Syria's relationship to its central powers. Remaining within the shadows of the old order, Syria needed an opportunity to display its commitment to change. The second Gulf War provided Syria with the ideal chance to demonstrate its strategic move, and its strategy for adjusting to the New World Order. Syria made a strategic decision in realigning its policy towards the US.

The consequent liberation of Kuwait and the qualified-destruction of Iraq allowed the New World Order to reveal its teeth. As the leading force in the New World Order, the US mobilised a coalition of states to repel Iraq's invasion. The action of the

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<sup>3</sup> S. David provides an in-depth account of omnibalancing in his article "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, pp. 233-256.



coalition set a precedent to future challenges to the inviolability of the state-system, and those middle powers that sought to test the durability of the hegemonic power.<sup>4</sup>

## The Gulf War

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, on 2 August 1990, set a two-fold challenge to the US-led New World Order. Firstly, due to the oil-dependent economic structure of the global economy, and the strategic relevance of the Arab Gulf to that global economy, this invasion represented a threat to the global economic order.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, one of the founding principles of international relations enshrined in the UN Charter of 1945, the inviolability of state borders, was threatened by Iraq's dramatic action in the Gulf. The invasion of Kuwait challenged the very essence of the international norms contained within the UN Charter.<sup>6</sup>

The US-led coalition launched the second Gulf War on 17 January 1991.<sup>7</sup> US impatience circumvented the success of the economic sanctions and the enforced embargo,<sup>8</sup> favoured by Russia and the European Union, against Iraq.<sup>9</sup> The US-led

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<sup>4</sup> Barhoum, K., "The Gulf Crisis and a New World Order," *Middle East International*, no. 391, 11 January 1991, pp. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Kubursi, A., and S. Mansur, "Oil and the Gulf War: An 'American Century' or a 'New World Order'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, Fall 1993, pp. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Kienle, E., "Syria, the Kuwait War, and the New World Order," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 384.

<sup>7</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. 299.

<sup>8</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Buettner, F., and M. Landgraf, "The European Community's Middle Eastern Policy: The New Order of Europe and the Gulf Crisis," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 81, and Swann, R., "Europe's Abortive Bridge-building," *Middle East International*, no. 391, 11 January 1991, pp. 5-7.

offensive, under the banner of the UN, supported by Western powers, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Syria, showed the role of force in establishing the co-ordinates of the New World Order.<sup>10</sup> The coalition forces sought to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Each coalition partner was motivated by differing needs. The international justification rested on the premise that Iraq had challenged the terms of the international state-system. For many of its critics, the US-led response was indicative of the relationship between the predominant economic system and the succession of US national interest.<sup>11</sup> The dependency of the global economy upon a cheap and regular flow of oil was sufficient to unite the US with its economic partners in its confrontation with Iraq. The participation of the Western powers can be attributed to their defence of the international political system and the stability of the capitalist economic order.<sup>12</sup>

Saudi Arabia's role is self-explanatory. The cause of Saudi insecurity, a feature of domestic politics, emanated from Iraq's immediate threat to the Saudi state.<sup>13</sup> This created a dependency on external powers. The Arab League failed to accommodate Saudi security needs whilst the US filled all avenues of doubt.

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, E., "The New World Order and the Gulf War: Rhetoric, Policy, and Politics in the United States," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 23-25

<sup>12</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. xxix.

<sup>13</sup> Abir, M., *Saudi Arabia: Government, Society, and the Gulf Crisis*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 174.

Considering its economic ties to the US, and its need to re-integrate itself into the regional political and economic system, Egypt took part in this coalition.<sup>14</sup> Egypt's rehabilitation into the Arab fold had been completed with the restoration of relations with Syria in 1989, and the Gulf War provided it with the chance to adopt a central role in the post-war era.<sup>15</sup>

As a member of NATO, Turkey's participation fulfilled the needs of its Western partners. Its inclusion in the Gulf War coalition allowed the secular leaders of the state to reaffirm their commitment to the West amidst the growing sense of West versus East schizophrenia embracing the country. Furthermore, the change in the world order presented a possible threat to Turkey's utility to the US and Europe; therefore, Turkey sought to assert its regional and international importance.

The response of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is understandable as they were allied to the US and Europe prior to the advent of the New World Order and the second Gulf War. Syria's participation, however, appears to have been at odds with its professed ideological and nationalist perspective. The Syrian decision to join the Gulf War alliance appeared to contradict both its domestic and international agendas.

## Syria's Entry into the Gulf War Coalition

The Gulf War proved to be a portentous moment for Syria, as it enabled the Syrian regime to realign its global allegiance towards the US. Its global vulnerability was

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<sup>14</sup> Rodenbeck, M., "Quiet Unease," *Middle East International*, no. 393, 8 February 1991, pp. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Egypt's central role in the post-war peace process helped to elevate its regional status. Its function as an intermediary between Syria, the PLO, and Israel has guaranteed it a role in the US-dominated regional order.

rapidly increasing as the influence of the Soviet Union receded, and the vacuum was filled by the US. At a regional level, on one hand, Iraq was punishing Syria's presence in Lebanon, by supporting Aoun's war of liberation.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the PLO had recognised the right of Israel to exist, thus jeopardising Syria's co-ordinating role in promoting comprehensive peace.<sup>17</sup>

Although Syria's entry into the Gulf War coalition appeared to contradict its Arab nationalist agenda, its participation can be accounted for by the following factors:

- (i) the New World Order;
- (ii) the peace process;
- (iii) the post-war regional order;
- (iv) Iraq's challenge to Syria's hegemony;
- (v) European sanctions;
- (vi) Syria's economic prospects.

### ***The New World Order***

The introduction of *new thinking* into Soviet foreign policy radically altered the co-ordinates of international relations. The bipolar division of the world, that had provided some middle powers, such as Syria, with the opportunity to exploit the vulnerabilities of their patron-states, fell away almost overnight.<sup>18</sup>

Syria's strategy had been devised after the Camp David Accords. Its tactics were based on co-ordinating the policies of the Eastern bloc states, and were to designed to

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<sup>16</sup> Jansen, G., "The Ousting of Aoun," *Middle East International*, no. 386, 26 October 1990, pp. 8-10.

<sup>17</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 206.

<sup>18</sup> Bercovitch, J., "Superpowers and Client States: Analysing Relations and Patterns of Influence," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 9.

spoil any separate peace initiatives fostered by the US or Israel. The establishment of the Steadfastness Front in 1979 in the face of the Camp David Accords indicated the beginning of the rejectionist period. Although the fortunes of the Steadfastness Front were more determined by inter-Arab struggles, rather than united action, Syria's obstructionist role prevented any further progress in the Middle East peace process.<sup>19</sup>

Syria's role in Lebanon was characteristic of its policy of tactical rejectionism. Its long-term resistance to Israeli and international intervention in Lebanon, its active role in the intra-fratricidal Palestinian struggle, and its alleged involvement in international terrorism were all symptomatic of Egypt's conclusion of a separate peace.<sup>20</sup> Syria's rejectionist policy was endorsed by the Soviet Union as the Camp David Accords had denied the Soviet Union critical access to the region.

The arrival of President Andropov in 1983, provided Syria with the necessary military umbrella to engage in further obstructionist policies whilst attempting to achieve a balance of power with Israel.<sup>21</sup> Syria's quest for strategic parity, according to the Syrian regime, was the only viable option for attaining a sufficient bargaining position to enter a more equitable peace process.<sup>22</sup> The introduction of perestroika in 1985 and its consequences ended Syria's post-Camp David strategy. Syria's rapprochement with Egypt in 1989 signalled the end of tactical rejectionism, and the acceptance of US global hegemony. In response to the changes that had taken place

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<sup>19</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Yorke, V., *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria and Israel, The End of an Era?*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988), pp. 305-307.

<sup>21</sup> Karsh, E., *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 79.

<sup>22</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 189-191.

in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Syria was forced to abandon its search for strategic parity.

The revolutions that swept throughout Eastern Europe during the latter stages of the 1980s served to remind the Syrian regime of its own dispensability. As the political leaders and political establishments of East Germany, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were swept aside, the realities of the global environment emerged.<sup>23</sup> Syria's fate appeared to be precarious and dependent upon the vagaries of US foreign policy.

The dissolution of the Soviet-Syrian partnership exposed Syria's regional and international vulnerability; and until the advent of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Syria's future looked uncertain. The punishment of Libya in 1986 for its alleged involvement in international terrorism looked like a possible course of punishment for Syria.

The decline of Soviet support forced Syria to re-examine its options. Syria's options were limited as the US prepared to punish Iraq for its aggression and challenge to the New World Order. Syria's motives for participating in the US-led coalition, therefore, can be partially explained by recognising its necessity to re-align its global position. The reconfiguration of global power compelled Syria to re-consider its regional strategy. Seeking regional hegemony was not abandoned; however, a new strategy was sought to achieve its ambitions. Syria's participation in the liberation of Kuwait enabled it to gain enough diplomatic and political capital to be propelled towards the centre of a proposed international peace process.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "State and Civil Society in Syria," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 47, no. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 243.

<sup>24</sup> Kienle, E., "Syria, the Kuwait War, and the New World Order," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 389.

### *Syria and the Peace Process*

One of Syria's principal benefits from joining the US-led offensive was the convening of an international conference based upon UN Resolution 242.<sup>25</sup> The US administration promised Syria the prospect of a peace process in exchange for lending the coalition legitimacy. Syria was rewarded for providing invaluable cover with an acknowledgement of its indispensability to a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As a radical state, Syria lent the US-led offensive a degree of legitimacy, otherwise absent from the alliance. The value of Syria's contribution to the US-led alliance was crucial in restraining the development of a counter-alliance amongst the remaining radical Arab states. The Syrian admission to the Gulf War coalition provided a pretext for the US to act without necessarily invoking Arab nationalist sentiments. Moreover, Asad denounced Saddam Hussein's attacks on Israel, "Nobody can drag Syria into an imposed war ... as Saddam is trying to do with his theatrical missiles fired at Israel. Not content with dragging Iraq into the furnace, its regime is trying to embroil the whole Arab world".<sup>26</sup>

Syria's inclusion enabled Asad to adjust, in an expedient fashion, to the changing demands of the New World Order. The days of tactical rejectionism were assigned to the 1980s as Syria gravitated towards the only viable and available option to pursue its regional ambitions. Syria managed to transform a potential strategic problem into a distinct advantage; the price of Syria's cover in the liberation of Kuwait yielded the Madrid Peace Conference, a long-term choice for Asad. A peace process would not

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<sup>25</sup> Cordahi, C., "Sticking to Its Principles," *Middle East International*, no. 398, 19 April 1991, pp. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Muir, J., "The PLO, Syria, and Iran," *Middle East International*, no. 392, 25 January 1991, pp. 9, and *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/0984, A/7, 31 January 1991.

only provide a pretext to settle the Golan issue, but also allow Syria to jostle for pre-eminence in the post-war regional order.

### *Post-war regional order*

During the years of tactical rejectionism, Syria had isolated itself from the mainstream Arab states. Its support of Iran during the eight year Gulf War translated into its exclusion from both the economic and security orders of the region.<sup>27</sup> The formation of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), with Iraq as the centre of gravity, served as a threat to Syria's claim for the leadership of the Arab nation.<sup>28</sup> The conclusion of the Gulf War in 1988 enabled Iraq to divert its attention towards its western borders and the balance of power in the Levant. Syria's hegemony in Lebanon was diminishing due to Iraq's growing influence through the sponsorship of General Aoun.<sup>29</sup>

Syria's entry into the second Gulf War elevated its status in the region. It extracted itself from its regional isolation whilst improving its credibility with the Gulf Arab states. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had failed to identify Iraq as the major threat to the Gulf States whereas Syria had maintained that Iran did not constitute the principal threat in the Gulf.<sup>30</sup> Iraq's invasion of Kuwait vindicated Syria's support of Iran and earned it considerable diplomatic credit. The war provided Syria with an opportunity to demonstrate its utility to the Gulf Arab states.

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<sup>27</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ehteshami, A., "Defence and Security Policies of Syria in a Changing Regional Environment," *International Relations*, vol. XIII, no. 1, April 1996, pp. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Nasrallah, F., "Syria after Ta'if: Lebanon and the Lebanese in Syrian Politics," in E. Kienle (ed.), *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, (London: British Academy Press, 1994), pp. 135, and Munro, A., *An Arabian Affair: Politics and Diplomacy behind the Gulf War*, (London: Brassey's, 1996), pp. 145.

<sup>30</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 29.



The reward for Syria was the pronouncement of the Damascus Declaration, where the GCC states plus Egyptian and Syrian armed forces formed the new formula for guaranteeing Arab Gulf security.<sup>31</sup> Syria's participation guaranteed it a key role in the post-war order with the benefits of Gulf financial aid and Gulf-US diplomatic credit.

After existing outside the regional framework throughout the 1980s, Syria was able to re-integrate into the regional mainstream gaining the confidence and support of the US-friendly regimes, in the form of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt.<sup>32</sup> Syria's quest to remain at the core of Arab politics was fulfilled in the Damascus Declaration, and the universal acknowledgement of Syria's strategic interest in Lebanon.<sup>33</sup>

Syria's participation was also accredited in Lebanon; the US gave the Syrians the green light to extend their hegemony and remove Iraq's Lebanese client, General Aoun, as the last bastion to Syrian hegemony (excluding Israeli occupied south).<sup>34</sup>

### *Iraq's challenge to Syria's hegemony*

The signing of the Iran-Iraq Peace Accord in 1988 left Iraq with a highly militarised society and a powerful political opponent for Syria. In the regional balance of power, Syria was outweighed in terms of population, natural resources, economy, and the militarisation of society. Iraq's termination of the war with Iran enabled it to re-enter the contest for regional influence. Although it was not in Syria's, or the broader Arab,

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<sup>31</sup> The Damascus Declaration, however, has essentially remained as a paper agreement. The US and Britain have continued to provide Gulf security despite the unpopularity of an imperial presence in the region.

<sup>32</sup> Shad, T., S. Boucher, and J. Gray Reddish, "Syrian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1&2, Winter/Spring 1995, pp. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 30.

<sup>34</sup> Faksh, M., "Asad's Westward Turn: Implications for Syria," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 3, March 1993, pp. 57, and Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 206.

interest to see Iraq destroyed, it was an advantage to witness the diminution of the threat posed by Iraq.<sup>35</sup>

### *European sanctions*

After witnessing the collapse of the East European states and the re-orientation of Soviet foreign policy, Syria was required to diversify its network of international support if it wished to diminish its new state of vulnerability. On 24 October 1986, the UK had suspended its diplomatic relations with Syria due to the Syrian involvement in the plot to place a bomb on an El Al flight to Tel Aviv departing from Heathrow Airport, on 17 April 1986.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the European Community imposed economic sanctions on Syria on 10 November 1986. It seemed almost certain that the Syrians were involved in the plot to blow up the Israeli airliner, but the question that evaded answers was how closely the president was involved.<sup>37</sup>

Syria's rehabilitation into European favour was achieved after its decision to join the US-led coalition forces. One dividend for participating in the second Gulf War was the restoration of diplomatic relations with the UK, and the lifting of economic sanctions by the European Community.<sup>38</sup> However, Syria was angered at an EC vote, on 22 October 1990, taken after an exertion of British pressure, to maintain a ban on arms sales to Syria and to limit the number of Syrian diplomats and officials in Europe.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 91, and Nasrallah, F., "Syria's Post-war Gains and Liabilities," *Middle East International*, no. 396, 22 March 1991, pp. 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> Jansen, G., "Talking Again," *Middle East International*, no. 389, 7 December 1990, pp. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for The Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 475.

<sup>38</sup> Nasrallah, F., "Syria's Post-war Gains and Liabilities," *Middle East International*, no. 396, 22 March 1991, pp. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Marlowe, L., "Syria Holds the Key to UK Hostages Release," *Financial Times*, Friday 2 November 1990, pp. 4.

Despite sending 15,000 troops to Saudi Arabia as part of its contribution to the Gulf War, Syria was still considered, by the US, a sponsor of state-terrorism.<sup>40</sup> Whilst acknowledging the political and diplomatic significance of Syria in justifying the allied liberation of Kuwait, the US did not recognise Syria's participation as sufficient to warrant its removal from its State Terrorist list. This dichotomy still separates the approaches of the European Union and the US in their diplomatic relations with Syria. Their differences in approach, however, did not impinge upon the economic benefits accrued by Syria's from the lifting of economic sanctions or the windfall from the Gulf Arab states.

### *Syria's economic prospects*

The second Gulf War provided Syria with an opportunity to compensate for the loss of the economic support of the Soviet Union, through the promotion of the Syrian-Egyptian-GCC security order. Syria and Egypt were both financial beneficiaries of the second Gulf War, and were rewarded for their allegiance to the Gulf Arab states. Their rewards, though, were disproportionate in favour of the Egyptians, which prompted Syria to temporarily review its options and suspend the deployment of its troops in Saudi Arabia.<sup>41</sup>

Syria received \$2 billion for its role in the liberation of Kuwait only from the governments of the Gulf Arab states. This capital was mainly used to upgrade the Syrian military.<sup>42</sup> The Egyptians, on the other hand, were granted a debt write-off of

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<sup>40</sup> Kienle, E., "Syria, the Kuwait War, and the New World Order," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 384.

<sup>41</sup> Munro, A., *An Arabian Affair: Politics and Diplomacy behind the Gulf War*, (London: Brassey's, 1996), pp. 64 and 203.

<sup>42</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 208.

\$14.4 billion by the US.<sup>43</sup> The disparities in the distribution of financial rewards reflected the differences in the relationships of the two states with the US.

The signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979, underpinned by economic benefits, marked the new Egyptian strategy for the recovering the Sinai peninsula. Egypt rejected the Soviet Union and competed with the Israelis for US influence.<sup>44</sup> This strategy had been successful in disengaging Egypt from the territorial conflict with Israel.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it had resulted in the return of the Sinai, and the cultivation of US support. However, it had produced an economic dependency upon the US.<sup>46</sup>

Syria's strategy during the Cold War had rested upon Soviet support. The radical change in the world order removed the main pillar of Syria's foreign policy strategy. Syria's options were clearly limited in a US dominated world order. Saddam Hussein's dramatic move granted Syria an unexpected opportunity to work closer with the US.<sup>47</sup> Joining the US-led Gulf War coalition afforded Syria the chance to adjust to the new international climate, and pursue policies still in line with its regional objectives, but less inimical to US interests in the Middle Eastern region.

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<sup>43</sup> Baker, R., "Imagining Egypt in the New Age: Civil Society and the Leftist Critique," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 415-416. In the article by Sadowski, Y., "Arab Economies after the Gulf War: Power, Poverty, and Petrodollars," *MERIP*, no. 170, May/June 1991, pp. 5, he reports that Egypt was awarded loans and grants of \$1.5 billion by the Saudis, moreover, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait wrote off \$6.6 billion of Egypt's debt.

<sup>44</sup> Hopwood, D., *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 111.

<sup>45</sup> Zaalouk, M., *Power, Class and Foreign Capital in Egypt: The Rise of the New Bourgeoisie*, (London: Zed, 1989), pp. 59.

<sup>46</sup> Dessouki, A., "The Primacy of Economics: The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 175.

<sup>47</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 207-208.

Although the decision to re-align its foreign policy and join the Gulf War coalition could be considered successful for the Syrian regime, it was a difficult task justifying this change in policy to the Syrian population. The Arab credentials of the regime, a major source of legitimacy, were under threat by the decision to lend support to the US in a war against an Arab brother. At the time of decision-making, therefore, a number of obstacles emerged that may have persuaded the political elite to adopt a pro-Iraqi position.

## **The Gulf War: Obstacles to Syrian Participation**

The above explanation for Syria's joining the Gulf War coalition was examined in the light of international conditions, but did not reflect the domestic constraints placed upon Syria. The following section will illustrate how Asad, although reliant upon the regime barons and sensitive to public perceptions of the regime's Arab credentials, was able to pursue a policy that appeared to be inimical to domestic and regional interests. There were few domestic constraints upon the regime as regards influencing its options in joining the Gulf War coalition. The two potential sources of resistance could have emerged from public discontent and from the entrenched positions of the regime barons.<sup>48</sup> Before discussing these factors, we should address the issue of legitimacy to be able to understand the impact of public opinion and the regime barons upon the state's foreign policy.

### ***Legitimacy***

Within the Arab World, the concept of legitimacy has undergone an evolutionary transformation over the last twenty-five years. Arab nationalism seems to have lost its appeal to the Arab population, whilst the promise of economic security may have

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<sup>48</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 179-180.

gained in credence. Arab nationalism, therefore, may be losing its significance as a legitimising tool. The provision of economic security may provide legitimacy to a more compliant public.<sup>49</sup>

The Syrian case, however, is still unique within the Arab World. Regime legitimacy in Syria is not a quantifiable commodity, and it is not really possible to gauge due to the secret nature of the regime and society. It has been traditionally measured by the Arab credentials of the state. Arab nationalism is believed to be one of the keys to understanding state-society relations in Syria.<sup>50</sup> As the military threat from Israel is still of paramount interest to the Syrian regime and the Syrian population, the hegemonic challenge of Israel to Syria's regional interests dominates its perception of international politics.

Arab nationalism remains a critical juncture around which the Syrian population can unite behind the regime. The foreign policy gains of the regime, namely, in the regional contest with Israel have been popular and won support. The return of the Golan, the liberation of the Arab territories, and the restoration of Palestinian rights have remained the central tenets of Asad's foreign policy. These goals continue to legitimise foreign policy decisions, and have not changed since Asad's seizure of power in 1970. In short, regime legitimacy has been synonymous with Arab nationalism.

Legitimacy, however, has not been a priority in the means to achieving these goals. The tactics of the Syrian regime have often seemed to be at odds with the Arab dimension in the Arab-Israeli dispute. As mentioned previously, Syria's intervention

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with a Damascene businessman, 29 September 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 174.

in Lebanon, its support of Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, its promotion of the anti-Arafat struggle in Lebanon, and its support of Amal in the Camp Wars of 1985, have been deeply unpopular and have been considered to be detrimental to the Arab cause.

Islam is an alternative form of acquiring legitimacy. However, the Syrian regime does not possess sufficient Islamic credentials despite the public displays of religiosity by the president.<sup>51</sup> The violent suppression of the Islamic uprising in Hama in 1982 has stripped the regime of all pretensions of Islamic legitimacy.<sup>52</sup>

Although the regime of Asad is essentially unpopular, it has survived for twenty seven years. The regime of President Asad owes its longevity to a number of factors which can be summarised as:

- the Ba'th party;
- the Armed Forces;
- the Security Services;
- the maintenance of legitimacy.

Each factor is independent of public opinion except for the factor of legitimacy.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Public opinion***

As illustrated in chapter four, political participation is limited in Syria. The public do not have effective access to a system of redress to challenge unpopular policy decisions. Despite the presence of an institutionalised political process, the structures in place serve more as a facade than a system of representation. Public unrest has not

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with the First Secretary of the British Embassy, Damascus, 22 September 1995.

<sup>52</sup> Batatu, H., "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *MERIP*, no. 110, November/December 1982, pp. 19-20.

<sup>53</sup> Hinnebusch, R., *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria: Army, Party, and Peasant*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 156.

emerged, in any significant way, since the destruction of Hama in 1982. In this instance, the regime was dependent upon the support of its security services and Rif'at Asad's Defence Companies.<sup>54</sup>

It was, however, important to address public opinion before taking part in the Gulf War coalition, to legitimise the logic of the decision. Asad found it necessary to defend his decision in a major speech on 12 September 1990.<sup>55</sup> Intervention was justified in the following ways:

- to constrain the imperial powers and assure their rapid departure after the completion of the task;
- the restoration of international laws and norms would place pressure on the Western governments to implement UN Resolutions 242, 338, and 425;
- to ensure that an international peace process would commence after the liberation of Kuwait.

In spite of this, the public were still discontented with the decision. Public opinion during the Gulf War was expressed in covert ways, such as the posting of seditious materials, and there were some demonstrations in eastern Syria, but very few Syrians were willing to challenge the regime.<sup>56</sup>

Syria's partnership in the alliance to liberate Kuwait, an oil-rich Gulf state, against Iraq, a fellow Ba'thist state, appeared to be contradictory to popular expression. Siding with the imperial power of the US, the long-term ally of Israel seemed to

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<sup>54</sup> "Salah ed-Din al Bitar's Last Interview: The Major Deviation of the Ba'th Is Having Renounced Democracy," *MERIP*, no. 110, November/December 1982, pp. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Jansen, G., "Unpopular U-turn," *Middle East International*, no. 384, 28 September 1990, pp. 11-12.

<sup>56</sup> Jansen, G., "Unpopular U-turn," *Middle East International*, no. 384, 28 September 1990, pp. 11-12.



negate the principles of Arab nationalism. Certainly, the decision to fight with the Western alliance was not determined by public sympathies with Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism and the liberation of the occupied territories remained at the centre of Asad's strategic thinking, yet abstaining from the liberation of Kuwait would have harmed Syrian interests, and intervention on the side of Iraq could have been suicidal.

The reconciliation between policy decisions and public opinion has never been critical to the state, as the regime exists largely above the influence of political interest groups. The only group that exerts real influence upon the regime can be identified as the *regime barons*. They are not, however, a group as such; they are carefully recruited, cultivated, and removed according to the strength of the president.<sup>57</sup>

### ***The Regime Barons***

Although President Asad appears to be the major decision-maker in Syria, this perception is, of course, inaccurate. There is a political elite that enjoins the president and represents the interests of:

- the Ba'th party;
- the Armed Forces;
- the Security Services.

The political elite have been identified as: Vice President 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam, Chief of Staff Hikmat al-Shihabi, and intelligence boss 'Ali Duba. The *jama'a* around

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<sup>57</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1995, pp. 76.

this core has been crucial to regime autonomy and stability.<sup>38</sup> There is little evidence that Asad encountered much resistance from the political elite, as the decision was considered to be consensual.<sup>39</sup> Although the decision appeared to be difficult to justify to the ideological army of Syria and the Ba'th party, Asad demonstrated the utility of his decision after the devastating defeat of Iraq.

Without the constraint of appeasing interests within the state, the Syrian elite were able to conduct and implement a policy that seemed antithetical to the traditional policies of the state. The nature of the decision-making process, and the method of implementation did not deviate from previous patterns. Foreign policy remains the exclusive domain of the president and his coterie. High politics is still the dominant theme in Syrian foreign policy; it exists beyond the reach of any institutional framework or the vagaries of public opinion.

The relative autonomy from domestic constraint, enjoyed by the state, empowered the decision-makers to pursue a policy that appeared to be inimical to Arab interests, and a betrayal of its traditional foreign policy. Through a careful balancing of domestic and international pressures, however, the state was able to follow a rational policy founded upon national security and national interest. National security and national interest owe their origins to the primacy of systemic factors in the formulation of foreign policy.

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<sup>38</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1995, pp. 77.

<sup>39</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Syria: The Politics of Peace and Regime Survival," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1995, pp. 76-77.

## The Primacy of Systemic Factors

Free from the impositions of constituent demands, Syria's decision to join the coalition was based upon a rational set of considerations focused on *realpolitik*. The foreign policy goals of the regime did not significantly change, but the strategy to achieve them was adapted according to the new international environment.

The rational actor model appears to offer the most appropriate analysis for Syria's decision to engage in the second Gulf War on the side of the US and its allies. The model's emphasis on national security and the national interest fit accordingly to the Syrian case. The systemic factors compelled Syria to conform to a rational decision-making process. Evidently, the domestic politics models fail to provide a convincing explanation of Syria's decision, with their focus upon the domestic arena. Despite widespread domestic opposition to Syria's intervention in the second Gulf War, the state employed a policy that contravened the public mood and the interests of other influential parties.

Understanding that force was still the ultimate source of power, Asad realised that Syria needed to adapt its strategy in order to capitalise upon the changing circumstances and fortunes of international relations. Asad said about the pre-eminence of force in international relations: "Force in today's world, just as in the past, is what determines rights. Everyone speaks about rights and international norms, charters, and resolutions. However, you find that every international event is settled by force."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Hannah, J., *At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era*, (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), pp. 21.

Despite the talk of a New World Order based on a new morality, that order was still defined by might over right. The dominant feature of the military in international relations had not radically altered. The significance of the New World Order lay in the reconfiguration of power, which emanated in a military unipolarity, and an economic multipolarity. As a pragmatist and a realist, Asad responded to the challenge of the New World Order. He perceived a New World Order emerging and wanted to influence it rather than be its victim. The Gulf War promised to be a watershed event in the birth of that order, and Syria's policy in the conflict would determine its status in the new order.

The calculated gamble, taken by the Syrian regime, vindicated its policy decision to join the US and its allies in the liberation of Kuwait. The Syrian public opinion reluctantly accepted the sagacity of Asad's decision, in the post-war period. It was acknowledged that Syria was spared the ordeal of being the next victim of the New World Order, and had in the mean time elevated its status in the regional hierarchy.

## Conclusion

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait afforded the US-led coalition with the occasion to challenge the actions of an aggressor state (Iraq) in order to guarantee the territorial integrity of a victimised state (Kuwait). The reaction of the US-led coalition represented the nature of the New World Order and it served to remind the world's states that international law would be upheld by the world's hegemonic powers.<sup>61</sup>

This perception of the New World Order is based upon international law and falls into the pluralist paradigm of international relations theory. The globalist perspective works from the assumption that the liberation of Kuwait was motivated by the need to guarantee access to cheap oil for the global economy. The action of the coalition, therefore, served the interests of the leaders of the global capitalist economy. Realists have, however, alluded to the primacy of self interest of the members of the US-led offensive.

For realists the New World Order did not entail a break from the past. Nevertheless, it signified the next stage of world history based upon a redistribution of power. National interests remained the paramount feature of the New World Order. Realists have asserted that the liberation of Kuwait served the national interests of both the international and regional players.<sup>62</sup>

### *International actors*

The destruction of an emerging middle power in the Middle East state sub-system demonstrated the nature of the New World Order. The successor to the bipolar order,

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<sup>61</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 24.

either the unipolar or multipolar order, was to be reinforced by international coercion whilst conciliation and co-operation were subordinate features of the New World Order.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the response of the US-led coalition did not connote the ascendancy of liberal values, but the omnipresence of force in international relations.<sup>64</sup> The response of the coalition served two purposes.

Firstly, it illustrated the inflexible nature of the centre powers demonstrating their political and military hegemony over the world's regions. The action of the coalition set a precedent to regional middle powers. It illustrated the intolerance of the centre powers to anti-systemic forces and their readiness to meter out punishment to regional threats. As a radical force in the region, Iraq threatened to disrupt the status quo that served the interests of the US.<sup>65</sup>

Secondly, it represented the collective national interests of its international members. Access to cheap oil was deemed essential to maintaining their high-tech economies and for the general servicing of the global economy. Adjacent to the copious oil fields of the GCC, Iraq's invasion posed a challenge to the continuous flow of cheap oil. As the currency of the global economy, oil is fundamental to the interdependent interests of the world's economic centres. The liberation of Kuwait, therefore, served the economic and political agenda of the international actors in the US-led offensive.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Kuroda, Y., "Bush's New World Order: A Structural Analysis of Instability and Conflict in the Gulf," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 56.

<sup>64</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 25.

<sup>65</sup> Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. xxi-xxx, and Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 9-10.

<sup>66</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 8-25.

*Regional actors*

The liberation of Kuwait served the interests of the regional actors who took part in the US-led coalition. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria were the main Arab beneficiaries; their participation elevated their international and regional status. Saudi Arabia's acute security dilemma, incurred by Iraq's ominous presence, obliged it to seek international protection. As a regional power, Iraq's emergence from the Iran-Iraq War constituted a threat to the hegemonic interests of Egypt and Syria. Egypt's dependence upon US economic aid was partially accountable for its entry into the coalition. Syria's gravitation towards the US-centred world order was a reflection of its new strategy in foreign policy. The roles of Egypt and Syria were essentially motivated by the prominence of their national interests. Turkey's participation in the coalition forces and Israel's abstinence from attacking Iraq, despite Iraq's Scud missile provocation, ensured that both parties received considerable economic and diplomatic credits.<sup>67</sup>

From this brief observation, it is possible to suggest that Syria's decision to join the Gulf War coalition was calculated according to a set of rational decisions. The hypothesis of this chapter asserts that the primary motivation behind Syria's role in the Gulf War coalition was the necessity to realign its global position. This was not a decision taken lightly, but owed its origins to the vulnerability of Syria vis-à-vis Israel and the remaining superpower, the US.

There was little choice but to accept the dominant role played by the US in the world order. Unipolarity was the defining feature of international relations, and the prospect of a multipolar system emerging looked increasingly remote. Syria faced two

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<sup>67</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/0984, A/21, 31 January 1991, and Freedman, L., and E. Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), pp. 203.

choices: either to pursue a US-led solution, or to risk falling into isolation. Ironically, Syria was forced to adopt a strategy employed by the Egyptian government in the late 1970s, but the terms of reference, however, were very different.

The reduction in Iraq's military capacity and the elimination of its political threat to Syrian hegemony in the region, and especially in Lebanon, were benefits enjoyed by Syria, but they did not constitute a major factor in the decision-making process. Moreover, the destruction of Iraq weakened the Arab balance of power with Israel, and it exposed the region to more external forces. The lifting of sanctions was incidental to the decision, especially as the US failed to remove Syria from its list of terrorist states. The economic dividends accrued after the war were also negligible in making the decision.

Adjusting to the New World Order was an essential part of Syria's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. US-Syrian relations had reached an all time low during the 1980s, due to:

- the bombing of the US marine base in 1983;
- the episode of hostage taking;
- Syria's alleged role in international terrorism.<sup>68</sup>

Libya paid for its activities in 1986,<sup>69</sup> Iraq was being prepared as the next victim in the Middle East, and Syria may have been in line for the following round of retributive action. The second Gulf War presented Syria with the moment to evade this course of action.

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<sup>68</sup> Agha, H., and A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 20-25.

<sup>69</sup> Chomsky, N., *World Orders, Old and New*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp. 23.



The New World Order represented a direct threat to Syria and its regime. The objectives of Syrian foreign policy were moving beyond the realms of realism; Asad, motivated by power-politics sought the first opportunity to realign Syria to the more advantageous side of the New World Order. Syria's inclusion in the US-led coalition enabled it to adjust to the environment of the New World Order.

In order to occupy a place in the post-war regional order and to achieve its regional ambitions, Syria joined the US-led coalition. This move may have appeared to have contradicted Syria's foreign policy goals of the 1970s and 1980s. But the promise of a revival of an international peace conference illustrated Syria's motive for allying itself to the conservative Gulf Arab states and their international guardians.



# THE MIDDLE EAST

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## SYRIA AND THE PEACE PROCESS

### Introduction

One result of the liberation of Kuwait was the convening of an international peace conference for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US maintained and pursued its commitment to the peace process despite the reluctant overtures of Shamir's government.<sup>1</sup> Syria's adjustment to the New World Order, represented in its decision to join the Gulf War coalition, was rewarded by the prospect of the peace process.

Syria's participation in the US-led peace process, arose from the change in the configuration of global power, as Asad noted: "If the New World Order is actually to be global, then it must adhere to legitimacy and we, along with others, must be part of it. We cannot support an order that is biased against us and that attacks the victim."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, S., "The Geopolitics of a Golan Heights Agreement," *Focus*, vol. 42, 1 June 1992, pp. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1351, A/9, 9 April 1992.

The debate about Syria's commitment to peace re-emerged as the peace process began. Syria watchers, such as Pipes<sup>3</sup> and Kirkpatrick<sup>4</sup> cast serious doubt over Syria's intentions towards Israel, whilst Hinnebusch,<sup>5</sup> Seale, and Kienle<sup>6</sup> believed that peace was a strategic option for Syria.

In chapter seven, I intend to show how Syria's engagement in the peace process is consistent with Asad's foreign policy. Its entry into the Madrid peace process was determined by the advent of the New World Order. Prior to this shift in the global configuration of power, the prospect of a solution based upon a comprehensive formula remained elusive. Syria's exclusion from the separate peace tracks, which had included Egypt and Lebanon, had encouraged Syria to develop tactical rejectionism. The New World Order produced a climate conducive to a more comprehensive peace formula. Hence, Syria's path of rejectionism was discarded as peace became a strategic option for Syria.<sup>7</sup>

Syria's foreign policy has been consistent since 1974. It has been motivated by the quest for a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based upon UN Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>8</sup> More recently, however, the terms of a peace settlement for Syria have become more fluid. Since Jordan and the PLO have signed separate peace

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<sup>3</sup> Pipes, D., "Syria's People May Not Want Peace," *Jewish Exponent*, 25 November 1994, pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Kirkpatrick, J., "We Shouldn't Risk US Dollars on Unreliable Arafat and Assad," *Human Events*, vol. 51, 28 July 1995, pp. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 201-207.

<sup>6</sup> Kienle, E., "Syria, the Kuwait War, and the New World Order," in T. Ismael, and J. Ismael (eds.), *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), pp. 390.

<sup>7</sup> Richards, C., "Assad Adds His Weight to Middle East Peace Talks," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1402, A/1, 9 June 1992.

deals, Syria has been left at liberty to settle the issue of the Golan without reference to the Palestinian Question, which has been the central feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict since its inception.

The Palestinian Question has been central to the legitimacy of the Syrian state. The regime's Arab credentials, obtained from its vociferous defence of the Arab territories, have served to justify foreign policy and unpopular domestic policies. Deviation from the Palestinian agenda, therefore, could be deemed to be betraying pan-Arabism, thereby risking regime legitimacy.

I contend that this idea has fallen into the shadows of history. The Syrian population has carried the burden of Palestine for the last fifty years; furthermore, it attributes the absence of democracy within Syrian society to the omnipresent threat of the Israelis.<sup>9</sup> Peace with Israel, irrespective of the Palestinians, would liberate Syria from its security dilemma and decompress the domestic political system. From this perspective, it is more likely, that the Syrian population perceives the separate PLO-Israeli deal as an opportunity to pursue state or domestic interests over Arab interests.<sup>10</sup>

Traditionally, Syria has been depicted as an enemy of peace. In this chapter, I intend to refute this assumption and show that peace has been a realistic option for Syria since Asad took power. Peace has been conceived in terms of a comprehensive option, thus universally satisfying Arab needs and ambitions. Before presenting this hypothesis, I intend to analyse the major events that characterised Syrian foreign policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The main focus of this chapter is to present an understanding of Syria's role in the current peace process.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Syrian businessman, 25 June 1994.

<sup>10</sup> This assumption is based on a number of interviews undertaken in Syria during October 1995.

## Syria and the Peace Process

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the succession of the US, as the architect of the New World Order, swept away the status quo and precipitated a change in the Middle Eastern regional order. The invasion of Kuwait provided the optimum moment for collating the interests of the US' allies in the region, and for incorporating Syria into the formula.

*With these trends reinforced by the crumbling of East European regimes and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the radical regimes in the Middle East concluded that they had been left to the mercy of the only remaining superpower, the United States, and its lackeys, of which Israel was first and foremost.<sup>11</sup>*

The changes in the world order presented a window of opportunity for Israel and the Arab states to find a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The structural determinants, namely, the emergence of the US as the world's superpower, coupled with a weakened Arab World created a context in which the US could impose a peace upon the region. The Madrid Peace Conference, which commenced in October 1991, initiated an irreversible process in which Jordan with a Palestinian delegation, Lebanon, and Syria participated in bilateral talks.

At this stage of the negotiations, Syria was the linchpin of the Arab camp; it persuaded the other Arab parties to conform to a united policy. Realising that a separate peace weakened the Arab position after Egypt had accepted the terms of Camp David, Syria sought to co-ordinate the policies of the Arab parties. Before attending the Madrid peace conference on 31 October 1991, Syria convened a co-ordinating session in

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<sup>11</sup> Karsh, E., "Peace in the Middle East," *The Oxford International Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 39.



Damascus, on 23 October 1991.<sup>12</sup> This was one opportunity to confront Israeli ascendancy through a unified position.

This chapter has been divided into two main sections: the history of the peace process, and the state of the current peace process. The first section will summarise Syria's conceptualisation of peace in the 1970s and 1980s. The second section will examine Syria's role in the peace process with reference to the changes within the New World Order.

## History of the Peace Process

The map of the contemporary Middle East, which was essentially drawn up after the First World War, set the structural precedents for the region's future. The dismemberment of Greater Syria into individual states administered by the mandatory powers sought to disfigure the political and geographical orientation of the region. The deliberations of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the issue of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, accompanied by the subsequent creation of Israel, generated structural fault lines that dragged the region irrevocably towards war.<sup>13</sup>

The Arab states of the region did not accept the existence of the state of Israel. It was believed to be a revocable state without indigenous roots. It owed its existence and allegiance to the Western powers.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the objective of the regional powers, has been to eliminate the state of Israel in their pursuit of regional influence. Israel provided an nexus for the newly formed Arab states to unite behind a single cause and

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<sup>12</sup> Butt, G., "Asad the Coordinator," *Middle East International*, no. 411, 25 October 1991, pp. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Karsh, E., "Peace in the Middle East," *The Oxford International Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter Issue 1993, pp. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Galvani, J., P. Johnson, and R. Theberge, "The October War: Egypt, Syria, Israel," *MERIP*, no. 22, November 1973, pp. 15.

to search for their own trans-state schemes. The Iraqi and Transjordanian schemes to recreate the Fertile Crescent and Greater Syria provided examples where the trans-state objectives of the newly independent states dominated the region's politics.<sup>15</sup> One political manifestation of the Arab nationalist movement was the rising Ba'th party.

### *The Ba'th party and Israel*

The Ba'th party, founded in 1940, represented a more aggressive and visionary form of Arab nationalism. Its appeal as a revolutionary movement far exceeded the chivalrous objectives of the early leaders of Arab nationalism, whose acceptance of the Arab state-system and their acquiescence to the creation of Israel was habitually denounced.<sup>16</sup>

As an ideology, Ba'thism called for the renaissance of Arabism, a regeneration of the great Arab empires, and the eradication of all occupying powers. The state of Israel was located at the centre of Ba'thi philosophy, and served to unify the objectives of Ba'thism.<sup>17</sup> The anti-Israeli rhetoric of the Ba'th regime after 1963 had called for the destruction of Israel, and the breakdown of the Arab state sub-system. According to these principles, in conjunction with the expansionist tendencies of the Israeli state, conflict between Syria and Israel was an inevitable feature of the contemporary Middle East.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Petran, T., *Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 97-105.

<sup>16</sup> Ma'oz, M., "The Emergence of Modern Syria," in M. Ma'oz, and A. Yaniv (eds.), *Syria under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Petran, T., *Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 89-92.

<sup>18</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press Press, 1995), pp. 82-84.



### *Syria and Israel*

Syria has long been regarded, by the West, as an ardent opponent of peace. This understanding has been based upon the military confrontations and vocal antipathy shared between Syria and Israel. The creation of Israel has been the source of Syria's enmity; its creation marked the demise of the Greater Syrian region as a single political and cultural unit. Viewed as an imperial and alien state, Israel symbolised the failure of evolutionary Arab nationalism to resist the imposition of another successive period of occupation.<sup>19</sup>

Although the creation of Israel affected the Arab World, due to its geographic proximity, its most immediate impact was felt in the Levant. It set a challenge to Syrian influence in Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, and at the same time undermined the legitimacy of the Syrian state. As a result of this, Syria's domestic politics after 1948, had been necessarily determined by the existence of Israel. The pre-occupation of Syrian foreign policy was committed to the challenge that Israel had set before it. The Syrian leadership has owed its credentials to the success of its Arab nationalist agenda, and its opposition to Israeli statehood.<sup>20</sup>

As previously mentioned, the 1967 War was a defining moment in contemporary Middle Eastern history. It signalled the permanence of Israel's presence in the region. The combined Arab effort to destroy Israel had failed. The structural faults remained, but Israel's existence was an unavoidable truth.

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<sup>19</sup> Ben-Meir, A., "The Israeli-Syrian Battle for Equitable Peace," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 1, January 1994, pp. 74.

<sup>20</sup> For more details of the theoretical approach consult: Lawson, F., *Why Syria Goes To War: Thirty Years of Confrontation*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

The details of the struggle between Syria and Israel, during the period 1948-70, are not strictly relevant here, as we are mainly concerned with the Asad years. But it is important to understand that the struggle owed its roots to the structural factors that shaped the Middle Eastern region after the First and Second World Wars.<sup>21</sup> With a change of leadership in Egypt and Syria, in 1970, the next phase of the regional conflict moved away from the destruction of Israel and focused on the liberation of the territories occupied in 1967.<sup>22</sup>

### *Asad and Sadat: A new direction*

Asad's rise to power was accompanied by a brand of realism that recognised the longevity of Israel's existence. At the time, neither Egypt nor Syria recognised the state of Israel, but their changing behavioural patterns acknowledged the contemporary realities. The ambitions of Syrian and Egyptian foreign policy, as displayed in the October War, were confined to liberating the territories occupied during the 1967 war.<sup>23</sup>

### *The October War*

The June War of 1967 contributed to a fundamental change in the military arena in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Asad had gained invaluable experience during the Six Day War and understood the limitations of Syria's military capabilities. Success had to be determined in the air, and the Israeli air force enjoyed the supremacy of the US military

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<sup>21</sup> For more details of the early Syrian-Israeli struggle see the following: Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press Press, 1995), Petran, T., *Syria*, (New York: Praeger, 1972), Seale, P., *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab politics 1945-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), and Rathmell, A., *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961*, (London: Tauris, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Karsh, E., "Peace in the Middle East," *The Oxford International Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press Press, 1995), pp. 120-130.

edge.<sup>24</sup> This reality played a significant part in shaping the military co-ordination of Egypt and Syria in the October War.

Unity between Egypt and Syria in waging the war in 1973 formed the two-front strategy to liberate the occupied territories. Committed to the principle and utility of unity, Asad was aware that the Arabs were weak and ineffectual when divided against the rapidly consolidating state of Israel. The war of 1973 was a war to liberate the Arab territories, and to award the front-line Arab states with the diplomatic advantage in post-war negotiations. In short, the October War was a war for peace.

The war provided a moral and psychological victory for the Arab states. The notion of Israeli supremacy had been severely challenged, and the Arab states had seized the diplomatic advantage.<sup>25</sup> The war initiated a process that produced a watershed in the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the unity between Syria and Egypt, already fractured through a break down in military co-ordination,<sup>26</sup> dissipated as Egypt pursued a separate peace deal with Israel.<sup>27</sup>

The October War of 1973 illustrated the precedence of Egypt's national-state interest over Arab interest. The political and cultural homogeneity of Egypt allowed for the creation of a more particular foreign policy,<sup>28</sup> whereas Syria's national interests were

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<sup>24</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 140.

<sup>25</sup> The use of the oil weapon by the Gulf Arab states provided economic, political, and diplomatic leverage for the Arab states.

<sup>26</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 194-201.

<sup>27</sup> Lorenz, J., *Egypt and the Arabs: Foreign Policy and the Search for National Identity*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 51.

<sup>28</sup> For more details of Egyptian and Syria identity see: Kienle, E., "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity, and Policy in Syria and Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, February 1995, pp. 53-71.

intricately tied to the broader Arab agenda.<sup>29</sup> The first and second disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt led to the signing of the Camp David Accords. The conclusion of the Camp David Accords, in the form of a peace treaty, rejected Syria's aim of achieving comprehensive peace.<sup>30</sup>

Arab unity had preoccupied the Syrian and Egyptian leadership since the 1950s.<sup>31</sup> Their foreign policies had been determined by the projection of regional competition with Israel. In 1973, Sadat's ambitions appear to have deviated from the Arab fold towards satisfying Egypt's national interest. Egypt's domestic problems took priority over its foreign policy commitments; Sadat entered into US-brokered talks. The US induced Egypt to enter into a peace agreement with Israel through financial assistance and the promise of annual aid.<sup>32</sup> Due to the primacy of the economic crisis, the role of the economy became the distinguishing feature of Egyptian foreign policy in the late 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Egypt's exit from the Syrian-Egyptian formula had significantly weakened Syria's negotiating position with Israel. Despite its isolation, Syria's commitment to comprehensive peace remained steadfast. For Asad, it was necessary for Syria and Egypt to co-ordinate their activities in order to achieve a real peace - a peace that

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<sup>29</sup> Galvani, J., P. Johnson, and R. Theberge, "The October War: Egypt, Syria, Israel," *MERIP*, no. 22, November 1973, pp. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Hopwood, D., *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-90*, (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 110.

<sup>31</sup> Kienle, E., "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity, and Policy in Syria and Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, February 1995, pp. 54-56.

<sup>32</sup> Dessouki, A., "The Primacy of Economics: The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in B. Korany, and A. Dessouki (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 175.

<sup>33</sup> Dessouki, A., "The Primacy of Economics: The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in A. Dessouki, and B. Korany (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Change*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 156, and Burrell, R., and A. Kelider, *The Washington Papers: Egypt the Dilemmas of a Nation - 1970-1977*, vol. v, no. 48, (London: Sage, 1977), pp. 61.

satisfied all parties involved. Syria remained consistent in its objectives, and demanded a total withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for peace; contained within this language was a tacit recognition of Israel's existence. In 1974, Asad remarked in an interview:

*For our part we look upon peace in its true sense ... a peace without occupation, without destitute peoples, and without citizens whose homeland is denied them ... Anyone who imagines that the peace process can be a piecemeal is mistaken ... We may now say as we have always said - that peace should be based on complete withdrawal from the lands occupied in 1967 and on the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people.<sup>34</sup>*

During the early stages of the second disengagement talks, Syria had been willing to attend an international conference if it was based upon the land for peace formula contained within the UN Resolutions 242 and 338. These conditions were not acceptable to Israel or the US. For Israel, any conference taking place under international aegis, particularly one based upon UN Resolutions, could carry binding obligations that were unacceptable to the Israeli state.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, for the US, an international conference would have incorporated the Soviet Union, which would have elevated the status of the latter in the peace process, and in particular, the Middle East. The US acquisition of Egypt, as a client state from the Soviet Union, had already won it a major advancement in the zero-sum game; an international conference held the possibility of awarding the Soviet Union an undeserved extension of its sphere of influence.<sup>36</sup> Syria's effective exclusion from the

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<sup>34</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 256.

<sup>35</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 158.

<sup>36</sup> Burrell, R., and A. Kelider, *The Washington Papers: Egypt the Dilemmas of a Nation - 1970-1977*, vol. v, no. 48, (London: Sage, 1977), pp. 65.

Geneva conference in 1977, then, was based on the procedural arrangements favoured by the US and Israel.<sup>37</sup>

During the period 1974-78, it appears that Syria was prepared to enter a peace process based upon the principles of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Syria's options, however, were limited. As a consequence of the separate Egyptian peace, Syria became the only belligerent front-line state, and found itself in a vulnerable position. It had the capacity to join a US sponsored peace process, yet it demanded a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US insistence on separate peace deals served to exclude Syria from any peace process. Peace could not be achieved in isolation, it was no longer an option. Rejectionism became the key to Syrian policy, and the pursuit of strategic parity became the strategy of its foreign policy.<sup>38</sup>

### ***1980s: Tactical rejectionism***<sup>39</sup>

Strategically, Syria signed its future according to the vagaries of Soviet fortune; the avenues for peace looked bleaker as Syria embraced tactical rejectionism,<sup>40</sup> and Israel's expansionist tendencies were reinforced by an ideologically driven US administration.<sup>41</sup> The polarisation of US-Soviet relations after the signing of the Camp David Accords, and the election of President Reagan were reflected in the escalating animosity between the Israelis and the Syrians.

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<sup>37</sup> Zisser, E., "Asad of Syria - the Leader and the Image," *Orient*, vol. 35, no. 2, June 1994, pp. 256.

<sup>38</sup> Khalidi, A., and H. Agha, "The Syrian Doctrine of Strategic Parity," in J. Kipper, and H. Saunders (eds.), *The Middle East in Global Perspective*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 186-218.

<sup>39</sup> This term has been borrowed from: Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 129.

<sup>40</sup> Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 129.

<sup>41</sup> Syria - Country Profile, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, no. 2, May 1981, pp. 25.

Syria's tactics changed after the withdrawal of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict. From a position of isolation, Syria attempted to stabilise the inequality in the balance of power between itself and Israel. The pursuit of strategic parity depended upon the strategic support of the Soviet Union, and Soviet compliance to Syrian objectives.<sup>42</sup>

The structural determinants of the region and the international environment edged Syria to embrace tactical rejectionism and a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union in 1980. The necessity was guided by structural forces, but the decisions were forged from a limited number of pragmatic options available to the Syrian elite.<sup>43</sup>

Syria's era of rejectionism commenced with the rejection of the Fahd Plan in 1981, on the pretext that it represented another partial peace settlement.<sup>44</sup> Syria actively sought to derail all possible peace initiatives, in the 1980s, which attempted to conclude a peace settlement without Syria. The old adage that the Middle East cannot go to war without Egypt, or create peace without Syria gained credence throughout the 1980s.

Syria used all available means to prevent the PLO and Jordan from reaching an understanding in their conflicts with Israel. Assassinations, military manoeuvres along the Jordanian border, and encouragement of the rebellion amongst the PLO factions

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<sup>42</sup> Freedman, R., "The Soviet Union and Syria: A Case Study of Soviet Policy," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 164.

<sup>43</sup> Freedman, R., "The Soviet Union and Syria: A Case Study of Soviet Policy," in M. Efrat, and J. Bercovitch (eds.), *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 164.

<sup>44</sup> Karsh, E., "Peace in the Middle East," *The Oxford International Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 38.

and suicide bombings in Lebanon were devices employed by the Syrian regime to destroy all conciliatory attempts towards Israel.<sup>45</sup>

Syria's decade of rejectionism ended in 1989, when it restored relations with Egypt and attempted to re-integrate into the emerging global order. As previously mentioned, the transformation of Soviet foreign policy forced Syria to moderate the terms of its international relations, and to engage in the New World Order.

Despite Syria's decade of tactical rejectionism, during the 1980s, Asad had continually indicated his willingness to enter into a peace process committed to achieving comprehensive peace. The pursuit of comprehensive peace had remained Syria's goal despite the tactical manoeuvres employed to destroy separate peace initiatives.

## **The Current Peace Process**

The peace process has undergone a number of transformations since its inception in Madrid, in October 1991. There have been two presidential elections in the US and two elections in Israel. Shamir's reluctance to attend the Madrid Conference appeared to have produced a stalemate during the talks. The election of the Rabin-Peres team, in June 1992, produced an era of optimism, as both men had discussed the concept of land for peace and territorial compromise. The election of President Clinton, in November 1992, and his assumption of office, in January 1993, was greeted with uncertainty by the Arab World, as the Bush administration had been less pro-Israeli than previous US administrations.<sup>46</sup> Notably, there were no leadership changes within the Arab World during this period.

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<sup>45</sup> Ironically, Begin's government shared Syria's disdain for PLO and Jordanian initiatives, especially those that included references to territorial compromise. See: Drysdale, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pp. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Seelye, T., "Syria and the Peace Process," *Middle East Policy*, vol. ii, no. 2, 1993, pp. 104-109.



The Clinton administration and the Rabin government co-operated closely through the offices of the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher. The US endorsement of Israeli policies within the region has led some observers to charge the Clinton team to have lost sight of objectivity.<sup>47</sup> The Syrians denounced the Clinton administration after it had used its veto to prevent the condemnation further Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup>

The assassination of Rabin in November 1995 caused the international community to reflect upon the role played by the Israeli leader, and the momentum of the peace process itself. The peace process, created by the structural forces of the post-Gulf War order, had survived the numerous changes of administrations and governments. The prospect of Netanyahu as an Israeli prime minister, however, appeared to challenge the fabric of the peace process.<sup>49</sup>

The prospect of reaching a comprehensive peace settlement has been the ambition of the Syrians since 1974, but the loss of the PLO and Jordan as negotiating allies has left Syria diplomatically isolated once again. Syria's isolation is unlike that of the 1980s, as it has not retracted its commitment to peace despite the obstacles placed in the path of progress. Syria's participation in the US sponsored peace process has remained resolute, although its demands have incrementally decreased according to necessity.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Kagian, J., "More of the Same at the UN," *Middle East International*, no. 544, 21 February 1997, pp. 6.

<sup>48</sup> User, G., "Land Confiscation in Arab Jerusalem," *Middle East International*, no. 500, 12 May 1995, pp. 3-4; Kidron, P., "Rabin Caves In On Land Confiscations," *Middle East International*, no. 501, 26 May 1995, pp. 3, and Neff, D., "The 30th Veto to Shield Israel," *Middle East International*, no. 501, 26 May 1995, pp. 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> Drake, L., "A Netanyahu Prime," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 58-69, and Usher, G., "Picture of War," *Middle East International*, no. 535, 4 October 1996, pp. 3-5.

<sup>50</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 48-49.

*The twists and turns of the peace process*

The peace process has taken a number of different routes since it began in October 1991. Each event in the region has had an impact on the rate and nature of negotiations. The US has, wherever possible, tried to apply pressure on the participating parties to maintain the momentum. The process has, however, been beset with problems starting with Israeli reluctance to attend the Madrid Conference, to the re-writing of the Oslo Accords in order to accommodate the demands of Netanyahu and the Hebron settlers.

In this section, I intend to examine Syria's role in the current peace process. Since the commencement of the Madrid Conference, the PLO and Jordan have followed Egypt's example and have signed separate peace treaties. There have been many developments in the path of peace since October 1991, but neither Syria nor Lebanon have concluded peace treaties with Israel. Syria's function in the peace process cannot, of course, be studied in isolation as all the components of the peace process are ultimately interconnected.

In attempting to examine the peace process, I shall use the following events as signposts to this study:

- the Madrid Peace Conference;
- the multilateral talks;
- the election of Rabin;
- the expulsion of 415 Palestinians;
- Operation Accountability;
- the Oslo Accords;
- the Hebron massacre;
- the Jordanian peace deal;

- the Wye Plantation talks
- Operation Grapes of Wrath;

These events seem to present themselves as natural obstacles or catalysts to the process.

### *The Madrid Peace Conference*

The Madrid Peace Conference presented the states of the Middle East with an opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement to their historic conflict. The international environment and the ensuing political conditions were ripe for a settlement. The US was in a position to exert its international and regional influence.

In the New World Order, the US could pursue its interests, in the Middle East, without the explicit cover of the UN. Thereupon, the formula for the peace process was not conducted under the aegis of the UN. The UN was reduced to observer status, and the Soviet Union/Russia played a nominal role in the negotiations.<sup>51</sup> The regional conditions have also provided the US with enough leverage to persuade the main adversaries of the conflict to attend the conference. The regional players were all weakened after the demise of the Soviet Union and the invasion of Kuwait.

The PLO's decision to support Saddam Hussein proved to be disastrous in terms of international legitimacy and finance. Irrespective of the international support it had gained throughout the *intifada*, the PLO lost its credibility through its support of Iraq.<sup>52</sup> 'Arafat's unequivocal backing of Saddam Hussein provided the US with the pretext to

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<sup>51</sup> Diab, M., "Have Syria and Israel Opted for Peace?," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 2, 1994, pp. 83.

<sup>52</sup> Karsh, E., "Peace in the Middle East," *The Oxford International Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 39.

exclude the PLO from direct representation at the Madrid Peace Conference. This gave the US administration sufficient flexibility to persuade the Israelis to attend.<sup>33</sup>

The Jordanian decision to abstain from pledging support for either side in the conflict left it vulnerable to regional and international pressures. Through this process, Jordan had alienated itself from the US and the Gulf Arab states. As a long term supporter of Jordan, the US felt betrayed by King Hussein's option, and was intent to punish Jordan. Jordan's acquiescence to attend the Madrid Peace Conference was indicative of its weakness; its conciliatory role towards the US also illustrated its desire for international rehabilitation.<sup>34</sup>

Due to Syria's participation in the liberation of Kuwait, Asad managed to accumulate sufficient diplomatic capital to occupy a prime position in the peace process.<sup>35</sup> For Syria, the invitation to attend the conference was a recognition of its centrality to the peace process. After years of patience and tactical manoeuvring, Asad had achieved his goal of engaging in an international conference whose foundation was built upon UN Resolutions 242, 338 and 425.<sup>36</sup> In an interview with the newspaper *Al-Akhbar*, Asad noted his appreciation of the way the regional and international attitudes had changed: "... the opportunities for peace have become better than at any other time before

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<sup>33</sup> Neff, D., "Settlements and Guarantees: The US Threatens Linkage," *Middle East International*, no. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 3-4, Kidron, P., "Consternation in Israel," *Middle East International*, no. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 4-5, and Kidron, P., "Sullen Acceptance," *Middle East International*, no. 411, 25 October 1991, pp. 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "Still in Two Minds," *Middle East International*, no. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 8 and Islam, S., "Hussein's Plea for Jordan," *Middle East International*, no. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 158.

<sup>36</sup> Butter, D., "Asad Treads Cautiously," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 37, no. 40, 8 October 1993, pp. 3.

because of the current international climate and also because of the development and increase in the number of those desiring peace even inside Israel itself."<sup>57</sup>

Unlike Jordan and the PLO, Syria's regional position improved during the tactical re-orientation of the second Gulf War.<sup>58</sup> However, this did not negate its vulnerability to the regional hegemony of Israel, or the international hegemony of the US.<sup>59</sup> Syria's attendance of the Madrid Conference, under less than ideal conditions, was a consequence of the change in the world order; and Syria's participation signified its adjustment to the New World Order.<sup>60</sup>

### *Syria's participation in the conference*

Secretary of State Baker travelled to Damascus in July 1991 in order to secure the Syrian seal of approval for the conference proposal. Syria was the first state to accept Baker's proposals to attend the Madrid session.<sup>61</sup> After Syria's acceptance, of the conference proposal, the rest of the Arab states followed suit and agreed to attend.<sup>62</sup>

For Syria, its diplomatic capital was at its maximum level; the second Gulf War had helped to ingratiate the regime with the US administration, and the diplomatic weight of Egypt and Saudi Arabia helped it to counter-balance the strategic alliance between Israel and the US. Israel had the upper hand in the balance of power; Syria's pursuit of

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<sup>57</sup> Butter, D., "Asad Treads Cautiously," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 37, no. 40, 8 October 1993, pp. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Freedman, L., "Syrian Initiative Increases Regional Risks for Assad," *The Times*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 157.

<sup>60</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 158.

<sup>61</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1125, A/8, 16 July 1991.

<sup>62</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1126, A/1, 17 July 1991.

strategic parity was over. Henceforward, Syria sought a new strategy based upon the Egyptian experience.

In order to combat US pressure, Syria conducted a co-ordinating session in Damascus on 23 October 1991.<sup>63</sup> Asad attempted to dissuade the other Arab parties from attending the multilateral round of talks. Multilateral talks, Asad argued, would form the first stage of normalisation prior to Israeli commitment to peace.<sup>64</sup> According to the Syrian stance, the Arab delegations could only resist US diplomatic pressure from a united platform. Asad had paid the price for Egypt's separate peace treaty in 1979; another separate peace deal would leave Syria isolated and regionally weakened.

For five decades, the public in the Arab World had been fed anti-Israeli propaganda. With its legitimacy resting on its Arab credentials, therefore, Syria's agreement to participate in the peace process required public justification. The Syrian public had to be prepared for the language of peace. Such a move demanded an incremental introduction of new notions, such as honourable peace, and the peace of the brave. Nevertheless, it was crucial for Syria to appear tenacious and courageous in negotiating with the Israelis. The opening ceremony of the Madrid Peace Conference illustrated this point; the politics of diplomatic language and personal affectations relied upon the rhetoric of distrust and animosity to fulfil Syrian perceptions.<sup>65</sup>

Before the Madrid Conference started, Syrian Foreign Minister, Shar'a, had announced his refusal to shake the hand of the Israeli delegate, he said:

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<sup>63</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1213, A/2, 26 October 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 49.

<sup>65</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "The Pluses and the Minuses," *Middle East International*, no. 412, 8 November 1991, pp. 5.

*This hand that you would like me to shake is very guilty, because it is a hand which occupies our land, ignores Palestinian national rights and we have been suffering from this occupation, and the Palestinians in the occupied territories have been suffering from constant repression.*<sup>66</sup>

The exchanges between Syrian Foreign Minister Shar'a and Israeli Prime Minister Shamir were acrimonious as each delegate accused the other of acts of tyranny and terrorism.<sup>67</sup> Although the charges were made, they were most probably created for public consumption to satisfy both domestic constituencies.

During the opening sessions in Madrid, Israeli Prime Minister, Shamir, refused to commit Israel to the land for peace formula demanded by the Syrians. The Syrians believed that Shamir's intransigence was designed to edge the Syrians out of the peace process. The inauguration of a new settlement on the Golan,<sup>68</sup> and the Knesset's timely approval of a non-binding resolution declaring the Golan non-negotiable were also believed to have been measures to frustrate the Syrians.<sup>69</sup> Syrian withdrawal from the peace process would have served the international interests of the Israeli state, and satisfied the perception of the Israeli public.

Syria's tolerance of these acts of belligerency demonstrated its regional and international vulnerability. The significance of the peace process to Syria's regional position was becoming apparent. In the past, Syria had enjoyed enough leverage from its partnership with the Soviet Union to remain steadfast with its demands. Without the backing of a major patron, Syria's diplomatic position was much more fluid and open

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<sup>66</sup> Neff, D., "The Make-or-Break Process Begins in Madrid," *Middle East International*, no. 411, 25 October 1991, pp. 3.

<sup>67</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1220, E/17, 4 November 1991

<sup>68</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1225, A/1, 9 November 1991.

<sup>69</sup> Muir, J., "Syrians Refuse the Bait," *Middle East International*, no. 413, 22 November 1991, pp. 5-6.

to pressure. An exit from the peace process was not a realistic option, but points of substance remained unnegotiable.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Procedures***

Asad made a number of concessions on the issue of procedure, but the substance of the peace process remained the same. He considered the terms of reference as balanced; they did not fulfil all of Syria's demands, but they reflected the political realities of the time. This was deemed to be the optimum moment for reaching an agreement satisfactory to all parties involved.<sup>71</sup>

At the expense of procedural details, Syria attended the Madrid Conference. Asad had been calling for an international conference, since 1974, conducted under the auspices of the UN with binding resolutions based on UN Resolution 242, and the principle of land for peace formula. Attending the conference required Syria rescinding from this position. President Asad received a US letter of assurance stipulating that the Madrid Peace Conference, and ensuing peace process, would be based upon UN Resolutions 242 and 338, but it was not a binding commitment.<sup>72</sup>

Although the Madrid Conference was not an international conference, the presence of Europe and the UN as observers added to the prestige of the event. Asad commented:

*As for the UN role, it took me some time before I was convinced that the group of elements together constituted an adequate UN role - the observers and the Resolutions through which the UN exists (in the process), and that any agreements would be ratified by the Security Council. Also calling the UN an observer just means it has no vote and*

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<sup>70</sup> Yorke, V., "Prospects for Peace: The Syrian Dimension," *Middle East International*, no. 414, 6 December 1991, pp. 16-17.

<sup>71</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1126, A/3, 17 July 1991.

<sup>72</sup> *Mid-East Mirror*, 15 October 1991.



*this is not a voting conference; an observer takes part in discussions and activities.*<sup>73</sup>

The absence of direct PLO representation was accepted by Asad as he commented: "everything will be done in agreement with the Palestinians and nothing will be done in isolation from them".<sup>74</sup> Asad added in an American television interview, on 18 September 1991, that Israel wouldn't have peace without settling the Palestinian problem: "If we leave any part of the problem unresolved, there will be no stable peace in the region ... The Arab problem is basically a single problem, dividing it will not help".<sup>75</sup>

### ***Palestinian participation***

The Palestinian issue was crucial to Syria's role in the peace process. As part of the comprehensive solution, the simultaneous resolution of the Palestinian issue was commensurate to the fulfilment of Syrian interests. The liberation of Golan was also contingent upon the liberation of all the occupied territories, and the restoration of Palestinian rights. The issues were all interdependent, and a separate Syrian peace was not part of the agenda. Asad commented: "Had Syria thought of its own interest only ... it would have achieved a unilateral solution ... But it did not and will not do this. The Golan was originally occupied in a battle waged for Palestine."<sup>76</sup>

The absence of independent Palestinian participation from previous peace schemes had traditionally prevented Syria from engaging in regional or international peace

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<sup>73</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/1128, A/1-A/2, 19 July 1991.

<sup>74</sup> Muir, J., "The Arabs Fall Into Line," *Middle East International*, no. 405, 26 July 1991, pp. 4-5.

<sup>75</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "Still in Two Minds," *Middle East International*, no. 409, 27 September 1991, pp. 8.

<sup>76</sup> FBIS, 8 May 1990, pp. 31.

discussions. Syria, in its pursuit to maximise its regional power, needed to incorporate the Palestinian issue within its sphere of influence. The inclusion of Palestinian interests under the umbrella of Jordan, especially in the form of the 'Arafat-Hussein Accord in 1985,<sup>77</sup> militated against Syrian hegemony over Mashreq affairs. In terms of extending Syrian influence and acquiring legitimacy from its pan-Arab role, the Palestinian issue remained central to Syrian foreign policy.

The demands of the New World Order, however, forced a change in Syria's perception of a Palestinian role. The US acceptance of Israel's demand that the PLO could not represent the Palestinians was imposed on the peace formula. Due to the prevailing international conditions, Syria was unable to resist such an imposition. The inclusion of Palestinian delegates in the Jordanian negotiating team signified another procedural concession from the Syrians.<sup>78</sup>

The structure of the peace process, built upon the concept of bilateral discussions, produced sufficient space for the Israelis to pursue separate peace deals. The Syrians were bargaining for a final status agreement whilst the Palestinians, under the ambit of the Jordanian team, were negotiating for an interim agreement. This in-built discrepancy set structural fault lines that the Palestinians and Syrians were unable to reconcile.<sup>79</sup>

The first round of talks, which began on 30 October 1991 in Madrid, served as an introduction to the peace process. It represented the first stage of the US-led initiative,

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<sup>77</sup> Brand, L., "Asad's Syria and the PLO: Coincidence or Conflict of Interests?," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. XIV, no. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 23-25.

<sup>78</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 160-161.

<sup>79</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 159.

and for the first time brought delegates from Israel, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon to the same negotiating table.<sup>80</sup>

The perennial rift between Asad and 'Arafat was bridged as a matter of co-ordinating Palestinian and Syrian positions on 19 October 1991.<sup>81</sup> Their meeting was a necessary part of the reconciliation between the two leaders; their last meeting took place in 1983 after Syria had encouraged the Abu Musa faction to seize control of Fatah and depose 'Arafat as its leader. Although the PLO was not officially attending the peace process, the Palestinian delegation was co-ordinating with 'Arafat.<sup>82</sup> During his visit to Damascus, 'Arafat had pledged his support for Syria's position in the multilateral talks.<sup>83</sup>

### *The multilateral talks*

Although Syria had made procedural concessions to attend the first round, it had refused to commit itself to attending the multilateral round of talks unless Israel announced its willingness to return the Golan Heights to Syria. In an interview with Syrian Arab Television, Muwaffaq al-Allaf, the head of the Syrian negotiating team, pointed out the incongruity of the multilateral talks: "While Israel is occupying the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza and southern Lebanon, it wants to sit down for talks with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians to discuss economic co-operation, water-sharing, and the environment."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1218, E/13-E/24, 1 November 1991.

<sup>81</sup> Andoni, L., "A Leap into Darkness," *Middle East International*, no. 411, 25 October 1991, pp. 4.

<sup>82</sup> See: Ashrawi, H., *This Side of Peace: A Personal Account*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

<sup>83</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1209, A/4, 22 October 1991.

<sup>84</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1226, A/9, 11 November 1991.

The multilateral round of talks were designed to incorporate the GCC states and Egypt into a round of regional talks. Syria considered the multilateral talks constituted a process towards normalising the relations between the region's states before the advent of peace. The prospect of economic co-operation was to dominate the agenda alongside the issues of water and security. Syria refused to attend the multilateral talks on the basis that regional co-operation could not be discussed before Israel made a commitment to the peace.<sup>85</sup>

Despite Syria's attempt to discourage the Arab parties from joining the multilateral talks, eleven states attended the multilateral talks in Moscow during the second round of talks in January 1992.<sup>86</sup> The unity Syria deemed necessary for a strong bargaining position dissipated as the Jordanians and the Palestinians joined the multilateral talks. The process towards normalisation without a firm commitment to the nature of peace had started. This division amongst the Arab ranks caused the Syrians great consternation, and indicated the fractious nature of the Arab policy.

Understanding the inequitable pressure placed upon those front-line states attending the talks, Syria chose to criticise the US for its lack of persuasion placed upon the Israelis to accept a UN role in the talks. The Israelis were able to attend the multilateral talks without making concessions to UN participation in the regional discussions, or over its principles on the selection of Palestinian candidates for the discussions. Syria recognised an emerging scenario where it would be excluded from the peace process. Its refusal to participate in the multilateral talks continued, as Asad argued that such talks acknowledged Israel's legitimacy without achieving any form of peace.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 49.

<sup>86</sup> Butt, G., "Flagging Arab Spirits," *Middle East International*, no. 418, 7 February 1992, pp. 4-5.

<sup>87</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 49.

Syria refused to attend the Casablanca Conference in November 1994,<sup>88</sup> the first regional economic conference to include Israel, on the basis that it legitimised Israel's regional role before a comprehensive peace had been established. Farouq Shar'a justified Syria's refusal by stating:

*If we are not going to attend the Casablanca Conference, it is because we care about regional co-operation and development, and we believe that holding such conferences, holding multinational, multilateral talks before achieving genuine peace in the region, would not give the results these multilateral talks and international conferences would yield after being 100% sure that peace is going to be established in the region.<sup>89</sup>*

### ***The election of Rabin***

The election of Yitzhak Rabin, as Israeli prime minister in June 1992, was welcomed by the Arab delegations in the peace process.<sup>90</sup> The Israeli Labour Party had been associated with the land for peace formula, and was thought to possess a less obstructionist attitude to the peace process. However, it had been a Likud government that had concluded peace with Egypt in the 1970s; moreover, Rabin's reputation had been built upon his *intifada*-crushing personality.<sup>91</sup>

The election of Rabin was accompanied by widespread speculation about a Syrian-Israeli deal. It is easy to deny the rumours in retrospect, but diplomatic gossip

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<sup>88</sup> Dajani, L., "The Casablanca Conference - Winners and Losers," *Middle East International*, no. 488, 18 November 1994, pp. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Nader, G., "Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa Reaffirms Peace for Golan Withdrawal," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 17.

<sup>90</sup> Nader, G., "Imagining Peace with Syria: Changes Show the Country and Regime Are Prepared for Peace," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Kidron, P., "Yitzhak Rabin, 1922-1995," *Middle East International*, no. 513, 17 November 1995, pp. 4.

emanated from a variety of sources.<sup>92</sup> The question of a Syrian-Israeli separate deal ran against the Syrian national interest.

Concluding a separate peace deal may have precluded Syria from extending its sphere of influence over its Arab neighbours. Such a deal would have isolated Syria from the remaining peace process, and divorced its influence over the Palestinian, Jordanian, and Lebanese tracks. Syria's role as the hegemonic leader of the Greater Syrian states could have been contained in a similar manner to Egyptian hegemony in the Middle East. The Syrians believed that inequitable progress could be made in the bilateral talks, but Syria's pledge to comprehensive peace meant that a peace treaty could not be concluded until all diplomatic tracks were satisfied.<sup>93</sup>

The sixth round of talks of the Madrid Conference opened, on 24 August 1992, with Rabin as prime minister. There was a considerable reduction in pre-talk animosity between the Syrian and Israeli sides. Syria's spokeswoman, Bushra Kanafani, told the press that the word 'comprehensive' was more acceptable to the Rabin team, but the substance of the talks had not significantly altered.<sup>94</sup> Israel's chief negotiator with the Syrians, Itamar Rabinovich, also noted a change in atmosphere and a reduction in tension between the two sides - the peace talks were then assuming a business-like tone.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> These sources will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>93</sup> Neriah, J., "Progress and Challenges on the Syrian Track: An Israeli Perspective on the Negotiations," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 4, May/June 1995, pp. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Hallaj, M., "Round Six: Hope Then Disappointment," *Middle East International*, no. 433, 11 September 1992, pp. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Neriah, J., "Progress and Challenges on the Syrian Track: An Israeli Perspective on the Negotiations," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 4, May/June 1995, pp. 10.

In spite of issuing conflicting and ambivalent references to the Golan Heights, it was possible to detect room for manoeuvre within the diplomatic language of the new Labour government. This feature had been lacking in the previous rounds of talks.<sup>96</sup> A major distinction between the Likud government and the Labour government was the acceptance, by Rabin's team, of the applicability of UN Resolution 242 to the talks.<sup>97</sup> Although there was no agreement on the meaning of Resolution 242, the Golan was included in its ambit, which constituted a movement from the Israeli side.

Both the Israeli and the Syrian negotiating teams had to satisfy their domestic constituencies. The Israelis had to placate the settlers in the Golan who were predominantly Labour supporters, and who stood to challenge the policies of the state.<sup>98</sup> The credibility of the Syrian state rested upon the total unequivocal liberation of Golan; Asad has built his reputation upon the attainment of this objective.

The second half of the sixth round of the bilateral talks was opened with a Syrian proposal that offered a peace treaty in return for the total evacuation of the Golan Heights.<sup>99</sup> Israel demanded to know the terms of the peace treaty, displaying its desire for normalisation which would include: an exchange of embassies and open borders. Israel's response disappointed the Syrian negotiating team. These requests were

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<sup>96</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1465, A/2-A/3, 21 August 1992, and ME/1469, A/1-A/2, 26 August 1992.

<sup>97</sup> Ehteshami, A., and Hinnebusch, R., *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 165.

<sup>98</sup> Kidron, P., "242 But Not an Inch," *Middle East International*, no. 433, 11 September 1992, pp. 4-5.

<sup>99</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 165-166.

considered to be unreasonable as Israel had not committed itself to the total withdrawal from the Golan.<sup>100</sup>

In an interview with the Voice of Israel radio, Itamar Rabinovich, the chief negotiator of the Israeli negotiating team, reiterated Israel's reluctance to discuss the extent of withdrawal from the Golan:

*We neither voiced nor hinted at any willingness to accept the Syrian demand for a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. We came to the current round of talks with renewed formulations. These contain Israel's clarification that our acceptance of Resolution 242 means that the withdrawal element would be included in the context of a peace treaty, if and when it is signed, when Israel's demands are met. However, Israel accepts Resolution 242 as talking about a withdrawal from territories, rather than a withdrawal from the territories.<sup>101</sup>*

The Israelis refused to follow the Sinai formula for the Golan. In particular, they wanted to avoid the cold peace inherited from the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979.<sup>102</sup>

The chief Syrian negotiator, Muwaffaq al-Allaf, expressed his frustration with the Israeli negotiating team: "They are not talking at all about withdrawal ... we are not ready to discuss any further point with Israel unless Israel discusses with us the question of total withdrawal from our territory."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Hallaj, M., "Peace Talks: the Illusion of Optimism Exposed," *Middle East International*, no. 434, 25 September 1992, pp. 3.

<sup>101</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1522, A/2, 27 October 1992.

<sup>102</sup> Jansen, G., "Syria's Bottom Line," *Middle East International*, no. 434, 25 September 1992, pp. 5.

<sup>103</sup> Hallaj, M., "Peace Talks: The Illusion of Optimism Exposed," *Middle East International*, no. 434, 25 September 1992, pp. 3.



The nature of the peace remained uncertain, at this stage of the discussion, as the Syrians refused to speculate on the prospect of warm peace. According to Jansen, the Syrians had admitted in private that partial withdrawal would be acceptable if Syrian sovereignty was acknowledged over the entire Golan. An international buffer force and demilitarised zones would be a prerequisite for this form of agreement. The statements were disclosed behind closed doors and only fuelled expectations.<sup>104</sup>

Israel repeated its demand for Syria's acceptance of the principle of a separate peace treaty. The idea was not an issue of discussion for the Syrians. Prior to the seventh round of talks on 29 October 1992, amidst endless rumours and speculation, 'Arafat expressed his concern that Syria and Israel were moving towards a separate peace treaty, and hence leaving the Palestinians at the mercy of the Israelis.<sup>105</sup>

Asad responded to 'Arafat's apprehensions by reassuring the Palestinian leader that Syria was committed to total peace and total withdrawal. Comprehensive peace based on the formula of land for peace remained the objective of Syria. As a gesture to Rabin, Asad used the term the *peace of the brave* to illustrate Syria's intention to achieve peace. Unity was the way to achieve the peace of the brave. As an encouragement, during the seventh round of talks, Rabin conceded that "We will negotiate withdrawal in the Golan, but not withdrawal from the Golan."<sup>106</sup>

The extent of Syria's pledge to support the Palestinians was indicated in its convening of a rejectionist conference in Damascus, in January 1992, where ten Palestinian

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<sup>104</sup> Jansen, G., "Syria's Bottom Line," *Middle East International*, no. 434, 25 September 1992, pp. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Hallaj, M., "The Seventh Round of the Bilateral Peace Talks," *Middle East International*, no. 437, 6 November 1992, pp. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Hallaj, M., "The Seventh Round of the Bilateral Peace Talks," *Middle East International*, no. 437, 6 November 1992, pp. 5.

factions criticised the Palestinian delegation for attending the multilateral talks.<sup>107</sup> Syrian and Palestinian interests were ultimately linked and could not be divorced from each other. Asad's accommodation of the rejectionist factions served to strengthen his bargaining position with both the Arabs and the Israelis. Proxy groups had long formed part of Syria's tactic for extending its influence beyond its limited resource base.<sup>108</sup>

### *The expulsion of 415 Palestinians*

The expulsion of 415 Palestinians, from the occupied territories to Lebanon in December 1992, stalled the peace talks. The expulsion of 415 alleged Hamas supporters was conducted without regard to international law. The accused were deported without trial and left to face the hardship of the Lebanese winter in tents and temporary shelters. Israel's actions contravened the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention to which it was a signatory.<sup>109</sup>

International condemnation came from the UN Security Council, the European Union, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Lebanon's response was to deny entry to the deportees, thus exerting pressure on Israel to accept UN Resolution 799, which called on Israel to allow the return of the deportees.<sup>110</sup>

The expulsion produced many more contradictions to the peace process. The Arab states refused to continue the peace talks. Their demands amounted to the return of the

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<sup>107</sup> Butt, G., "Flagging Arab Spirits," *Middle East International*, no. 418, 7 February 1992, pp. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Syria's support of the ten rejectionist Palestinian groups, Hizbollah, Amal, and allegedly the PKK has given Syria a leverage over its more omnipotent enemies.

<sup>109</sup> Baram, H., "The Expulsion of the Palestinians: Rabin Shows His True Colours," *Middle East International*, no. 441, 8 January 1993, pp. 3.

<sup>110</sup> Editorial, "An Act of Heartless Cruelty," *Middle East International*, no. 441, 8 January 1993, pp. 2.

415 expelled Palestinians, to the occupied territories, as a condition for resuming the negotiations.<sup>111</sup>

In the midst of the deportee crisis, Bill Clinton assumed the presidency of the US. In selecting his team, Clinton appointed Warren Christopher, as Secretary of State, as a replacement for Baker. The intervention of Clinton's new administration seemed to have added a new impetus to the peace process at a time when the Israeli deportation could have derailed it.<sup>112</sup>

The new direction of the US team pushed for Syria to return to the negotiating table; this venture was also successful in bringing the Palestinians back to the table, as they were fearful of being excluded from the process. Syria displayed uncharacteristic ambivalence in its attitude towards the plight of the deportees and called for the resumption of talks. For Syria, the peace process had developed a momentum of its own and isolated incidents, such as the expulsion of the Palestinians, were not sufficient to halt the process.<sup>113</sup>

After meeting Christopher in Damascus, on 21 February 1993, the Syrian Foreign Minister, al-Shar'a, said: "the goal of the peace process is broader and more important" than the issue of the Palestinian deportees in Lebanon".<sup>114</sup> This suggested that the process itself was more important than the constituent parts. Syria's stipulation of

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<sup>111</sup> Kagian, J., "Retreat from 799: Security Council Bends to US Pressure," *Middle East International*, no. 444, 19 February 1993, pp. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 166.

<sup>113</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 166.

<sup>114</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1620, A/1, 23 February 1993.

incorporating all parties, and co-ordinating Arab diplomatic unity appeared to have changed track.

A potential change in Syrian foreign policy presented a direct threat to the Palestinian negotiating team. Syria's diplomatic weight could have persuaded the other participants to attend the talks despite the Palestinian absence. In the twist and turn of the peace process, Syria denied that it was making progress with Israel on the fast track. Al-Shar'a replied to the rumours in an interview published in the *Le Figaro*, on 26 February 1993: "If we wanted a separate peace, we could have done it years ago. If more attention is paid to the Syrian-Israeli negotiations than to the others, that is because there can be no peace without Syria."<sup>115</sup>

#### ***Rabin and Clinton***

Rabin's first visit to the White House guaranteed continued US support for Israel. More importantly, Rabin announced his commitment to peace based upon the principles of UN Resolutions 242 and 338. The change in both administrations seemed to precipitate a more active role for the US in the peace process. Clinton appointed many pro-Israeli candidates to his administration; the US role in the peace process then, looked less favourable than under the Bush administration. The Syrian-Israeli peace was placed on the fast track by both Rabin and Christopher, whilst the Palestinian track received less attention as the issue of the deportees stayed paramount.<sup>116</sup>

In an apparent change of US and Israeli policy, the peace process started to assume characteristics once displayed by the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. Israel targeted

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<sup>115</sup> Butt, G., "Speaking with Two Voices," *Middle East International*, no. 445, 5 March 1993, pp. 7-8.

<sup>116</sup> Neff, D., "Clinton, Rabin, and a Deal with Syria," *Middle East International*, no. 446, 19 March 1993, pp. 3.

Syria for a separate peace; it believed that peace with its northern neighbour would neutralise the Palestinian track.<sup>117</sup> Rabin acknowledged that a fundamental change had taken place in Syrian-Israeli relations. Asad's commitment to peace was becoming more credible, and his posture against the rise of Islamic militancy made the prospect of peace with Syria even more attractive.

Syria's insistence that the Palestinians attend the ninth round of talks, before the fulfilment of UN Resolution 799, demonstrated the intensity of its commitment to the peace process.<sup>118</sup> The Americans and the Syrians encouraged the Palestinians to take part in the talks. The structural determinants seemed to push the Palestinian delegation towards peace although the deportees felt betrayed, and the supporters of Hamas in the territories deplored the official Palestinian position.

### *Operation Accountability*

Operation Accountability was the codename for Israel's response to Hizbollah activities in south Lebanon. Retaliation for the Katyushas, fired into northern Israel by Hizbollah, was severe.<sup>119</sup> It took the form of collective punishment, and was inflicted on the civilians living in the south Lebanon region. The response was characteristic of Israeli reprisals. It was estimated that, in the Israeli bombing raids, at least 130 people were killed, 450 were wounded, and 400,000 fled their homes.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Neff, D., "Clinton Dangles Carrots for the Palestinians," *Middle East International*, no. 448, 16 April 1993, pp. 3.

<sup>118</sup> Butt, G., "Arab Intentions Unclear," *Middle East International*, no. 448, 16 April 1993, pp. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Edge, S., and D. Butter, "Can the US Pull Peace from War?," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 37, no. 32, 13 August 1993, pp. 2-3.

<sup>120</sup> Muir, J., "Rabin's Revenge Exacts an Appalling Toll," *Middle East International*, no. 456, 6 August 1993, pp. 3.

Israel's objective was to eliminate the Hizbollah threat, and to challenge the cohesion of the Lebanese state. Israel sought to exploit the divisions within the Lebanese state by challenging its sovereignty over south Lebanon. The Lebanese government, however, was resolute in its response to Israel as it permitted Hizbollah to continue its resistance to the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon.<sup>121</sup>

The south Lebanese border provides Syria and Israel with an arena for confrontation whereas the Syrian-Israeli border along the Golan Heights is governed by the disengagement agreements of 1974.<sup>122</sup> As an instrument of Syrian political pressure, Hizbollah has acted as a bargaining chip in Syria's negotiations with Israel.<sup>123</sup>

If a peace agreement is reached between Syria and Israel, Hizbollah may lose its utility to Syria. Realising this, it has started to integrate itself into the constitutional politics of Lebanon's economic and political reconstruction. Until such an agreement is signed, Hizbollah, will remain one of the Syrian regime's bargaining chips in regional politics and in the peace process.

Hizbollah, as a revolutionary organisation, has proved to be very useful to Syria's regional goals. Syria has been effective in persuading Hizbollah to act according to its interests, through the regulation of arms control. Syria's special relationship with Hizbollah, orchestrated through the offices of Iran, has enabled it to influence the group's behaviour.<sup>124</sup> As a proxy of Syria and Iran, Hizbollah exerts timely pressure

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<sup>121</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1755, A/5, 31 July 1993.

<sup>122</sup> Moore, J., "An Israeli-Syrian Peace Treaty: So Close and Yet So Far," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 3, 1994, pp. 61-62.

<sup>123</sup> Ma'oz, M., *Syria and Israel: From War to Peace-making*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 225.

<sup>124</sup> Agha, H., A. Khalidi, *Syria and Iran: Rivalry and Cooperation*, (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 19-21.

on Israel; its revolutionary philosophy, emboldened by resistance, acts as continuous irritant to the Israelis.<sup>125</sup>

Although stretching Iranian support, Asad had sufficient leverage over Hizbollah to assist US mediation between Israel and Hizbollah. Despite the death of Syrian soldiers from Israel's reprisal raids, Asad exercised restraint, and exerted pressure on Hizbollah to suspend their attacks on northern Israel. Syrian intervention produced a climate in which a cease-fire agreement was reached through the offices of the US.<sup>126</sup>

Syrian diplomatic intervention achieved three advantages:

- (i) it quelled the intensity of the conflict;
- (ii) it helped to produce an understanding between Hizbollah and Israel;
- (iii) it allowed Asad to cultivate diplomatic credit with the US.<sup>127</sup>

Syrian mediation was rewarded by a more constructive US role, albeit temporary, which brought about a change in the content of the Syrian-Israeli dialogue. Syria's constraining role in south Lebanon had indicated its readiness to control Hizbollah; moreover, it gained the Syrian state credit from both the US administration and the Israeli government.

The prospect for progress on the Syrian-Israeli peace track was beginning to improve. Syrian and Israeli intransigence was incrementally and symmetrically receding, whilst both sides jostled for their diplomatic advantage. The continuing ambivalence in their public statements was most probably aimed at satisfying their respective public

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<sup>125</sup> Edge, S., and D. Butter, "Can the US Pull Peace from War?," *Middle East Economic Digest*, vol. 37, no. 32, 13 August 1993, pp. 2-3.

<sup>126</sup> Baram, H., "The Crime and Its Reward," *Middle East International*, no. 456, 6 August 1993, pp. 4.

<sup>127</sup> Baram, H., "The Crime and Its Reward," *Middle East International*, no. 456, 6 August 1993, pp. 4-5.

opinion. These contradictions between public statements and the steps taken on the peace track countenanced public criticism as the two sides drew closer to each other.

In abstract terms, not openly admitted between the two sides, the concepts of normalisation and withdrawal had been used simultaneously. Neither side was willing to concede the extent of normalisation or withdrawal, but a formula for promoting Syrian-Israeli peace was in the making.

Meanwhile, Syria was careful not to contradict its pledge to achieving comprehensive peace and stated that any such agreement would not be signed or implemented until the Palestinian, Jordanian, and Lebanese tracks had reached their natural conclusions.<sup>128</sup> However, the announcement of the Oslo Accords and the Declaration of Principles, conceived in private talks between the PLO and Israel under Norwegian guidance, in August 1993, abruptly halted progress on the Syrian-Israeli track.<sup>129</sup>

### *The Oslo Accords*

The announcement that the PLO had reached a secret agreement with the Israelis stunned the Arab World. The world media greeted the news with applause and praised Rabin and 'Arafat for their courage in striking such a deal. The Syrian president remained mute.

The Gaza-Jericho First Plan came against the backdrop of a dissatisfied Palestinian delegation, who were increasingly losing faith in the leadership of the PLO. Furthermore, the PLO's decision to support Saddam Hussein during the second Gulf War had been financially disastrous. Wracked with acute leadership and financial

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<sup>128</sup> *Washington Report*, vol. XII, no. 2, August 1993, pp. 6.

<sup>129</sup> Seale, P., "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 34-35.



crises, the PLO was losing its authority and legitimacy amongst its members and constituency.<sup>130</sup>

The Oslo Accords transformed 'Arafat's precarious position as leader of the Palestinian struggle for statehood into a victor and popular leader again. The contents of the deal, although lacking in numerous areas, were perceived to be the first step towards achieving statehood. 'Arafat's constituency within the occupied territories initially pledged their support for the Accords. The PLO, particularly 'Arafat's Fatah, had regained its legitimacy amongst the West Bank and Gazan population.<sup>131</sup>

Prior to the signing of the Accords, the PLO and Israel agreed to formally recognise each other. The Gaza-Jericho First Plan granted the Palestinians self-rule in the occupied territories at the beginning of a five year interim period. At the beginning of the third year, the issue of Jerusalem, the status of Israeli settlements, and the fate of the Palestinian refugees were to be negotiated.<sup>132</sup>

After the PLO-Israeli deal had become public knowledge, 'Arafat and his Foreign Minister, Farouq Qaddumi, visited Syria to seek Asad's approval. The move made by the Palestinian leader and his team had shocked the Syrian government.<sup>133</sup> The decision to reach a separate agreement within the ambit of secret discussions was reminiscent of Sadat's style of negotiating. Asad had once again been circumvented in the peace process, and left to observe with a diminishing sense of influence and importance.

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<sup>130</sup> Andoni, L., "Arafat and the PLO in Crisis," *Middle East International*, no. 457, 28 August 1993, pp. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Usher, G., "Why Gaza Mostly Says Yes," *Middle East International*, no. 459, 24 September 1993, pp. 19-20.

<sup>132</sup> Butt, G., "The Deal That Could Change the Middle East," *Middle East International*, no. 458, 10 September 1993, pp. 3-4.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raslan Allush, 27 June 1994.

This time, Syria could not afford to adopt rejectionism, as it had done after the conclusion of the Camp David Accords. Syria's options were no longer so durable; the nature of the New World Order, and the predominance of the US in the Middle East militated against Syrian rejectionism. In addition, the collapse of the East European political systems, and the crippled state of Iraq, stood as constant reminders, to Syria, that power-politics determined the co-ordinates of the New World Order.

The PLO-Israeli accord signified a defining moment in Syria's perception of the Palestinian question; it left two distinct impressions. Firstly, it showed the potency of the New World Order and its impact upon the Syrian state. In particular, it indicated Syria's inability to resist the conclusion of another separate peace deal. Secondly, the Syrian public, after five decades of supporting the Palestinian cause was ready to accept a separation of Syrian and Palestinian interests.<sup>134</sup> The burden of supporting the Palestinians had left a heavy toll upon the Syrian population, in terms of personal sacrifice and material wealth.<sup>135</sup>

Until this point in history, Asad had referred to the Palestinians as southern cousins, and believed that the Palestinian cause belonged to the Arab nation, and not exclusively to 'Arafat or Fatah. Since 1970, the nature of Syrian-Palestinian relations have been determined by the competition between the pro-Arafat factions within the PLO, and Syria's attempt to assert its influence over PLO foreign policy. Syria's policy in Lebanon during 1983 provides one such case.

As referred to in chapter five, Syria's encouragement of the fratricidal conflict between the pro-'Arafat and anti-'Arafat Palestinian factions in Lebanon was justified as part of

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<sup>134</sup> Ehteshami, A., and Hinnebusch, R., *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 178.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with a Syrian journalist in Damascus, September 1995.

Syria's strategy to unify the Arab position. Syria's means to control and influence Palestinian activities were frequently justified by the ends.

Syria's regional credibility, as the co-ordinator of Arab affairs, was under review after the PLO had signed a separate deal. Syrian influence over Jordan and Lebanon was believed to be unequivocal. On 27 December 1993, the Syrian Foreign Minister delivered a message to King Hussein from President Asad, stressing the necessity for the co-ordination of action between Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria with the aim of isolating 'Arafat. Shar'a was also reported to have issued a warning to Jordan to refrain from embarking on a separate peace process. King Hussein had agreed not to sign any agreement with Israel before the Syrians and the Lebanese were ready to conclude peace with the Israelis.<sup>136</sup>

The Palestinian deal may have served the interests of the Palestinians within Gaza and the West Bank, but it emasculated the collective Arab bargaining position. The Palestinian issue had been central to the peace process. The Arab-Israeli conflict, irrespective of the Golan Heights and south Lebanon, was based on the creation of the Israeli state and the displacement of the Palestinian population. 'Arafat had tried to secure the future of a Palestinian state through an autonomy agreement that was distinct from the other bilateral tracks in the peace process.

Israel, according to the Syrians, had successfully divided the existing unity between the Arab states. With the conclusion of 'Arafat and Rabin's deal, the issue of Palestine was no longer an Arab issue, but became a PLO one. The PLO had acted on behalf of

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<sup>136</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "Hussein Stands by the PLO," *Middle East International*, no. 466, 7 January 1994, pp. 9.

the Palestinian population and was, therefore, responsible for the Gaza-Jericho First Plan.<sup>137</sup>

The Syrian press started to use familiar idioms to set a distance between the Palestinian and Syrian struggle with Israel. An incisive idiom suggested that the Syrians could not be more royal than the king.<sup>138</sup> As Syrian Foreign Minister, al-Shar'a said:

*Syria's stance has never changed. Syria insisted and continues to insist on withdrawal from all the Arab lands occupied in 1967. However, the others, or some of the others, have broken away and negotiated for the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Jordanian territories. Thus Syria does not wish to be more royal than the king.*<sup>139</sup>

In other words, the Palestinians had determined their own future and the Syrians were no longer responsible for their southern cousins.

According to members of the Syrian public, 'Arafat's move provided the Syrian regime with a pretext to reach a peace settlement with Israel divorced from the Palestinian issue.<sup>140</sup> The return of the Golan, in this instance, would be disengaged from the West Bank and Gaza. Syrian state interests started to acquire an importance of their own, but regional hegemony and national security still dominated the Syrian agenda.<sup>141</sup>

The only oppositional course to the Oslo Accords open to Asad was to allow the ten Palestinian rejectionist groups to reside in Syria. Just as Hizbollah has been a card

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<sup>137</sup> Butt, G., "The Deal That Could Change the Middle East," *Middle East International*, no. 458, 10 September 1993, pp. 3-4.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with a Damascene bureaucrat, 5 October 1995.

<sup>139</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/2503, MED/10, 8 January 1996.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with a Damascene bureaucrat, 5 October 1995.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with a Damascene bureaucrat, 5 October 1995.

amongst Asad's deck of options, 'the group of ten' became another sensitive card. They gave the Syrian regime access to the Palestinian political arena, and the potential to disrupt the implementation of the peace deal in the occupied territories.<sup>142</sup> Courting the rejectionist groups gave Asad important leverage over his adversaries. As one Syrian official observed, "These groups can be held on a tight leash or let loose. They feel obliged to Syria and they can be persuaded to change course".<sup>143</sup> Dirty tricks, after all, had enabled Syria to promote its regional interests beyond the scope of its natural resources.<sup>144</sup>

The Palestinian groups in Damascus had been aware of the limitations placed upon them by the Syrians. The relationship between the Syrian state and the Palestinian factions was one of patron and client. The determinants of the relationship were explicit as Syrian interests took precedence over factional interests, and, therefore, subjugated the activities of the groups to Syrian approval.<sup>145</sup>

The Palestinian groups, especially the Communist Party (PPP) and the PFLP had been punished by the Syrian regime for contradicting the policies of the Syrians. The alliance between the Islamic and secular groups, under Syrian tutelage, bore many limitations as their collective partnership was based on tactical motives rather than any ideological affinity.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ben-Meir, A., "The Israeli-Syrian Battle for Equitable Peace," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 1, 1994, pp. 75.

<sup>143</sup> Ben-Meir, A., "The Israeli-Syrian Battle for Equitable Peace," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 1, 1994, pp. 75.

<sup>144</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 459-491.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with the Press Secretary of the DFLP, Maher Hamdi, Damascus, 10 October 1995.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with the Press Secretary of the DFLP, Maher Hamdi, Damascus, 10 October 1995.

Syria's international interests prevented the rejectionist groups from sabotaging the peace process within the occupied territories.<sup>147</sup> It remained, however, a potential source of power for Asad, Cohen observed:

*Although Damascus now represents no substantial military threat to Israel, its control of Lebanon and its ability to unleash radical and fundamentalist Palestinian forces opposed to a negotiated settlement of the conflict gives it a measure of veto power over the peace talks.*<sup>148</sup>

Thus, one could argue, that the Syrian state was paying 'Arafat, Israel, and the international community a service by containing the potential threat of the rejectionist factions.

Although the Syrian regime expressed its dismay at 'Arafat's separate deal, and the method by which it was achieved, the regime did not condemn it. Asad outlined the basis of Syria's response, as one guided by the determinants of the New World Order. He opined:

*If Syria wanted to obstruct the agreement it would have foiled it, and if it becomes clear to us that this agreement will create major damage, we will do so. But we do not believe it constituted a threat and was just a step along a long road.*<sup>149</sup>

Syria commenced the waiting game as 'Arafat entered negotiations over the fine details of the Oslo Accords. Asad spelled out Syria's position in a speech made to the People's Council:

*From the beginning (of the current peace process), our decision was clear: coordination with Arab parties participating in the peace process*

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Press Secretary of the PFLP, Damascus, 4 October 1995.

<sup>148</sup> Cohen, S., "The Geopolitics of a Golan Heights Agreement," *Focus*, vol. 42, 1 June 1992, pp. 15.

<sup>149</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1799, MED/16, 21 September 1993, and ME/1802, MED/1-ME/3, 24 September 1993.

*... when we raised the matter of coordination, we did so on the premise that the other Arab parties, which were involved in a negotiating process in an unequal manner with the Israeli side, should benefit from Syria's situation - its negotiating strength and its various capabilities on the battlefield - in addition to the fact that Syria is the basic element for peace in the region.<sup>150</sup>*

Convinced that Syria would achieve a real peace, Asad was insistent that the scale of time was not an issue.

### ***The Clinton-Asad meeting***

The Syrian-Israeli track fell adrift after the Oslo Accords, and Syria's refusal to attend another round of talks. Clinton's meeting with Asad in Geneva on 16 January 1994 was designed to give the Syrian-Israeli track a fillip.<sup>151</sup> The meeting itself did not produce anything concrete, but it did draw Syria closer into the epicentre of the New World Order.

Asad's meeting with Clinton, in Geneva, sent a signal to the international community that Syria was gravitating towards the norms of the hegemonic global power. Syria achieved its ambitions from the meeting, notably:

- to push the peace process forward;
- to improve bilateral US-Syrian relations;
- to discuss Syria's regional role.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Gold, D., "The Syrian-Israeli Track - Taking the Final Step: What Sacrifices Will Assad Make to Get Back the Golan?," *Middle East Insight*, vol. x, no. 6, September/ October 1994, pp. 16-17.

<sup>151</sup> Butt, G., "Asad Gains Maximum Benefits for Minimal Concessions," *Middle East International*, no. 467, 21 January 1994, pp. 3.

<sup>152</sup> Richards, C., "Clinton Wooed by Syrian President," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 11.

During their press conference, President Clinton acknowledged that Syria was the key to a wider settlement.<sup>153</sup> Syria, however, was not removed from the US terrorist list, which would have made it eligible for the procurement of American investments, loans, and advanced technologies;<sup>154</sup> but the meeting gave Asad international prestige, and Syria a platform to promote its regional agenda.

Asad punctuated his public address in Geneva with the following phrase: "In honour we fought. In honour we shall negotiate. In honour we shall make peace".<sup>155</sup> Asad stated that Syria "sees peace with Israel as a strategic choice to secure Arab rights, and which enables all peoples in the region to live in security".<sup>156</sup>

Syria's commitment to achieving comprehensive peace, irrespective of the PLO-Israeli separate deal, formed part of Asad's platform, as he said:

*I hope that our meeting today will contribute to the realisation of the aspirations of the people of the region ... that this new year will be the year of achieving the just and comprehensive peace which puts an end to the tragedies of violence and wars endured by them for several decades.*<sup>157</sup>

Asad did not commit Syria to the normalisation of relations, as required by the Israelis, in return for withdrawal in the Golan. The Syrian President did refer to Syria's

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<sup>153</sup> Richards, C., "Clinton Wooed by Syrian President," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 11.

<sup>154</sup> Ben-Meir, A., "The Israeli-Syrian Battle for Equitable Peace," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 1, 1994, pp. 80.

<sup>155</sup> Graz, L., "How It Looked Close Up," *Middle East International*, no. 467, 21 January 1994, pp. 6.

<sup>156</sup> Richards, C., "Assad Adds His Weight to Middle East Peace Talks," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Richards, C., "Assad Adds His Weight to Middle East Peace Talks," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 1.



acceptance of the principle of normal relations, but this would be a feature of the second phase of the peace process when full withdrawal had been completed.<sup>158</sup>

Syria's commitment to peace as a strategic choice indicated how the New World Order has impinged upon Syria's option for regaining the Golan and liberating the rest of the occupied territories. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the advent of the New World Order, peace had become a strategic option for Syria. In its pursuit to achieve its goals, Syria showed its readiness to improve its bilateral relations with the US, but not at the expense of its regional status.<sup>159</sup>

### *The Hebron Massacre*

The Clinton-Asad meeting prompted the Syrians and Israelis to resume their negotiations. On 25 February 1994, before the talks began, Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler from Khan Yunis, had shot 48 Palestinian Muslims praying in the Ibrahim mosque in Hebron. Hence, the following round of talks in the peace process were suspended by the Arab parties.<sup>160</sup>

Although the Syrian-Israeli track stopped simultaneously with the talks of the PLO, Jordan, and Lebanon, Syria worked towards easing Syrian-Israeli tensions. In order to facilitate such a move, a confidence building gesture was made when 57 Israeli Arabs visited Syria between 7-10 March 1994. The delegation was led by 'Abd al-Wahhab Darawsha from the Arab Democratic party.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Richards, C., "Assad Adds His Weight to Middle East Peace Talks," *The Independent*, Monday 17 January 1994, pp. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Dergham, R., "Assessing Assad," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xii, no. 4&5, May/August 1996, pp. 13.

<sup>160</sup> Baram, H., "Has Hebron Sounded Oslo's Death-knell?," *Middle East International*, no. 470, 4 March 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>161</sup> Jansen, M., "An Unusual Delegation," *Middle East International*, no. 471, 18 March 1994, pp. 11.

As in the case with the expelled Palestinians in the winter of 1992/93, after the Hebron massacre the Syrians had been waiting to return to the negotiating table, and so persuaded the Jordanians and Lebanese to circumvent Palestinian resistance to resuming the talks. This factor was revealing in two ways: firstly, it demonstrated Syria's readiness to proceed with the negotiations; and secondly, it illuminated Syria's dismissive attitude towards the interests of the PLO.

### *The Jordanian peace deal*

The momentum of the peace process became a priority for Syria. The Palestinians had chosen their own route, but Syria's commitment was constant though the terms of reference were unclear. Separate peace was not an acceptable option, but progress on the bilateral talks was the aim. The comprehensive dimension of the talks would be completed through the simultaneous signing of treaties between Israel and Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Syria, in this context would hold the key to "setting the new structure of the peace into concrete".<sup>162</sup>

Just as Syria's quest for strategic parity was pursued with vigour, Syria's strategic choice for peace acquired the same momentum. Syria could not desert the peace process after the announcement of the Oslo Accords, nor could it change its strategy after Jordan and Israel reached a separate peace deal of their own.

On 25 July 1994, at the White House in Washington, King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin signed the Washington Declaration.<sup>163</sup> The declaration disclosed that the

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<sup>162</sup> Ya'ari, E., "Syria Next vs. Damascus Last," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 20.

<sup>163</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 219.

state of war between the two states was over.<sup>164</sup> This did not constitute a full peace treaty, but signalled the possibility that a treaty was within reach. Despite the issue of the Washington Declaration, it was considered very unlikely that Jordan could sign a separate peace treaty without the support or consent of Syria. Such a move, it was thought, could have provoked the Syrians into escalating a crisis with the Jordanian government.

In a move conducted to prevent Syria's isolation, Asad was given prior warning of the Jordanian-Israeli summit by the US President. The Syrian President apparently gave a discreet nod of acceptance, understanding that progress in the bilateral talks was appropriate as long as a peace treaty had not been concluded.<sup>165</sup>

Jordan's new position did not produce any major shock waves within the region.<sup>166</sup> Relations between Israel and Jordan had covertly existed for many years, and seemed to be common knowledge amongst journalists and Middle Eastern observers. The reported collusion between Israel, Jordan, and the US during Black September in 1970 had suggested that an implicit understanding existed between the Israeli and Jordanian leaderships.<sup>167</sup>

Jordan's decision to pursue its own national agenda was not revelatory either, as the PLO's signature to the Oslo Accords had provided the Jordanian government with a pretext to focus upon its own problems. The pronouncement of the PLO's government in exile in 1988, and the revocation of Jordan's claims to the West Bank formally

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<sup>164</sup> Neff, D., "Hussein and Rabin Make Their Declaration," *Middle East International*, no. 481, 5 August 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>165</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "Jordan's Dramatic Peace Gestures," *Middle East International*, no. 480, 22 July 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with George Jabbour 7 October 1995. According to Asad's former adviser 1985-1989, Syria had anticipated such a move.

<sup>167</sup> Seale, P., *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 161.

separated the political and geographical jurisdiction of Jordan and the PLO.<sup>168</sup> The PLO's agreement to Oslo further relieved Jordan of its commitment to the Palestinians, and removed any structural obstacles to concluding a peace treaty. The only obstacle that remained in the way between Israel and Jordan was Syria.

The inter-Arab rivalry between Syria and Jordan had produced many permutations of support, within the region, and numerous combinations of punishment and reproach. Both states were alleged to have participated in clandestine operations against each other over the years; they had, in light of new global and regional realities found a *modus vivendi*. The collapse of the old world order and Jordan's disastrous decision to support Saddam Hussein exposed Jordan's vulnerabilities to the policies of the Gulf Arab states, in particular Saudi Arabia, and to the recriminatory policies of the US.<sup>169</sup>

Jordan and the PLO found refuge in the diplomatic support of Syria. Syria's comprehensive approach, encompassing Jordan's weakness, enabled Jordan to maximise its relative strength within the forum of a united position. Syria's own position was emboldened, as it adopted its familiar role as the guardian of Arab interest.<sup>170</sup>

The PLO's engagement in secret peace talks with Israel, and the resulting Oslo Accords weakened the unity of the Arab diplomatic front. Jordan enjoyed a distinct advantage from the Palestinian-Israeli initiative, whilst for Syria the result brought ambiguity and uncertainty.

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<sup>168</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/0467, A/1, 26 May 1989.

<sup>169</sup> Andoni, L., "Sigh of Relief," *Middle East International*, no. 389, 7 December 1990, pp. 7, Andoni, L., "Cutting the Strings," *Middle East International*, no. 394, 22 February 1991, pp. 10-11, and Hawatmeh, G., "Fissured Opinion," *Middle East International*, no. 395, 8 March 1991, pp. 14-15.

<sup>170</sup> Neff, D., "Syria Is the Key Issue," *Middle East International*, no. 480, 22 July 1994, pp. 4.

In its desperate bid for international rehabilitation, Jordan charted a course towards the US. With a poor resource base, the imposition of international and regional economic sanctions, and growing domestic militancy, rehabilitation included a critical financial package designed to placate the over-burdened populace. For Jordan, the Oslo Accords produced the optimum moment to complete this period of rehabilitation. The price for rehabilitation was peace with Israel.<sup>171</sup>

As with Egypt, economic crisis precipitated the need for a change in foreign policy; the US was the willing party to reduce Jordan's debt.<sup>172</sup> King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin addressed the US Congress, on 27 July 1994, stating that the war between Israel and Jordan was over. As an inducement for Jordan to sign a separate peace treaty, the Congress pledged to reduce Jordan's \$700 million debt to \$220 million.<sup>173</sup>

Jordan's decision to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel, on 26 October 1994, reflected the changes within the regional and international climate. Syria was unable to contest the decision or prevent the implementation of the peace treaty. Syria's response was consigned to condemnation of King Hussein and his government. The Syrian regime charged the Jordanian regime with betraying the Arabs. In his speech to the People's Council, on 10 September 1994, Asad said:

*For decades, Syria waged the Arabs' battle against the Israeli occupation, to liberate the land and recover the (Arabs') rights. Our people carried the principal burden in the confrontation and we offered great sacrifices in lives and suffering, and the conflict was reflected in the country's public life ... I do not want to discuss what they (the*

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<sup>171</sup> Hawatmeh, G., "Jordan's Dramatic Peace Gestures," *Middle East International*, no. 480, 22 July 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>172</sup> Neff, D., "Hussein and Rabin Make Their Declaration," *Middle East International*, no. 481, 5 August 1994, pp. 3-4.

<sup>173</sup> Neff, D., "Hussein and Rabin Make Their Declaration," *Middle East International*, no. 481, 5 August 1994, pp. 3-4.

*Palestinians and Jordanians) arrived at, but reality makes unambiguously clear the enormity of the damage that unilateralism has inflicted on the core of the causes for which we have long fought and struggled.*<sup>174</sup>

Syria's comprehensive policy had essentially failed. The Israelis and the Americans had managed to wean the Palestinian and Jordanian governments away from the Arab fold. The prospect of concluding a separate peace treaty was greater than waiting for the Syrians to reach a settlement, and then co-ordinate the final round of multilateral talks.

The arrival of the New World Order signified a diminution in Syria's regional power projection. The redistribution of global power led to a reduction in Syria's ability to influence the decision-making process within the Middle East region. Whereas Syria had challenged the PLO and the Jordanians in the past, the hegemonic role played by the US in the Middle East, seemed to grant both actors more freedom from Syrian tutelage in their decision-making processes.

The Syrian government looked as if it had become a casualty of the New World Order. After following the option for strategic peace and engaging in the Madrid Peace Conference, Syria had been circumvented as the Jordanians and Palestinians signed separate peace treaties. Syria looked increasingly isolated from the successes of the peace process, and its regional hegemony looked to be under threat from Israel.

Through the peace policy, Rabin and Peres had aimed to shape the new Middle Eastern order. Their new order was determined by the primacy of economics; Israel's desire to

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<sup>174</sup> Asad, H., "We Want a Just Peace Because We Want Stability," *Middle East Insight*, vol. x, no. 6, September/October 1994, pp. 16.

extend its economic hegemony in the region underpinned its commitment to peace.<sup>175</sup> Peace with Syria was crucial to eliminating the risk of war, and enhancing Israel's chance of integrating itself into the region. Peace was a desirable object to both Syria and Israel, but their terms of reference were very different.

The mode of direct and private discussion provided the potential for Syria and Israel to reconcile their differences. The Syrian and Israeli chiefs of staff met in Washington to discuss security issues.<sup>176</sup> The failure of Amnon Shahaq and Hikmat al-Shihabi, the Israeli and Syrian chiefs of staff to find common ground in their meeting of December 1994, however, led to the drawing up of the Aims and Principles of Security Arrangements, and the resumption of discrete talks in June 1995.<sup>177</sup> This new formula of discussion was unable to accommodate the polarised positions of the chiefs of staff and required the offices of Syria's and Israel's chief negotiators, and aides. This resulted in the private talks at the Wye Plantation, Maryland in the US, during December 1995.<sup>178</sup>

### *The Wye Plantation talks*

US Secretary of State Christopher encouraged Syria and Israel to break their deadlock through private discussions at the Wye Plantation in Maryland. The Camp David and Dayton Accords had been achieved through the auspices of US engineered talks, and, therefore, had set a precedent for the resolution of the Syrian-Israeli conflict. The first

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<sup>175</sup> Seale, P., "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 36.

<sup>176</sup> Syria - Country Report, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 1st Quarter 1996, pp. 10.

<sup>177</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualeem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 92.

<sup>178</sup> Seale, P., "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 36.

round of talks commenced on 27 December 1995 and concluded on 29 December, and the second round took place between 3-5 January 1996.<sup>179</sup>

The issue on the table was the Golan Heights. Israel's interest in the Golan Heights has been attributed to its location as a strategic value as a buffer between Syria and Israel. Its substantial water reserves, and its biblical value are also offered as justification for the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights in 1981.<sup>180</sup> For the Syrians, the Golan Heights have become symbolic of their regional national struggle with Israel. The return of the Golan would alleviate the state of its responsibility from the 1967 debacle, and recover some of the lost honour, associated with the Ba'th regime.<sup>181</sup> The return of the Golan would also lend the Syrian state a defensive buffer zone; this is because Damascus is within a forty mile reach of the Golan Heights.

Formerly, Syria's commitment to peace with Israel had been based upon a full withdrawal from all the occupied territories in return for a peace treaty. This position had changed during the course of the peace process. Due to the separate peace deals of the PLO and the Jordanians, Syria's concept of comprehensive peace had been curtailed. Walid Moualem, Syria's chief negotiator and ambassador to the US, commented:

*We still want comprehensiveness - comprehensiveness was one basis of the Madrid process. Our foreign minister in Madrid went around to the various Arab delegations to insist on the same venue and timing for*

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<sup>179</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/2496, MED/1-MED/3, 29 December 1995, ME/2497, MED/1-MED/3, 30 December 1995, ME/2498, MED/1-MED/5 31 December 1995, ME/2500, MED/7-MED/11, 3 January 1996, ME/2501, MED/1-MED/3, 4 January 1996, and ME/2502, MED/4-MED/7, 4 January 1996.

<sup>180</sup> This view has since been discounted for more information see: Shahak, I., "The Real Problem between Israel and Syria," *Middle East International*, no. 523, 12 April 1996, pp. 19, and Muslih, M., "The Golan: Israel, Syria, and Strategic Calculations," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4, Autumn 1993, pp. 611-632.

<sup>181</sup> Hinnebusch, R., "Does Syria Want Peace? Syrian Policy in the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 50-51.



*the negotiations, and here in Washington we had regular coordinating meetings for the heads of Arab delegations ... But we were taken by surprise by Oslo - we did not know about the secret talks until the agreement was announced. We were also surprised by the Jordanian treaty.*<sup>182</sup>

Syria's inability to restrain the PLO and Jordan from concluding their peace deals caused the leadership to review its negotiating position.

The separate PLO and Jordanian peace deals had struck a double-edged blow to the Syrians. On the one hand, it had relieved Syria from the burden of its historical legacy, and presented the state with the opportunity to strike a deal according to its self-interest. The perceptible change in the attitude of the Syrians towards the Palestinian issue was conducive to a change in the official Syrian position. The unconditional return of the Golan Heights, therefore, held the prospect of earning the state a new source of legitimacy. Full withdrawal from the Golan would also vindicate Asad's authoritative domestic policy, and accentuate his foreign policy successes.

On the other hand, Israel was successful in isolating Syria from the peace process by its peace with the PLO and Jordan. Syrian hegemony in the Levant was diminishing as Israel had grown in regional stature. The economic dynamism of Israel stood to further erode Syria's influence. The new Middle Eastern order, based on the unipolar intervention of the US and the success of its client-state, ensured that the region was subordinate to the prevailing regional and international hegemonic orders, and effaced of its Arab character.

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<sup>182</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 88-89.

A peace treaty with Israel, focused solely upon the Golan, held the possibility of de-linking Syria from its spheres of influence as the regional competition with Israel assumed an economic character. However, Lebanon could not be uncoupled from Syria's sphere of influence, nor could a Lebanese-Israeli peace be durable without Syrian compliance. To quote Walid Moualem:

*We said that comprehensive peace from our perspective includes Syria and Lebanon together at the same time. We sign together, and Israel withdraws both from south Lebanon and the Golan Heights.*<sup>183</sup>

The Syrians were free to pursue a peace deal with Israel based upon the total liberation of the Golan Heights for full peace. The discussions at the Wye Plantation were designed to propel the process towards a hasty conclusion. Apparently, in July 1994, Israel agreed to a full withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines.<sup>184</sup> This paved the way for the negotiations to address the cumulative issues of a peace treaty, which included:

- meaning of withdrawal;
- timetable of withdrawal;
- normalisation;
- security arrangements.

### *Meaning of withdrawal*

The meaning of withdrawal, Syria argued, meant an Israeli return to the 4 June 1967 borders, which left Syria some access to Lake Tiberias.<sup>185</sup> Israel insisted that the international boundary meant the pre-1948 borders, which placed the lake entirely in its

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<sup>183</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 88-89.

<sup>184</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 84-85.

<sup>185</sup> Baram, H., "Asad Waits for 1997," *Middle East International*, no. 517, 19 January 1996, pp. 5-6.

territory: Syria could not be allowed to return to the northern shore of Lake Tiberias, Israel's water reserve.<sup>186</sup> After the election of Netanyahu, as Israel's prime Minister in May 1996, President Asad disclosed that Rabin had conceded to a full withdrawal from the Golan in accordance to Syria's conditions.<sup>187</sup> The talks at the Wye Plantation were based upon this premise, and were, therefore, invested with the potential to produce a peace treaty. This claim was first made public in Hebrew in a publication, and then by Egypt's president, Mubarak, in an interview with al-Hayat.<sup>188</sup>

### *Timetable of withdrawal*

The timing of withdrawal remained a problem. Syria wanted full withdrawal with a reasonable time frame of about a year.<sup>189</sup> Pointing to Israel's reluctance to fulfil the Oslo Accords, Asad rejected any agreement that left the outcome to Israel's discretion and refused normalisation prior to full withdrawal.

During Rabin's premiership, Israel proposed a three stage Golan withdrawal over a period of five years. After the inception of the process, Syria would have to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, and implement the policy of normalisation. Withdrawal would be linked to normalisation. The assassination of Rabin catapulted the Syrian-Israeli peace process to the fore of Israeli foreign policy.

With an impending election, it appeared that Peres was intent on concluding a quick deal. Lacking the security credentials of his predecessor, Peres either needed to

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<sup>186</sup> Moore, J., "An Israeli-Syrian Peace Treaty: So Close and Yet So Far," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 3, 1994, pp. 76-77.

<sup>187</sup> Asad, H., "Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad, Interview with CNN, Damascus, 25 September 1996," cited in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 151-152.

<sup>188</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 83.

<sup>189</sup> *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/2504, MED/1-MED/2.

establish a strong-arm or to secure a foreign policy gain. Incorporating Syria into the peace process offered Peres the chance of re-election, but the assassinations of the leader of Islamic Jihad, Shaqaqi, in Malta in October 1995, and Yahya 'Ayyash (the engineer) on 4 January 1996 changed the course of the peace process.<sup>190</sup>

### *Normalisation*

The issue of normalisation served to separate the Syrian-Israeli negotiating teams, though Syria had confirmed its commitment to normalisation.<sup>191</sup> Normalisation would follow the conclusion of the withdrawal of Israel from the Golan and after the signing of a peace treaty. As al-Shar'a said: "Let us put things in the proper sequence. We do not want to have loopholes or snags here and there, which would be counter-productive".<sup>192</sup>

Barak, the Israeli Foreign Minister, included the free flow of goods, services, and people, joint water and trade projects and the integration of the two countries' electricity grids, into the concept of normalisation.<sup>193</sup> Syrian ambassador to the US, Moualem, explained Syria's reluctance to conclude economic normalisation:

*They wanted open borders, open markets for their goods, and so on. This would have an obvious effect on our own economy. Our economic regulations are not against them; we do open our markets to any country. And how can you integrate two economies when one has a per capita income of \$900 per year and the other has a per capita income of \$15,000 per year? Such integration is not possible, so we discussed a transitional period during which we could raise our*

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<sup>190</sup> These issues will be discussed at length later in this chapter in "Operation Grapes of Wrath".

<sup>191</sup> Ya'ari, E., "Syrian Foreign Minister Addresses Israeli Public," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 19.

<sup>192</sup> Ya'ari, E., "Syrian Foreign Minister Addresses Israeli Public," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 19.

<sup>193</sup> Neff, D., "Christopher's Final Goal," *Middle East International*, no. 518, 2 February 1996, pp. 7.

*economy to the level where there can be competition without undue hardship on our society.*<sup>194</sup>

### ***Security arrangements***

As Israel inched closer to agreeing to a full withdrawal from the Golan, it insisted on security substitutes for territory. Its maximum position included dismantling Syrian chemical weapons and a radical reduction in the Syrian standing army. While Syria's regular army is much larger, such demands would demolish Syria's deterrent posture given Israel's nuclear monopoly and Syria's inability to rapidly mobilise reserves.<sup>195</sup>

Israel also wanted a limited forces zone requiring a virtual Syrian pullback to Damascus. Syria accepted demilitarisation of the Golan but wanted equal limited forces zones on both sides of the border, which Israel refused.<sup>196</sup> The negotiations stalled over an Israeli demand for an early-warning station on Mount Hermon.<sup>197</sup> Syria insisted that aerial or satellite surveillance was adequate, and that a continued Israeli presence there would be an affront to Syrian sovereignty.<sup>198</sup>

### ***Missed opportunities***

The Wye Plantation talks produced the opportunity for a Syrian-Israeli peace deal. It had become known in retrospect that Rabin had agreed to a full withdrawal in return for full peace. This agreement formed the basis of the Wye Plantation talks. The

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<sup>194</sup> Butler, L., "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negotiations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 86-87.

<sup>195</sup> Moore, J., "An Israeli-Syrian Peace Treaty: So Close and Yet So Far," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 3, 1994, pp. 76-79.

<sup>196</sup> Moore, J., "An Israeli-Syrian Peace Treaty: So Close and Yet So Far," *Middle East Policy*, vol. iii, no. 3, 1994, pp. 78-79.

<sup>197</sup> Seale, P., "Asad's Regional Strategy and the Challenge from Netanyahu," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, Autumn 1996, pp. 36.

<sup>198</sup> Neff, D., "Christopher's Final Goal," *Middle East International*, no. 518, 2 February 1996, pp. 7.

assassination of Rabin accelerated the peace process as his successor, Peres, aimed to achieve a rapid solution to the conflict. Both parties were intent on securing peace; the issues of normalisation were within reach.

The intransigence of both parties had been broken. The prospect of peace, although a secret, appears to have been an option. Peres' decision to hold an early election, and his need to establish security credentials shattered the progress of the Wye Plantation talks.

### *Operation Grapes of Wrath*

After the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on 4 November 1995, the prospective Israeli elections dominated the regional political scene. The speculation over Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, had produced some hope for a Syrian-Israeli peace deal, yet the Syrian-Israeli track remained in the background of discussions.<sup>199</sup>

Peres had been the Israeli architect of the Oslo Accords, and was attributed with its more progressive dimensions. Peres, portrayed as a dove to Rabin's hawk, seemed to symbolise hope for the Syrians and for the disenchanted Palestinians. The election procedure took precedence over the peace process, and the contest of electioneering distorted the political views of both the Labor and Likud parties.

Rabin had been the military and political component of the partnership, whilst Peres played the diplomatic role. Despite their antipathy towards each other, they had managed to complement each other's substance and style of leadership. Peres lacked the military stature of Rabin; Rabin's military successes, particularly in the 1967 War,

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<sup>199</sup> Ozanne, J., "Police Sees Arms Stockpile at Home of Rabin's Assassin," *Financial Times*, Friday 10 November 1995, pp. 16.

had been carved into Israeli folklore, and his leadership skills were legendary. Peres, as a trained diplomat, could not compete with Rabin's security credentials.<sup>200</sup>

The assassination of Shaqaqi in Malta, in October 1995, by Mossad, and the assassination of Yahya 'Ayyash on 4 January 1996 by Shin Bet<sup>201</sup> created a fundamental problem that looked set to derail the peace process. The retaliatory moves came in the form of a series of devastating suicide bombers targeting civilian population centres within Israel. Islamic Jihad and Hamas had, until the assassinations of Shaqaqi and 'Ayyash, reached an informal agreement with the Palestinian Authority to refrain from violent opposition to the peace process.<sup>202</sup>

The assassinations provoked a violent response which halted progress on all of the peace tracks. President Asad refused to publicly condemn the suicide missions, and as a result the Israeli government unilaterally suspended the negotiations on the Syrian-Israeli track.

Therefore, Peres faced the prospect of a general election with a distinct disadvantage:

- increased domestic insecurity;
- an ailing Palestinian-Israeli interim agreement;
- no significant progress on the Syrian-Israeli track;
- no personal record of military integrity.

The spate of suicide bombings had started to divide public opinion until Peres' apparent failure to protect the security of Israeli citizens produced a new consensus of

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<sup>200</sup> Ozanne, J., "Struggle to Hold It All Together: Shimon Peres, The Acting Israeli leader Face Formidable Challenges in Keeping the Peace Process Going," *Financial Times*, Saturday 11 November 1995, pp. 6.

<sup>201</sup> Amayreh, K., "The Killing of Yahya Ayyash," *Middle East International*, no. 517, 19 January 1996, pp. 4.

<sup>202</sup> Usher, G., "Hamas and the Bus Bomb," *Middle East International*, no. 506, 4 August 1995, pp. 4-5.

public opinion. The sympathy vote, derived from Rabin's assassination, was rapidly diminishing as the national obsession with security started to gain priority in the lives of the public.

Peres' approach to Labor's receding support was dramatic; it came in the form of an excessive military retaliation against Hizbollah.<sup>203</sup> The intensity of Hizbollah's activities had not substantially changed as they were governed by the verbal understanding reached between Hizbollah and Israel after Operation Accountability in July 1993.

Operation Grapes of Wrath was launched in April 1996. It essentially represented two objectives:

- (i) it was an election platform for Peres and the Labor party;
- (ii) it was designed to pressure Syria and Lebanon into returning to the peace talks.

The Clinton administration was firmly committed to the re-election of Peres; accordingly it lent Israel its unequivocal support in Operation Grapes of Wrath.<sup>204</sup> Both the US and Israeli administrations had presided over the critical stages of the peace process, and had invested enormous political capital into the process, although one could argue that Clinton's role had remained peripheral and possibly ceremonial.

It is not possible to gauge the intention of the operation, but Grapes of Wrath seemed to have spun out of control and proved to be far more devastating than was originally anticipated. The mission had been dominated by the supremacy of Israeli air power, which exceeded the range and capabilities of Hizbollah's Katyusha rockets. It was estimated by UN peace-keepers that there were 3,000 aerial sorties by fighter

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<sup>203</sup> Jansen, G., "The Giant's Failure," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 7.

<sup>204</sup> Jansen, G., "The Giant's Failure," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 7.



bombers and helicopter gunships over 17 days, 30,000 artillery shells were fired, plus hundreds of shells from ships ashore. Hizbollah's arsenal was not so impressive; it was estimated to consist of 1,100 Katyusha rockets.<sup>205</sup>

Peres' sanctioning of military action appears most likely to have been motivated by increasing his prospect of re-election. Security had not been the exclusive preserve of Israel's generals, as the military was ultimately responsible to the civilian government. The escalation of the Israeli assault, and the resulting massacre at Qana, brought international condemnation upon Peres' government and discredited it before the eyes of the Israeli public. On the 18 April 1996, 102 sheltering refugees were killed by Israeli self-propelled artillery as they sought refuge in the UN base of Qana.<sup>206</sup>

What appeared to be a bid for re-election turned out to be a domestic and international disaster for Peres, Israel, and the US. The excessive use of force and the consequent human devastation undermined Peres' stature as a sagacious patrician. It also allowed the Syrians, Lebanese, and French to assert their influence in the formation, and implementation of the cease-fire and its arrangements.<sup>207</sup>

The Israeli military initiative was partially designed to eliminate the pernicious threat of Hizbollah from northern Israel, thereby terminating one of Syria's principal sources of pressure. Without the option of Hizbollah, as a persistent irritant to the Israelis, it was estimated that the Syrians would be forced to return to the peace talks. Ironically, the Syrians were the main beneficiaries, in terms of accumulating diplomatic credit, and exercising control over Hizbollah.

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<sup>205</sup> Jansen, G., "The Giant's Failure," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 7.

<sup>206</sup> "What Happened at Qana," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 5.

<sup>207</sup> Jansen, M., "Lebanon Cease-fire Terms," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 5, and Swann, R., "Trying Not to Gloat," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 7-8.

A consequence of Operation Grapes of Wrath was the propulsion of Syria towards the epicentre of the cease-fire process. Though occupying a back seat, the Syrian President played a fundamental role in achieving the cease-fire. As the Americans tried to formulate their own proposals, the French and the Syrians negotiated the terms and conditions of the cease-fire between Israel and Lebanon. On 26 April 1996, Israel and the US accepted the terms of the cease-fire, which were based on the existing terms reached after Operation Accountability in July 1993.<sup>208</sup>

Instead of remaining a verbal agreement, this time a document set out the parameters of behaviour. According to this document:

- armed groups were not to attack Israel with any type of weapons;
- Israel was prohibited from attacking Lebanese civilians or civilian targets in Lebanon;
- attacks on civilian infrastructure were banned, as was the launching of attacks into Israel's occupation zone from areas of civilian habitation;
- the parties would retain the right of legitimate defence within stipulations of the understanding.<sup>209</sup>

On 16 May 1996, Israel and the US agreed to the establishment of a monitoring committee composed of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, the US, and France; the rotating chair belonged to the US and France, hence, elevating the role of France in the region.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Jansen, M., "Lebanon Cease-fire Terms," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 5-6.

<sup>209</sup> Jansen, M., "Lebanon Cease-fire Terms," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 6.

<sup>210</sup> Jansen, M., "Lebanon Cease-fire Terms," *Middle East International*, no. 525, 10 May 1996, pp. 6.

This episode demonstrated Syria's durability to operate in the New World Order. In an attempt to persuade the Israeli public of his security credentials, Peres had lost the political and diplomatic advantage gained through the separate peace agreements with the PLO and Jordan. Operation Grapes of Wrath had also failed to eliminate Syria's political, diplomatic, and military manoeuvrability.

Syria's influence over Hizbollah, and, therefore, its access to northern Israel via proxy, has remained an avenue to exert pressure on the Israelis. Syria's access, indeed, had improved after Operation Grapes of Wrath, as the terms of the cease-fire legitimised Hizbollah's attacks within the security zone. Syria's regional influence was also enhanced due to the special role it played in brokering the cease-fire.

Emerging from yet another period of political isolation, Syria managed to elevate its regional status through the auspices of its dominance in Lebanon. Throughout the 1980s, during its period of tactical rejectionism, Syria had fought its campaign through Lebanon. Lebanon had become the last stronghold of Syrian influence; its matrix of confessions and propensity to violence had provided Syria with a context within which it can resist Israeli and US intervention. In the 1990s, Israel had formally removed the PLO and Jordan from Syria's influence, and in turn focused its attentions towards Lebanon and Hizbollah.

The environment of the New World Order took away Syria's option for rejecting peace after Jordan and the PLO had signed separate agreements. Syria's actions were conditioned according to the new distribution of power within the world system. On the other hand, Lebanon has stayed a Syrian stronghold, and Asad has remained a key player in its orientation. In the 1980s, through persistence and a sustainable loss of life, Syria had managed to defeat the Israelis and the US in Lebanon. Operation Grapes

of Wrath provided another chance for Syria to achieve such a victory, but in the 1996 case, the success was diplomatic rather than military.

In yet another twist of the peace process, Syria had managed to avoid the prospect of regional isolation and the capitulation to return to the peace negotiations on Israel's terms. Israel's escalation of the conflict has failed to reduce Syria's influence in Lebanon and its access to pressure Israel through the activities of Hizbollah.

Operation Grapes of Wrath had failed to persuade the Israeli public to re-elect the Labor party. In the first direct election of an Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu assumed office in June 1996. The change of government within Israel and the election of Netanyahu has compounded the problems for the Palestinians. The Oslo Accords and the accompanying agreements have subsequently been amended to accommodate the demands of Israel's settlers.<sup>211</sup> The Jordanian peace is also showing signs of weakness as the process of normalisation has not been embraced by the Jordanian population,<sup>212</sup> nor has the US Congress approved the cancelling of the Jordanian debt promised by the Clinton administration as an inducement to peace.<sup>213</sup>

The platform on which Netanyahu had been elected denied Syria's sovereignty of the Golan, and, therefore, has appeared to ended the prospect for a Syrian-Israeli peace deal during the term of his office.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Amayreh, K., "Sabre-rattling Settlers," *Middle East International*, no. 541, 10 January 1997, pp. 4, and Usher, G., "Unfinished Struggle - Arafat after Hebron," *Middle East International*, no. 542, 24 January 1997, pp. 3-4.

<sup>212</sup> Kamal, S., "Hussein's Sorrow and Shame," *Middle East International*, no. 546, 21 March 1997, pp. 9.

<sup>213</sup> Ya'ari, E., "Syria Next vs. Damascus Last," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 23.

<sup>214</sup> Gardner, D., "Syria Rejects Israeli Demand to Restart," *Financial Times*, Thursday 28 November 1996, pp. 4.

## Conclusion

It has been argued throughout this chapter that Syria's commitment to peace has been constant since 1974. Achieving comprehensive peace between the Arab states and Israel would serve the national interests of Syria in its struggle for regional hegemony with Israel. Comprehensive peace would enable Syria to extend its sphere of influence over its Levantine neighbours without invoking the prospect of military confrontation with Israel.

The concept of comprehensive peace has entailed the liberation of the Arab occupied territories, including the West Bank, Gaza, south Lebanon, and the Golan Heights. The restoration of Palestinian rights has also been a component of the comprehensive peace.<sup>215</sup> Farouq Shar'a, the Syrian Foreign Minister, had made the Syrian position on peace very clear when he stated: "What we want is to implement UN Resolutions, in particular, UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338. These resolutions call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab lands and safeguarding the Palestinian national rights."<sup>216</sup>

The Syrian commitment to comprehensive peace was asserted by President Asad in an interview with CNN on 28 October 1991:

*No one in the region, or outside the region, Europe, the USA, Eastern Europe, or other areas of the world has interest in the absence of a comprehensive peace in this region. Any separate or partial peace process will not achieve peace, security and stability in the region and any party continuing the state of war with Israel will bring back*

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<sup>215</sup> Ehteshami, A., and R. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 160-161.

<sup>216</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/1402, A/1, 9 June 1992.

*complicated circumstances to the region and will lead to comprehensive wars in the future.*<sup>217</sup>

The conclusion of separate peace deals has become the zenith of Syria's fears. Syria's disdain of separate peace formulas had been displayed throughout the 1980s. The creation of the Front for Steadfastness to undermine Egypt's separate peace with Israel, and Syria's tactical rejection of the Lebanese-Israeli Accord illustrated its conviction to spoil formulas which excluded it from the peace process.

The end of the Cold War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait offered a moment for Syria to present itself at the centre of a more comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Madrid Peace Conference provided the forum for an international resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict Syria's compliance to attend the Madrid Peace Conference was based on its foundation of UN Resolutions 242, 338, and 425. Syria showed its flexibility, a concession to the New World Order dominated by the US, by curtailing some of its demands to participate in the peace process.

During the Madrid Conference, Syria tried to co-ordinate the policies of Jordan, Lebanon, and the PLO. Diplomatic unity offered the Arab states the potential to resist Israeli pressure in the negotiating process. The bilateral talks, however, set the Palestinians and Jordanians down a different track. The PLO and Jordanian assignment to the Oslo Accords and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, respectively, represented a serious set back for the Syrians.

The Palestinians and Jordanians were motivated by the opportunity to achieve short-term gains to their national interest. Rousseau's fable of the stag hunt provides the

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<sup>217</sup> BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/1215, A/3, 29 October 1991.

most apposite explanation for their behaviour.<sup>218</sup> If applied to this case, it would suggest that existing in an anarchic state of nature, where self-help governs the behaviour of states, the PLO and Jordan have made rational decisions based upon their immediate concerns. The hunt for the stag (comprehensive peace) was flawed from the outset, as the hare (separate peace) held the prospect of short-term gratification. The pursuit of the hare has weakened the potential of the pack, and allowed the stag to escape to the safety of the folkloric forest.

The short-term satiation of the hare has left the PLO hungry as the winter sets in; meanwhile, the lion of Syria has kept his sights on the stag. The inherent problems contained within the Oslo Accords have justified Syria's search for a comprehensive peace, and its reluctance to settle for a separate peace deal. The issues of Jerusalem, the settlements, and the refugees, for example, have yet to be settled, whilst Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank, and to annex East Jerusalem.<sup>219</sup>

The separate peace deals signed by the PLO and Jordan have undermined Syrian influence in the Levant, and has weakened its position in the balance of power with Israel.<sup>220</sup> Geopolitically isolated, Syria has remained an observer as Israel concluded separate peace treaties with the PLO and Jordan. However, the limited nature of the peace treaties has left Syria with some leverage in the peace process.

Since the PLO and Jordan have signed separate peace deals, Syria has been faced with two alternatives:

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<sup>218</sup> Haas, E., "Obscurities Enshrined: The Balance of Power As an Analytical Concept," in P. Viotti, and M. Kauppi (eds.), *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, and Globalism*, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 106.

<sup>219</sup> See Kidron, P., "Har Homa: The Price of Netanyahu's Showmanship," *Middle East International*, no. 545, 7 March 1997, pp. 3-5.

<sup>220</sup> Ya'ari, E., "Syria Next vs. Damascus Last," *Middle East Insight*, vol. xi, no. 1, November/December 1994, pp. 20-23.

- (i) to conclude a separate peace deal with Israel, where Israel withdraws from the Golan in exchange for peace and normalisation;
- (ii) to wait to conclude a comprehensive peace in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords.

Comprehensive peace is no longer an option in the near future. The PLO and Jordan have signed separate peace treaties with Israel; the Gulf Arab states have suspended their secondary boycott of Israel. Syria may hold some Palestinian cards, in the form of the rejectionist Palestinian groups, but these groups do not constitute a bridge to peace. At most, Syria can try to spoil the PLO-Israel peace agreement, but the details of Oslo I, Oslo II, the policies of the Likud government, and the corruption of 'Arafat's regime are tending to this objective.<sup>221</sup>

To wrap up, there has been little progress on the Syrian-Israeli track. Numerous obstacles have served to prevent either side from making concessions. The balance of power, in diplomatic terms, has continued to determine the stalemate between the two adversaries. Each event has empowered one player at the expense of the other.

The contest between Syria and Israel for regional hegemony found a new expression in the Madrid Peace Conference. Attending the conference, however, did not prevent the old enemies from engaging in their struggle in Lebanon. Operation Accountability and Operation Grapes of Wrath, two Israeli assaults upon Hizbollah, were, in fact, attempts at weakening Syria's hand in the peace negotiations.

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<sup>221</sup> Hirst, D., "Shameless in Gaza," *The Guardian*, Monday 21 April 1997, pp. 8-9.



The determinants of a comprehensive peace held the possibility of Syria containing Israel's hegemony. Israel has always been aware of this fact, and, therefore, followed a separate peace approach, which had been designed to incorporate the Levantine states into its orbit of influence. The prospect of a peace had wooed the Arab parties, and convinced them to engage in separate peace deals with Israel.

Evidently Israel's regional hegemony, coupled with its integrated relationship with the US, have impinged upon Syria's options. In the aftermath of the second Gulf War, the pursuit of peace through the US-led peace process endowed Syria with its only opportunity to find a resolution satisfying its minimal requirements. Peace under the auspices of the US presented itself as a strategic choice; Syria was not in a political or military position to resist the encompassing features of the New World Order.

# CONCLUSION

## Introduction

In an increasingly complex world of interdependence and dependence, the paradigm of realism has fallen from grace. Its analysis has been deemed to be ill-fitting with the globalisation of the world economy, and the advancement in global communications. The spread of information technology, and the accompanying communications revolution have helped to deconstruct the myths of an anarchical world order. Furthermore, the globalisation of interests has helped to reduce threats to national security as national interests have become increasingly interdependent.

The integration of the world's economies, based on an international division of labour, has diffused power throughout the global economy. Power has become a much more diffuse commodity, and no longer relates exclusively to military power. This has made international capital and information important sources of power.

The succession of global capitalism, and the advent of the information revolution have challenged the primacy of the state as the principle actor in international relations. Pluralists propose that the state has started to lose its significance as the adjudicator of international relations. The proliferation of the trans-national actors, international agencies, and the establishment of trans-national governmental bodies have all contributed to the erosion of state autonomy.

Globalists work from a less optimistic base. They refute the premise of interdependence among states. Alternatively, they perceive international relations through a world-systems theory. The relations between the states of the core and the periphery, of the global economy, are characterised as dependent. Integration, it is argued, has not led to a universal improvement in the livelihoods of the global population. To the contrary, global capitalism has exacerbated the impoverishment of the states in the periphery of the global economy.

It has been argued in this thesis, that realism and neo-realism are the most appropriate models for explaining Syria's adjustment to the New World Order. Realism is an ahistorical paradigm of international relations theory. Realism, and its sister neo-realism, highlight the uniformity of states' foreign policies. Foreign policy is the product of the anarchical system, where states compete in a self-help environment. With their focus on the international political system, both paradigms have stressed the central role played by the state in conducting international relations.

The state is the principal actor in Syria. In the anarchical environment of the international political system, and the penetrated Middle Eastern sub-system, Syria has sought to accumulate power, preserve its national security, and attain a regional balance of power with its hegemonic foe. It has attempted to insulate itself both from the external and domestic environment.

The author recognises that realism, however, has some flaws. Alongside pluralism and globalism, realism appears to be the most primitive paradigm of international relations theory. It cannot adequately account for the rise of TNCs, or the dependency of the Third World upon the centre states of the global economy. Moreover, it concentrates only on the international political system, and does not pay attention to the domestic

process. Nevertheless, domestic politics is a crucial factor when considering states of the Third World.

The deficit of state consolidation in the Third World has exposed foreign policies to the irrational impulses of state elites attempting to appease their domestic constituencies. As in all Third World states, the lack of a dynamic institutional framework, in Syria, suggests that the state has been open to the interests of dominant social groups. Thus, there is a need to examine the domestic politics of Syria.

As we have seen, the history of the post-independence Syrian state was fraught with instability. The permeability of the state, a feature accentuated by the French authorities, had been exploited by other regional and international actors. Their interference in Syrian affairs challenged the sovereignty of the state; the state, therefore, lacked insulation from the combination of domestic and international actors.

The arrival of Asad, at the helm of the Syrian state, has led to the transformation of Syria's fortunes. He has injected a dose of realism into Syria's foreign policy, and engaged in the old art of *state-craft*. Through a process of state consolidation, Asad has skilfully transposed Syria from a weak fractious state into a convincing regional player. He has managed to elevate the role of the state in Syrian affairs. Under Asad's rule, the state has become the principle actor, and has been unequivocally in control of foreign policy.

The Syrian state has been forged through its struggle with Israel. After 1970, the competition between Syria and Israel changed course. Dispensing with guerrilla tactics, Syria has engaged in a balance of power game. The ideology of Arab nationalism has been relegated to legitimising Syrian foreign policy, whilst the politics of power accumulation has been used to consolidate the power potential of the state.

Power within the state has been consolidated through a national programme of state-building. The state, through a complex of corporations, re-ordered state-society relations. In principle, the state assumed a monopoly of power, and built its base upon the foundations of the military and the Ba'th party.

In re-ordering state-society relations, the Syrian state has aimed to gain relative autonomy from the domestic forces within society. The state resides above all the forces within society by balancing the interests of competing groups. Those groups owe their allegiance to the state, though they have limited access to the decision-making process, according to the levels of patronage. The regime barons, for instance, have participated in the affairs of high politics with the president. The state, however, is neither constrained by the economic interests of the business class, nor by the ideological interests of the Ba'th party.

The patrimonial system is still prevalent in Syria and militates against the implementation of institutional processes in the decision-making process. The patrimonial system purchases valuable legitimacy for the state, which is, otherwise, lacking in the political system. The transplant of the patrimonial with the institutional system would enable the state to formalise its relations with society. At present, the state is still dependent upon the Armed Forces and Security Services to guarantee its survival. Although the state exists above society, its legitimacy base is weak, and its formal institutions lack authority. In other words, although the Syrian state is unitary, its status is perpetually in question.

The absence of institutional depth within Syria has led us to consider omnibalancing as a model for examining Syria's foreign policy. Realism operates from the assumption that states are the principal actors in international relations, and that their behaviour is governed by the international political system, rather than the domestic arena. States are

considered to be unitary, and their internal politics are deemed to be irrelevant. This element of the paradigm may be applicable to the state of the Western countries, where state consolidation has taken place over a period of two or three centuries, but in the new state of the Third World, it loses its pertinence. Therefore, omnibalancing, with part of its focus on the domestic scene, has afforded us the opportunity to examine domestic politics and the international political systems that impinge upon state behaviour.

Omnibalancing has allowed us to incorporate aspects of realism and domestic politics models. By using the omnibalancing model, it has been possible to gauge the array of influences upon the formulation of Syrian foreign policy. In particular, omnibalancing has presented itself as the best model for explaining Syria's adjustment to the New World Order.

## **The New World Order**

The definition of the New World Order has been critical to this study. It has been identified, by the author, as the redistribution of power throughout the international political system. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the Autumn of 1991 led to the diffusion of its power into the system of states. Examined away from the utopian visions, the New World Order has been presented as a transformation in the structure of the international political system from bipolarity to unipolarity.

The structure of the international political system has been defined by the balance of power. The fluctuation in the structure of the system is not yet complete. The world order is still in transition. This transition has been attributed to the diverse nature of global power. Rosecrance has suggested that the five great bases of power, the US,

Russia, the European Union, Japan, and China, control the organisation of the world order.<sup>1</sup> Krauthammer, however, has contested this concert of powers view:

*Only a few months ago it was conventional wisdom that the new rivals, the great pillars of the new multipolar world, would be Japan and Germany (and/or Europe). How quickly a myth can explode. The notion that economic power inevitably translates into geopolitical influence is materialist illusion.*<sup>2</sup>

Nye has combined these two analyses and compared the New World Order to a multi-layered cake, where the US is the dominant military power, Japan, Europe, and China are the emerging economic centres, and the rest of the world's states prop up the system. The nature of the New World Order was soon revealed after the invasion of Kuwait.

### *The second Gulf War*

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 was the first challenge to the New World Order. The second Gulf War created the opportunity for the utopians to observe their New World Order. The end of the Cold War had removed the prospect of superpower conflict and competition. Soviet compliance with the US, albeit, token support, signified the arrival of a new era in international relations. The international community held the opportunity to resolve the situation through peaceful and diplomatic means.

On 17 January 1991, diplomacy gave way to military power. High-technology armaments, and pervasive information systems dominated the spectacle of war. The coalition of interests, represented in the *upper layers of the cake*, conferred their

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<sup>1</sup> Rosecrance, R., "A New Concert of Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Krauthammer, C., "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 24.

aspirations, through the exercise of military power; they committed themselves to the US-led world order.

Although there is room for debate when defining the world order, two points of clarity have emerged since the dissolution of the Soviet Union:

- i) the balance of power remains the most useful analytical tool for examining the international political system;
- ii) the Middle Eastern sub-state system is dominated by the unipolarity of the US.

### *The balance of power*

The balance of power continues to provide the most appropriate description of the international political system. Despite the spread of trans-nationalism, and the effects of the globalisation of production, states remain the sovereign units in international relations. The power of TNCs and international agencies may be on the increase, but states are still the principal referents of the international political system.

States exist in an anarchical arena, and the systemic forces that derive from this environment impinge upon the behaviour of states. In order to survive, states are compelled to function according to a self-help principle, hence producing a uniformity of state behaviour. States adopt rational foreign policies based upon their national interest. The balance of power provides the mechanism for producing world order; the absence of an international hierarchy militates against any other mechanism for regulating world order.

The structure of the New world Order has taken on a unipolar form for the immediate future, but the rise of new economic centres, such as China, Japan, and Europe will gradually transform this unipolar structure into a multipolar one.



*Unipolarity in the Middle East*

Located at the cross-roads between the Occident and the Orient, the Middle East region has found itself unduly subjected to the pressures of the international political system. As a regional system, the Middle East has been highly penetrated by international actors, and as a consequence, remains vulnerable to external factors.

During the 1980s, Libya, Iran, and Syria had refused to accommodate US interests in the area; accordingly they were labelled as terrorist states. As enemies of the emerging dominant hegemonic order, their futures had become uncertain. Libya had faced US recrimination in 1986 prior to the dissolution of the Soviet system.

Throughout the bipolar era, Syria had been a pernicious thorn in America's side. With the rise of US hegemony in the region, Syria has been forced to adjust its policy orientation. In order to counter the perennial threat from Israel, Syria was required to leave the eclipsing shadow of the Soviet Union, and seek shade on the periphery of US influence.

The Gulf War provided Syria with an opportunity to traverse from the collapsing world order to the unipolar world order. The force of the hegemonic world order pushed Syria towards international rehabilitation, and an acceptance of US domination of the world order. This realignment has allowed Syria to invest in a new regional order. Instead of becoming a victim of the New World Order, Syria extracted itself from the policies formulated in the climate of the Cold War, and adjusted to the demands of the unipolar configuration of global power.

The demise of Soviet influence in world affairs, and the fluctuation in the international reconfiguration of power, enhanced the role of the US as the world's only superpower. When Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the US found itself in a

unique position; it was able to adopt an instrumental role in shaping the policies of the new Middle Eastern order.

### *The US-led coalition*

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait led to the Saudi invitation to the US-led coalition forces to launch an offensive on Iraq from Saudi soil. The US presence in Saudi Arabia gave it unprecedented access to the region. It became the unipolar force in the region, and represented a threat to the client states of the former Soviet Union. The destruction of Iraq, one of the region's large military powers, established the credentials of the new regional order and the potency of the New World Order. The unipolarity of US hegemony in the Middle East became dangerous for the pariah states of the region.

Syria's participation in the liberation of Kuwait, therefore, was an expression of a rational choice. The decision was justified to the Syrian population in Arab nationalist terms; yet by observing the structural factors of the international and regional systems, one is able to identify a policy based upon the determinants of power politics.

Syria's choice to join the Gulf War coalition was formulated in accordance with its national security. It was not hampered by ideology, nor constrained by Arab nationalism. It was arrived at through a careful calculation of costs and benefits. The dominance of the international political system, namely, the transformation in the international configuration of power impinged upon Syria's options. The political survival of the state, in an environment of self-help, rested upon its ability to accommodate the change in the international political environment, and to insulate itself from domestic repercussions.

The Syrian state enjoyed sufficient autonomy to pursue a policy that contravened the public mood. This does not, however, eliminate the vulnerability of the Syrian state.

The centrifugal forces that had torn the East European states apart are a constant reminder of the vulnerability of states resting upon facade institutions and coercion. The rewards for Syria's participation were an important source of vindication for the political elite, and a necessary sweetener for the uncertain regime barons.

Syria's decision to join the US oriented liberation of Kuwait has empowered the Syrian state to avoid the putative fate of Iraq, and it gave it a chance to participate in the post-war regional order. Syrian complicity with the coalition forces was based on a rational decision-making process. The systemic factors pushed Syria towards adopting a policy founded upon self-help. The international balance of power of the Cold War era no longer offered Syria protection from the hegemonic ambitions of Israel and the US. National security, which is a primary constituent of a rational foreign policy decision-making process, compelled the Syrian elite to choose a US-friendly path.

The reward for Syria's rational decision to enter the war, in collusion with an imperial force, against its Ba'thi neighbour, was a role in the post-war regional order, and the convention of an international peace process.

## **Syria and the Peace Process**

The New World Order had changed the structure of the international political system, and the co-ordinates of the region. With the dissolution of Soviet power, the US has been empowered to enforce a peace process upon the region, a process flexible enough to include Syria.

Syria's entry into the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, and its participation in the following rounds of the peace process have demonstrated Syria's commitment to

peace. It has been the assertion of the author that Syria's commitment to peace has been consistent since 1970.

The fulfilment of comprehensive peace has held the prospect of terminating the state of war between the Arab states and Israel. Comprehensive peace for Syria, where Gaza, the West Bank, southern Lebanon, and the Golan heights were to be returned for peace, according to the land for peace formula, contained the possibility of extending Syrian influence throughout the Levant in return for peace. In other words, peace would not mean a conclusion of the struggle between Syria and Israel. Peace would only move the contest onto another plane of competition. The structural determinants of the region have ensured that both states are locked in an interminable regional struggle for hegemony.

The US understood the centrality of Syria to the Levant, and that its exclusion from the peace process would prove to be disruptive. Syrian compliance, meanwhile, was also based on the US-led war with Iraq, which had provided a portent for Syria. Rationality dictated a policy grounded in national interest.

The fluctuation in the configuration of global power had left Syria in a vulnerable state. The pursuit of strategic parity was essentially over; Syria's strategies were exhausted, and the dominance of the US in world affairs meant that pariah status was dangerous without the umbrella of the Soviet Union. The structural forces of the international political system pushed Syria towards the peace process. Attending the Madrid Peace Conference was, therefore, based on a rational decision.

Syria's position has not been ideologically driven, but based on an understanding of power politics, and the regional balance of power. The Levant Security Doctrine had

catered for Syrian security through the incorporation of Lebanon, Jordan, and the PLO's foreign policies into a unified polity. Comprehensive peace held the same goals.

Although Syria had been required to make procedural concessions, in attending the Madrid conference, it remained resolute in its demand of the land for peace formula. Comprehensive peace formed the bedrock of its negotiating position. President Asad stressed the co-ordination among the Arab states, and Syria's determination to resist separate peace.

The Syrian state sought to sell the peace to its population. The years of indoctrination had fostered a deep disdain for the Israeli state and its citizens, and the Syrian state needed to modify this residual base of mistrust in order to justify its peace negotiations. The peace was made easier to sell after Israel and the PLO had announced the results of their secret talks.<sup>3</sup>

Despite attempting to co-ordinate the positions of the Arab parties, in their negotiations with the Israelis, Syria was unable to restrain the PLO and Jordan from concluding separate peace deals with Israel. Their separate peace deals undermined the Syrian position, and in effect, isolated it from the peace process. Unity had provided the Arab states with a semblance of balance with the Israelis. Asad's commitment to securing the Levant Doctrine moved from the field of confrontation to the peace process.

Syria's response revealed the extent of its regional and international vulnerability. The impact of the New World Order had taken its toll on Syria's ability to resist the imposition of separate peace deals. In the past, tactical rejectionism had empowered

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<sup>3</sup> After talking to a number of Syrian businessmen, bureaucrats, and shabab in Damascus, it started to become clear that the actions of the PLO had alleviated the Syrian population of its commitment to Palestine. The Syrian youth were not really interested in Palestine; consumerism has arrived in Damascus, music, fashion, and Western interests are more important than politics.

Syria in its disruption of separate peace formulas, but its hands were tied by the New World Order. Adjusting to the New World Order entailed exercising restraint.

As a rational actor, the Syrian state quietly accepted the *fait accompli* of Arafat's secret talks. Asad had been outmanoeuvred by the Israelis. They had employed the classic divide and rule policy of the former imperial powers. Syria observed the events and promised not to interfere unless its interests were directly harmed. Asad, however, maintained a deck of negotiating cards in Syria, the Damascus 10, but they were confined to the bottom drawer of diplomacy.

The conclusion of the PLO and Jordanian peace deals presented the Syrians with the opportunity to seal a separate deal of its own. Prior to the PLO's move, Syria's self-interest fell under the spotlight after Rabin had become Israeli prime minister in 1992. It is unwise to speculate in the field of politics, but we can be certain that Syria would have acted according to its perceived long-term interests. We cannot be certain whether it would have signed a separate peace before the PLO, but if one looks at history, Syria's rejection of separate peace had been in line with its national interests.

Syria's national interests have been interwoven with Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians since the dismemberment of Bilad al-Sham, and the creation of Israel. The rise of Asad, to his self-styled presidential monarchy, marked a transition in Syrian history. Through the politics of power accumulation, the preservation of national security, and the promotion of national interest, Syria has extricated itself from regional vulnerability, and, in turn, projected itself as the keystone of regional stability.

Until the metamorphosis of the world order, Syria's foreign policy had been based on a strategy of attaining a balance of power with Israel. Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians formed a critical part of the strategy, but its *Achilles Heal* had remained the

possibility of separate peace. Separate peace has held the potential of destabilising Syria's influence in the region, thus harming its national interests.

The separate peace deals of the PLO and Jordan thus harmed Syria's national interest. It significantly impaired Syria's ability to parry Israel's hegemony. Syria was compelled, however, by the determinants of the international political system to remain in the peace process. Exclusion would have meant regional and international isolation. It would have also entailed the disengagement of Syria's interests with Jordan and the PLO. Hence, a new peace was pursued, one pertaining to the liberation of the Golan and southern Lebanon.

Syria's adjustment to the New World Order required a downgrading of its ambitions. The PLO and Jordan have undermined Syria's stature as the repository of Arab power in the Levant. Comprehensive peace drained down the channels of the separate peace tracks, and left Syria with the residue of a Golan and Lebanon deal. Syria's terms of reference on the Golan, however, have remained unequivocal; full withdrawal for full peace.

The Wye Plantation talks were designed to resolve the Syrian-Israeli impasse over the Golan Heights. In the light of the problems emanating from Oslo I and Oslo II, the Israeli government aimed to secure a peace deal with the Syrians. The talks showed how both Syria and Israel had reached an understanding of each other's concerns and needs.

We have learnt in retrospect that Israel had accepted the principle of complete withdrawal for full peace. The decision had been *deposited* with the US administration along with the incremental concessions attained during the process of talks. With this admission by the Syrians, we are able to see how close Syria and Israel had moved to

peace. Peres was eager to conclude a deal on the Golan to enhance his political prestige, and to advance Israel's hegemonic interests in the region. Asad had the credentials to deliver Syria into the peace process.

The structural determinants of the international political system, and the vagaries of the Middle Eastern sub-system have pushed Syria and Israel towards concluding a peace deal. But the moment slipped through the fingers of both leaders, as Asad played for time, and Peres sought an early election victory.

### **Adjusting to the New World Order**

In conclusion, Syrian foreign policy has been determined by the international political system. Foreign policy has been based upon securing national security, conceived within the terms of the Levant Security Doctrine, in an anarchic arena. Attaining a balance of power with Israel, its historic foe, has determined the policy initiatives of the state.

Syria's foreign policy has been consistent since 1970. The maximisation of power has guided the principle behind containing the threat of Israel, and extending its own hegemony over the Levant. Syria's commitment to peace has been concomitant to its foreign policy goals, namely, the recovery of the Arab territories seized in 1967 by Israel.

Since 1970, three identifiable strategies have been employed, whilst a myriad of tactics have been discernible. Each strategy and tactic has been justified by Syria's consistent foreign policy goals. The prospect of separate peace has proved to be the nemesis of Syria, but comprehensive peace (cold) has been a long-term objective of the Syrians.



Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the structural determinants of the international political system militated against progress on the comprehensive track.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the birth of the New World Order has opened a window of opportunity for Syria and the Middle East region. The second Gulf War offered Syria the optimum moment to realign itself with the US, and to seize the peace initiative. Comprehensive peace offered Syria the possibility to contain Israel's hegemonic ambitions, but separate peace represented a challenge to Syria's own hegemonic ambitions.

Without a major patron, Syria's vulnerability had increased; thereupon, it was compelled to adjust to the New World Order. Syria's adjustment to the New World Order has been based upon a rational set of criteria by balancing the interests of its domestic groups against the constraints of the international political system. Syria had witnessed, and experienced the heat at the epicentre of the New World Order's authority; courting an alternative axis existed beyond the realms of rationality. Assimilation to the dominant hegemonic order, even if partial, provided Syria with a life-line of survival in the anarchic and hostile state of nature.

Domestically, Syria was able to accommodate its adjustment to the New World Order without incurring undue damage to the state. By balancing the interests of the social forces within the Syrian Bonapartist state, Syria has managed to remove the area of high politics far from the public eye. The autonomy from domestic forces, therefore, has invested the Syrian state with the ability to formulate foreign policy decisions away from internal constraints. The decision to re-orient Syria's foreign policy towards the US was sufficiently insulated from the domestic censure.

Thus, Syria's adjustment to the New World Order entailed manoeuvring from the bipolar to the unipolar world order and transferring its struggle with Israel from the battle-field to the negotiating room.

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