



JHUMUNC
THE JOHNS HOPKINS MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
Quadrumvirate: Yom Kippur War (1973)
Chaired by Michael Shen

Session XXIII

Syrian Arab Republic

Quadrumvirate: Yom Kippur War of 1973

Topic A: Establishing a Permanent Constitution

Topic B: Stabilizing and Strengthening the Arab Republic

Committee Overview

This committee begins on the morning of October 6, 1973 – prior to the start of the Yom Kippur War – and will cover two topics. The first topic for debate will discuss the merits of having a permanent constitution. Before attempting to create a permanent constitution, delegates should understand Syria’s political history and situation to subsequently determine if a constitution is necessary. Next, delegates will decide what modifications ought to be made to the 1973 proposed Constitution. Finally, delegates should reflect on the political, social, and economic implications of their passed directives – specifically, how do they fit into the agenda of the larger Arab world?

The second topic for debate will be Syria’s role in stabilizing and strengthening the Arab Republic. As a major player and owner of key resources, Syria must decide which course of action it will take during the Yom Kippur War and after its resolutions. Furthermore, delegates will have the unique opportunity to define Syria’s vision for the Arab Republic and shape it to their will. The end result, hopefully, will be to have created

a world in which the goals of the Syrian Arab Republic are clearly defined, exceptionally planned, and well-integrated with the surrounding Middle East’s situation.

Parliamentary Procedure

This committee will follow general parliamentary procedure, defaulting to moderated caucuses unless otherwise motioned for by the delegates. The flow of debate will be fluid, enabling quick responses to crises and simulating a more realistic environment.

Delegates may pass committee-wide, joint, or personal directives as a way to respond to crises and influence the direction of the discussion. Delegates with a superior understanding of their characters have the advantage of issuing personal directives to advance their own agenda or that of the committee.

Success in this committee will be dependent on a delegate’s ability to integrate their novel ideas and interests with those across the table.



Delegate Biographies:

Mustafa Tlass

Minister of Defense

Born to a Sunni Muslim in 1932, Mustafa Tlass joined the Ba'ath party at the young age of 15.¹ He befriended Hafez al-Assad, the future president of Syria, whilst studying at the Homs Military Academy.² After Hafez al-Assad successfully took power through the Corrective Revolution in 1970, he made Tlass his Minister of Defense even though Tlass played an insignificant role in the coup.³

Ahmad al-Khatib

Head of State

Ahmad al-Khatib was chosen by Hafez al-Assad after Hafez's successful coup to act as the ceremonial head of state of Syria in 1970. Ahmad al-Khatib served as a civilian member of the Ba'ath party. His position was filled by Assad after only four months.⁴

Rifaat al-Assad

Founder and Leader of the Defense Companies

Rifaat al-Assad joined the Syrian Arab Army in 1958 as a First Lieutenant and became commander of a special force loyal to the Ba'ath party in 1965. In 1970, he supported his brother,

Hafez al-Assad, in Hafez's coup—the Corrective Revolution. The following year, his paramilitary unit evolved into the Defense Companies, an elite force of 55,000 men.⁵

Abdul Halim Khaddam

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

Born to a Sunni Muslim in 1932, Abdul Halim Khaddam joined the Ba'ath party at the young age of 17. He was an economy and trade minister in Syrian government before the Corrective Revolution. Deciding to side with Hafez al-Assad in the coup, Abdul was named the foreign minister in 1970.⁶

Abdullah al-Ahmar

Assistant Secretary General of the National Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party

Abdullah al-Ahmar, born at Al-Tall in 1936, first joined the Ba'ath Party in the 1950s. He was the Secretary of Douma and al-Tal Section of the Party and the Secretary of Damascus Countryside Branch of the Party before Hafez al-Assad's coup.⁷ After the Corrective Revolution, Ahmar was elected to the National Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party.⁸

¹ "Lt. Gen. Mustafa Tlass." "Dossier: Lt. Gen. Mustafa Tlass" (July 2000). Middle East Forum. Accessed November 17, 2019.

https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0007_sd2.htm.

² Briscoe, Ivan, Floor Janssen, and Rosan Smits. "Stability and Economic Recovery after Assad: Key Steps for Syria's Post-Conflict Transition." Clingendael. Netherlands Institute of International Relations, n.d.

https://web.archive.org/web/20121119054333/http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2012/20121100_syria_stability_recovery_cru.pdf.

³ "Lt. Gen. Mustafa Tlass." "Dossier: Lt. Gen. Mustafa Tlass" (July 2000). Middle East Forum. Accessed November 17, 2019.

https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0007_sd2.htm.

⁴ Sami M. Moubayed, *Steel & Silk: Men and Women who Shaped Syria 1900-2000*, Cune Press (Seattle, Washington), 150.

⁵ "Dossier: Rifaat Assad" (June 2000). Middle East Forum. Accessed November 17, 2019.

https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0006_sd.htm.

⁶ "Profile: Abdel-Halim Khaddam." Lebanon Wire, June 7, 2005. <https://web.archive.org/web/20060327043713/http://www.lebanonwire.com/0605/05060702RR.asp>.

⁷ "Comrade Abdullah Alahmar Assistant Secretary General of the Baath Arab Socialist Party." Assistant Secretary General. Baath Arab Socialist Party National Leadership, September 3, 2015. http://www.baath-party.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=315&Itemid=333&lang=en.

⁸ "Comrade Abdullah Alahmar Assistant Secretary General of the Baath Arab Socialist Party." Assistant Secretary General. Baath Arab Socialist Party National Leadership, September 3, 2015. http://www.baath-party.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=315&Itemid=333&lang=en.

Mahmoud al-Ayyubi

Prime Minister & Vice President

Mahmoud al-Ayyubi is a politician who rose to power first in 1971 as the Vice President of Syria. Later, in 1972, he was additionally appointed the position of Prime Minister of Syria. While Assad served as Head of State, al-Ayyubi served as Head of Government. His official role was to lead the government along with Assad and his Cabinet. In the event of a vote of no confidence, the Prime Minister is required to present the government's letter of resignation to the President.⁹

Abdul Rahman Khleifawi

Former Prime Minister

Abdul Rahman Khleifawi, of Algerian descent, was born in 1930. Originally an army general, he became Minister of Interior in 1970. Hafez al-Assad made Khleifawi the Prime Minister after Assad's coup. He was replaced by Mahmoud al-Ayyubi in 1972.¹⁰

Muhammad Ali al-Halabi

Speaker of the People's Council

A former teacher in Kuwait, Muhammad Ali al-Halabi became the chairman and spokesman for the National Council in June of 1973.¹¹ As the speaker of the People's Council, Halabi represents Syria's legislature. The Council's guards are under the jurisdiction of the speaker.¹²

Riyad al-Turk

Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party ("Political Bureau")

Riyad al-Turk joined the Syrian Communist Party as a student and was imprisoned for opposing the military government long before Assad's rise to power. He wrote political articles for the Party's newspaper that propelled him to high leadership in the Party. In 1958, he was again imprisoned for opposing the creation of the United Arab Republic. In 1972, he merged the Communist Party with the National Progressive Front.¹³

Mohammad Zied Chouiki

Minister of Education

The Minister of Education is responsible for overseeing low level education. Along with the Minister of Higher Education, Chouiki was tasked with the basic education of Syrian children. Courses included the basics as well as Ba'athism ideology¹⁴. For the most part, the majority of early childhood education was run by non-governmental programs. Upon achievement of a basic education, children were evaluated to see if they would continue to a general secondary school or enroll in a technical school.¹⁵

⁹ National Foreign Assessment Center. "Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments / National Foreign Assessment Center. 1976July-Dec." HathiTrust. Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435024020018&view=2up&seq=6>.

¹⁰ "MUHAMMAD ALI AL-HALABI." World Heritage Encyclopedia. Accessed November 17, 2019. http://community.worldheritage.org/articles/eng/Muhammad_Ali_al-Halabi.

¹¹ "MUHAMMAD ALI AL-HALABI." World Heritage Encyclopedia. Accessed November 17, 2019.

http://community.worldheritage.org/articles/eng/Muhammad_Ali_al-Halabi.

¹² The 2012 Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic

¹³ Wright, Robin (2008). *Dreams and Shadows, the Future of the Middle East*. New York: Penguin Press. p. 213. ISBN 1-59420-111-0.

¹⁴ Al-Maaloli, Raymon. "The Ideology of Authority: 50 Years of Education in Syria." Washington Institute. Accessed November 17, 2019.

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/the-ideology-of-authority-50-years-of-education-in-syria>

¹⁵ "Education System: Syria." Nuffic.

Haissam Kelani

Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations

Ambassador Haissam Kelani is a well-traveled diplomat who studied in both Paris and Germany, speaks 4 languages, and has had an extensive military background. Before the war, Ambassador Kelani served in the Syrian Air Force, the Economy Department, and as ambassador to Morocco, Algeria, and the German Democratic Republic before becoming Syria's permanent representative to the U.N.¹⁶ Ambassador Kelani undoubtedly has a large network of connections across the Middle East and the world.

Nasouh Al Dakkak

Governor of the Central Bank of Syria

As the Governor of the Central Bank, Al Dakkak has immense power over Syria's economy and gold reserves. Established in 1953, the Central Bank of Syria, maintains and fosters the nation's financial systems. Al Dakkak is thereby able to monitor allocation of monetary resources to ensure maximum economic growth and development for the state of Syria.¹⁷

Ali Haydar

Special Forces Commander

Ali Haydar is an Alawite and close personal friend to President Hafez al-Assad. After joining the Ba'ath Party as a schoolboy and training with the Soviets, Haydar became the Commander of the Syrian Special Forces in 1968. The Special Forces were specially trained in air and sniper warfare and was comprised of 25,000 men.¹⁸ As a close ally of President al-Assad, Haydar has significant sway over Assad's decisions. Furthermore, Haydar is very influential in the Alawite community.

¹⁶ "HAISSAM KELANI." prabook.com. Accessed November 17, 2019. <https://prabook.com/web/haissam.kelani/758221>.

¹⁷ "The Strategic Vision of the Central Bank of Syria." Central Bank of Syria. Accessed November 17, 2019. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130925211813/http://www.banquecentrale.gov.sy/main-eg.htm>.

¹⁸ Shibley, Barnett; Michael N., Telhami (2002). Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East. Cornell University Press. p. 148.

Muhammad al-Kuli

Air Force Intelligence

As the Chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee, al-Kuli is one of Assad's closest advisors. He oversees the entire Air Force Intelligence and increasingly uses it for unconventional purposes. To other delegates, under al-Kuli's influence, Air Force Intelligence is relatively unregulated and unsupervised, allowing it to operate independently of governmental oversight - this freedom manifested in the select staffing of intelligence posts and directives controlling Syria's intelligence activities.¹⁹

Ali Douba

Military Intelligence

Ali Douba is a close friend of President Hafez al-Assad and a member of the Alawite sect of Islam. He served as a military attaché after joining the army and became the deputy to the head of military intelligence in 1971.²⁰ Deeply entrenched in the upper reaches of politics and the intelligence community, Douba is knowledgeable on both internal and external affairs. He would be able to ask advisors for information on a coming war with Israel.

Ghazi Kanaan

Soldier

Ghazi Kanaan fought in the Golan Heights against Israel during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. As a soldier, Kanaan has information regarding the situation on the ground and Israeli strategies. He also has connections to other soldiers. Kanaan is on track towards a promotion to colonel, and then head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon.²¹

¹⁹ Reich, Bernard (1990). Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary. Greenwood Publishing Group. ISBN 0313262136.

²⁰ Faure, Claude (2002). Dictionary of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Culture, History, and Politics. Macmillan Reference USA. p. 109. ISBN 0-02-865977-5.

²¹ "Syrian Minister 'Commits Suicide'." BBC News. BBC, October 12, 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4334442.stm.

Hikmat al-Shihabi

Head of Intelligence Services

General al-Shihabi serves as the Head of Intelligence Services (military intelligence) during the time of the War of 1973. He works closely with Ali Douba and had extensive military training in both the Soviet Union and the United States.²² Like Douba, General al-Shihabi has extensive connections to the intelligence community but is not as close to President al-Assad.

Ali Sadreddine Al-Bayanouni

Member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood Shura Council and Executive Office

Al-Bayanouni joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954. He later served as a reserve officer in the Syrian Army 1959-60. In 1963, he graduated with a law degree. By 1972, Al-Bayanouni eventually rose to serve on the Shura Council. Despite imprisonment in 1975, Al-Bayanouni continued to play an active role in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.²³

Sa'id Hawwa

Leading Member and Prominent Ideologue in the Muslim Brotherhood of Syria

Hawwa was born in 1935 and grew up in the central Syrian city of Hama. He joined the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in 1953. He moved to Saudi Arabia for a few years after rising tensions between the Ba'athist regime and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood was banned by the Ba'athist government in 1963. He returned to Syria after the Corrective Revolution in 1970. As a significant ideological driver of the Syrian Brotherhood, Hawwa is responsible for escalating conflict between the Ba'athist party and the Brotherhood.²⁴

Issam al-Attar

Supreme Guide of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

Born in 1927 in Syria, Attar became the second Supreme Guide of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in 1961. The Brotherhood was banned by the Ba'athist government in 1963.²⁵ He was the leader in the 1964 Hama riot—the first significant conflict between the Ba'ath Party leadership and the Muslim Brotherhood. Tensions between the Brotherhood and the Ba'athist Party escalated after the Corrective Revolution in 1970.²⁶

Khalid Bakdash

Leader of the Syrian Communist Party

Bakdash became a supporter of communism as an 18-year-old student at Damascus University. He went to Moscow in 1934 and was the creator of the first Arabic translation of the Communist Manifesto. Bakdash returned to Syria in 1936 and became the secretary of the Communist Party. Bakdash gained a seat in Parliament in 1954 but was forced to leave the country from 1958-1966 due to his criticisms of Egyptian President Nasser during the existence of the United Arab Republic. In the early 1970s, Bakdash opted to have the Communist Party joining the National Progressive Front, a coalition of parties who supported Arab nationalist and socialist agendas, as the only other option was for the party to be outlawed.²⁷

²² Faure, Claude (2002). *Dictionary of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Culture, History, and Politics*. Macmillan Reference USA. p. 432. ISBN 978-0-02-865977-0.

²³ "The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria." *Carnegie Middle East Center*. Accessed November 18, 2019. <https://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48370>.

²⁴ Lacroix, Stephane (2011). *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. pp. 124-125.

²⁵ Blanton, Tom. "History Repeats Itself as Tragedy." *Foreign Policy*, September 21, 2012.

https://web.archive.org/web/20130729110520/https://foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/history_repeats_itself_as_tragedy?page=0,0.

²⁶ Seale, Patrick (1990). *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*. University of California Press. ISBN 978-0-520-06976-3.

²⁷ Federal Research Division (2004). *Syria A Country Study*. Kessinger Publishing. p. 217. ISBN 1-4191-5022-7.

Jamil al-Assad

Parliament Member

A younger brother of Hafez al-Assad, Jamil served as a member of Parliament from 1971 onwards. Jamil was deeply religious, to the point of being known for supporting the conversion of members of the Allawite community to Shiism. Jamil al-Assad was also a commander of a minor militia.²⁸

Anisa Makhlof

First Lady of Syria

Anisa Makhlof married Hafez al-Assad in 1957, elevating her family's status and wealth by enabling them to be awarded exclusive contracts within the Syrian banking, oil, and telecommunication sectors. Anisa Makhlof became the first lady in March of 1971. She has been described as "a formidable figure" within the al-Assad family and the Ba'athist government and would go on to advocate for heavy military responses to Syrian protesters and rebels during the Syrian Civil War.²⁹

²⁸ "Jamil Assad, 71; Uncle of Syrian President Bashar Assad Was in Parliament." Los Angeles Times, December 17, 2004. <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/dec/17/local/me-passings17.1>.

²⁹ "Where Are They Now?" The Economist. The Economist Newspaper, February 21, 2013. <https://www.economist.com/pomegranate/2013/02/21/where-are-they-now>.



Topic A:

Establishing a Permanent Constitution

Introduction

President Hafiz al-Assad was an instrumental figure in Middle Eastern politics for over three decades. Under his tutelage, the Syrian Arab Republic rose to be a prominent influence in the Arab world. Assad's policies, negotiations, and tactics would shape the actions of his neighbors and incite actions from powerful countries across the globe.

Hafiz al-Assad joined Syria's Ba'ath Party as a student activist. He later attended military school, working his way up the ranks to commander. After leading the military, Assad took on the role of Defense Minister and was defeated by Israel in the Six-Day War. Following his defeat, Assad vied with competitors to keep his influence and position. Eventually victorious, he was elected Prime Minister and later President.³⁰

A military man, Assad aligned himself with the army and the Soviet Union, who was willing to supply his troops with arms and strategy. While he played politics abroad, Assad worked to put on a façade of a kind ruler, but secretly eliminated all opposition. For example, he implemented large public works projects using donations from domestic and international organizations and individuals. Those who chose to focus on criticizing his rule rather than extolling his roadbuilding however found themselves arrested, tortured, or executed. Assad ruled with an iron fist,

willing to put down rebellions at the cost of thousands of lives and razed cities.

Assad did his best to push Syria to the forefront of Arab politics, and at times, he tried to assert Syrian dominance throughout the Middle East. He found some success, but many failures. For example, when he tried to attack Israel with Egypt, his Egyptian allies deserted him. When Assad tried to assert control in Lebanon during their civil war, he struggled against Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Later, Assad would support Western forces in their coalition against his neighbor Iraq. Assad was a diplomat when it suited his interests and an executioner when he was threatened.³¹

Historical Background

Life before the 1973 Constitution

The Ba'ath Party dominated much of Syrian politics from 1963 onwards. Assad was a key member of the Ba'ath Party. The party, like Assad's presidency, was authoritarian and socialist. Unlike previous political parties, the Ba'athists tried to turn a blind eye to Syria's social stratification. During Assad's presidency, his administration and party would be challenged by the Muslim Brotherhood. Successfully dealing with their threat was of paramount importance.³² Additionally, it is worth noting that a Syrian minority – the

³⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Hafiz Al-Assad." Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October 2, 2019.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hafiz-al-Assad>.

³¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Hafiz Al-Assad." Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., October

2, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hafiz-al-Assad>.

³² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Muslim Brotherhood." Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., May 8, 2019.

Alawites – has held significant control of the country since Assad was elected.³³

Assad himself was an Alawite and, before he introduced the new constitution, implemented a series of reforms known as the Corrective Movement (read: coup d'état). To consolidate his power in a tumultuous environment, Assad needed to appeal to many religious and educational parties. On the religious side, he presented himself as a devout Muslim and would pray in Sunni mosques, despite being an Alawite. He used his influence to place strategic Sunnis in high government positions, such as Head of State. In fact, most of his cabinet was Sunni.³⁴ On the international stage, Assad worked with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to create the “Cairo-Damascus-Riyadh axis” to counter Israel’s rising influence in the region.³⁵

Leading up to the 1973 Constitution, Assad went to great lengths to seem democratic and fair. He staffed his advisory with individuals who overall represented all citizens – from the elite to the farmer. He appealed to his voters by seeming technologically progressive; he also relaxed the government’s control over the economy.³⁶

When the 1973 Constitution was released, there was immediate backlash from the Muslim Brotherhood. Their chief concern was the exclusion of the mandate that the President of Syria must be a Muslim.³⁷ In a piece published by the Atlantic, Robert Kaplan stated that, “An Alawi ruling Syria is like an untouchable

becoming maharajah in India or a Jew becoming tsar in Russia – an unprecedented development shocking to the majority population which had monopolized power for so many centuries”.³⁸ Suffice to say, Assad’s sudden rise to power was not received happily by many.

History of the Ba’ath Party of Syria

To understand the importance of a constitution, it’s helpful to understand the political system in place before Assad rose to power. Since Assad was a member of the Ba’ath Party, the founding of the party and its earliest ideals are a good place to start.

The Ba’ath Party can trace its roots back to 1963 when it had its first major seizure of power. That year, the Ba’ath Party successfully executed a coup d’état and wrangled control of the government.³⁹ It’s important to consider that this operation was planned and executed by the military with civilian leadership approval. The coup in 1963 became a milestone in the party’s history, and following its success, the party was able to push its socialist agenda based on étatism and autarchy. The Oxford English Dictionary defines étatism as prioritizing the development of the state over the citizen.⁴⁰ The party therefore spent resources promoting its initiatives potentially at the cost of helping its citizens.

At its core, the Ba’ath Party was focused on modernization and nationalism. Here, as in other nationalist movements, the party believed that a strong state that created social programs would be the key to

³³ Irvine, Verity Elizabeth. “Local Government.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., July 15, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria/Local-government>.

³⁴ Reich, Bernard. *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: a Biographical Dictionary*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

³⁵ Freedman, Robert O. *The Middle East Enters the Twenty-First Century*. UPF., 2002.

³⁶ Freedman, Robert O. *The Middle East Enters the Twenty-First Century*. UPF., 2002.

³⁷ Alianak, Sonia. *Middle Eastern Leaders and Islam: a Precarious Equilibrium*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

³⁸ Kaplan, Robert D. “Syria: Identity Crisis.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, February 1, 1993. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1993/02/syria-identity-crisis/303860/>.

³⁹ “Profile: Syria’s Ruling Baath Party.” BBC, July 9, 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18582755>

⁴⁰ Speake, Jennifer and Mark LaFlur. *The Oxford English Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English*. Oxford University Press: 2002.

a successful Syria.⁴¹ The most famous economic programs included land reform, subsidies, and price controls. Furthermore, the government was so entrenched in its views that it rewarded supporters and punished opponents. Compared to Syria's history of feudalism and upper classes, the government believed themselves to be better equipped to protect the country's wealth. In conclusion, the party tied the economic success to its own success.

When Assad seized power in 1970, he began to move away from the Ba'athist ideals of socialism and nationalism – though he himself was a member of the Ba'ath Party. He realized that strict economic controls meant the possibility of economic stagnation and radical socialist policies could be detrimental to the party in the future. Instead, he initiated his “Corrective Movement” which brought Syria away from strict socialism to a more capitalist medium. Foreign capitalism was strictly frowned upon, but non-monopolist, nationalistic capitalism was heralded.⁴² However, officially, the party and his policies were still “socialist,” perhaps to appease the Arab masses.

While this may sound delightful, Assad did use his party to make it the dominant political party in Syria. The party campaigned in nearly every province in Syria such that the party was known to all citizens and that improper criticism could be punished.⁴³ At the time, there was certainly still a divide between the wealthy and the poor. The only hardship both groups faced as foreign oppression and so nationalism became the unifying thread for both groups.

While Assad's Corrective Movement had some early success, in time, it would fail to truly bring Syria out of economic stagnation.

Political Structure of Syria

As mentioned before, the Ba'ath Party was conceived around 1947 but did not rise to prominence until the 1960s. It was fundamentally a modernist movement that called for a renaissance of Arabism, the recreation of formidable Arab states, and the eradication of non-Arab powers occupying Arab land.⁴⁴ The founders hoped that the ideology would cause a population of Arabs to think critically about their current situation and to reinvigorate their civilization.

In 1963 when the Syrian Ba'ath Party seized power, they called for the destruction of Israel.⁴⁵ They, like the broader Ba'ath ideology, favored a socialist community that denounced tyranny. Damascus became a center for learning and political discourse. From here, leaders enacted widespread land reform and other nationalist policies.

On June 6, 1967, Israel invaded Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza. The neighboring Arab states' failed retaliation resulted in a demoralized Arab world and prompted a reevaluation of the efficacy of the Arab state-system.⁴⁶ After all, they had just essentially lost all of Palestine and Gaza to the Israelis for good. Not surprisingly, the Ba'ath Party took much of the criticism for Syria's failure in this war, and that paved the way for Assad to throw his coup in the early 1970s.⁴⁷

During this time, Syria relied heavily on its military for a strong state and to promote its agenda to the region and

⁴¹ “The Baath Party in Syria.” Religious Literacy Project, Harvard Divinity School.

⁴² Freedmen, Robert (2002). *The Middle East Enters the Twenty-first Century*. University Press of Florida. ISBN 0813031109.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Profile: Syria's ruling Baath Party,” BBC, 2012.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ History.com Editors, “Six-Day War,” History, 2018.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

international stage. Syria is no stranger to a military coup, and the ever-expanding military allows for greater access into rural parts of the country.

Since Assad took power in the early 1970s, Syria has fluctuated between an institutional system and a neo-patrimonial system. The former is what one may see today – it is centered around society’s values and norms. Some common practices include voting in assemblies and having an office of authority. This line of ruling is most likely to be rational and well-received by the population.⁴⁸ The latter system stems from patrimonialism which describes an inheritance of power through the male line. The benefit to this structure is that sometimes, decisions simply must be made without time and consideration of the people. On the other hand, this system is more likely to be irrational and discourage unity. Following the discovery of oil, this converted to a neo-patrimonial system where instead of trading one’s support to the state for favors, one traded support for economic rewards.⁴⁹ Thus, the state has a more allocative role in everyday life.

Between these two systems lies the more concrete political machines – the political system, the Ba’ath Party, and the armed forces. However, the balance of power was not always equal. Assad sought to create and retain a presidential monarchy where he could dictate foreign and domestic policy. He alone had the power to appoint the prime minister, speaker of the People’s Council, make laws when legislative body was on vacation, veto laws, legislate at will, and even dismiss the People’s Council. He alone controlled the important functions of

government, while the other officials were left to deal with the mundane clerical work.

Outside of Assad, there were some elected members of the People’s Council who did not truly have power unless Assad agreed to their wishes. The local governments of Syria’s fourteen provinces directed the daily necessities of running the municipalities. A governor usually oversaw this process, and his local government was largely self-sufficient except when requesting funding from Damascus.⁵⁰ The National Progressive Front allowed other political parties to debate under the watchful eye of the Ba’ath Party.⁵¹

Of course, the Ba’ath Party permeated throughout Syrian life. The organization itself consisted of a Secretary-General and 21 command members. Leadership was centralized by region and the whole party’s goal was to recruit, educate (read: indoctrinate), and communicate with the public. Loyalty to the Ba’ath Party usually meant loyalty to the government; and as such, the Syrian government was able to win the support of unionized workers and agricultural families.⁵²

Finally, the government includes the military in the sense that they play a role in dictating policy, but without the constraints placed on the legislative body.⁵³

⁴⁸ Raymond Hinnebusch, “Sectarianism and Governance in Syria,” (Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol 19, No. 1, 2019).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Syria - Government and Society, Local Government.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc., 2019.

⁵¹ “National Progressive Front (Syria),” Encyclopedia, 2019.

⁵² “Profile: Syria’s ruling Baath Party,” BBC, 2012.

⁵³ Quilliam, Neil. *Syria and the New World Order*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1999.

The 1973 Constitution

The Constitution

The 1973 Constitution was a major step towards having a unified constitution. Regardless of whether it was legally enacted, the Constitution and Ba'ath provided at least 16 years of continuity in Syrian politics.⁵⁴

The following section contains select Articles of the 1973 Syrian Constitution. The italicized text is a translation of the Constitution by the Carnegie Middle East Center.⁵⁵ The questions that follow are meant to be discussion starters for the delegates. When pondering these Articles, remember to predict what their effects will have not only on Syrian citizens, but also on Syria's relationship with other countries. By thinking critically and analytically, delegates will be able to influence a generation of Syrians that will bring stability and prosperity to Syria.

Article 1, (1) The Syrian Arab Republic is a democratic, popular, socialist, and sovereign state. No part of its territory can be ceded. Syria is a member of the Union of the Arab Republics.

- What happens when a foreign force occupies, or attempts to annex, Syrian territory?
- What duties does Syria have as a member of the Arab Republic?

Article 2, (2) Sovereignty is vested in the people, who exercise it in accordance with this Constitution.

- What is sovereignty? How may the people exercise their rights? What guarantees can be made to the people

that their sovereignty is not rescinded?

Article 3, (1) The religion of the President of the Republic has to be Islam. (2) Islamic jurisprudence is a main source of legislation.

- Why is it paramount to groups like the Muslim Brotherhood that the President be Muslim?
- Is Sharia the best form of law? Will it bring the most prosperity to the people of Syria? Will it bring the most stability?

Article 8 The leading party in the society and the state is the Socialist Arab Baath Party. It leads a patriotic and progressive front seeking to unify the resources of the people's masses and place them at the service of the Arab nation's goals.

- What are the advantages of having a leading party? Its disadvantages?
- How should the Ba'ath Party address opposition?

Article 12 The state is at the people's service. Its establishments seeks to protect the fundamental rights of the citizens and develop their lives. It also seeks to support the political organizations in order to bring about self-development.

- What are the fundamental rights of citizens?

Article 13, (1) The state economy is a planned socialist economy which seeks to end all forms of exploitation.

- What benefits do a socialist economy have?
- Can Syria have both a socialist economy and a growing private sector under President Assad?

⁵⁴ Roberts, David. *The Ba'ath and the Creation of Modern Syria (RLE Syria)*. Routledge, 2013.

⁵⁵ "The Syrian Constitution - 1973-2012." Carnegie Middle East Center. Accessed October 31, 2019. <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/50255?lang=en>.

Article 15, (3) Private seizure cannot be effected except through a judicial decision.

- What constitutes private seizure – property, assets, personal freedom?

Article 21 The educational and cultural system aims at creating a socialist nationalist Arab generation which is scientifically minded and attached to its history and land, proud of its heritage, and filled with the spirit of struggle to achieve its nation's objectives of unity, freedom, and socialism, and to serve humanity and its progress.

- How can the government provide a state in which this goal is achieved?

Article 25, (1) Freedom is a sacred right. The state protects the personal freedom of the citizens and safeguards their dignity and security.

- Who in the state ensures the security of the citizens?
- What happens when the President undermines this law?

Article 28, (1) Every defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty by a final judicial decision. (2) No one may be kept under surveillance or detained except in accordance with the law. (3) No one may be tortured physically or mentally or be treated in a humiliating manner. The law defines the punishment of whoever commits such an act. (4) The right of litigation, contest, and defense before the judiciary is safeguarded by the law.

- What or who prevents unlawful arrests and detentions?

Article 35, (1) The freedom of faith is guaranteed. The state respects all religions.

- How will discrimination against non-Muslims be regulated?

Article 38 Every citizen has the right to freely and openly express his views in words, in writing, and through all other means of expression. He also has the right to participate in

supervision and constructive criticism in a manner that safeguards the soundness of the domestic and nationalist structure and strengthens the socialist system. The state guarantees the freedom of the press, of printing, and publication in accordance with the law.

- How? Under what circumstances is this valid?

Article 40, (2) Military service is compulsory and regulated by law.

- What will this teach young adults? How does it contribute to the Constitution's mission?

Article 45 The state guarantees women all opportunities enabling them to fully and effectively participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life. The state removes the restrictions that prevent women's development and participation in building the socialist Arab society.

- What barriers will be removed so that women can take advantage of the aforementioned opportunities?

Article 50, (1) The People's Assembly assumes legislative power in the manner defined in this Constitution. (2) The members of the People's Assembly are elected by general, secret, direct, and equal ballot in accordance with the provisions of the election law.

- What constitutes a secret, direct, and equal ballot?

Article 67 Members of the Assembly enjoy immunity throughout the term of the Assembly. Unless they are apprehended in the act of committing a crime, no penal measures can be taken against any member without the advance permission of the Assembly. When the Assembly is not in session, permission must be obtained from the President of the Assembly. As soon as it convenes, the Assembly is notified of the measures taken.

- Is immunity necessary?

Article 97 The President cannot be held responsible for actions pertaining directly to his duties, except in the case of high treason. A request for his indictment requires a proposal of at least one-third of the members of the People's Assembly and an Assembly decision adopted by a two-thirds majority in an open vote at a special secret session. His trial takes place only before the Supreme Constitutional Court.

- What regulations, if any, should be placed on the President?

Article 101 The President of the Republic can declare and terminate a state of emergency in the manner stated in the law.

- What constitutes a state of emergency? Can the President be overruled?

Article 103 The President of the Republic is the supreme commander of the army and the armed forces. He issues all the necessary decisions and orders in exercising this authority. He can delegate some of his authority.

- Can the army be used for personal use?

Article 112 The President of the Republic can hold public referenda on important issues affecting the country's highest interests. The results of the referenda are binding and effective on the date of their promulgation. The President of the Republic issues the results.

- What issues constitute a referendum
 - war, taxes, education, votes of no confidence?

Article 131 The judicial authority is independent. The President of the Republic guarantees this independence with the assistance of the Higher Council of the Judiciary.

- How can this be guaranteed?

Article 139 The Supreme Constitutional Court is composed of five members, of whom one will be

the President, and all of whom are appointed by the President of the Republic by decree.

- How much influence does the President exercise on the Constitutional Court?

Article 146 The Supreme Constitutional Court has no right to look into laws which the President of the Republic submits to public referendum and are approved by the people.

- How much trust can be placed in referendums?

The above Articles are just a subset of those included in the Constitution. When evaluating the document as a whole, consider what the broad strengths and weaknesses are. When evaluating the individual points, consider the economic, political, or cultural impact. Remember that these laws will not just govern how Syrians act within their country, but also how they work with foreign powers.

Marginalized Groups under the Constitution, Using Women as a Case Study

One argument against the Ba'ath political model and proposed constitution is that it creates a militaristic and masculine society that can marginalize women.

In 1973 when the constitution was introduced, the Ba'ath Party used rhetoric to validate themselves and their ideas a legitimate. Using language like "leading party," the Ba'ath Party was the first to cement themselves as the rightful governing body in Syria. One may argue that the Constitution's Preamble paints a portrait of the ideal Ba'athist man and later when the words "people" and "masses" are used, they solely refer to men. Women then, are resigned to the fringe.

The Preamble describes “struggle” and “sacrifice,” implying that men are necessary for the protection of society’s ideals and goals. This inherently draws a gender boundary between men and women. The Preamble also favors creating physically strong men instead of overall healthy men. But does it want to create physically strong women too?

This struggle is naturally militaristic, partially because men and the military are so closely tied together. Since Syria has mandatory armed forces service, men are automatically enrolled into the military. Their contributions are at times glorified alongside some emphasized characteristics, mainly their citizenship status and their manliness. Therefore, one may argue that the Constitution creates a world of masculine protection, which overshadows the power of women.

Another idea to consider is that if military service and masculinity is closely tied with citizenship, and women do not often service, can they ever be seen as full citizens? Some concrete examples include the inability for women to transfer citizenship to her spouse or son if she marries a non-Syrian. There are other laws dealing with inheriting and bequeathing property. There are two clauses that protect women’s rights but are not present in the Constitution until a number of clauses in. This may indicate the level of priority the state gives women.

Since the Constitution gives the Ba’ath Party full executive, legislative, and judicial power, there is nobody to advocate for the interests of minorities or marginalized populations. There are very few people from outside the party that can both raise awareness or cause lasting change

to help equalize the treatment of citizens – which include the Christians, the ‘Alawis, the Druze, the Isma’ilis, the Kurds, the Armenians, and even the Jews.⁵⁶

Other Arab Nations

Foreign Relations

By October 6, 1973, the Syrian Arab Republic had made alliances with much of the Arab world. 17 different Arab nations, including Syria, had already joined an organization called the Arab League, tying themselves together with the goal of coordinating collaboration to protect their independence and sovereignty while pursuing the interests of the Arab World.

Of these 17 Arabic nations, the five nations of Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Algeria, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had pre-established constitutions ratified in 1926, 1952, 1962, 1962, and 1971 respectively. Due to the close diplomatic ties between these five nations and the Syrian Arab Republic, delegates can use the constitutions of these five nations as a primary source to gain an understanding of how the Arab World has changed over time, and as a basic template for drafting their own constitution for the Syrian Arab Republic.

Other Arab Nation Constitutions

All of the Arab nations begin their constitutions by defining themselves as a free and independent nation. For example, Article 1 of the Constitution of Jordan states:

“The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an independent sovereign Arab State. It is indivisible and inalienable and no part of it may be ceded. The people of Jordan form a part of the Arab Nation, and its system of

⁵⁶ Aldoughli, Rahaf. "Interrogating the Constructions of Masculinist Protection and Militarism in the Syrian Constitution

of 1973." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019): 48-74. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/720175>.

government is parliamentary with a hereditary monarchy.”⁵⁷

Compared to Article 1 of the Constitution of Lebanon which states:

“Lebanon is an independent, indivisible, and sovereign state. Its frontiers are those which now bound it:

On the North: From the mouth of the Nahr Al-Kabir along a line following the course of this river to its point of junction with Wadi Khalid opposite Jisr Al-Qamar.

On the East: The summit line separating the Wadi Khalid and Nahr Al-Asi, passing by the villages of Mu’aysarah, Harbanah, Hayt, Ibish, Faysan to the height of the two villages of Brifa and Matraba. This line follows the northern boundary of the Ba’albak District at the northeastern and south eastern directions, thence the easter boundaries of the districts of Ba’albak, Biqa’, Hasbayya, and Rashayya.

On the South: The present southern boundaries of the districts of Sûr (Tyre) and Marji’yun.

*On the West: The Mediterranean.”*⁵⁸

When drafting a constitution for the Syrian Arab Republic, delegates must determine how they wish to define Syria as a fully independent and sovereign nation. They may opt to use a more in-depth definition as the ones used by Jordan and Lebanon, or choose to go a simpler route such as the Algerian Constitution, which simply says in Article 1, “Algeria is a democratic and popular republic.”⁵⁹

This decision is simply one of many that delegates will have to contemplate while drafting what they believe to be the best constitution for the Syrian Arab

Republic under Ba’athist rule. The constitutions of the other Arabic nations in 1973 all go on to define the different branches of government, as well as their different powers.

Each constitution dedicates a major section defining the system of government the nation will use. The Kuwaiti Constitution for example, dictates that the nation will be ruled by a hereditary monarchy in its first of five parts, which is solely dedicated to the state and system of government, and chooses to wait until the end of Part 4 to discuss the judiciary. In contrast, the Constitution of Jordan sets up each branch of government, Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary, in quick succession, using Chapters Four, Five, and Six respectively.

Furthermore, all five Arab nations declare, at the beginning of their Constitution, Islam to be the official religion of the nation and Arabic the official language. Kuwait dedicates Article 2 of their constitution to the State Religion, and Article 3 to the Official Language, while the UAE waits until Article 7 to state:

*“Islam is the official religion of the Union (UAE). The Islamic Shari’ah shall be a main source of legislation in the Union. The official language of the Union is Arabic.”*⁶⁰

⁵⁷ “The Constitution of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.” refworld.org. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6b53310.pdf>.

⁵⁸ “The Lebanese Constitution.” wipo.int. <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/lb/lb018en.pdf>.

⁵⁹ “Constitution of Algeria (1963).” marxists.org. <https://www.marxists.org/history/algeria/1963/09/constitution.htm>.

⁶⁰ “United Arab Emirates: Constitution.” United Arab Emirates., December 2, 1971. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/48eca8132.html>.

Delegates of the Syrian Arab Republic will have to decide how to best frame the document that will formally and officially establish the nation's government under Ba'athist rule. How much power should Assad have as President of Syria? How will succession of power be dictated? Will the nation have an official language and religion? What are the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizens, and how is citizenship determined? All of these questions will have to be debated by delegates as they shape the future of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Questions to Consider

1. *Under what circumstances are a permanent constitution beneficial?*

Given the current politics and structure of government, what makes a constitution successful? Given the frequency of coups and pattern of political instability, is there a better way to unify the country?

2. *If the Ba'ath party already controls so much of Syrian politics and everyday life, how much effect could a constitution possibly offer?*

What would having a constitution add or subtract from the Ba'ath and the President's power?

3. *Who would hold the government to keeping the promises set forth in the Constitution?*

How could the government prove to the people that the constitution will be upheld if the government controls the military?

4. *How can the government be inclusive of everyone in its policies? Is this even a priority or not?*

Since the constitution can imply that certain citizens are entitled to more benefits, can the inequality be solved? Would this (potential) resolution be included in the constitution, or is it the President's discretion to remedy this inequality?

5. *Should the governing system resemble more of an institutional system or a neo-patrimonial system?*

Where is the line drawn between state and regime?

6. *How should the Constitution be approved?*

What group(s) of people can suggest changes and ultimately approve the document? Are there groups who do not deserve a say in the process?

7. *What are the largest criticisms of the Constitution?*

Has the Constitution been vetted properly or is it a hasty process to consolidate power while seeming legitimate? Who will address the criticisms?

8. *How can this Constitution end the cycle of coup d'états that are pervasive throughout Syria's history?*

Does the document provide for a more peaceful transition of power? If so, is it adequate? If not, is it necessary to have a transition process outlined? Will it finally improve everyday Syrians' lives?

Conclusion

When Assad rose to power, he did it on socialist and nationalist promises. Now he attempts to put forth a permanent constitution that will fundamentally shape how Syrian politics operates for the coming decades. Is the proposed constitution mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive? Is Syria ready to accept such a legislative document and is the government able to deliver on its promises? These answers will drive the discussion of how to best craft a governing document as well as how Syria positions itself to be a leader in the larger Arab world.



Topic B:

Stabilizing and Strengthening the Arab Republic

Introduction

In order to properly stabilize and strengthen the Arab Republic, delegates must first gain an in depth understanding of the instability the Syrian Arab Republic has faced, both domestically and internationally.

The Syrian Arab Republic has been fraught with instability during its early history as an independent nation. The main ruling political party that still maintains control to this day, the Ba'th party, did not gain control until 1963, 18 years after Syria's independence from French rule. Within those first 18 years, the Syrian Government underwent 7 different coups and, at one point, found itself once again under the control of a foreign regime during Syria's unification with Egypt.

Once the Ba'th party obtained control over the Syrian Government, Syria focused its attention on attempting to unify with Iraq into one socialist Arab nation, as the Ba'th party advocates for.⁶¹ While unsuccessful, even after despite several attempts at unification, Syria became one of the founding members of the Arab League.

As a member of the Arab League, Syria has been involved in several Arab-Israeli wars, fighting to protect the interests of the Arab World in the Middle East. As a result of these conflicts with Israel, Syria lost control of the Golan Heights to an Israeli occupation of the territory, which began during the Six-Day War in 1967.⁶² To this day, one of Syria's biggest foreign policy

goals has been attempting to regain control of the then annexed territory, thereby reuniting the Syrian Arab Republic and returning it to its full strength.

The Syrian Government

Independence to Ba'thist Syria: 1946-1963

Following the events of World War II, the Syrian Arab Republic officially became an independent nation in April of 1946, following the removal of French troops after two years of tensions between the controlling French administration and the Syrian government, under the presidency of Shukri al-Quwatli (elected in 1943).⁶³

Quwatli's tenure as president was short lived, however, and in March 1949 came the first in a series of coups that would plague Syria for the next five years. During 1949 alone, the Syrian government underwent three different coups (in March, August, and December), resulting in the leadership of Col. Husni al-Za'imm, Col. Sami al-Hinnawi, and Col. Adib al-Shishakli respectively.⁶⁴ Under his regime, Shishakli worked to prevent any political union between Syria and Iraq and used the allegiance of the army to limit the influence of rival political parties. Shishakli even orchestrated a second coup of his own in November of 1951 to remove his political rivals, including his own prime minister

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² History.com Editors, "Six-Day War," History, 2018.

⁶³ Gadd, Cyril J. Irvine, Verity E. and Others. "Syria." Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Fawzi Salu, and solidify his control over the government.⁶⁵

In February of 1954, Shishakli found himself being ousted in a coup led by Col. Faysal al-Atasi, which resulted in the Syrian Parliament's power being restored. Atasi's coup resulted in a loss of momentum for the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, resulting in the Ba'thists no longer having a political rival.

In February 1958, the Ba'th party controlled the Syrian Government and united Syria with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) under the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the then President of Egypt. As part of the U.A.R., the Ba'thist-controlled Syrian Government willingly lost its sovereignty to a nation of people who "tended to treat the Syrians as subordinates".⁶⁶ This resulted in high tensions between the Syrians and Egyptians, which, when coupled with a damaged Syrian economy due to droughts, led to a coup by the Syrian army in 1961, returning Syria to its former state as an independent nation on the world stage, thereby bringing an end to the U.A.R.

The 1961 coup enabled a new round of parliamentary elections to be held. Yet the new political powers to be clashed with the socialist Ba'thist sentiments that were prevalent within the Syrian army.⁶⁷ By March 1963, the Ba'thist-aligned army had once again taken complete control over the Syrian Government.

Syria Under the Ba'thists: 1963-1973

From 1963 onwards, the Ba'th party controlled the Syrian Government. At roughly the same time, the party had also managed to grab a foothold in Iraq, making the possibility of a union between the two nations much more likely. However, the talks of unification were stalled by President Nasser, who refused a union that did not meet his requirements. Following the failure of the unification talks, pro-Nasser Arab unionists were removed, resulting in the Ba'th party further securing their control over the new Syrian regime.

This sense of control was short lived, however, as the Ba'th party had branches in several Arab nations due to its support of Pan-Arabism, or the "Nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries".⁶⁸ This led to two different issues in the Ba'th party. The first issue was the influence that non-Syrian Ba'thists had on Syrian affairs, an influence that was possible due to the multinational structure of the Ba'th party. The second issue was the rivalry between the Iraqi and Syrian Ba'thist, as both factions claimed to be the true leader of the party's Pan-Arab nationalist cause. This rivalry between the two groups was furthered by the creation of a Pan-Arab central committee by the Syrian Ba'thists.⁶⁹

In Syria, the Ba'th party continued cementing its control by turning the nation into a police state to remove its opposition and appeal to the middle and lower classes, those "who had long resented the power of the politicians and large landowners".⁷⁰ In

⁶⁵ Gadd, Cyril J. Irvine, Verity E. and Others. "Syria." Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁶⁶ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Abid al-Shishakli." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., September 23, 2019.

⁶⁷ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "20th-century international relations: The Six-Day War," Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019.

⁶⁸ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Pan-Arabism." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., July 6, 2011. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pan-Arabism>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gadd, Cyril J. Irvine, Verity E. and Others. "Syria." Encyclopædia Britannica.

February 1966, the Ba'th party witnessed another coup, this time bringing to power a faction led by Col. Salah al-Jadid. While in power, Jadid pushed a much more radical party agenda in both foreign and domestic policies, while simultaneously removing the moderates in the Ba'th party leadership.

In 1969, the Ba'th party found itself once again divided between Jadid and his group of followers, made up of mostly Syrian civilians, and a second faction led by Gen. Hafiz al-Assad and the military. Assad seized power in November 1970 by jailing Jadid and was sworn in as the new President of Syria on March 14, 1971.⁷¹ As the President of Syria, Assad attempted to return Syria to a position of strength in the Arab World, and the Middle East overall. Using aid from the Soviet Union, Assad strengthened the Syrian armed forces, and used a system of public works programs to gain the loyalty of the general population, all while silencing his political opponents in order to maintain his control over the Syrian military and government.⁷²

Despite the still somewhat abundant presence of coups that occurred in Syria during the time under Ba'thist rule from 1963 to 1971, Syria found itself in a state of relative political stability, unlike the time from Syria's independence in 1946 to 1963. This level of political stability in Syria at this time can be attributed to the extremely close relationship between the Ba'th party and the Syrian military.⁷³ Under Assad's rule, this relationship was further supported by a network of government officials who were all Alawites and had no qualms with utilizing harsh methods to repress all who opposed them, such as the members of the

majority group, the Sunni. However, Assad's regime maintained a level of political stability by using the idea of Arab nationalism to unite the diverse Syrian culture.

The Arab-Israeli Wars

The Arab League

On March 22, 1945, Syria, alongside the nations of Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Transjordan (now modern-day Jordan), helped found the Arab League with the original aim "to strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic, and social programs of its members".⁷⁴ The Arab League did serve to meet this aim in its earlier days. In 1959, the first Arab petroleum congress was help by the Arab League, and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) was founded in 1964.⁷⁵

While these economic benefits did help to stabilize the Arab World, including Syria, the Arab League served as a military alliance as well. On April 13, 1950, the members of the Arab League signed an agreement involving economic cooperation between all of the members as well as requiring a coordination of any and all defense and military measures taken.⁷⁶ This agreement came into play during the multiple Arab-Israeli wars that occurred.

⁷¹ "Profile: Hafez Al-Assad (12 March 1971 - 10 June 2000)," Middle East Monitor, 2015.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "The Ba'ath Party in Syria," Harvard Religious Literacy Project, 2019.

⁷⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Arab League." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., January 16, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arab-League>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

The Palestinian Nakbah: 1947-1949

In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two separate states, one Jewish and the other Arab.⁷⁷ While British forces were leaving the area, tensions between the Jews and Arabs immediately hit the boiling point, and clashes between Arab and Jewish forces began.

Israel immediately declared its independence once the last of the British troops left, and forces from the Arab League moved to occupy the areas in southern and eastern Palestine that the UN had not designated for Israel, the new Jewish state. The Arab forces went on to capture East Jerusalem, stating the necessity to restore law and order in the area due to the power vacuum left by the British, and a refugee crisis in the neighboring Arab nations as justifications for their quick action.

At the same time, Israeli forces captured the main road to and from Jerusalem and, by early 1949, managed to capture all of the Negev (Southland) up to the former border between Egypt and Palestine, but were unable to occupy the Gaza Strip.⁷⁸

By July 1949, several armistice agreements were put into place between Israel and each individual Arab State, designating a firm border between Israel and its surrounding Arab nations.⁷⁹

Due to the magnitude of the number of refugees who were displaced due to the conflict, this first Arab-Israeli War is referred to as the Nakbah or Catastrophe in the Arab World, while Israel considers it as its War of Independence.

⁷⁷ "UN Partition Plan - Resolution 181 (1947)," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019.

⁷⁸ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Gaza Strip." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019.

⁷⁹ "Armistice Lines (1949-1967)." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013.

Six-Day War: 1967

Tensions once again increased between Israel and the Arab world during the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis. However, this second Arab-Israeli War only involved Egyptian forces, from the Arab world, and Syria did not get involved.⁸⁰

The third Arab-Israeli War once again brought Syrian and Israeli forces against one another. After the events of the first Arab-Israeli War, the Syrian government had invested in fortifying the western crest of the Golan Heights. In early 1967, Syrian forces bombarded several Israeli villages from this fortified region in the Golan Heights.⁸¹ In retaliation, Israeli forces shot down six Syrian fighters. This resulted in the Arab League gathering its forces one more time.

In a show of support for Syria, President Nasser mobilized Egyptian forces, requested the removal of UNEF, and instituted a blockade of Elat by closing the Gulf of Agaba to Israeli shipping.⁸² In addition, the individual Arab nations, beginning with Jordan and Egypt, signed mutual defense pacts with one another.

In response to the mobilization of the Arab forces, Israel launched an air assault, destroying Egypt's air force and incapacitating Syria's air force. Due to this successful attack, Israeli ground units were able to successfully take the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula up to the east bank of the Suez Canal from Egyptian forces and the West Bank from Jordanian forces. In addition, Israel managed to occupy the entire city of Jerusalem. After all the other Arab Nations agreed to a cease fire called by

⁸⁰ History.com Editors, "Six-Day War," History, 2018.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Six-Day War." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019.

the UN Security Council, Syria remained on the offensive and continued to bombard villages in Israel. Within three days, Israeli forces captured the Golan Heights from Syrian forces.⁸³

After the loss of the Golan Heights, Syria agreed to an armistice with Israel, resulting in an end to the fighting on June 10, 1967.⁸⁴ While five Arab villages remained on the Golan Heights, the entire area was placed under the administration of the Israeli army. All five villages were offered Israeli citizenship and although they declined, roughly 30 Jewish settlements were created by the 1970s.

The Arab League suffered more than 18,000 casualties in the Six-Day War, with 1,000 of them being members of Syrian armed forces, compared to the mere 700 Israeli casualties.⁸⁵ The Arab forces also lost an extensive amount of weaponry and equipment through the Israeli attacks on both the Syrian and Egyptian air forces. The years following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war were filled with sporadic fighting between the Arab World and Israel and, as the loss of the Golan Heights remains a major point of contention between Syria and Israel to this day, tensions between the Arab League and Israel are once again beginning to boil over as the Yom Kippur War approaches.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "Six Day War," The State of Israel: The Knesset, 2008.

Questions to Consider

1. *Should the Arab world be united under the banner of a single socialist Arab nation?*

Is the Ba'th party right in advocating for the formation of a single Arab nation? Is this the only way to protect the interests of the Arab world on the international stage, or is the existence of the Arab league enough?

2. *Should Syria reattempt a unification with Egypt to reform the U.A.R.?*

Is this the only way to protect Syria's interests on the world stage?

3. *Is conflict with Israel inevitable?*

By 1973, numerous Arab-Israeli wars have been fought in the past two decades. Is another war the only option for Syria to secure its place in the Middle East?

4. *Should Syria continue its attempts to regain the Golan Heights?*

Is it worth the potential bloodshed and loss of life to make another attempt at regaining the Golan Heights? Should the Syrian Government accept the Golan Heights as lost to Israel since its occupation beginning in 1967?

5. *Is another military coup necessary to strengthen the Syrian Government?*

Has the current regime lost its strength? Is the current leadership still able to protect Syria's interests, both domestically and internationally?

6. *Is allying with Egypt the right move for the Syrian Arab Republic?*

Following the expulsion of the pro-Nasser Arab unionists less than a decade earlier, do Syria and Egypt still share the same goals?

Conclusion

The Syrian Arab Republic must consider both domestic and international policy changes in order to properly strengthen and stabilize the Arab Republic. Delegates of this committee must remember the events of the past that occurred in the tumultuous period of Syria's early history, resulting in almost ten different administrations in an independent nation that was under 20-years-old. It was once the Ba'th Party took an uncontested hold over the Syrian government that the Syrian Arab Republic truly reached an era of relative political stability, under the Presidency of Hafiz al-Assad.

From an international standpoint, Syria has taken some steps to protect the interests of the Arab World through the foundation of the Arab League. However, the failure of the U.A.R. brings up the question of if the creation of one socialist Arab nation, as the Ba'th party pushes for, is the right way to protect those interests. In addition, by 1973 Syria has also found itself at the losing end of two out of three Arab-Israeli wars and the loss of control over the Golan Heights. This is still a major blow to the Syrian Arab Republic, and delegates must decide whether to attempt to regain control will help to stabilize and strengthen the Arab Republic.

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