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Restructuring the army in the new Syria



political research

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Introduction

Syria's biggest problem lies in that its army concerned itself with politics shortly after independence, as Syria witnessed a series of military coups that began in 1949, the last of which was the coup of Hafez al-Assad in November 1970. The latter established a military dictatorship based on the Soviet formula, especially regarding the establishment of the so-called indoctrinated army and security apparatus, the militarization of society, the nationalization of politics and the suppression of public liberties, all of which have hindered growth of Syria for over five decades.

Since 2011, the ideological army and security services have been used by the ruling elite, headed by Bashar al-Assad, in the face of the Syrian people who rose up to demand freedom and dignity, thus causing one of the greatest catastrophes of the twentieth century after World War II.

This large army, whose goal is to protect the regime not to defend the country, was thus unable to confront Israel's continuous attacks. In fact, it was defeated by Israel in all the confrontations, mainly in 1967, 1973, and in Lebanon in 1982, and when Israel attacked Hezbollah in 2006, it stood as a helpless spectator. An army that claims retaining the right to responding to Israel's continuous attacks on Syria, but that only has the guts to confront peaceful demonstrators with bullets, as an execution of its superiors' orders.

During Syria's years of conflict which started in 2011, the situation of the army has deteriorated even more. In addition to the repression role assigned to the military and security forces by the ruling elite, many of its elements and leaders were killed, and the sectarian nature that dominated the conflict soon took over the military and security forces. On a parallel note, paramilitary militias were formed to support the regime, and Lebanese, Iraqi, Afghani, and Iranian militias were brought in by the regime, with regular forces, mainly from Iran, Russia, America, and Turkey, already present on Syrian soil. All of which made the political situation even more complicated.

The re-establishing of Syria is practically impossible with such situation, and requires a reform in the army's roles, so army restructuring will be the subject of this study.



First: The impact of war on the Syrian Army

The impact on the Syrian army prior to the Baath takeover of power

A number of political, historical, social and economic factors contributed to the strong representation of minorities in the Syrian armed forces, before the Baathist officers seized power in 1963. This is due to the period of the French mandate, as the French preferred to recruit religious and ethnic minorities, in what was called the Special Forces for the Near East, which was used to maintain order and suppress internal strife, and which later developed into the Syrian and Lebanese armed forces.

The aim of recruiting minorities was to prevent any sect from reaching a strong position, which could pose a threat to the French central administration. This French recruitment strategy is itself a traditional policy applied in a number of affiliated countries where groups with limited aspirations towards independence are mostly relied upon. Therefore, such groups were deliberately attracted by military job opportunities in the Army. There are also other factors that contributed to the people of poor rural areas, mostly minorities, be represented in the Army⁽¹⁾.

This phase was marked by the emergence of ethnic and sectarian units within the army, and by the focus on the sectarian and tribal composition of the army's formations. For example, in the Syrian Jazeera, there are the Chaldo-Assyrian regiments, as well as the so-called (Druze community) for the Druze, and the cavalry units from the Circassians and Alawites⁽²⁾.

When Syria gained its independence in 1946, it was a state in many aspects without being a nation, and it was a political entity without being a political community. Therefore, loyalty to sects and clans was predominant over loyalty to the state.

Despite the emergence of nationalism as an ideology and the continuous social change that weakened the sectarian, regional, and tribal ties to some extent, their roots were stronger, because they were either exploited for political and opportunistic purposes, or there might have

(1) Nicholas Van Damme, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, Politics and Society, pp. 5152-

(2) Azmi Bishara, *The Army and Politics: Theoretical Problems and Arab Models*, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Beirut, April 2017, p. 111



been conditions that triggered their re-emergence, especially after the seventies.

After independence, and due to the expansion of schools that provided the opportunity for education in the countryside, military enrollment has increased with the numbers of entrants reaching hundreds in the fifties and sixties. Most of those who joined the army were from poor and middle classes and from rural areas, which helped increase the number of officers who belong to the minorities; and, with their access to leadership positions, they were supporting their relatives and members of their sect to be accepted into military colleges, this explains the large number of soldiers from minorities who took control of Syria after the 1949 coups⁽³⁾.

Despite the presence of a strong representation of minorities in the army, which far exceeds their percentage in the population, the most prominent leaders who owned the reins of power and occupied important military positions, politically and strategically, were Sunni officers, with the presence of a Kurdish reference to Hosni al-Zaim and Sami al-Hinnawi. The Kurds and The Circassians played an important role under the leadership of Hosni al-Zaim, while a number of officers from Hama, led by Adib Al-Shishakli, were able to quickly ascend military posts⁽⁴⁾.

During the study of the Syrian Army's history, it was found that, since 1957, the Sunni officers had entered an endless phase of deflation, due to their continuous divisions and conflicts (nationalist versus right-wing, nationalist versus communist, nationalist versus separatist, Nasserist versus Baathist, socialist versus capitalist, Right-wing Baathist versus leftist Baathist). Their successive liquidations within the body of the military corps constituted a factor of weakness to the Syrian Army.

On February 22, 1958, the unity between Syria and Egypt was announced, and the two armies were unified. At that time, the number of the Syrian army elements was about 30,000 and the Syrian army was professional, and concerned with military matters only. Then, the transition to the eastern military model began, with Russian and Egyptian experts contributing to its establishment, in terms of training and organization. The military combat and administrative systems were modernized, new military divisions were created, the air and naval forces were reorganized, the military firepower was increased, the army command was organized and some bodies and departments were launched; they still exist up till now. Those three years had a great impact on the army organization. After all, the Syrian army was an important

(3) - Van Damme, *Ibid.*, p. 54

(4) Van Damme, *Ibid.*, p. 54



factor that contributed to the unit. However, in 1961, the army became the cause of the separation, due to the malpractices of the army leaders like Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, since the number of Syrian officers who were dismissed during the unit period amounted to 1,100 active officers, and 3,000 reserve officers. 500 officers were transferred to the southern region, and 2,300 Egyptian officers were brought in to take up positions in the leadership of the First Army (the Syrian Army).

To be fair, the development of the Syrian army, in the years of its union with Egypt reached a reassuring degree, despite its shortcomings, after a decade of severe structural weakness that followed the Palestine war⁽⁵⁾.

In the phase of unity with Egypt 1958-1961, the transfer of a number of Syrian officers to Egypt, their dismissal and replacement by Egyptians, were accompanied with the arrival of the Damascene officers to the height of their power, whether intentionally or unintentionally. These officers were assigned to command the Syrian military regions, and occupied strong positions. This matter enabled Lieutenant-Colonel Abdul Karim al-Nahlawi to carry out a successful coup on September 28, 1961, which caused the separation of Syria from Egypt, but the Nahlawi bloc collapsed quickly during the separation, due to the non-Damascus officers' lack of support for him⁽⁶⁾.

The impact on the army during the first period of Ba'ath rule

On the eighth of March 1963, a coup led by a coalition of Baathist, Nasserite, and unionist officers overthrew the secessionist regime, and this led to the dismissal of a number of officers who were not loyal to the Baathists. At the same time, many officers were summoned, based on familial, tribal and regionalist ties, to compensate for the shortfall caused by the dismissal of many officers and non-commissioned officers. This matter quickly strengthened the new coup leaders, and they took over political power in addition to the military. Most of the summoned officers belonged to minorities, since most of the Baathist military leaders were from minorities (nine members out of 15 members). So, the leaders were accused of accepting in the army members of their communities based on sectarian criteria, and from there began the

(5) Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Transformations of the Syrian Military Institution (Challenge of Change and Reconfiguration), a study published on the Center's website, pp. 132133-,
On the link: <https://cutt.us/XyQaE>

(6) Van Damme, idib., p. 55



problem of sectarianizing the Syrian army, since the supreme leadership of the party committee was in the hands of three members of the Alawite sect: Muhammad Omran, Salah Jadid and Hafez Assad. All three played a pivotal role in transforming the Syrian army into the Baath Army, and succeeded within a short period in removing their most important opponents from Nasserists and Unionists, after the failed coup attempt on July 18, 1963⁽⁷⁾.

In 1959, the Military Committee was formed secretly and aimed at reorganizing the party among the officers on a new basis. Since the path was full of dangers, it acted with great caution that even the old Baath party leaders remained completely ignorant of its existence and its true purpose until 1964.

The composition of the Military Committee changed over time. It started with a group of four members, in 1959, and reached seven before the coup of September 1961, and fifteen members on the eve of the March 1963 coup, and fourteen members in July 1963.

In August 1965, the military office of the Baath Party took over, and with the exception of the decline of Muhammad Omran's influence in the committee, the inner group remained the leading nucleus of the office, and formed the backbone of the coup of February 23, 1966, and it remained in the upper hand until the setback of June 1967.

Then, there was a duality in power: Hafez al-Assad led the pragmatic military organization, while Salah Jadid led the radical civilian wing⁽⁸⁾.

After they got rid of their Nasserist and Unionist partners, the struggle for power began to emerge between the leaders of the party committee itself. Here, the (paralytic) power of the army began to appear, especially with the soldiers gathering around each team of the party committee, who have sectarian, clan, or even regional ties. Disputes arose over power and the sharing of influence between them, and this was the beginning of collapse of the hierarchy and discipline within the army. In addition to the above, discrimination began when applying to the military academy and training centers, between those belonging to the Baath and those not affiliated with it, and discrimination also began in the movement of officers within the army, especially in pivotal sectors and those close to Damascus. Officers who were unreliable or who may have been unreliable were expelled to the front with Israel, or to areas far from

(7) Members of the Partisan Defense Committee after its expansion: (Mohammed Omran, Salah Jadid, Hafez al-Assad, Suleiman Haddad, Othman Kanaan, Abdul Karim al-Jundi, Ahmed al-Mir, Salim Hatoum, Hamad Obaid, Hussein Melhem, Amin al-Hafiz, Muhammad Rabah al-Taweel, Mustafa al-Hajj Ali, Ahmed Suwaidani, Musa Al-Zoubi).

(8) Hanna Batatou, *Syrian Peasants*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, pp. 281 - 282



Damascus, and the Baath government deliberately built an ideological army instead of the National Army, thus transforming it into an institution affiliated with the Baathist ideology.

Also, decrees were issued by the Revolutionary Command Council, requiring the return of the demobilized Baathist officers, whose number was approximately 90, and their appointment to important military centers in the capital Damascus and its suburbs. This resulted in the formation of the following groups:

1. A bloc that includes Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad, around which some Alawite and Ismaili officers gathered.
2. A bloc that includes Muhammad Omran, who was competing for power with Salah Jadid and Amin al-Hafiz.
3. A bloc that includes Captain Salim Hatoum and other Druze officers (Hamad Obaid and Fahd al-Shaer).
4. Another bloc includes Amin al-Hafiz and a number of Sunni officers⁽⁹⁾.

Taking the government led to the gradual militarization of the party, through the National Guard Corps, then by subjecting the Baathists to military courses called “feda’yeen work courses”, as a condition for rank promotion in the party. This militarization stopped in the seventies, then reappeared in the eighties through the formation of armed factions within the party’s popular organizations according to a fascist approach. This conferred control to socio-political elites, who considered the army their main means of reaching higher social ranks. This applied to marginalized and poor communities and religious minorities, since the army was the best path that a young man from marginal families could take in the country, to get a job that increases his social status⁽¹⁰⁾.

In December 1964, Major General Muhammad Omran was dismissed by members of the party committee. He was accused of building an Alawite sectarian bloc within the army, and was considered the main official of the then-dominant association.

As for Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad, and although they relied on their personal military Alawite supporters to retain their positions of power, and benefited from sectarian, regional, and clan loyalties to strengthen these positions, they had wisdom, because they did not openly

(9) Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Transformations of the Military Institution, previous reference, pg. 136

(10) Azmi Bishara, previous reference, p. 110



declare this, as Muhammad Omran did. Omran had said: “The Fatimids should take their role” in reference to the Alawis, Druze and Ismailis, as Fatimids, so that they play a role opposing the Sunni president and supreme commander of the armed forces: Amin al-Hafiz⁽¹¹⁾.

After Amin Al-Hafez and Salah Jadid succeeding in removing Muhammad Omran, their main rival, they had to confront each other. In the second half of 1965, the confrontation between the most prominent military competitors became clear in the party and military meetings, which prompted Amin Al-Hafez and the party’s military command to return Muhammad Omran to the Ministry of Defense, to impose military discipline.

The army was in a state of paralysis and polarization that reached an unprecedented stage, but after Omran’s appointment, tensions between the military began to escalate instead of fading, and there were hidden reasons for Amin Al-Hafez to strike the rising influence of Salah Jadid in the army. After all, the latter was the chief-of-staff of the army, and his military supporters increased at the expense of those of Amin al-Hafiz⁽¹²⁾.

On February 23, 1966, President Amin Al-Hafez and opponents of Salah Jadid were overthrown by a military coup in which Major Salim Hatoum played a prominent role. Things settled down for Salah Jadid, who became the party’s regional secretary, and for Hafez al-Assad, who was appointed after the coup as Minister of Defense, while retaining the leadership of the Air Force⁽¹³⁾.

At this stage, sectarian loyalties were very important in the army, and the spirit that arose before February 23 made conflicts take a sectarian form, and trust between officers of different sects became shaky. This was not without a failed coup d’état attempted by Salim Hatoum on September 8, 1966. The coup led to the placement of many officers in prisons, or their dismissal. Some of them even fled from Syria, especially the Druze and Houran blocs. Subsequent liquidations were conducted in the army on a large-scale⁽¹⁴⁾.

By the outbreak of the June 1967 war, at least 700 officers—which equaled more than a third of the eligible army officers—were dismissed or laid off, and their reserves, rural school-

(11) Van Damme, op. cit., pp. 6970-

(12) Van Damme, Ibid, 7273-

(13) The Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party, Syrian Country, Regional Leadership, Documentary Report on the Party’s Crisis submitted to the Extraordinary National Conference held from 10 to 27 March 1966, pp. 104108-

(14) Van Damme, Ibid., 9596-



teachers, or under-trained officer cadets, were replaced. Therefore, the officer corps became strongly politicized, but weakly disciplined and unable to lead, and this was painfully demonstrated by the war⁽¹⁵⁾.

On a different note, as soon as Salah Jadid gained power, he began to escalate the rhetoric against Israel, accusing the latter of diverting the Syrian tributaries of the Jordan River. His speeches caught the attention of Jamal AbdelNasser who responded by offering a mutual agreement sponsored by Kosgen, prime minister of the Soviet Union. At the same time, in the spring of 1966, the new Baath regime entered into a fierce struggle with the Fatah movement, in an attempt to control it from within. In October 1966, the Baath regime established an organization under its control for Palestinian feda'yeen operations, in the name of "Al Saiqa forces", and adopted the popular liberation war at a time when Israel was diverting the waters of the Jordan River. This triggered tension on the Syrian front with Israel, which prompted Jamal Abdel Nasser to withdraw the international emergency forces from Sinai, fearing the start of an Israeli invasion of Syria. As soon as the year 1967 was about to begin, the combat situation and readiness of the Syrian army was in the worst condition, in terms of organization, qualification, leadership and discipline; It was a humiliating defeat for the Arabs on the three fronts, but there is no place to talk here about the June 1967 war.

In February 1968, Major General Ahmed Suwaidani, who was the most prominent supporter of Salah Jadid, was relieved of his position, and Major General Mustafa Tlass replaced him, which meant that the military Baathists got evacuated from Houran, hence the end of their role as an influential force within the army. So, their strength was derived from their alliance with other groups, such as those of Salah Jadid or Salim Hatoum⁽¹⁶⁾.

The indoctrination of the army outlined the division of officers implicated in the Baathist conflict. The conflict escalated between Jadid and Al-Assad, in post 5-June 1967 war, especially on the relation between the State and Society and the conflict strategy with Israel, the Arab and international relations, financial and societal policies, the position from the growing Palestinian Revolution, and the most serious of all: The conflict over power.⁽¹⁷⁾

After Hatoum's failed coup, the Baathist officers gathered either around Salah Jadid or around Hafez Al-Assad who were the most prominent politicians in Syria. Even though Salah

(15) Hanna Batato, former reference, p.302

(16) Al-Hayat newspaper, 16 February 1968

(17) - Azmi Bishara, previous reference, p. 119



Jadid had no official position in the armed forces, he tightened his grip on a large part of the officers through his supporters in the military office supervising the party's military organization, and through the Al-Saiqa forces. At the same time, Hafez Al-Assad was the minister of Defense and the command of air forces, and thus could appoint a number of his military supporters for important positions in the army. The conflict between the two was prevalent during the party's conferences because of the emergence of two different trends: The first was led by Salah Jadid, Abdul Karim al-Jundi, who was head of the National Security Office and head of the General Intelligence Department, Ibrahim Makhos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the then-Prime Minister Youssef Zein. The other trend was represented by Hafez al-Assad, Minister of Defense, and Mustafa Tlass, Chief-of-Staff. So, Salah Jadid's military supporters were transferred to less important positions in the army. Hafez al-Assad succeeded in imposing his control over most of the armed forces, whereas Salah Jadid took control of the civilian party apparatus, thus creating a duality of power, where each one strongly contradicts the other⁽¹⁸⁾.

Salah Jadid realized that only one of them must win, so he called for an exceptional regional conference, which lasted for about two weeks, and, after lengthy sessions of discussion, it was decided that Al-Assad and his team would be dismissed from the party, and prosecuted for not obeying orders, and for his previous roles undisclosed by the investigations. Hafez al-Assad was ready to play the role he played over and over with Salah Jadid, so he sent his forces to the capital, to arrest all the present Baathist leaders, and then launched what he called "the corrective movement" on November 16, 1970, to get rid of all his opponents, and those who stand in the way of his being an absolute ruler without opponents. After seven years of Baath rule, the national army turned into an ideological sectarian army, then it turned after a while to Al-Assad's army⁽¹⁹⁾.

The reason behind the conflict between Assad and Jadid (which was happening in secret) was that the party leadership decided, during the war between the Palestinian organizations and the Jordanian army in September 1970, to intervene militarily on the side of the Palestinian organizations; but this intervention failed, and sparked a confrontation between Assad and Jadid. In late October 1970, the tenth extraordinary National Conference was convened to find a solution to the renewed conflict between them, but the conference outcomes were against Al-Assad's interest, with Al-Assad and Tlass completely isolated during the sessions, while Jadid and his allies benefited from the majority's support. At the end of the conference, a decision was issued to dismiss the Minister of Defense al-Assad and Chief-of-Staff Tlass from

(18) Van Damme, op. cit., p. 101

(19) The Syrian army from the beginning to Hafez al-Assad. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk>



their positions, and to assign them other tasks in the party. This matter led Al-Assad to turn against them on November 13, and arrest the most prominent civilian leaders of the party; the other part fled to Lebanon. So, Al-Assad was able to monopolize power, and he no longer had competitors. Actually, Al-Assad knew, prior to the conference, what was being prepared for him, so he prepared in advance for his military coup, which he carried out on November 13 and announced it on November 16, 1970.

The impact on the army during the period of Assad's rule 1970 - 2010

Al-Assad seizing power through a coup mediated by the military and security institutions, he was fully aware of the danger of these two institutions on his own rule; so, not only did he manage to gain the loyalty of all army officers, but he also formed a wide network of loyal people from the security apparatus that extended to all Syria. The army was thus reconstituted and its tasks determined, in such a way that it was impossible for any group of officers to pose a real threat to the president and his regime. So, Hafez al-Assad was able to control the army after purging it from his rivals and from officers with a different set of mind than him. After all, since he assumed the position of the Ministry of Defense in 1966, he appointed close officers in some positions because they were fully prepared to implement his plan of taking over the rule and to build a sustainable absolute presidential system for him and his family after him.

While in power, Hafez al-Assad focused on developing the army and armed forces, by improving the level of their armament and training, and by increasing the number of members, realizing that the army is the most powerful weapon in face of the people, if they try to overthrow him. In fact, the army was organized according to the division system, instead of Formation of brigades, and then in 1982, the number of soldiers increased, so the formation of corps was adopted.

If we look closely at the course of events, we can ascertain that Hafez al-Assad, with the secret help of local experts, was able to push all military, security and civil institutions to work with a mentality of competition among them to show loyalty while monitored by a central system linked to the office of the President of the Republic, who received hundreds of daily security reports. This is how Syria entered the era of dictatorship which relies on the principle of worshipping the individual. Since Al-Assad's coup in 1970, the era of military coups has ended, and because of al-Assad's knowledge of the importance of the army in coups and political changes, he paid extra-attention to that, and applied when needed the policy of polarization and exclusion, all of which made the armed forces a malleable tool in his hand.



Al-Assad participated in all the coups that took place since 1963, and was one of their planners, which means he knows who might carry them out, and he knows that without absolute control over the army he cannot continue to rule, because all that Hafez al-Assad wanted was to have absolute authority for him and his family, permanently.

This principle on which power was built in Syria was consolidated over the long period of rule of Al-Assad family. He would force the Syrians- through his subordinates- to worship him by force and to elevate him to the rank of gods.

The privileges granted to those loyal to him from among the Syrian army officers are one of the systematic factors in the army's dealings with Syrian society. Since Hafez al-Assad's assumption of power, they enjoyed great privileges, participated strongly in business and economic activity, and occupied high positions in economic sectors that are under the army's control. Al-Assad linked their personal fate entirely to the survival of the regime and its head. Also, those close to the officers had great influence, enabling them to interfere in political affairs, and allowing them to reap huge fortunes by entering into partnerships with renowned businessmen.

Since he assumed the duties of Ministry of Defense in 1966, Hafez al-Assad has implemented a set of measures, later applied by his son, with the aim of achieving absolute control over the army, the most important of which are:

- A. That everything related to the Syrian armed forces remained in the hands of Hafez al-Assad and his son after him with no room left for anyone else, not even the Deputy Commander-in-Chief (Vice-minister of Defense). Matters related to recruitment, transfers and appointment in military positions, especially officers, were kept for him. He relied on two branches in the Army General Command, namely (the Officers Branch working in the Officers' Affairs Department, and Branch 293 in the Military Intelligence Division), and he, and his son later on, allowed no one to interfere in their work. At the head of the aforementioned branches were Alawite officers he fully trusted.
- B. Making all military privileges inherent in the position and granted exclusively to the position not to other officers. Also linked to the position were the sect, the degree of kinship and loyalty. For example, all positions in the Military Intelligence Division, Air Force Intelligence, and Formation Leadership surrounding Damascus, were awarded to the Alawites who were exclusively close to the regime (the Assad family). As a result, many would pledge allegiance to the regime and to the president and his family, either to obtain the offered privileges, or for fear of being harmed by the regime. This



self-interest behavior soon became the new normal and a well-established custom in the military and security institutions. Undoubtedly, this led to the marginalization of all those with national and moral values who have loyalty to the homeland and not to the president's family, and to preventing them from taking up military positions, according to their rank and qualifications⁽²⁰⁾.

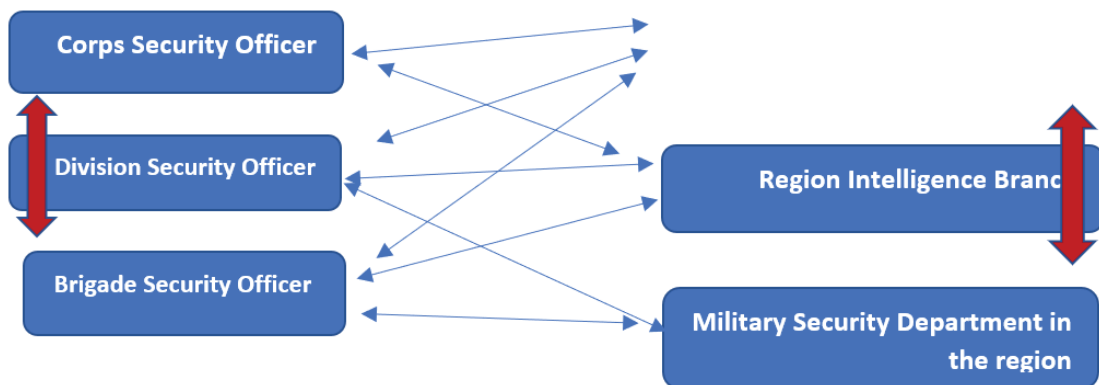
- C. Keeping all military positions, especially the combat formations (which have at their disposal military combat and armament equipment), for the most loyal leaders, especially members of the Alawite sect, in addition to the strategic distribution of officers and their ranks within these formations. For example, the percentage of Alawites in combat formations exceeds 80%, whereas most officers from other categories are enrolled in educational facilities, university training, the People's Army and as leaders of military regions, with the percentage of these exceeding 80%. The reason for that is that these institutions are not ones to be feared, because they do not have the armament capabilities necessary to carry out any coup attempt against the regime.

For example, in the era of Hafez al-Assad in the eighties and the nineties, the Syrian army had sixteen military divisions, of which 13 division commanders were from the Alawite sect, and the rest of the division commanders were from other sects. See Tables 1 to 7 in the Appendix

- D. Two intelligence agencies have been annexed to the army: The Military Intelligence Division and the Air Intelligence Department, each being divided into dozens of branches that monitor the armed forces and scrutinize the members' behavior. These two agencies employed tens of thousands of secret informants in military formations and units, in addition to the overt security apparatus in every division, brigade, and battalion. **See chart No. (1)**

(20) For reference about the senior officers who occupied the most important military positions in the army and security during the Assad era, you can review the book "The Sectarian Sect, the Imaginary Sects," Azmi Bishara, p. 364371-, from the publications of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. You can also review the study of the Omran Center for Strategic Studies entitled "The Military Institution in Syria in 2019" and the study of the same center entitled "Centers of Strength in the Regime's Army" (March 2020).

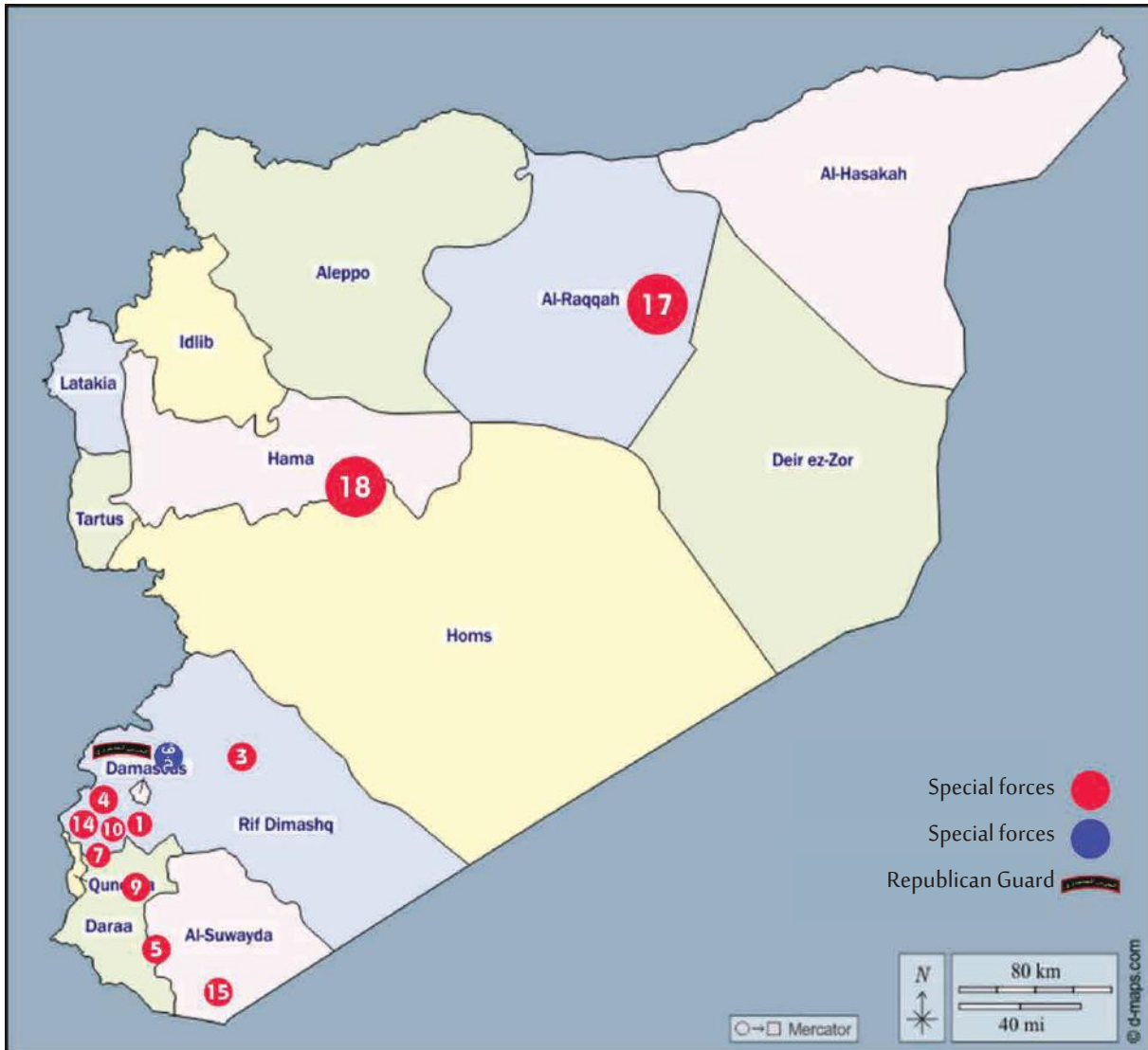
Chart No. 1 shows the intelligence links within the military formations



- E. The concentration of the army's cantonment sites around the city of Damascus, Syria's capital and the center of authority, not to defend the country against Israel, but to protect the regime. Eight military divisions were deployed around Damascus, namely the Division: (1-3-4-7-10-14, the Republican Guard, and the Special Forces), in addition to the Air Defense and Air Force teams. After the Hama events, he formed the 11th Armored Division, based in the Central region (Homs - Hama), followed in the same region by the formation of the 18th Armored Division. After the events of As-Suwayda in 2001, Bashar al-Assad formed the 15th Division located in As-Suwayda. Also, after the events of the Kurds in Qamishli in 2004, he deployed the 17th Division to the eastern region, mainly the governorates of "Al-Hasakah, Deir Ez-Zor and Raqqa". It is understood from the above that the military formations were entrusted with internal security operations, not protecting the state's borders, and this was confirmed after 2011. See Map No. 1



Map No. (1) places the formations of the Syrian army around the city of Damascus



Source <https://bit.ly/3fro7Ev>

- F. Corruption in the army was planned systematically, and often overlooked by the army's central command, armed forces, and intelligence services. Corruption covered a wide range of crimes like blackmailing, bribery, theft, and tampering, neglect in duty, nepotism, etc.. This was not limited to the financial aspect only, but also included the army's combat readiness, training, and discipline. Favoritism and mediations spread on a large scale, in addition to the deepening sectarian rift within the army (sectarianism is a crime in the Assad regime, but only committed against the non-Alawite sects).



- G. This was accompanied by the political administration's loyalty to the leader Hafez al-Assad and to his son after him, not to the homeland. This administration was actually responsible for directing the army's political and moral activity towards serving the leader, and teaching the soldiers to belong to his ideology and to justify all his behavior. Therefore, Hafez Al-Assad was seen as impeccable and infallible, and has reached a higher degree of deification (the divine being can be an object of controversy whereas no negative word could be uttered about the president, his family and his regime), through the military and government media, as they were also trained to serve the dictator and to deify him, and monitor all ideas and intellectual deliberations in the armed forces, in order to submit reports to the security authorities.
- H. Distinguishing between the army formations, (the former Defense Brigades (the Fourth Division), the Republican Guard, the Special Forces, the Military Intelligence Division, the Air Force Intelligence Department, and the rest of the army formations), in terms of attention, arming, and granting moral and financial privileges to the elements who serve in these formations, since these formations are meant to protect the system, and thus, their members were favored on the expense of the others.

In this respect, we must mention that during the period (2005 to 2011) in which General Hassan Turkmani was appointed as the Minister of Defense and General Ali Habib as the Chief of Staff of the ministry, a positive change occurred in the military performance, because they assigned senior positions to honest and skilled people, and would personally follow up, along with the army's leading cadres, all field procedures and operations. Even the general situation of the army in terms of readiness and training improved and the levels of corruption were reduced. Not that we can say that the army has overcome the accumulated corruption, but at least they limited it to a reasonable degree. This does not mean that they changed the army's subordination to the Assad family, or the public order that has been established for decades⁽²¹⁾.

I reviewed here the most important steps taken by Hafez al-Assad's regime, to control the army, and subject it entirely to himself, since assuming his duties at Ministry of Defense until now, with no space left for the rest. Each of Al-Assad father and son tried to impose their own system on the Syrians so that the latter are always in need for mediation, from the authority itself or from people close to it, or through bribes to those in influence, or through kinship relations. Sometimes the Syrians had no option but to follow some of these paths, and thus the Syrian local community has lost confidence among its members, and fear and anticipation

(21) Major General Muhammad Al-Hajj Ali, Studies and Research (unpublished)



have prevailed on social relations, along with the dispersal of patriotic and societal motives. As a consequence, the Syrian civil society was destroyed and has become more like narrow cantons with conflicting interests among them.

The Syrian regime has always insisted on rejecting sectarianism in his political and media speeches; however, the reality on the ground seemed different, as the Alawite sect, to which Syrian President Bashar al-Assad belonged, dominated the crucial leadership positions of the army and security forces in the region.

Based on the foregoing, we can say, with confidence: The military and security institutions, with their complex composition, were responsible for passing on power from father to son. With the son's accession to power, nothing has changed in terms of the leader's deification and him singling himself out as the sole leader of Syria and its society. Rather, the influence of those close to the authority and the shabiha associated with them, increased, whether in the army or in the security services. Corruption rates have also increased. Therefore, it has become impossible to make structural changes in the ruling power, and to reach a modern pluralistic democratic state, without carrying out radical reforms in these two institutions, and subjecting them to international standards in the structure, organization and tasks so that they protect the homeland and the people instead of defending the ruler and strengthening his authority.

Additional problems besetting the army in the context of the Syrian war

With the beginning of the popular movement in 2011, many questions arose initially about the position of the Syrian army regarding the movement. Will the army join to support the regime, or will it remain neutral, or will it play a role in bringing about change ?

With the expansion of the popular movement, the army began to take part in the events; however, it played its expected role, the one it was prepared for, which is to protect the government and to side with it. As a matter of fact, it began using violence against the defenseless people, thus severely tarnishing the image of the army and security forces in Syria, and creating a crack between the army and the people. So, the army networks already plagued by nepotism prior to 2011, transformed into organizations of theft and corruption. In fact, many officers had no choice but to collude with the regime's networks and to use corruption to compensate for their low salaries. Also, the army institution has begun to recruit its members based on sectarian ground and family affiliation, instead of taking into account their compe-



tence and merit⁽²²⁾.

Using the army and security services to confront the popular revolution:

The Syrian authorities responded to the legitimate demands by deploying army units against the peaceful protestors in Damascus as demonstrations started erupting across the country. The security forces fired live ammunition on the demonstrators, who for the most, faced off the bullets unarmed and defenseless. The increase in the number of martyrs exacerbated the masses.

As a result, the security agents, the shabiha, the armed Baath Brigades and their allies, Hezbollah included, failed to suppress the popular movement, and the regime decided to engage its armored divisions to put an end to the popular uprising and address the situation that got out of control.

Meanwhile, a crisis management cell was formed, headed by the former Minister of Defense, General Hassan Turkmani. The cell tried to prevent the army's use of light and heavy weapons on civilians, and to prevent regime supporters and shabiha from shedding more Syrian blood. This behavior by the Crisis Management Cell was one of the most important reason behind the assassination of its members who were unwanted by the leaders of security forces, hence the bombing of the cell members in the national security compounds in Damascus on July 18, 2012.

The explosion occurred in the National Security building on the morning of July 18, 2012 but was not powerful as it could not be heard in Damascus neighborhoods. The leaders of the four basic security services, who are essential members of the Crisis Management Cell as well, were deliberately absent from the meeting. At this writing, no investigation results have ever been disclosed⁽²³⁾.

(22) General Khaled Ibrahim, a defected officer based in Jordan.

(23) Killed in the explosion were General Hassan Turkmani, who was the head of the crisis cell, and who used to hold the position of Assistant Vice President of the Republic, General Daoud Rajha (Minister of Defense), General Assef Shawkat (Deputy Chief-of-Staff for Security Affairs), and Major General Hisham Bakhtiar (Head of the Security Bureau in the Baath Party regional leadership). The retired Major General Salah al-Nuaimi, who was the secretary of the cell, was injured. As for the Ministry of the Interior, Major General Muhammad al-Shaar, he had left the meeting shortly before the explosion and news spread that he had been seriously injured, while in reality he was unharmed. Unusually, the heads of the four security services were absent from the meeting. They are Major General Abdel Fattah Qudsia (Head of the Military Intelligence Division), Major General Dib Zaitoun (Head of the Political Security Division), Major General Ali Mamlouk (Director of the



The bombing of the Crisis Management Cell was a turning point in the Syrian revolution, because after the explosion, the confrontation with the people escalated to an open war, waged by the regime on cities and towns using a vast range of weapons including chemical weapons, mainly barrel bombs. This event also marked the beginning of city invasions, genocide and forced displacements.

With the killing of four senior Syrian army officers in the rank of (General), the crisis management cell page was turned, and no alternative has since been chosen. This is how the leaders of the four basic security services were once again given free hand to suppress the revolution against the regime⁽²⁴⁾.

Before the start of the Syrian revolution, the Syrian army was one of the largest armies in the Middle East, in terms of numbering and armament. It was composed of 450,000 fighters in land, air and sea forces, in addition to 350,000 reservists who could be summoned to join the army any time.

The land forces: consisted of three land corps and 6 armored divisions each comprised of three tanks, a mechanized brigade, a field artillery regiment, and other insurance units; plus four mechanized infantry divisions each comprised of two mechanized brigades, two tanks, an artillery regiment as well as insurance units. There are also the Special Forces unit composed of six regiments, and two special forces divisions that are formed similarly to the mechanized infantry. Add to all, the Republican Guard Corps with a strength greater than an armored division, the Border Guard forces with the strength of an infantry division approximately, and four independent mechanized infantry brigades, with a total of 14 divisions on the ground.

The Air Defense Force consisted of two air divisions, with a total of 450 fighters and bombers, 200 helicopters, in addition to a number of training and reconnaissance aircrafts, and two air defense divisions of different types of missiles and anti-aircraft weapons.

The Syrian Navy was weak in capabilities, consisting of three naval brigades, and some divisions that served them.

State Security Department) and Major General Jamil Hassan (Director of the Air Force Intelligence Department).

(24) Major General Muhammad Al-Hajj Ali, research studies (unpublished)



Chart No. 2 shows the organizational structure of the Syrian army

			Officers' Affairs
			Organization and Administration Division
Corps 26	Navy Brigade 56 water Sub-marine guards	Inspection	Inquiry/Reconnaissance
Corps 24	Navy Brigade 107 Coastal missiles	Supply	Engineering
Air Force Department	Navy Brigade 110 Missile Boat	Operations	Artillery and rockets
Corps 22			Signs
Corps 20			Armament
Air Force Command	Naval Force	Committies	Political Administration
			Administration
The Army's Organizational Structure Diagram			
General Command of the Army and Armed Forces			
1st Division	2 nd Division	3 rd Division	Command Reserves
Corp 1		Corp 3	Corp 17
Corp 5		Corp 11	Corp 4
Corp 7		Corp 18	Republic Guard Corps
Corp15	Corp 10		Special Forces
Brigade 90	Corp 14		
Brigade 61	Brigade 18		



Before the revolution, the Syrian army had the following weapons:

- About 5,000 tanks of various types (T-72 - T62 - T55 modified).
- About 3000 vehicles (BMP.1), which are combat vehicles, in addition to being a soldier carrier.
- About 2,600 field guns, of which more than 600 are mounted on armored vehicles (Kafuz Decca).
- More than 900 long-range surface-to-surface missiles.
- 350 fighter-bomber aircrafts, just not ready to engage in air combat operations in the face of hostile aviation. Most of these planes were not able to fly, due to the lack of wheels, and to Russia's reluctance to meet purchase requests as a result of the imposed embargo.
- 200 helicopters, training aircraft, reconnaissance aircraft, and transport aircraft.
- And other weapons and equipment that this research does not have the capacity to include⁽²⁵⁾.

This military hardware was destroyed in the war that lasted more than nine years, and cannot be replaced in the foreseeable future. If Syria is unable to rebuild destroyed houses and restore its infrastructure, how can it consider re-arming the army? This also constitutes an issue of crucial importance for the future of the national army.

So What is left of the Syrian army after ten years of war:

In manpower: There are no more than 150,000 fighters left in the Syrian army. They have damaged morals and most of them are deployed at checkpoints and guard their commanders, despite the Syrian government's attempts to recruit as many people who are able to carry weapons as possible.

1. Tanks: There are less than 1,000 tanks left.
2. Vehicles (BMP 1): less than 800 armored vehicles.
3. Field artillery: less than 1,200 cannons of various calibers

(25) Major General Muhammad Al-Hajj Ali, unpublished studies presented in multiple symposia



4. Aviation: The Syrian army has lost most of its aircrafts. There are currently less than 50 MiG fighters, and less than 20 Sukhoi bombers, and an equal number of helicopters, all of which are of old types, have low performance level and need technical maintenance.

See Chart 3 for comparison

Chart No. (3) shows the strength of the Syrian army before the revolution and what is left of it now

What existed of the Army before the uprising and what was left of it	
Number before the Uprising	Current Number
Manpower	
Regime Manpower 430,000	Regime Manpower 120,000
Palestinian Liberation Army Forces 20,000	Palestinian Liberation Army Forces ??
Elements of the security apparatus 150,000	Elements of the security apparatus 70,000
Heavy Weapons	
Tanks 5,000	Tanks: up to 1,000
BMB vehicles 3,700	BMB vehicles: up to 700
Artillery 3,200	Artillery 1,500
Shilka vehicles 500	Shilka vehicles: up till 200
Air equipment 700 of various models	Air equipment Only 160 left

In addition to the above, the Syrian army experienced great changes since 2011, in its leadership, control and subordination of its forces. We find that the army has its command structure and the leaders no longer have control over their divisions.

Depending on their regions, army divisions are now subject to the authority of the regime's intelligence services, as well as to Russian and Iranian influence. Even the Army General Command has no control over them. This has left Syria with various military paradigms, which differ from the army's pre-revolution structure, and which can be defined as agencies and militias that now constitute the protective garrison for the Syrian authorities.

As for manpower, the Syrian army lost many elements; mainly due to defections and battle



losses, as well as to young people's reluctance to join the military, knowing that they constitute the army's human reserves. This left Syria with a quarter of its pre-war human capabilities.

As for the combat equipment, they have been greatly depleted, mainly due to the regime forces incurring losses throughout 10 years of war. The opposition factions benefited from these losses to seize a lot of the regime's weapons and ammunitions from several warehouses, since the regime lacked the census required to use all of them. Also, no technicians were available to repair these weapons, as they all defected and fled from maintenance centers, which caused the weapons to lose many of their characteristics and combat features, especially after heavy use combined with lack of maintenance.

We conclude that the Syrian army no longer meets the qualifications of a national army, and has become closer to a militia than to a regular army. Not to forget that it was unable to confront the opposition armed factions to prevent the regime's fall, despite its assistance from thousands of Iranian militias. It was only after the Russian military intervention with its great capabilities and modern weapons, that it was able to protect the Assad regime from falling.

As a consequence, it became difficult to restore the Syrians' confidence in their national army; and for such confidence to be restored, great efforts should be made and both the political and military authorities should cooperate with each other, motivated by their patriotism, since we need to establish an army whose loyalty is to the homeland not to a person, family or sect; and this is one of the most difficult issues that surround the army restoration.

When we talk about re-building the Syrian army, within the context of finding a mechanism to build sustainable peace in Syria, it is necessary to analyze the composition of that institution before the revolution, especially from demographic and disciplinary views as mentioned earlier. Such analyzes will surely lead us to the fact that this is an army that protects the Assad regime, not the nation per se.

After all, the father Assad regime relied on the armed forces to impose its rule, because this was his only way to legitimize its presence at the head of power, after he came to it in a military coup in 1970, relying on the members of the Alawite sect from his family and friends.

That's why many army members belong to the Alawite sect, and I mean here the volunteers in the army, whether they are officers, non-commissioned officers or soldiers. This Alawite dominance finds its root in the policy of Assad father and son, and imposes itself as a custom that is accepted willy-nilly by the Syrians.



Before the Revolution, the percentage of Alawites in the army was 80%, and currently raised to more than 95%, knowing that the Alawites represent only 9% of the whole Syrian population. As for the conscripts, they come from all sects.

This sectarian composition of the Syrian army poses for us a major challenge if we want to turn this army into a national one, because restructuring the human component of this army is such a hard task. It usually takes a long time, not less than 15 years, especially that we have to replace the volunteer members and to train the new ones.

In terms of discipline, things had already been out of order prior to the revolution. There was a clear and rooted discrimination between members of the armed forces, mainly based on their sectarian affiliation, and on nepotism. Moreover, corruption had been deeply entrenched in all divisions to the point that it became very difficult to get rid of it.

Another problem is the need to make this army adhere to the standards of democracy and to stand up for human rights, bearing in mind that this was the case before the revolution, but since then the situation went down the drain. In short, we need to implement a set of broad procedures and measures to rehabilitate the army and modernize the military laws, in order to achieve the desired goal of army restoration.

The Syrians are convinced that the Syrian army and the security apparatus, operate under the slogan “Either Assad rules or we burn the country”, and that the Syrian army, which was built at the expense of the livelihood of millions of Syrians, is no different than the security forces since both are involved in heinous crimes that violated the Syrians’ dignity over five decades of Assad family rule.

After years of battles with the protestors, the Syrian army was estimated to have lost about 75% of its pre-war strength to defections and combat deaths with no documented information about its current state.¹ These rapid losses experienced by the Syrian army alongside lack of discipline among its members, their non-compliance with the leadership’s commands, and their loyalty to multiple subordinates, turned the Syrian territory into an arena where several conflicting militias are battling one another. With that said, some divisions still retain some of their fighting capabilities, namely the Fourth Armored Division and the Republican Guard Corps.



The results of the armed forces' intervention in the popular revolution:

The regime's deployment of armed forces against unarmed protestors, and its use of all kinds of weapons available in its arsenal, has resulted in a number of negative effects that can be summarized as follows:

1. A crack in the organizational structure of most fighting units, as a result of the defection of a large number of active officers and conscripts. Entire military divisions have collapsed.
2. Army's weak performance as a result of manpower shortages (due to casualties and defections).
3. Stagnation in human capacity, due to most Syrians refusing to draft their children into the military under the existing conditions, and instead, smuggling them out of the country.
4. Major combat equipment losses sustained by most army divisions due to the seizure of arsenals by the armed opposition factions in a number of locations.
5. Low percentage of combat readiness due to lack of soldiers and material means.
6. Weapons' loss of characteristics, due to long-term use without the necessary periodic inspections and maintenance as many weapon experts defected and left the maintenance centers⁽²⁶⁾.

We conclude from the above: that the military entities currently active on the ground does not qualify as an army, but rather fit the criteria for militia. This reduces the army's performance. Also, there is a major demographic imbalance in the military personnel in favor of the Alawite sect, especially after a number of members of the Sunni sect defected from it. Not to mention chaos, lack of discipline, crimes, cases of human rights violations, and failure to abide by the regulations and the military laws. What remains of the Syrian army in terms of men, equipment and weapons is not sufficient. What is required is for the army to extend its influence over the whole territory of Syria, and to fight the extremists who do not comply with a potential peace agreement, whether they belonged to the regime or to the opposition. The army's weakness and its dependence on foreign powers, mainly sectarian militias affiliated

(26) An interview conducted by the researcher with Brigadier General Fayeز Amro, who has been residing in Turkey since his defection from the regime's army.



with Iran and Russian forces, can be addressed by requesting international defense in order to maintain security and ensure the expulsion of foreign militias from Syria. All in all, we need to implement many measures in the early stages of the peace process to restore the Syrian army and to subject it to a central command. This may even be the precursor phase to the start of the peace process, where the army has to carry out tasks and obligations that establish security in the post-war phase, to protect the borders and to confront terrorist groups.



Second: The regime's allied and auxiliary forces

1. Auxiliary forces:

The auxiliary forces are the local volunteer militias formed by the regime, such as the National Defense Forces, the Popular Committees, militias headed by Syria's leading businessmen and pro-regime parties. The first two were established with the help of Iran and in coordination with the Fourth Armored Division and the Republican Guard Corps and operated around their district as vigilante groups such as in Latakia, Tartous, Homs, Hama and Damascus.

In fact, all these forces originated from lightly-armed local groups that began to expand and fight over large areas of Syria after their members found in fighting a way to escape from legal pursuit and circonscription.

These forces does not necessarily take orders directly from the regime. Much of their funding comes from businessmen loyal to the regime, and their members are recruited by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the Lebanese Hezbollah on sectarian grounds. Same applies to their leadership which consists of a number of officers loyal to the regime, such as Brigadier General Suhail al-Hassan, commander of the (Tiger Forces). Some of these units have turned into semi-independent militias, carrying out security and military tasks without reference to the leadership, in addition to thousands of systematic looting operations conducted on sectarian backgrounds, as in eastern Aleppo and the northern countryside of Hama, or on nationalist backgrounds, as in Ain-Al-Arab, Tal Abyad and Tal Tamr, or even on tribal backgrounds, as in Al-Mayadin and Albukamal countrysides.

A. National Defense Forces:

Under pressure from the Iranians, the government formed at the end of 2012 the National Defense Forces as a militia auxiliary to the Syrian army. Their aim was to compensate for manpower shortage in the Syrian army, which was caused by defections and casualties, as well as to cover up for the Syrian army for the crimes it commits.

The Iranian goal of establishing these forces is to create a local Syrian militia controlled by Iran, similar to the Hezbollah militia in Lebanon and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq,



and to create popular forces linked to the Quds Force which could be used in the future to influence governmental decisions and to find popular support in Syria in the event the regime collapsed. Iran has invested a lot in this field, and subjected the leaders of this militia to training courses in Iran, in return of salaries paid to them by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard corps.

The Quds Force commanders lead their military actions, in cooperation with the Syrian intelligence services. Their numbers reach 80,000 leaders distributed over most of the regime-held areas. Most of them are delinquents with heavy criminal records who practice tashbeeh (thuggery), theft, looting and authoritarianism over Syrians. Some are government agents who impose royalty payments on trading companies. Not to forget their involvement in illegal drug trade and other heinous acts as well.

The political and security authorities, which will be entrusted with the peace-building task in Syria, will face a great challenge in getting rid of the militias Iran has created, especially that these militias have become accustomed to specific behavioral patterns (slander, theft, looting, extortion, smuggling, lack of discipline, etc..). Moreover, these militias are numerous and cover a large area of the Syrian territory, and therefore, a national plan must be drawn up to dismantle them so as to integrate them into Syrian society as many of them started adhering to Iranian ideologies. These militias are very similar to some armed opposition factions that somehow implement non-national agendas and transnational ideologies.

B. The Baath Brigades:

It is a volunteer militia of members of the Baath Party, formed at the beginning of the Syrian revolution. Its main task is to guard public facilities and government buildings, among others. It is supervised by the regional leadership of the Baath Party and by party branches in the provinces, in coordination with the security forces. This militia is financed by traders and it is composed of about 10,000s armed men. In my opinion, this militia won't be an obstacle to a political solution in Syria, due to its vulnerability in terms of human capacity and armament, and due to the state's control of it.

C. Desert Hawks Brigade:

Most of them are ultra-sectarian. They are made up of retired non-commissioned officers, well-trained and armed with armored vehicles designated for special missions and ambushes. They are located in Homs and Lattakia. Their number reaches 2,000 fighters. It is necessary to get rid of this militia, at the beginning of the political solution, so that it does not constitute a



sectarian phenomenon and starts attracting sectarian fanatics, a problem that would be difficult to deal with.

D. Palestinian forces fighting on the government's side:

They are the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, the Fath Al-Intifada Forces, As-Sa'iqa forces, the Palestinian Ba'ath Party Brigades, and the Free Palestine Movement; a total number of 5,000 to 7,000 fighters. I do not think that they will constitute a challenge to the political solution, because they are small in number and do not enjoy national immunity; plus, they are controlled by the people who directly report any wrongdoing to the regime's intelligence service.

There are other groups of Syrian militias that I do not think will have an impact on the Syrian cause, that's if a political agreement takes place. **See Table 8 in the Appendix.**

As for the auxiliary forces, they are the Fourth and Fifth Armored Division (Fourth and Fifth Corps), which were established in the past years with the aim of facing the army's shortage in manpower and which need to be institutionalized and integrated into the army. The Fourth Corps was established in October 2015, by merging forces from the army and the auxiliary forces of Latakia, such as the National Defense Forces, the Tiger Forces, Noursour al-Zawba'a (the Eagles of Whirlwind) and the Ba'ath Brigades. The new corps benefited from Russian artillery, brought in from the Eighth Artillery Regiment, and from the 120th Artillery regiment, the 439th Artillery Brigade of the Republican Guard, and the 20th Missile Regiment.

In November 2016, the fourth Corps established the Fifth Corps for the medium and long-term management of the army after the latter's state deteriorated due to human losses, defection, desertion from military service, corruption and the heinous acts conducted by both the army and the auxiliary forces. Another goal for establishing the fifth corps is to provide a legal cover for these forces that were formed outside the framework of the army institution, so that they are not targeted in any upcoming political solution but rather dealt with as part of the army itself, knowing that the Syrian military law allows the establishment of subsidiary forces when necessary with the aim to fight only alongside the army.

Moreover, establishing the Fifth Corps reflected the Russian desire to find a kind of balance with Iran within the army institution. This step came as an attempt to prevent Iran from imposing its single vision on the army, after it created the fourth corps which is made up of the



National Defense Forces and other Iranian-backed militias⁽²⁷⁾.

2. Regime-allied forces

They are the foreign forces that entered Syria to support the regime, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, the Iranian, Iraqi, Afghan, Pakistani and other Shiite militias, in addition to the Russian security forces and companies (Wagner). Reports indicated that the total number of Iranian forces and their affiliated militias in Syria exceeds 70,000 fighters. In addition to the Russian soldiers who also participated in the hostilities in Syria.

These forces had a prominent role in supporting the regime and in restoring its spirit and forces twice, after it was close to falling. Actually, Iran transferred many military advisors and thousands of Iraqi, Lebanese, Afghan and Pakistani militias to Syria, in order to provide the regime with military support of soldiers and equipment. So, Iran played a major role in the deployment of these militias on the fronts, in coordination with the Republican Guard Corps and the Fourth Armored Division. The Russian intervention limited the deterioration of regime's military capabilities, as Russia provided extensive air support to the regime during its battles with the opposition factions, as well as advanced armored vehicles; all of which gave the regime forces a wide advantage in many battles, and enabled it to regain large areas of the country.

This means that external support from Russia and Iran, and from external militias as well, was a key factor in enabling the army to withstand the opposition and continue the fight, especially thanks to financial, logistical and operational support and assistance. **See Table 9 in the Appendix**

We can conclude that the structure of the Syrian army differed greatly after 2011 from what it was before, especially after two legions were added, thus bringing the number of legions to five. Most members of these two legions were local militia volunteers, recruited on sectarian grounds. The People's Republic, the Desert Hawks, the Storm Eagles, to name a few, add to them some armed factions that were fighting the regime in southern Syria after the reconciliation took place, mainly the Eighth Brigade, led by Ahmed al-Awda, a member of the Fifth Corps.

This turned the army structure into a mixture of regular and irregular units of militias, where

(27) Brigadier General Khaled Ibrahim, a defected regime officer residing in Jordan



both auxiliary and allied forces constituted more than half of the army's personnel.

Despite the regime succeeding in covering the shortage in manpower, it failed in terms of organizational and operational effectiveness. In fact, these formations also contributed to the army degradation, with a large part of them transforming into militias that ignored the military hierarchy, and that lacked discipline and military experience. This led to great confusion on the ground among the field commanders with often two sides fighting against the opposition forces, and in some cases even led to armed clashes between the various leaders. Compared to the army, these militias enjoyed greater privileges and had no obligations or responsibilities.

With foreign influence, opportunism has essentially replaced the already-weak professionalism and military doctrine. Syrian officers and elements would often change their looks and behavior according to the forces they work with.

At one point, mainly after the Russians' intervention, the chaos caused by these combinations of militias prompted the regime to exert more effort to control them; first, by turning the Syrian army into a central commander that assigns tasks and operations to either the militias or the army divisions, and second by dissolving a number of militias that resulted from some military and political factors.

From a military perspective, the regime no longer needed these militias now that a number of areas such as Eastern Ghouta, south Damascus, the northern countryside of Homs, Daraa and Quneitra, have come under its full control.

And from a political perspective, the decision of getting rid of these militias came after pressure from Russia to fulfill international conditions that call for the dissolution of all illegal military entities, including what the West perceives as local and foreign militias, especially those affiliated with Iran⁽²⁸⁾.

It can be said that such impact on the Syrian army's structure will affect Syria's situation in the future. This effect will not be limited to impeding the peace process between the Syrians, in the event of a political solution, but it will also affect regional stability, especially with the Iranian and Russian plans of integrating these militias into the Syrian army to employ them in achieving future gains. This applies also to both the Fourth and Fifth Corps, as well as to the Iranian forces and Hezbollah; in such a way that whatever future settlement the Syrians will have to discuss, they will be faced with a complex network of relations and interactions between military, security, economic, political and civil agencies that will decide for them future

(28) Brigadier General Khaled Ibrahim, previous reference



scenarios for their country.

As a matter of fact, it is a priority for any political solution in Syria to tackle the army's restoration issue after the failure to dismantle the army, so as to avoid repeating the Iraqi post-US-invasion experience in 2003.

All factors indicate that the political solution set by the international community includes preserving the state apparatus, especially the army institution, since dismantling the army can destroy the state and renew the war. It is necessary to rebuild the army in a professional way, based on scientific plans and on a set of principles mainly the Syrian collective mind, which rejected sectarian mini-states and benefited from Iraq's and Lebanon's intellectualism.

3. The dangers of militias on the reform of the Syrian army:

Reforming the Syrian army and security services face one of the most serious issues and it is the containing of armed militias, whether military or paramilitary, whether loyal to the regime or opposed to it.

These militias pose a dangerous security challenge, especially those that were formed on sectarian bases; as they will reject any political settlement that could limit their influence, after years of benefiting from the absence of a central authority to spread chaos through terrorist activities and slander operations.

Any political and military future authorities will later face many problems in getting rid of these militias, by integrating them in society based on legal standards. With that said, the greatest challenge of all remains the fact that these ideological militias are imbued with sectarian spirit, and linked to the Wali al-Faqih, or linked to al-Qaeda, which are both accustomed to a specific behavior (tashbeeh, theft, looting, extortion and killing), and which are both legislated with religious fatwas; in addition to the difficulty of dismantling the armed opposition factions that follow transnational agendas and ideologies.

Therefore, the Syrian political and military authorities will be obliged to develop national plans to rehabilitate these militias elements and integrate them into society, a procedure which calls for a concerted international effort, and the necessary support from international organizations.

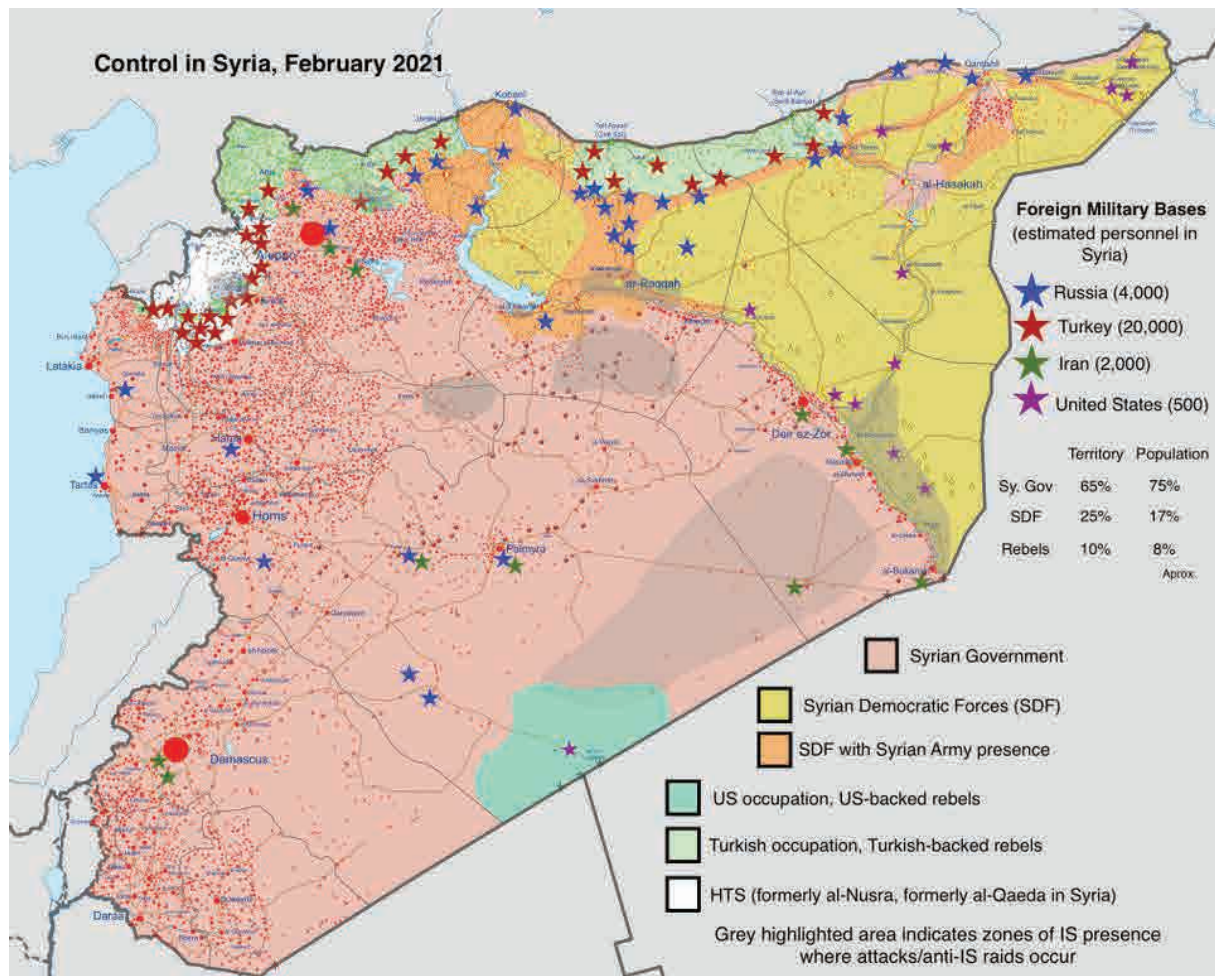


Third: Non-regime-held areas:

So far, three areas remain outside the government's authority, one of them is equal to 40% of the whole area of Syria. In order to reduce the negative effects of war in these areas, the armed conflict should stop and be replaced with reconciliations that should be implemented effectively for the peace process to carry on. These areas should also benefit from an organization to their central administration, in terms of security control, and of creating an environment that allows the restoration of life and of administrative services.

Despite the many differences in the security structure between the areas controlled by the opposition factions, there are many issues in common between them, the most important of which are: the absence of law, high level of criminality, threats to the livelihoods of citizens, terrorism, ideological and sectarian militancy, and the sharing of military influence between many factions in each of the three regions, with some of the factions battling one another; not to mention other issues that require long-term solutions. See map No. 2

Map Nbr 2 shows areas of control in Syria.



Source: <https://bit.ly/33PWlqB>

1. The northwestern region of Syria

(north, east and west of Aleppo, Idlib governorate, northeast of Latakia):

It is the most complex region beyond the regime control, with an area of more than 12,000 km². The area suffers many conflicting issues, at the center of which lies the presence of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Jabhat al-Nusra, and its factions). This group controls a large part of Idlib governorate, and imposes its ideology on the civilians there.

Other Islamic organizations are also present in the area, they share the same ideology as Al-Nusra despite their conflicts on the ground. There are also some moderate factions but they are subject to the Turkish control. Some areas like the East of the Euphrates (Nabaa al-salam)



fall under the Turkish authority to which the factions called “National Army” are affiliated. There are also foreign factions, such as the Turkistan faction with their families, located in Jisr al-Shughur area, and there are a large number of factions that moved to the region from in and around Damascus, Homs, Hama, Daraa and others. Can also be found in the area a number of foreign Islamist-oriented fighters in addition to civilians who were displaced from their areas from various Syrian governorates, and sought refuge in that area during the war. This area is administratively distributed between the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Latakia, Al-Raqqa, and Al-Hasakah.

The area experiences security chaos due to the presence of the wide variety organizations and their respective affiliations, not to mention their dependencies to transnational parties. So, the situation in this area is complicated, and to deal with it means the need to set a different plan that can help achieve peace and security there.

Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (Al-Nusra) constitutes a major obstacle to any ceasefire agreement, political solution and peace plan in that region, for its non-compliance is expected.

With that said, caution must be exercised when dealing with Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, before finding alternatives that help neutralize it, dismantle it or eliminate it. Here, I think that it is better to separate the area where the organization and its factions are present from the other areas, and to form an armed force that supports the existing local councils.

On the other hand, it is not possible for many of the displaced people to return to that area, due to the presence of many residents of other Syrian governorates in it, especially after the latter moved in, and created crowds of people living in camps, tents, or in open air, all of which are not decent human habitations. This also means that if we take into account the presence of more than three million Syrians in Turkey, it is unlikely that all these can return once the ceasefire agreement enters in force⁽²⁹⁾. See Table No. (10)

2. The northeastern region

(Al-Hasakah, Deir Ezzor, Al-Raqqa):

This region has an area equal to that of the quarter of Syria, and enjoys autonomous administration. It is currently ruled by Syrian Democratic Forces / SDF, which is made up of a

(29) Brigadier Mohamad Haj Ali, unpublished research



coalition of Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian and Syriac forces, although the composition of the SDF forces and of its leadership is mostly Kurdish.

The SDF has control over the administration and takes all its decisions under the supervision of the American and coalition forces. The area is considered the best among areas outside the government's authority, in terms of security and organization of civilian affairs, but it is also an unstable region due to the presence of many Iraqi ethnicities and due as well to the presence of the regime forces in Qamishli and Al-Hasaka, which are forces that do not inspire trust, and that need to be reorganized if we want to guarantee the safe return of the displaced. In fact, most of the displaced from those areas fled the Kurdish forces (SDF), especially in Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, as this region is known for tensions between the Arab and the Kurd, tensions that have been fueled by the Syrian regime for decades.

In order to ensure the success of the security and stability maintenance plan in that region until a political solution is established, and in order to ensure the safe return of the displaced and maintain the ceasefire, it is necessary to form an elected council of civilians that represent all segments of society and that supervise the area. This council may be assisted by a joint security-military committee consisting of government forces, SDF forces, officers, dignitaries and influential people from Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor and Hasaka, from the Arab and Kurdish backgrounds.

Also, the area must be divided into three local administrations, according to its administrative division Al-Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and Al-Hasakah. A military force, rather chosen from the people, should be formed for each area to assist the local administration in carrying out its tasks, in cooperation with the security apparatus. Moreover, a joint security committee must be formed in each of these regions, consisting of representatives from the government and others from the opposition, to coordinate and solve the problems that may arise. The United States of America worked on that, and it was possible to achieve security and stability in it, especially in the early stages, but the destruction of Deir Ezzor and Raqqa prevented the displaced from returning to their houses there, and therefore it becomes necessary to build special camps for those wishing to return during the early stages of the cease-fire, while restoring the infrastructure in the two aforementioned cities⁽³⁰⁾. **See Table No. 11 in the Appendix**

(30) See last reference



3. ISIS-controlled areas:

There are cells of ISIS in a few isolated areas in the Syrian Deir ez-Zor and Al-Hammad, all the way to As-Suwayda'. Here, a security and peace process should be implemented thanks to the Syrians' combined efforts in order to trap these cells with the help of both the government and the opposition factions. Any political solution should include measures that fight the ideology of such organizations.

4. Conclusion after studying the opposition factions:

The first conclusion is that there is a large number of factions in each of the three aforementioned regions that do not share common goals, but rather have multiple affiliations and loyalties, along with moral degradation, and administrative and organizational chaos. There are also organizations with Islamic orientations and fanatic nationalism, which do not believe in democracy, pluralism and international human rights, and which are controlled by other countries and are hard to combine to form a joint force that maintains security in those areas. We also note the difficulty of these factions reaching an agreement to form autonomous administrations in each area, and the difficulty of implementing any peace agreement.

The other conclusion is that the regime, after more than nine years of using all the military, human and economic capabilities of the army has not been able to defeat the revolution of the Syrian people, and will not be able to.

Syria has suffered a high level of destruction, killing, displacement and submission to four international occupations (Russian, American, Iranian, Turkish, and other international coalition forces) and it has become an arena for settling accounts and for international trade-offs, and is currently attracting all world terrorism. What is clear is that there is no end so far to this catastrophe.



Fourth: Some countries' attempts to restructure their army

We will discuss here the experiences of some countries that have witnessed similar conflicts and divisions, and benefit from their experiences in restoring their armies.

There is no doubt that restoring armies in most countries is a continuous process, and is not just limited to technological development or to changing missions, objectives and strategic variables. With that said, some countries have had an experience in the field, especially when changing their political system, and going through transitional stages from the monarchy to the republican system, or from a dictatorial authority to a democratic authority. In such times, the military institution is either on the side of the old system or on the new one. But what if a military coup occurs, what happens in that case? How do the military and the new regime deal with the situation imposed on them by revolutions or major political and social transformations? We are going to show some experiments with reforming armies that might be useful in this research:

1. The Spanish experience:

The civil war that lasted in Spain from 1936 to 1939 spanned three years of battles that killed half a million people. General Franco, the leader of the "Nationalists", overthrew the elected government, and took power, supported by the Nazi regime in Germany and the Fascist regime in Italy. Franco's coup came five years after Spain abolished monarchy and converted to the republican system. As the country ruler, Franco adopted a violent approach to deal with his political opponents at the beginning, and followed it with a systematic approach later on. Repression, murder, torture and rape were exerted on his rivals and the army played a major role in it, so it was not surprising that Franco continued to rule until his death in 1975. He dealt with politics, and left economic affairs and development matters to a government of technocrats. However, our story begins after Franco's departure.

Millions of Spanish men have spent a large part of their lives in conscription under the control of authoritarian fascist officers and under a tyrannical regime, says Rafael Martinez, professor of political science at the University of Barcelona. Thus, the Spanish armed forces was seen as one of the authoritarian regime pillars, unlike the rest of the European armies, whose officers were seen as heroes.



The involvement of the army and its leaders into politics, and its participation in a bloody war against large groups of the people, not to mention the lack of professionalism of its soldiers, left no choice to the new King of Spain Juan Carlos, who established a democratic transformation, but to reform the army with quick steps, so as not to disrupt the path of democratic reform.

A few months after Juan Carlos' coronation, General Manuel Melado was promoted to the army leadership, and vowed in his first speech the army's commitment to the law. His words were very clear to the soldiers: "We must not forget that the army, no matter how sacred its mission, is not supposed to rule, but rather, to serve the country under the command of the national government."

During the Franco era, the army divisions were independent as they were not linked to one another but would rather take direct orders exclusively from the dictator. Later on, the task of reforming the army began with several steps, the most important of which are:

- Constitutional and legal structure: creation of the Ministry of Defense for the first time, in order to bring the army divisions and their equipment under a unified command that in turn operates under the elected civilian government.
- Gradually excluding the army from political life, by limiting its constitutional and legal role, and restricting the military courts and limiting their authority over civilians.
- Raising the efficiency of the armed forces and making them professional, and preventing the military from working in civilian jobs.
- Reducing the number of troops and adopting the efficiency criterion in promotions instead of seniority.
- Shifting the armed forces' attention to the regional situation instead of the local one, and having it enter into military alliances.

These measures were subject to opposition by top military leaders and their supporters from the right-wing and fascist politicians. They have tried more than once to disrupt the democratic reform of the country, including two failed coup attempts in 1981 and 1982, but civil-military relations in Spain went well after that⁽³¹⁾.

(31) Sasa Post Center: Military politics and democratic transition: 3 experiences of reforming military institutions, December 18, 2019



2. The Indonesian Experience

In May 1998, the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, witnessed massive demonstrations that lasted three days. During this time, the armed forces decided not to confront the demonstrators, and to start reform measures to ensure the transfer of power from General Suharto to the vice-general in a peaceful manner.

Signs of division in the regime of General Suharto, who came to power in a military coup, had begun to appear more than 10 years before his resignation. The army leaders divided, the country experienced a severe economic crisis, the opposition voices demanding democracy increased, the regime's inability to maintain security and the disintegration of the ruling coalition were enough to clear the way for the democratic reform.

Since coming to power, General Suharto, established a repressive military regime, and used the army to promote sectarian and societal conflicts. He also merged the police with the armed forces and the two had one mission and one command. The military engaged in suppressing and hijacking protesters and democracy advocates, got involved in power and human rights abuse, and got into direct conflicts with regions enjoying relative autonomy, or direct occupation such as East Timor.

The Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) was in control of everything during Suharto's rule (politics, economy, police and media), and turning its back on Suharto was only a way for the TNI to preserve its strong position in the country.

The reform of Indonesia's security institutions was initiated by the same elite of generals and military personnel who agreed to several constitutional and legal reforms, such as separating the police from the army, cutting the army's relationship with its civilian support represented by the Suharto Party, preventing the military from assuming civilian jobs during their service, and standing neutral in the 1999 elections. They even accepted to reduce the number of seats allocated to the army in Parliament.

However, these institutional reforms were not accompanied by a real desire to change the status of the army on the ground. So, the military institution maintained its independence from the civilian government, and has not given up on the kottor system, which allows to every civil administrative unit (from the national level to the village level) a parallel military unit. It also maintained the judiciary immunity of officers accused of human rights violations. Also, no major change was noticed in the military's control over a large part of Indonesia's economy,



and from the military's engagement into competitive commercial activity⁽³²⁾.

3. The Burmese experience:

(the military council falls and the rule of the army lives on)

The military and former Prime Minister Thein Sein came to the presidential seat in Myanmar (Burma) in 2011, after his party swept the elections with a majority of more than 90% of the votes. His first months of presidency were characterized by promises of democratic reform, and by support from the United States of America and international bodies that saw in the former general a possibility of reform against the army's old guard.

In fact, several measures were taken to quickly lift restrictions on the opposition, mainly by granting relative freedom to the press, by allowing the largest opposition party to resume its activity, by releasing some political prisoners, and by restoring the right to strike in the law.

As for the State Peace and Development Council which had been the ruling military body, since 1988, it was dissolved by President Thein Sein, which can be considered a huge change despite the relations between the parties to power in Myanmar have not changed much.

Burma's government has been subject for decades to secession attempts and armed rebellion, to which the army would respond by destroying entire villages, and engaging in ethnic war in several provinces, against Rohingya Muslims among others.

Burma's army has a wide record of heinous acts including but not limited to cases of human rights violations, arrest and killing of opponents and journalists, electoral fraud in favor of the Union of Solidarity and Development Party, which is a branch of the army leadership and which rules based on the 2008 constitution that was drafted by a committee appointed by the army. The party was voted on in elections that were described locally and internationally as "rigged".

The army retains 25% of the seats in Parliament, according to the constitution, whose first chapter clearly states that defense bodies participate in the country's political leadership. Myanmar's National Defense and Security Council consists of 11 members (5 current military, 5 ex-military, and one civilian). The council enjoys a higher position than the civil government, and thus can cancel or amend the latter's decision and can impose its conditions on it. The

(32) Sasa post center: Military rule, previous reference.



military's power also extends to the media, and independent journalists were always under threat from the military police.

Economic activity in Myanmar was not separated from the military control. The two largest holding companies in the country are directly owned by the army, in addition of the military owning the company responsible for importing weapons⁽³³⁾.

After reviewing these countries' experiences in military reform, we conclude that none of them is similar to Syria's case and that there is little benefit in applying these approaches. After all, the Syrian army differs from these armies in several matters, the most important of which are demographic, professional, subordination, discipline, and national spirit, and most of all this army's affiliation to Al-Assad family, an affiliation that has become deeply rooted in the army after more than fifty years. Not to mention the sectarian and ideological dominance, and the army's degradation after 10 years of battles and multiple crimes it committed against the Syrian people, as well as the integration of a number of militias into its ranks, the loss of previously controlled areas, its subordination to two occupying international forces, Russia and Iran, and the presence of American, Turkish, British and French international powers on the Syrian territory, all of which makes the process of reforming the Syrian army a complex process that requires a long period of time.

(33) Sasa post center: Military rule, previous reference



Fifth: The challenges of army restructuring.

The process of restructuring the army in Syria will face complex challenges, the most important of which are:

1. The challenge of evacuating foreign forces.

It is not possible for foreign armies to leave Syria without the conclusion of an international agreement. Note that the establishment of a political solution in Syria is linked to US, Russian, and Turkish agreements that gain Iranian approval, which in turn cannot be achieved without already establishing a political solution. Therefore, there should be a Transitional Governing Body as well as a Transitional Military Council that assists the governing body or the agreed upon government formula. By then, the army must have regained its ability to maintain security on Syrian territory, without ignoring the need for an international decision to implement the UN Security Council resolution that stipulates the exit of foreign forces from Syria.

2. The challenge of facing five decades of Assad's rule:

- A. The challenge of having Al- Assad family's supporters mainly in the army is that they will oppose the reform because it affects their interests. After all, many forces, such as the intelligence services and some military leaders implicated in crimes against the people, benefit from the regime's corruption, and any attempt to separate them from the regime will spark among them the fear of being held accountable for their heinous acts.
- B. The difficulty of getting rid of discrimination based on sectarian, ethnic or partisan grounds, especially that the reform process is based on two basic factors, namely patriotism and efficiency. After all, inherited ideologies, the rush for power and granting privileges to one sect over another, or to the Baathists over others for example, do not help achieve social justice on which the Syrian regime is supposed to be based.
- C. The difficulty in addressing security transgressions to which the regime's organs will resort to in order to spread chaos, and from which they collect personal gains and interests. So, these networks will stand as an obstacle to any change.



- D. The lack of honest and efficient national personnel, especially in both the judiciary and military fields, who can act as a pillar to the security system and to its maintenance. Add to that, the difficulty of forming strong political and administrative institutions (within a short period of time) that can bring about change, and that benefit from popular support, while also implementing means of oversight and legal accountability; especially after the regime destroyed social life and repressed collective thinking, for more than fifty years.
- E. The difference of security perceptions between the two parties to the conflict. On one hand, the regime and its supporters will never accept any reform formula that restraints the regime's power, especially that the regime sees the opposition as a terrorist force wanted by the security services. On the other hand, the opposition calls for the dismantling of the security bodies, and the total rupture with the regime and considers them a necessary condition for political change. This means the challenge of establishing a political solution remains, because each party considers itself right.
- F. The difficulty of finding security formulas that face national security challenges that do not conflict with regional and international security equations, especially that both the regime and the opposition are robbed from their ability to take a national decision due to the Syrians prioritizing self-interest over national affiliation. These regional and security equations are to be taken into account especially that the countries that intervened in the Syrian war have interests of their own, and do not look at the solution from a human perspective.
- G. The emergence of transnational projects with national or ideological dimensions that can impede the reform process, and it is a national priority to confront them and expose them. However, with the Syrian state's weakness, and the numerous foreign interventions that favor one specific power on the expense of all the rest, based on self-interest, it became hard to convince all the existing forces of the necessity of implementing a unified national plan.
- H. Authority is essentially held by the regime and its militias, and this constitutes a major obstacle to any reform process. After all, it's an authority that does not have full popular consensus. The regime's allies that claim protecting Syria aims for the fragmentation of the Syrian society, mainly through sectarianism, and displacement; this means that Syria will have a hard time finding a political solution.



- I. Weapons proliferation and their foreign dependency, as well as their use for political goals unrelated to Syria, is a cause for security chaos that destabilizes peace and stability. This chaos hinders the reform process, and is a clear obstacle to a political solution, especially since many militants use arms for sectarian purposes that are fueled by extremist forces or by organizations with other objectives.
- J. The collapse of the Syrian economy, and the horrific destruction that befell the infrastructure, service facilities, and towns and villages, are also obstacles to the reform process. This aspect of the problem is covered by economists.
- K. Severe societal division (on national, ideological, religious, sectarian grounds) as a result of the regime's wrong policies in managing the crisis and of regional and international parties that do not want the Syrians to move to a democratic system because it affects these parties' existence. That's why these entities resorted to fueling nationalist, sectarian and partisan ideologies.
- L. Blackout on transitional justice during the political negotiations conducted by the regional and international parties controlling the conflict. This may bring about retaliatory behaviors that will plunge the country into an atmosphere of tension and increase the difficulty of a reform process.

3. The negative outcome of years of conflict on the army

The ten years of conflict have left major negative effects on the Syrian army, or what remains of this army, and any reform cannot be proclaimed without addressing these effects that can be summarized as follows:

- A. Lack of discipline in the military. Discipline means seriousness, commitment, accuracy, good performance of duty, respect of others' rights, and the ability to distinguish between what is legal and what is not. If we apply this simplified definition on the current army structure and the various security agencies, it becomes clear to us that there is a complete loss of discipline among its members.
- B. Loyalty to the president and not to the homeland: There is no doubt that the concept of "military doctrine" in Syria is based mainly on pledging allegiance to the one leader that rules the state and the people. There is currently no place in the army leadership except for those who offer loyalty and obedience to the leader and not to the homeland,



because the homeland, according to the leader's motto, is reduced to the person of the president. As for the security services, they have the role of consolidating this loyalty.

- C. The power of corruption: Corruption was somehow legalized by the regime in order to tighten control over the army and security services and to ensure the loyalty of all leaders to the head of the regime.
- D. Sectarianism: It is one of the regime's malicious tools, which it has used since the coup of March 8, 1963, in order to gain total control over the state and society.
- E. Party indoctrination: Using ideology was the best way to grant the Baath Party authority over the army, and to ensure its loyalty to the Ba'ath leadership represented by the party's regional secretary, who in turn is the national secretary and president of the Syrian Arab Republic, and commander-in-chief of the army.
- F. The absolute control of the security services over the army: We explained earlier that the security services have powers that exceed the army's leadership, starting with the individuals and ending with the authority granted to the head of the Military Intelligence Division, who has more power than the Minister of Defense (Deputy Commanding General of the Army)
- G. Random ranking and promotions in the army: (the benefiteres are members without significant positions or powers) and most of them belong to a different sect than that of the president.
- H. The poor living conditions of the military personnel of all ranks, especially those conscripted to military service.
- I. Tefyish: (a term given to the process carried out by a soldier in compulsory service who pays his salary to his commander at the beginning of each month in exchange for him going home), perhaps tefyish is a phenomenon enjoyed by the Syrian army exclusively. This term is known only to the Syrian army, and it is a privilege granted by the regime to office holders in order to ensure their loyalty to it.
- J. Looting/Taafish: It is a well-known term in Syria, and it refers to stealing home furnitures and looting places in controlled areas. Nine years of the revolution revealed the regime's cover for this phenomenon usually conducted by army leaders and other shabiha from Al-Assad's forces.



- K. Fake allowance for fictitious expatriates: Perhaps one of the most important phenomena that has spread in the Syrian army is the payment of cash allowance to the expatriates. Actually, thousands of those who did not leave the country were able to benefit from this service, through brokers who spread throughout the country and abroad, to make false expatriation files. These files are documented in completely legal ways, in exchange for double sums of money paid to the chiefs of the conscription division, the dues reach all the leaders.

After this brief account of the negative side of the army, one can say that such issues will block any reform process, and with it the shifting to international standards, such as: democracy, adherence to human rights, and legal accountability.

However, the important thing here is to look for an effective reform method that can overcome all these obstacles and lead to the political solution.



Sixth: The foundations for restructuring the army and the roles it will play (army reform)

Basics of army restructuring:

Based on the need for a basis for the political settlement, and on the need for the implementation of security measures in the foreseeable future in hope that they would later help build sustainable peace, as well as on the content of UN Resolution No. (2254) December 18 / December 2015, issued by the UN Security Council, we can definitely say that Syria is aching for fundamental changes, mainly reforms in its army's organizational structure, role and mission. However, starting to implement these changes is entirely linked to the process of political transition of power. Despite this fact, some practical measures can be implemented before the transition process.

Actually, preparing the atmosphere for a political solution, is an introduction to the reform process.

So, it is imperative to lay down the foundations and rules that end the war, provide security, and lead to the process of reforming and building state institutions, particularly the army. In order for the army reform process to succeed, the higher state organs must participate in the reform. It is known that building the armed forces and maintaining their strength is a very complex work, and depends on financial, moral, human and technical factors, as well as specialists and experienced people (military, politicians, economists, jurists). It should start by:

- A. Laying down appropriate plans and programs to reform the existing security situation in Syria.
- B. Setting future visions for the structure, missions and role of the military institution.
- C. Determining the available and expected human capabilities, and setting plans to recruit more soldiers.

In order to complete the reform process, the proposed Military Council, under the guidance of the accepted political authority, must work in coordination with the new executive institutions to form a specialized committee comprising military, economic, political and social



experts, whose task will be as follows:

- A. Establish the future defense policy of the state.
- B. Determining the state's needs for the armed forces, in terms of manpower, and type and size of armaments.
- C. Determining the armed forces' cantonment sites.
- D. Draw up an inventory of the financial amount the state can provide now and in the future for the army reform process.
- E. Determining reform priorities and obstacles.
- F. Imposing a military doctrine on the Syrian armed forces.

But in the current circumstances, and after estimating the national security needs, we can say that the actual need of the army is limited to performing the following tasks:

- A. Protecting the Syrian maritime, terrestrial and air borders
- B. Fighting terrorism, militias and terrorist organizations that reject the political process.
- C. The cooperation between the army and the internal security forces in the process of maintaining security in the country.

The implementation of these tasks requires a manpower of 125,000 to 150,000 soldiers in the three forces (land, sea, and air), deployed throughout the Syrian territory according to a previously-established plan. This starts with the demobilization of a large numbers of officers who should be either forced to retire or transferred to civilian jobs, and the launching of a thorough investigation into the crimes committed against the Syrian people, so that those involved would be brought to justice.

The process of reforming the army begins with preserving what remains of it, as well as rebuilding it in accordance with national and international standards, provided that it is loyal to the homeland. This process depends on the principles of efficiency and good performance, and includes all categories of the Syrian people on an equal footing. After all, it is very necessary to rebuild the lost trust among the people. As for the army, it must be subject to democratic governance, rule of law, oversight, transparency and professionalism, and not interfere in political life.



In order for the reform process to match the requirements of the next stage of being subject to democratic governance and abiding by human rights principles and international laws and regulations, it must depend on a set of factors especially during the first stage of implementing the political solution, the most important of which is determining the form of the political solution and its procedures, in addition to imposing the international treaty number 2245 in all its articles.

Factors contributing to army restructuring

It goes without saying that the process of army reform and reorganization does not occur without achieving a political transition to a deliberative democratic political system that succeeds the Assad regime. With Assad in power, there will be no reform in the military and security institutions. Also, reaching a political solution requires international consensus among the main parties, mainly the United States and Turkey on the one hand, and Russia and Iran on the other. Before starting the process of reforming the army and armed forces, a set of measures must be implemented, the most important of which are:

- A. Achieving tangible progress in the political reform in accordance with Resolution No. (2254) issued by the UN Security Council on December 18, 2015, and the rest of the UN resolutions related to the Syrian issue after 2011.
- B. A comprehensive cease-fire on all Syrian territory, supported by the international community, and the adoption of international monitoring mechanisms, in addition to punitive measures for those who contravene this agreement. However, the ceasefire must be accompanied by the serious initiation of the political process by the conflicting parties.
- C. As a result of the new situation formed on the ground, security system must be temporarily decentralized in the first stage of the settlement, especially in the areas under the control of the opposition. In these areas, the responsibility for achieving security should fall on the shoulders of the opposition factions with the support of neighboring countries, and under the supervision of the joint security committees that will be formed by the government and the opposition. These security measures should be implemented immediately after success in the negotiation process and simultaneously with the unification of local forces, administrative structures and judicial systems, provided that such unification is in compliance with the Syrian judiciary.



- D. On the other hand, the Syrian government must control the loyal militias (National Defense Forces, Popular Committees, Baath Brigades, Palestinian militias, etc.).
- E. It is difficult to implement security measures with the presence of foreign militias on the Syrian territory. Therefore, the international forces overseeing the application of political solution must help remove them from Syria, within a specific time frame associated with the expulsion of foreign fighters from the opposition ranks, and the dismantling of extremist Islamic groups.
- F. Forming a military council subject to the agreed-upon political authority, and comprised of representatives from the conflicting parties (government, opposition and independents) with the exclusion of those responsible for crimes committed during the war. The role of this council will be to implement the new military policy, in line with the peace and security requirements in Syria.
- G. It is unlikely that the Syrian government will abide by these measures, without pressure from its international backers, especially Russia, and without continuous international pressure from the Security Council.
- H. International supervision of all steps related to the political and security settlement to ensure its good implementation in accordance with this aspect of the international resolution 2254.
- I. Releasing all arbitrarily detained persons by the regime and opposition factions, and clarifying the fate of those who went missing, due to the importance of this matter in spreading relaxed political and security environment and proving the parties' good intentions.
- J. The principle of implementing transitional justice and holding war criminals accountable must be present all along. Therefore, a special body must be formed and must apply the Law on all conflicting parties, in order to calm the citizens and give credibility to the political process. This approach helps overcome the tragedies of the war, which continued since more than 9 years ago with more than 800,000 Syrians killed, half of the Syrian population displaced, as well as other tragedies committed against the Syrian people.



Steps to be implemented to ensure the success of army restructuring:

- A. The formation of a military council subject to the political authority agreed upon in the political solution, with the powers to restructure the army and the security forces. It should be composed of defectors and regime officers who are not former senior leaders, who have not committed crimes against the Syrian people, and who have leadership experience and patriotism. This council carries out a set of tasks that we will discuss later.
- B. Work to restore the demographic balance of the army, in proportion to the demographic structure of Syria, and to end sectarianism in the army and combat all its manifestations.
- C. Forming military courts specialized in war crimes to prosecute all those who committed massacres against the Syrian people from all warring parties, and referring all perpetrators of crimes, whether from the opposition or from the Syrian army, to military courts with international assistance, in order to eradicate them from the army, because justice is the alternative to revenge.
- D. Dissolving the two Military Intelligence agencies (the Military Intelligence Division - Air Intelligence Department), and assigning their tasks to the Army's Reconnaissance Department. As for the tasks of civilian security nature, they should be assigned to the General Intelligence Department, according to new national foundations.
- E. Changing the military doctrine that previously revolved around loyalty to the president and to partisanship and sectarianism; and basing its doctrine on nationalism; while keeping the army away from politics and political parties, so that the armed forces would remain away from all political conflicts and from governors' dictatorship.
- F. Reorganizing the military divisions and sending them to their cantonment sites according to national interests, not just according to a regime-protection plan.
- G. Redefining the organizational structure of the army and its composition in terms of manpower, financial means, and equipment, based on its constitutional role, and according to financial capabilities and its need of personnel and equipment, while keeping conscription during the transitional phase.
- H. Determining cantonment sites according to the divisions' roles and tasks which should



be dictated by the military command under the guidance of the political authority.

- I. Setting the work directions and plan for all the military positions based on competency and experience. Also, criminalizing sectarianism, nepotism and corruption during the move towards democracy.
- J. Redrafting all the military operation rules, and the battling rules, regardless from partisanship and ideologies, so that loyalty would be to the nation, apart from politics.
- K. Re-integrating all officers and defectors into the army and security apparatus, while keeping at bay those who drifted away from nationalism and joined extremist groups or got involved in corruption.
- L. Redrafting the military service regulations in such a way that they are in conformity with the changes. Same applies to the internal regulations, such as adapting the training programs to the newly-established patriotic army foundations, away from political parties and ideologies.
- M. Improve the army salaries, similarly to other state officials, taking into account the soldiers' work nature, especially its timing and location; and compensating them when necessary in order to get rid of the flaws that infested the Al-Assad's army.
- N. Re-assessing the old military commands who were loyal to the regime, and subjecting the army to the political leadership, in conformity with the democracy reforms, and forming a high-council for the armed forces led by the president and the prime minister, depending on the political system that will then be decided.
- O. Merging pro-regime militias with opposition militias, and enlisting the good ones among them in the army and security apparatus, on objective and professional grounds; and training them to the military life. This should help re-balance sectarian groups within the army.



Seven: Transitional Military Council

Because of the unstable security situation, the presence of foreign militias, extremist jihadist groups, the spread of organized crime, and the widespread proliferation of weapons, the security apparatus, including the army, will have a major role in achieving stability and restoring security, which is a priority for the complete reconstruction of Syria.

From here emerges the idea of a “transitional military council” with broad powers that will restore stability and ensure the expulsion of all foreign fighters from the country, the elimination of organized crime, the restrictions of weapons to the state and other important tasks.

Even though some ideas support the formation of such transitional military until the authority returns to the elected government, the fear of restoring military rule in the country remains, thus standing as an obstacle to the formation of a military council. So, between the necessity of a Transitional Military Council and the fear of a military rule, alternative ideas arise, and revolve around the formation of a Transitional Military Council that is formed by a transitional political authority as appointed by the political solution. The Military Council will be subject to this authority, which has the ultimate right to modify its powers, expand, reduce or dismiss its members.

Tasks of the Transitional Military Council:

The Transitional Military Council shall carry out the following main tasks:

- A. The Military Council operates under the command of the political leadership that is formed according to the political solution and issues executive decisions in line with its tasks as entrusted to it by the political leadership.
- B. Leading the army and Syrian armed forces and overseeing the entire security apparatus during this transitional phase.
- C. Issuing orders to establish the cease-fire, maintain its continuity, give it a mandatory character, and ensure security and stability in all Syrian regions.
- D. Issuing decisions and taking the necessary measures to end all armed manifestations



- throughout the country, and supervising their implementation.
- E. Develop the necessary plans to extend state authority over the entire territory of the Syrian Arab Republic with its internationally recognized geographical borders.
 - F. Setting the necessary measures and procedures to provide security, maintain stability and civil peace throughout the country, and supervising their implementation.
 - G. Issuing the necessary decisions and orders related to the status of military officers, non-commissioned officers, defectors, and dismissed soldiers, in order to reintegrate them unless penalties have been imposed on them for heinous crimes.
 - H. Developing plans and issuing the necessary orders to dismantle militias and armed factions, and develop programs to rehabilitate the members, after investigating those who have committed crimes against Syrians.
 - I. Issuing decrees under the authority leadership related to the formation of the military leadership, starting with the appointment of the Minister of Defense and the vice-ministers, the appointment of the chief-of-staff and his representatives, and the appointment of leaders and heads of army organs and departments.
 - J. Issuing executive decisions and directives to ensure effective oversight of the military performance, by enabling the military oversight bodies to perform their duties of monitoring the behavior and practices of officers and military officials and holding violators accountable for their wrongdoings.
 - K. Issuing the necessary decisions and orders related to the reform process of the Syrian army, in order to rebuild it on national foundations away from partisanship, ideologies, and sectarianism, and to limit its mission to defending the homeland and the people, as stated in international laws and regulations.
 - L. Issuing the necessary decisions and orders related to the process of reforming the security services, rebuilding and merging them in accordance with professional standards, and setting plans for developing the security system in line with international standards of security and human rights, and subjecting them to democratic governance.
 - M. Protecting and controlling the borders and ensuring the country unity.
 - N. Limiting the use of weapons to the Syrian state, and confronting all external powers and



subjugating them to the state authority.

- O. Reviewing the names of army commands and security leaders involved in crimes against the Syrian people, and bringing them to justice. Also, making the necessary changes to achieve peace in the army such as dismissing the sectarian and corrupt elements that could sabotage the peace process.
- P. Assessing the current military formations, their operating systems and equipment, determining the necessary needs for equipment and weapons, and working on providing them.
- Q. Liberating the Ministry of Defense from administrative corruption and sectarian behavior, and recruiting officials based on their professional skills.
- R. Develop plans to expel foreign armed militias from Syria, and supervise their implementation.
- S. In addition to other regular tasks that fall on the shoulders of the General Command of the Army and Armed Forces.

The bottom line:

It is the responsibility of the Transitional Military Council to accomplish the task of reforming the army and security services, in accordance with international and humanitarian standards, to ensure stability and civil peace. It is also its duty to implement the principle of transitional justice, to eradicate terrorism from the Syrian territory, to schedule the exit of foreign militias, to expel the occupying armies and to extend the state authority throughout all the territory, in order to restore national sovereignty.

The roles of the army in the first stage of the political transition

The military institution plays a vital role in preserving the state structure, and preventing its collapse by maintaining security and civil peace. Therefore, the army must be preserved and restructured in a way that includes all segments of the people, so that it plays its national role in protecting the borders and national security, and to preserve Syrian unity by avoiding fragmentation and division. One of the most important tasks of the army that can be carried out



in cooperation with security agents and civilians, is to achieve political transition. This should first start by confronting any and all armed groups that reject a political solution, and by eliminating groups involved in corruption, namely theft and looting of public and private property, kidnappings and extortion of civilians.

Another priority for the military in the transitional period is to expel foreign militias, and foreign organizations and individuals that refuse to leave the Syrian land, and to extend its control over the entire Syrian territory. There are many citizens who embraced extremist ideologies spread by terrorist groups and Shiite organizations that randomly entered the country, and it is necessary for the army to confront them with a carrot-and-stick approach to have them comply with the requirements of a political solution.

Also, the army must collect weapons and restrict them to the hand of the state, especially after they went out of control during the uprising. Until the task is complete, the Transitional Governing Body, the army and the security apparatus, as well as civilians, militia leaders and arm holders must all cooperate to apply harsher penalties on those who refuse to hand over weapons, or to grant rewards in the opposite case, while enacting laws that help. As for the collected weapons, they should be counted, and classified in well-guarded warehouses, and subject to regular maintenance

The challenge of addressing the uncontrolled proliferation of arms starts by confiscating the weapons by tackling their root causes, and by establishing national reconciliation based on transitional justice on one hand, and creating job opportunities for arm holders on the other hand, a step that will push them to lay down arms and engage in the reconstruction process. With that said, we note the difficulty of providing employment opportunities and adequate remuneration to such a large group in a short period of time.

Ceasefire Measures

It is imperative that ceasefire measures precede measures to address the militants' situation and the issues of weapon collection and national reconciliation. Along with the ceasefire, UN peacekeeping forces should be deployed by a decision of the Security Council, to stop and prevent violence, and to interfere in the military contact between the parties.

It is important that the party that will supervise the Ceasefire implementation and peacekeeping be capable of carrying out its missions. The United Nations forces have priority over



other parties, with permission for them to use force when necessary. Their missions will be:

Maintaining peace and security, conducting surveillance, verifying the cessation of hostilities, guarding protected areas and protecting civilians, assisting in the withdrawal, disarmament and redeployment of forces, assisting in the humanitarian effort.

There should be separation of forces, mainly through the establishment of neutral geographic areas used to separate forces. The method through which the separation will take place must be determined, and a specific time should be set for the completion of the separation. Future obligations must also be determined. There should be three areas of separation, namely:

1. Buffer zones. They are supposed to prevent contact between the parties.
2. Restricted areas. They are used to prohibit a specific activity (no-fly zones, no-weapons zones, etc.).
3. Coordination areas. They are meant for coordination with the peacekeeping forces or the Ceasefire Committee.

It is necessary to define the geographical scope of the ceasefire, knowing that the ceasefire should be expanded over the entire Syrian territory, except for the areas of presence of (ISIS) and (Jabhat al-Nusra) and the likes. These areas should follow a specific plan to get rid of these groups, probably by fighting them or dismantling them, especially since Resolution 2254 clearly specifies that the ceasefire does not include these factions.

There are four ways to separate forces:

- Ceasefire on site, where all forces remain in place, and assume non-offensive positions.
- Establishing a geographical line dividing the parties, with maps detailing this line.
- Assembly areas of the forces to be agreed upon in order to separate the forces. The latter will receive further instructions later.
- Total withdrawal. This applies to militias and foreign forces present on Syrian territory.

It is also necessary for all parties to control their forces, especially with the multiplicity of



militias and leaders, and their lack of discipline. This requires international and regional cooperation, specifically from the Turkish side. The ceasefire agreement must include specific steps that the parties take to prove their control over their forces. It is crucial to define the responsibilities of the countries that control the militias in Syria, and to determine the forces that will be party to the agreement.

An important part of the ceasefire agreement is to define prohibited actions which may include: (military or hostile attacks against another party's forces, positions or property; distribution of weapons, ammunition or other war equipment; attempts to occupy new sites or assume offensive positions; conducting unauthorized operations; redeployment of forces or resources; recruitment and mobilization of soldiers; attacks; hostage-taking or unlawful detention of civilians and humanitarian personnel, appropriation of private property, hindering trade and the movement of goods, laying mines and explosive devices, The use of hostile media campaigns, false statements, etc.), and it may be agreed that these prohibitions will be implemented in stages.

This is followed by confidence-building measures, or it may be associated with the ceasefire, where emphasis is placed on confidence-building measures in order that all conflicting parties contribute to the political process. The most important of these measures is the release of detainees from all parties, and the clarification of the fate of the missing. Could be Discussed the release of women and children as a priority, and accessing detention centers for inspection. Other measures include identifying the missing, appointing specialized committees, facilitating access to humanitarian organizations, providing aid in all areas, and stopping all forms of attacks against civilians. The ceasefire agreement must be accompanied by the start of the withdrawal of foreign forces, and a timetable for the complete withdrawal from all Syrian territory.

Agreements between the conflicting parties must include provisions related to the modalities of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers. The timing of disarmament must also be determined as well as its stages. Encouragement and assistance in handing over weapons should be offered and strong social and media campaigns might be of help.

It goes without saying that the rules and foundations for the reintegration of forces should be set, as well as the integration of demobilized fighters into society by creating permanent job opportunities for them to ensure that they have a decent life. The international community must play a positive role in this task.



Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration

The mechanism of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants is an integrated process. It transforms combatants from their previous status as combatants to a new status, namely civilians, soldiers or security personnel in the formal State apparatus. This occurs through the reduction of the number of weapons, and the dismantling of fighting groups, restoring the security services and the army, and helping the former fighters integrate, either into civilian life, or into the state organs or into the army; a procedure that is achieved by creating job opportunities for them, based on a national plan that is set for this purpose.⁽³⁴⁾

When the armed conflicts end, and the state and society reconstruction begins, no magic wand can be used to quickly restore life to its normal course. Studies indicate that a ceasefire, especially after civil wars, does not necessarily mean the return of security and the end of violence.

Actually, disarmament between warring parties can lead to the emergence of a post-conflict environment that may lead to even more violence than what it was during the fighting phase. In fact, the term “post-conflict” offers a wide range of threats faced by post-war (revolution) societies at the end of war. There are many examples on that. Countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan still live in tragic security situations, and many countries that witnessed the signing of optimistic peace agreements faced issues that robbed them from this optimism, and casted even more burdens that need to be dealt with in appropriate ways.⁽³⁵⁾

The mechanisms used in the transition from war to peace are:

disarmament; demobilization, reintegration (merger)

This mechanism primarily seeks to create an environment in which peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and development efforts can succeed. Therefore, this mechanism should be viewed as part of the complex and lengthy processes of establishing sustainable security.

It is important that the goals and objectives of this mechanism be clear and specific, and

(34) Nicole Ball, “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration,” Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael, 2006, 1–28.

(35) Robert Muggah, “No Magic Bullet: A Critical Perspective on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Weapons Reduction in Post-Conflict Contexts,” *The Round Table* 94, no. 379 (April 1, 2005): 239–52.



that it be strongly valued in peace-building and reconstruction procedures. These mechanisms cannot replace the reconciliation effort, nor can they alone prevent the recurrence of armed conflicts. It does not by itself produce the development required in the post-war period, nor is it capable of ensuring public security⁽³⁶⁾.

The most prominent flaw of this mechanism lies in the ambiguity of its objectives, and thus the inability to accurately evaluate its effectiveness, especially that it spans several stages (disarmament, demobilization of combatants, and then reintegration). This linear sequence leads to a focus on the first two parts, at the expense of the last part: reintegration.

Moreover, when focusing on disarmament and demobilization of combatants, ineffective measures are usually adopted, and their success cannot be assessed. For example, the focus is on the number and type of weapons that have been removed from combatants, instead of focusing on the impact of disarming these weapons on security and peace. Not to mention that the procedures of storing or disposing of these weapons are usually neglected, and this poses a danger when recycling them, especially if the army and security personnel in these areas is drowned in corruption. Sometimes, another matter increases the complexity of attaining these goals, and it is that the various actors (international organizations, local governments and armed groups) may have conflicting interests and motives⁽³⁷⁾.

This disparity is reflected, for example, in the conflicting goals of those involved in the peace process. Local governments may view this process as primarily aimed at deterring warlords who may undermine broad reconciliation processes.

Also this process may be primarily symbolic, aiming to build trust between the conflicting parties and society in general, but international organizations may intervene and further complicate the issue by linking this process with development programs, and viewing the former militants as an effective source of manpower in these development programs; all of which overlooks the effort required to find practical solutions, and to apply them⁽³⁸⁾.

These dilemmas often lead to the application of these mechanisms in an unbalanced manner, especially since the stages of these mechanisms (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration) differ in terms of priority, requirements, budget and the complexity of their imple-

(36) Ibid, Robert Muggah.

(37) Ibid.

(38) Robert Muggah, Ibid.



mentation.

The focus is often on disarmament and collecting weapons, because this task is relatively easy, and does not require huge budgets, nor extended periods of time, compared to the effort of reintegration. The latter is a more complex process, requires large financial resources, and extends for long periods of time.

First it requires convincing the ex-combatants that the economic and social conditions in the country will improve, and that it is more appropriate and beneficial for them to participate in the labor market. Second, in order for them to be able to enter the labor market, training programs should be established. It is worth mentioning that reintegration becomes harder as time goes by.⁽³⁹⁾

The reintegration mechanism does this by providing the minimum required level of security, stability and confidence-building between the various conflicting parties. In more precise words, the mechanism limits the number and type of weapons in the hands of fighters, abolish the leadership systems of these groups, and allows the militants to give up weapons without bearing the stigma of surrender. It should be noted that this point is very important, after all saving face is a necessary aspect of accepting the process of laying down arms.

Implementing this mechanism is beneficial in that it builds confidence between militants and civilians, which in turn helps initiate other peace-building measures such as elections and security forces reform. This mechanism also provides the fighters with the necessary transitional stage between fighting and reintegration into society, and it does so by ensuring them an economic and social safety environment that encourages them to cooperate. The mechanism also rebuilds their identities so that they adapt psychologically to the transformation of their personalities from former fighters to another position that entails another image.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The mechanism of collecting weapons and combat materiel in Syria after the war:

First, it is necessary to determine the parties that own weapons, and their subordination, which are as follows:

(39) Alpaslan Özerde, Ibid

(40) Ibid.



1. The regime forces, the National Defense Forces, the shabiha, and the foreign forces of the Iranian and Lebanese Shiite militias affiliated with them. As for the regime forces, the regular army that is, its weapons are known and registered in official records. They are considered known and legitimate. Note that each receiving party must be checked and investigated to know what type of weapon and equipment they have.
2. The militias of Iran and Hezbollah will take their weapons with them when they leave, unless they have other intentions.
3. The uncontrolled proliferation of weapon prevails in shabiha groups, drug dealers, smugglers, and oil dealers who formed armed groups (for self-protection, looting, theft and kidnapping). Such weapon in their hands is illegal, and the process of collecting it is not an easy one.
4. The Syrian Democratic Forces and the Kurdish forces in general have heavy, medium and light weapons, supported by the US. If collecting weapons is decided after the war based on international resolutions, it should be easy to collect heavy and medium weapons from them, whereas the light weapons remain hard to collect.
5. The opposition forces in the north and northwest are supported by Turkey. In the event that the Syrian situation is resolved, it is also easy to collect heavy and medium weapons from them. However, this does not apply to the light weapons.
6. Extremist forces and organizations, such as ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and those affiliated with them, have a special status. If an international consensus is reached on how to dissolve these organizations, and their names disclosed, their weapons are to be revealed and handed over. Here too the light weapon is an obstacle like the rest of the factions.
7. The opposition groups that joined the Fourth and Fifth Armored Division, under Russian control. All heavy and medium weapons are under Russian control. As for light weapons, if used by the Division under the supervision of the Russians, it is dealt with as the army weapons in that it is registered in records, and thus may remain. But if this light weapon had been with them previously, then it is considered an issue that must be resolved.

As a conclusion, and for all these groups, whether pro-regime or opposition, legal or illegal, the issue of light weapons remains the most important one in the process of collecting them



and bringing them under the control of the state and the army. Also, there is the issue of dealing with the elements, and prevent them from committing any act that violates the law, and prevent them from engaging in any action that affects the civil and military institutions of the state, such as sabotage, bombing, kidnapping, theft and looting, and in any act that threatens the state stability at this crucial stage of the solution.

This mechanism can be implemented with the concerted effort of all state institutions, legal personalities, civilians, clans, and renowned businessmen. The members of these groups should be given confidence and be convinced that reintegration has a positive impact on them in order for the incubation process to start. Then, the members will either be integrated into the armed forces or demobilized; this is when the collection of weapons can start smoothly and without any obstacle. The collection process must go on even if the state was forced to purchase this weapon, whether directly or through agents, however, if this process succeeds, there will remain a few light weapons that will not be revealed; this is better as a first stage.

This could happen thanks to the concerted effort of the state ministries and apparatus, as well as the media and media bulletins, in educating the elements to return to the state control as citizens who are not outlaws. This could also happen by activating the role of the Department of Moral and Political Guidance in the Armed Forces, in launching awareness campaigns to persuade these groups and elements to return to normal Syrian life, and to hand over weapons to the state and to the army, so that we will all be under the authority of the state.

These elements should also be promised of a compensation for the light weapons in their possession knowing that they bought them from their own budget. These promises must be fulfilled.

The elements should also be promised to get soft loans without interest for small business projects they would want to invest in, and which bring them financial benefits, and turn them into active elements in society, without the need for help from anyone.

The international, regional and Arab parties play a role as well in supporting this process by providing financial and moral assistance. The elements who wish to join the Syrian armed forces, must be accepted on the condition they respect the laws and military discipline, taking into account that the elements that fought together in the same group will be dispersed through all army units over the entire Syrian territory.

Permanent reconciliation must be enshrined in new legislations and the sectarian conflict must come to an end. Syrian militias and armed opposition elements should be integrated



only in the Syrian armed forces, and according to a full national rehabilitation program. The Department of Military Engineering has an important duty in clearing the Syrian soil of mines, explosives and unexploded bullets, and removing them from the living areas, as well as from roads and agricultural lands.

There are two other factors that impact the disarmament process. First, the success of national communal reconciliation, and the defusing of revenge; in other words, reconciliation must accompany the disarmament process, and set the path for the establishment of a national economy according to an internationally supported plan, in order to create job opportunities that provide an alternative income for arm holders, as this will encourage them to lay down their weapons and return to their civilian lives.

The roles of the army in the second stage, which are its usual roles in a modern state:

By the end of the transitional phase, most of the tasks of army reforming we mentioned will have been achieved. Notably, all foreign forces and militias will have left, local militias will have been dissolved, whether through absorption or war; the army will have been restructured, its extremist and sectarian elements will have been either referred to retirement or transferred to civilian jobs while sending the criminals among them to the military judiciary formed for this purpose. At the same time, weapons from all factions will have been collected, through incentive or sanctions. Only then the army can return to its barracks, and its task becomes to protect the borders and the constitution, as well as taking complementary measures to complete the reform process, so that it becomes a professional army that does its job as stated in the Constitution and as viewed by the political leadership. The most important of these measures are:

1. Develop a new vision for building a national army based on loyalty to the homeland, and protection of borders and territory.
2. Follow-up on transforming the army into a national institution subject to legal accountability, compliant with international and humanitarian standards, and keeping it away from political life.
3. Take all measures to restore the Syrian's loss of confidence in them, and to correct the negative image that was formed over decades in the minds of the Syrians.



4. Modifying the military regulations and focusing on the national identity of the army and its commitment to the new Syrian constitution. Preserving the army and consolidating discipline in the military institution, while continuing to purify the army of the corrupt and those with sectarian inclinations.
5. Re-assess the financial budget the government can allocate to the development of weapons, and to the construction of military barracks outside crowded areas, as well as to the rationalization of income, the establishment of severe controls, and the accountability of anyone who transgresses public money.
6. Implementation of the rotation system for officers and volunteer officers in military institutions, so that no volunteer stays in the same service location for more than three years, whatever the circumstances.
7. Paying attention to the general appearance of all military personnel, in terms of the uniform quality, from the lowest rank to the highest rank in the army.
8. Work to combat terrorism with the cooperation of neighboring without compromising national sovereignty.
9. Forming committees to study the conditions of the military who were wronged under the previous regime, and to compensate them with what they deserve in order to correct injustice.
10. Diversifying the sources of armament, and not relying on one country for importation of arms, because the army does not fall under the mercy of the state from which it was armed.
11. Taking valid steps to ensure a dignified life for the members of the armed forces, striking hard against any form of corruption, and caring for the families of the martyrs, the wounded and the disabled in war.
12. Conscious training of the forces to ensure the complete fulfillment of their missions, and sending military elements to various countries to acquire military knowledge, which helps in building and organizing modern armies and using modern weapons.
13. Promulgating legislations that make the Syrian army a professional army, end the compulsory service law, and rely exclusively on volunteers for the army manpower, whatever their rank.



Conclusion:

What this mechanism cannot accomplish is building the will of the conflicting parties to enter into political dialogue. The disarmament mechanism cannot replace peace enforcement measures, and although it reduces conflicts, it cannot prevent them. These mechanisms are not supposed to achieve the required development in the stages following conflict resolution, nor do they provide any guarantee for this to be achieved, and the last thing is that disarmament measures are not expected to prevent the spread of light weapons to other civilian sectors⁽⁴¹⁾.

There are also preconditions that must be met to improve the chances of success of this mechanism. In general, it is necessary to ascertain the parties' readiness to enter into the peace process, knowing that the peace-building process in Syria is subject to the regime's approval of a political solution whether willingly or after pressure from international powers.

The same mechanism must be applied to the initial peace agreements and treaties, more specifically, the agreement signed by the leaders of the conflicting parties, that is, the second-tier leaders of the peace process. After all, the procedures for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the combatants, and the establishment of an entity containing representatives from these parties must be secured through treaties; this is also a condition to fulfill to achieve the best results.

Given the complexity of this mechanism, international support should be provided to it, as the latter acts as a legitimate cover, and a kind of guarantee for the process, in addition to the financial and material support it requires⁽⁴²⁾.

The disarmament of combatants should take place in a way that does not affect Syria's national sovereignty. With that said, most countries that have undergone disarmament operations often have a fragile economy, and a limited amount of financial, material and technical resources. A situation that propels us into the future, where Syria is a country that is left with the regime's inheritance debts, especially to the international parties that intervened in the conflict, mainly Russia and Iran. It is known that Syria is a young nation and thus will not face problems with the cadres per se, as much as it will face problems in regrouping these cadres, and reintegrating them into the labor market. These national cadres play an important role in

(41) Ibid

(42) Ibid



the disarmament process, but in turn, they often tend to favor safe environment over voluntary return, and therefore plans should be made to find a balance between engaging suitable funders and the agenda these funders will often impose.

The second stage revolves around returning the cadres who will provide the funding, this will mark the beginning of economic recovery, the strong basis for the disarmament process.



Appendix

1. Political conditions for army restructuring

- A. Achieving tangible progress in the political situation based on the UN resolution Nbr 2254 issued by the Security Council on 18\12\2015 as well as on other decisions related to the Syrian issue after 2011.
- B. Ceasefire followed by the separation of fighters and re-assembling them.
- C. Subjugating the army to the governing entity in conformity with democracy rules.

2. Army reorganization

- A. Changing the army's doctrine on national bases.
- B. Determine the army's organizational structure and personnel according to the national need, the financial capabilities and the potential of weaponization.
- C. Army restructuring on new foundations in line with the future tasks.
- D. Redrafting military rules and training regulations in tune with the requirements of change
- E. Temporarily decentralizing the security missions in the first stage of the settlement, especially in the opposition-held areas, so that the opposition is responsible for achieving security in these areas with the support of neighboring countries and under the supervision of the joint security committees that will be formed by both the government and the opposition.
- F. Reconfigure the military formations and units, organize them and deploy them on the ground depending on the new mission.

3. Joining the army and naming its leaders.

- A. Work to restore the demographic balance of the army.
- B. Re-evaluating the personalities of the military leaders who were with the regime.



- C. Determining the mechanisms and rules for filling military positions.
- D. Formation of a new professional army command or a transitional military council.
- E. Return officers, non-commissioned officers, and defected individuals to the army and security services on national terms.

4. Militias

- A. That the new Syrian authority will control the loyal militias (National Defense Forces - Popular Committees - Baath Brigades - Palestinian militias...etc).
- B. The removal of foreign militias. The international forces supporting the political solution must help to expel them from all Syrian territory, over a specified time period during which the removal of foreign fighters from the ranks of the armed opposition and the dismantling of extremist Islamic groups must take place.
- C. Conducting disarmament operations and restricting arms to the hands of the state.

5. Foreign forces on Syrian territory

- A. Forming military courts specialized in war crimes to hold war criminals accountable.
- B. Dissolving the two military intelligence agencies (the Intelligence Division - Air Force Intelligence Department) and merging them with the Reconnaissance Department.
- C. Scheduling the exit of foreign forces from Syria, supervising their exit and filling the void they leave.

6. Complementary themes:

- A. Improving the standard of living for army personnel.
- B. Fighting all forms of Corruption and nepotism in the army



Appendix

The following set of tables shows sectarian dominance in army recruitments

Table No. (1) Defense Ministers and Chiefs of Staff in the Syrian Armed Forces under Bashar al-Assad's rule according to their sectarian affiliation

Notes	Sectarian Affiliation	Chiefs of Staff 2000-2011	Sectarian Affiliation	Ministry of Defense 2000-2011
	Alawite	General Ali Aslan	Sunnite	General Moustafa Tlass
	Sunnite	General Hassan Turkmani	Alawite	General Ali Aslan
	Alawite	General Ali Habib	Sunnite	General Hassan Turkmani
	Christian	General Daoud Rajha	Alawite	General Ali Habib
	Sunnite	General Fahd Jasem Freige	Christian	General Daoud Rajha
	Alawite	General Ali Ayoub	Sunnite	General Fahd Jassem Freige
Fulfills the 2 tasks: Chief-of-staff and Minister of Defense.	Alawite	General Ali Ayoub	Alawite	General Ali Ayoub



Table No. (2) Corps commanders between 2000 and 2011

Sectarian Affiliation	3 rd Division	Sectarian Affiliation	2 nd Division	Sectarian Affiliation	1 st Division
Alawite	General Chafic Fayad	Alawite	General Ibrahim Safi	Sunnite	General Ahmad Abd-Al-Nabi
Alawite	Major General Nader Youssef	Alawite	Major General Ibrahim Al-Ali	Alawite	Major General Munir Adnov
Sunnite	Major General Fahd Jassem Freige	Sunnite	Major General Ahmad Joujou	Sunnite	Major General AbdelKader Al-Sheikh
Alawite	Major General Munir Jabbour	Alawite	Major General Ayman Zeidan	Ismailite	Major General Jihad Jabr
Alawite	Major General Naim Suleiman	Sunnite	Major General Mouwafak Assaad	Alawite	Major General Ali Ayoub
		Alawite	Major General Ezzedine Bou Issa	Sunnite	Major General Ahmad Tlass



Table No. 3 shows the commanders of the land divisions on the eve of the beginning of the 2011 revolution

Sectarian Affiliation	Leader	Unit
Alawite	Major General Mounir Nasr	1st Division
Alawite	Major General Jihad Sultan	
Alawite	Major General Naim Suleiman	3 rd Division
Alawite	Major General Salim Barakat	
Alawite	Major General Mohamad Ali Dergham	4 th Division
Alawite	Major General Badih Ali	5 th Division
Sunnite	Major General Wassel Amir	
Sunnite	Major General Mohamad Khairat	
Alawite	Major General Ramadan Ramadan	7 th Division
Sunnite	Major General Ahmad Tlass	
Alawite	Major General Ahmad Youness Akda	9 th Division
Sunnite	Major General Omar Jebbaoui	10 th Division
Druze	Major General Nassib Bou Mahmoud	11 th Division
Alawite	Major General Jihad Ayoub	
Alawite	Major General Abbas Hussein	
Alawite	Major General Mohamad Suedan	14 th Division
Alawite	Major General Ali Assaad	15 th Division
Christian	Major General Esber Abboud	17 th Division
Alawite	Major General Badr Akel	



Alawite	Major General Wajih Mahmoud	18 th Division
Sunnite	Major General Azzam Al-Masri	

Table No. 4 Commanders of the Air Force under Bashar al-Assad in 2000 and 2011

Notes	Sectarian Affiliation	Commanders of The Air Force
	Alawite	Major General Ali Mahmoud
	Sunnite/ Palestinian	Major General Hazem Al-Khadra
	Alawite	Major General Ahmad Rotb
	Sunnite	Major General Aassem Hallak
	Alawite	Major General Ahmad Balloul

Table No. 5 Commanders of the Air Force and Air Defense teams

Sectarian Affiliation	Leader	Team
Sunnite	Major General Jayez Al-Ali	Team 20 Air force
		Team 22 Air Force
		Team 24 Air Force
		Team 26 Air Force



Table No. 6 shows the commanders of the Republican Guard, the Fourth Division, and the Special Forces during Bashar al-Assad's rule from 2000 to 2011, according to their sectarian affiliation

Sectarian Affiliation	Special Force Leaders between 2000 and 2011	Sectarian Affiliation	Fourth Division Leader	Sectarian Affiliation	Republican Guard
Alawite	Major General Ali Habib	Alawite	Major General Mohamad Ammar	Alawite	Major General Ali Hassan
Sunnite	Major General Sobhi Al-Tabib	Alawite	Major General Mohamad Youssef	Alawite	Major General Nouredine Nakkar
Alawite	Major General Ra'if Balloul	Alawite	Major General Mohamad Ali Dergham	Alawite	Major General Shueib Semaan
Alawite	Major General Jomaa Al-Ahmad			Alawite	Major General Badih Al-Ali
Alawite	Major General Ahmad Hammouda				

Table No. 7 The heads of the security services responsible for controlling the Syrian armed forces during the rule of Bashar al-Assad

Sectarian Affiliation	Air Force Intelligence Directors	Sectarian Affiliation	Heads of the Military Intelligence Division
Alawite	Major General Ibrahim Houeija	Alawite	Major General Hassan Khalil
Alawite	Major General Ezzedine Ismail	Alawite	Major General Assef Shawkat
Alawite	Major General Abdelfattah Kodsieh	Alawite	Major General Abdelfattah Kodsieh
Alawite	Major General Jamil Al-Hasan	Alawite	Major General Rafik Chahade
Alawite	Major General Ghassan Ismail	Alawite	Major General Mohamad Mahla
		Alawite	Major General Kifah Melhem



Table Nbr 8 Pro-regime militia

Name of the Militia	Number (Approximately)
National Defense Force	40000
Suqur Al-Sahra' Forces	2000
Baath Brigades	5000
Palestinian forces, the Popular Front (General Command), Fatah Al-Intifada, the Palestinian Ba'ath Forces, and other Palestinian brigades formed during the revolution	5000-7000

Table No. 9 Russian forces in Syria

Type	Number	Type	Number
Sukhoi ground attack aircraft	21	Sukhoi-24 fighter-interceptor aircraft	12
Medium bombers (Sukhoi-34) multi-role	6	Sukhoi 30 . aircraft	4
Helicopter (Including Mi-24 Hated Attack)	15	Drones similar to the US MQ Predator	Unknown
number reconnaissance planes	Unknown	air defense systems	3
Tanks over	100	Elements	10000
Personnel Carriers	A few hundreds		

Note: The number of Russian combat and fighter-bomber aircraft is estimated at 60, as well as reconnaissance and unmanned aircraft, in addition to naval ships.



Table No. (10/A)

The fighting factions that are currently in the opposition-controlled areas⁽⁴³⁾ (Aleppo, Idlib, Raqqa)

First: the Syrian National Army

The National Army consists of 3 corps + the National Liberation Front in Idlib:

First Corps: Corps Commander: Moataz Raslan, a defected officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel

Deployment areas in: Euphrates Shield (Hawar Kilis area) and Nabaa Al-Salam (Karmazah)

Number	Name of the Faction	Leader's Name	Sites	Deployment in the peace spring zon
1	North Division	Rami Koja Captain Moustafa	Jarablus + Al-Toukhar	-----
2	9 th Division	Lieutenant Abou Jalal	Darat Ezza +Jarablus	-----
3	20 th Division	AbdelAziz Souadi (Abou Berzan)	Only in Al-Bab	Tal Abiad-Zabadi- Mabrouke M4
4	Ahrar Al-Sharkia	Ahmad Al-Hayes Abou Hatem Chakra	Al-Bab City	Soulouk M4
5	Al-Sharkia army	Captain Hussein Hamade (Abou Ali)	Hammamet crossing in the countryside of Efrin	Soulouk+M4
6	Third Brigade Al-Ahfed	AbdAlKarim Kassoum	Za-hirya-Aleppo Countryside	-----
7	Em-Hajar Base	Houssam Bakkour (Abou Al-Nour)	Em Hajar in Aleppo	-----

(43) In these tables, the information was provided by the two defected officers from the Syrian regime: Maher Al-Nuaimi and Abdullah Al-Najjar.



8	Elite Army	Captain Moataz Reslam	Hiwar Kilis	Kormaza M4+
9	Samarcande Brigade	Sa'er Maarouf	Aleppo and Idlib Countrysides	-----

Second Corps:

Corps Commander: Colonel Ahmed Othman

Cantonment Sites in:

- Euphrates Shield areas: Hiwar Kilis + Efrin + Sheikh Hadid + Al-Bab + Jarablus + Turkmen villages in the countryside of Aleppo

Nabaa Al-Salam: Ras Al-Ain and neighborhood+ M4 line

Number	Name of Faction	Leader's name	Spread in Euphrates shield area	Spread in Nabaa Al-Salam
1	Hamza troop	Seif Abou Bakr	Hiwar Kilis +Al-Bab	Ra's Al-Ain and Neighborhood
2	Al-Sultan Murad troop	Fahim Issa	Hiwar Kilis	Ra's Al-Ain +M4
3	Al-Moatassam troop	Abou Al-Moatassam (A civilian. And he's an agricultural engineer)	Endan in Aleppo Countryside	Ra's Al-Ain city only
4	Sulaiman shah troop	Mohamad Al-Jassem Abou Amcha	Sheikh Hadid	M4
5	Al-Fateh Brigade	Doughan	Al-Turkman villages	-----
6	Suqur Al-Shemal Brigade	Hassan Khairieh	Hiwar Kilis	Ra's Al-Ain city only
7	Malak Shah Troop	Mahmoud Al-Baz	-----	Ra's Al-Ain city only

Third Legion:

Corps Commander: Abu Yassin (civilian)



Deployment Area:

Euphrates Shield areas: Aazaz and its countryside

Nabaa Al-Salam: Tel Abyad and its villages towards Ain Al Arab + M4 line

Number	Name of the Faction	Faction Leader	Deployment in Euphrates Shield	Deployment in Nabaa Al-Salam
1	The Levant Front	Abu Ahmed Nour (Civilian)	Aazaz and neighborhood +Efrine+Bab Al-Salam crossing border	Tal Abyad + Tal Abyad crossing + some villages towards Ayn al-Arab
2	Glory Corps	Major Yasser Abdel Rahim	-----	Tal Abiad
3	Rahman Corps	Abdel Nasser Shamir	Efrine countryside	Tal Abiad
4	51 Division	Abu Hamza	-----	Tal Abiad
5	The Islam Army	Issam Bouaidani	Al-Bad and Efrine	M4



Al-Sham Corps: Commander Munzer Serras Abu Obeida

The main center is in Idlib countryside

It is affiliated with the head of the National Liberation Front

Deployment areas: Idlib countryside + Euphrates Shield area and has several headquarters in Aleppo countryside + Nabaa Al-Salam area + M4

National Liberation Front:

Deployment in Idlib and its countryside

Number	Name of the Faction	Faction Leader	Deployment
1	1st Coastal Division	Captain Mohamed Haj Ali	Jisr al-Shughur countryside + Jabal al-Turkman + Jabal al-Akrad
2	2nd Coastal Division	Bashar Munla	Jabal al-Turkman + Jabal al-Akrad
3	Al-Nasr army	Captain Mohamed Mansour	Idlib countryside + Al-Ghab villages
4	second army	Ayham Khalif	Idlib countryside
5	middle Division	Major Abu Hamed	Idlib countryside
6	Suqur Al-Shamal division	Colonel Afif Suleiman	Idlib countryside
7	Sham Legion	Munzer Serras Abu Obeida	Idlib countryside



Table No. (10/A)

Extremist militant factions in Idlib

The Main Front	Composition of Fronts	Leader	Deployment	Numbers
Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham	Jabhat al-Nusra (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)	Ahmed Hussein Al-Sharaa (Abu Muhammad Al-Jolani)	Idlib and its surrounding villages to the Turkish border	-----
	Ansar al-Din Front	Abu Abdullah Al-Shami	Aleppo countryside	-----
	Noureddine Zanki movement	Tawfiq Shahabeddin	Aleppo is a faction of the National Army	1000
	Liwa' Al-Haqq	-----	-----	-----
	Al-Ahrar army	Abu Saleh Tahan	The city of Binnish and its surroundings in Idlib countryside	700



Hurras-Al-Din (Linked to Al-Qaeda)	He defected from the Al-Nusra Organization and consisted of:	Samir Hijazi (Abu Hammam al-Shami), the former military commander of Jabhat al-Nusra	Near Jisr al-Shughur, the northern Hama countryside, and Jabal al-Turkman	1000
	Jaysh Al-Malahem	Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Makki	south of Idlib	-----
	The Desert's army (Or Jaysh Al-Badia)	-----	south of Idlib	-----
	Al-Sahel Army	-----	-----	-----
	Cable Legions	-----	-----	-----
	Soldiers of Sharia	-----	-----	-----
Ansar al-Din Front split from Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham	It is an alliance of Fajr al-Sham, Sham al-Islam, Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, and the Green Battalion	Abou Abdallah Al-Shami	----- ---	300
Al-Jihad Coordination	-----	AbdelMouin Kahhal	----- ---	-----
Ansar Fighters Brigade	-----	Jamal Zeina (Abou Malek Al-Talleh)	----- ---	-----



Turkistan Islamic Party	(Uyghurs) from China's Shenbang Province who moved with their families to Syria via Turkey	Hassan Makh-doum	The area extending from Jisr Al Mahambel, east of Jisr Al-Shughur, to the Zayzoun station and Al-Qarqur and the eastern end of Al-Assi River in the Al-Ghab Plain	1500-2000
Ansar al-Tawhid group	(Remnants of the Jund al-Aqsa group), most of them are Syrians (from Sarmin)	Khaled Khattab	North-ern Countryside of Idlib	600-800
Ajnad Al-Koukaz (Soldiers of the Caucasus)	They came from Europe, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Chechnya	-----	Idlib and its countryside	1000
Al Aqsa Brigade (Jund Al-Aqsa)	Most of them are from the city of Hama, which is a remnant of the Jund al-Aqsa organization	Mohammad Zarzour	Jisr-Al-shughur area	400-600
ISIS cells	They wander between Syria and Iraq in the mountains and caves and carry out operations in small numbers and spread in the desert		A few thousands	



Table No. 11 Factions of the Syrian Democratic Forces:

(The number of Syrian Democratic Forces ranges between 26,388 and 33,688 members, more than 86% of whom are Arabs)⁽⁴⁴⁾

Name of the Faction	Cantonment Site	Period of Activity	Numbers	Leader
The People's Protection Units (YPG) controls the entire region	Northeast Syria, villages north of Aleppo and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood of Aleppo	2011	35000-60000	Mazloum Abdi
YPG Women's Protection Units and YPG Tracking	Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) control areas	2013	-----	Nisreen Abdullah, spokeswoman for the Women's Protection Units
Al-Sanadid Forces were formed from the Shammar tribe	Al-Hasakah	2013	4500	Bandar Al-Hadi Al-Jarba
MFS Syriac Military Council Syriacs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians	Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) control areas	2013	200	Aram Hanna, commander of the Syriac Military Council, Abjar Yaqoub, official spokesman for the Syriac Military Council, leader of the Syriac Military Council, Oram Maruki, and Khabur Akkad commanding the Military Council in Hasaka.
Army of Revolutionaries is a mixture of Arabs and Turks	North and East Syria and the countryside of Aleppo	2016	1800-4000	

(44) Abdullah al-Najjar, the PYD party separation project east of the Euphrates, Harmoon Center, April 13, 2020



<p>The Raqqa Revolutionaries Front Brigade, affiliated with the SDF since 2015</p>	<p>It was dissolved in 2017, and its leader was placed under house arrest</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>-----</p>	<p>Ahmad Al-Ousman Alloush (Abou Issa)</p>
<p>Global Freedom Tabor is a foreign left-wing fighter from Germany, Greece, Turkey, and Armenia.</p>	<p>Ras Al-Ain, Al-Hasakah</p>	<p>2015</p>	<p>-----</p>	<p>It is a media case only, and there is no fighting faction within SDF in this way</p>
<p>Internal Security Forces, the Asayish, the body responsible for the internal security of Rojava.</p>	<p>Northeast Syria</p>	<p>2014</p>	<p>There is no documented reports about it. It is inseparable from SDF</p>	<p>Joan Ibrahim</p>
<p>Sotoro Christian Supports (SDF)</p>	<p>It is deployed in the Al-Wusta (Christian) neighborhood in the city of Qamishli</p>	<p>2013 until now</p>	<p>100 fighters</p>	<p>Sargon Chamoun and his representative Khaldoun Hanno</p>



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