The Syrian Conflict: Through the Lens of Realpolitik
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To loved ones
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Abstract

This thesis examines power relations in the security vacuum created by the Syrian conflict. The conflicting nature of Syrian domestic politics has created a political stalemate that needs outside support to be resolved. Inaction on the part of the greater international community has allowed for regional powers to become highly entrenched in the conflict. Regional involvement and the demographics of Syrian parties have been used by popular mediums to describe the conflict as sectarian by nature. The central point of this thesis is to show that the veneer of sectarianism by all parties, both Syrian and regional, is primarily a by-product of competitive self-interest. This is done by showing that the relationships made between Syrian groups and their patrons are based on self-interest and the utility provided in these temporary unions. The seminal political theories of Locke and Hobbes concerning the foundations of political power show the Syrian groups to be acting upon political necessity, not sect. The ambitions of regional powers are analyzed through realist theory to explain power relations in an unregulated political environment both in Syria and in the region. As such nations must act upon their own initiative to dictate their security. This thesis rejects sectarianism as an explanation for regional politics in the Syrian conflict.

Keywords: Syrian conflict, Arab Spring, Proxy War, Realpolitik, Realist political theory.
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Glossary of Abbreviations Used

AQ: al Qaeda
AQAP: al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula
AQI: al Qaeda in Iraq
CENTCOM: United States Central Command
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
FSA: Free Syrian Army
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
HRW: Human Rights Watch
IF: The Islamic Front
IRGC: Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.
ISIL/ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham
JI: Jaysh al Islam
KNC: Kurdish National Congress
KNP: Kurdish National Party
KRG: Kurdish Regional Government
LCC: Local Coordination Committees
MB: The Muslim Brotherhood
MPI: Multidimensional poverty index
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCC: National Coordination Council
N.D.: No Date
P5+1: The 5 permanent member of the United Nations Security Council plus Iran
PKK: Kurdistan Workers Party
PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD: Democratic Union Party
R2P: Responsibility to Protect
SIF: Syrian Islamic Front
SILF/ISLF: Syrian Islamic Liberation Front
SMC: Supreme Military Council
SME: Small and Medium Enterprises
SNC: Syrian National Council
SOC: Syrian Opposition Coalition/National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF: United Nations Children and Education Fund
US: United States
WHO: World Health Organization
YPG: People’s Defense Units/
Kurdish People
Committees for the Protection of the
Chapter One

Introduction
The Syrian conflict began in the spring of 2011 as a series of small peaceful protests. Riding the current of the Arab Spring, the Syrian opposition formed formal opposition groups and governing bodies by summer of that year with the hopes of replacing the Assad government. During the fall of 2011 the Assad government escalated the brutality of the suppression of protests by using the army and air force against Syrian protestors (Syria Profile, 2013). Concurrently, fringe Syrian opposition forces began guerilla attacks on government installations. Since the winter of 2011, the Syrian situation has devolved from what were protests for government reformation to armed opposition of the government. The majority of its populace now lives in a decimated country in which, according to the United Nations, over 130,000 civilian have died, making it the worst humanitarian disaster since Rwanda in 1994 (Syria Profile, 2013). It has also led commentators to posit that this conflict is quickly becoming a sectarian war; however, at this point it may be much more rudimentary than sectarianism. This popular sentiment raises the question as to why Syrian political parties, Syrian combatants, and their regional patrons have created such a devastating conflict.

Many of the activities being played out in Syria appear to be reminiscent of concepts written by Social Contract and realist theorists. Currently, the Syrian government’s centralization of power is reminiscent of Hobbes’s views on absolute power. The government maintains that formal order is paramount to all other domestic concerns as

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1 Social Contract theorists are John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
2 The Social Contract is a concept of the origins of society and the legitimacy of the authority of a state over an individual. Hobbes’s view calls for strict obedience to the state (Gough, 1936, pp.2-3)
there are constant threats to the Syrian way of life by outside forces like al Qaeda and
the United States, which theoretically founds the government’s aggressive posture.
Conversely, the opposition has theoretically taken the view of John Locke. When a
government fails to serve its citizens, the people have the right to rebel. As Locke sees
it,” Government has no other end that but the preservation of property (Locke, 1690).”
If the Syrian government offers no protection of life, let alone property, then Locke’s
theory shows why the opposition’s stance is uncompromising. Based on the theoretical
incongruence of Hobbes and Locke, and the stagnant nature of the conflict in Syria, the
picture becomes clearer as to why both sides of the conflict sought regional support.

The current instance of foreign involvement in Syria is neither benevolent nor uniform
by the powers engaged. These forms of assistance, both fiscal and military, are driven by
respective national interests that are using religious justifications as a casus belli. There
are several religions, to include differing Muslim groups, involved in the Syrian conflict.
Some claim that differences in sect cannot be overcome. Current literature on the Syrian
conflict generally fixates on elements of sectarian clashes overshadowing the concepts
of power. While culture and religion are highly valued by the parties involved and
focused on by the media, it is evident that further explanation is needed. State survival
for the Syrian government, the desire for a new political system for the opposition, and
relative gains for the regional powers will be shown to trump sectarianism. The sectarian
dynamic that is affixed to the conflict gives a rudimentary understanding to the conflict
at both the domestic and regional levels, but it falls short of the real issue: power.

Although there are other examples of Iranian, Qatari, Turkish, and Saudi efforts in vying
for the control of regional power in the Arab Spring, the Syrian case is the most
pronounced in terms of overt efforts. Turkish, Saudi, and Qatari efforts, along with the regional Sunni religious establishment, namely in Egypt, will play heavily against Iranian attempts to secure gains in power throughout the region. Although these former nations do not represent a monolith, they are pursuing interests contrary to what Iran has done in Syria and across the Middle East since 1979.

Given the necessity of outside support for both the opposition and governments survival, Syrian groups have invited outside influence that will serve foreign interests first, which will further exacerbate sectarianism and state division. These are consequences of the dynamics of: realism’s relative gains amongst regional powers, varying ideological foundations concerning power, and the utility of aiding Syrian groups. The conditions of this domestic-foreign relationship and the relationships current composition are incongruent with a unified Syria; however, given that the domestic stalemate has produced a failed state in chaos, these marriages of convenience are necessary for Syrian groups.

Regional conflict that blurs domestic and regional identity is no stranger to the region as it has been a norm for centuries. In contemporary times, regional sectarian based conflict has found itself in Lebanon in the 1980’s, Iraq both in the 1980’s and presently, and in the Gulf during since the onset of the Arab Spring. For the Syrians involved in this conflict, their vulnerability has them at the beginning of another stage of regional conflict that will not entirely be in their own hands; however, the end will justify the means for the victor as power is the true end.

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3 Intermestic is a term used to describe a political issue that retains both domestic and international political concerns.
**Significance**

The significance of covering the Syrian Conflict is vast given the imminent danger to the region and to Syria itself. The commitment of Syrian fighters both pro and anti-government is beyond reproach, so it is important to analyze what factors will have the greatest effect on respective gains and losses for all parties involved. The new facets discussed in this paper are based on the Syrian conflict. First, the literary debate shows the various attempts to attain domestic political legitimacy in Syria and the reasons for the breakdown. Second, the paper shows how regional powers have taken the lead internationally in the Syrian conflict due to the feebleness of the United Nations and liberalism. Finally, the paper uses realism to assess regional powers policy goals as they are played out in the Syrian conflict.

Given that the Syrian conflict concerns political legitimacy within a power vacuum, this paper’s primary purpose is to analyze the foundations of alliances between Syrian groups and regional powers. Specifically, the literary debate will illustrate the contrary nature of parties portrayed in general media. Furthermore, the utility of Hobbes and Locke establishes the drive for power by groups in Syria, which is given in the findings section. This shows the determination of both sides of the conflict, which aids in forecasting future actions. These alliances have taken Syria past the point of no return in regards to its political structure by giving all sides the most primal form of legitimacy: weapons. Specifically, it is within the ability of these foreign powers to finance allies, which does, and will further create protracted divisions in Syria. This paper shows that all forms of foreign aid in the Syrian struggle are not benevolent; however, given the humanitarian crisis within Syria, all types of aid are clearly needed for all sides to sustain themselves.
Second, the Syrian case is also a case of “Eastern” agency overcoming Western historical influence in the Syrian engagement. Given the failure of the UN Security Council and the UN’s Responsibility to Protect, or R2P, regional powers have seized the opportunity to influence the Syrian conflict as they see fit. By demonstrating this form of agency taking place within Syrian turmoil, regional powers policies are testing the permanence of the decisions made by imperial powers which began with Sykes Picot in 1916 and its enforcement at San Remo in 1920. Middle Eastern regional powers are showing the truly intermestic nature of politics in the region as they are heavily engaged in Syrian affairs. Given the policies of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, these countries are committed to positively dictating their respective realms of power, which will have massive effects on Syria.

Finally, this paper analyzes regional powers actions concerning the current conflict in Syria through a realist theoretical lens. It shows the congruency of democracy and theocracy alike to realism regarding gains to be made within a failed Syrian state. The differences in these gains are shown for their axiomatic and pragmatic characteristics. By analyzing how the alliances between regional powers and their respective Syrian allies came about, premature trajectories for future actions become visible. This is very important because this lends insight into future stability, or lack of, for Syria, its neighbors, and the region’s balance of power. Academics and statesmen alike need to understand these foundations if they have any desire to understand what is happening, which will lend to their application of policy and analysis regarding Syria and regional politics.
The aforementioned factors set this thesis apart from other studies on the subject while presenting a fresh look into the reflective nature of the parties within Syria and their respective patrons.

**Challenges**

This topic does not come without challenges. The scaffolding of the groups within the government and the opposition are vague as there are a number of factors inhibiting a closer inspection. Primarily, the attempt to learn more about the militias, armies, and security service is a major challenge as they protect certain information for their own safety. There are currently no surveys which assess the popularity of Syrian opposition groups to the Syrian people.

As such, this study assumes that given a complete breakdown in security, regular people have to rely on those that can provide them safety and minimal forms of sustenance. It also assumes that those receiving outside support are able to provide for those they are protecting. The lack of exposure to these groups is why it is so important to understand the causality of the conflict and how the hydra of an opposition has formed. The horizontal structuring of the opposition groups provides regional powers with options as to whom they should support. Support from regional powers will make one group more viable than the other, which could possibly be antithetical to the nature of organic Syrian politics respective of demographics; however, given the conflicts primal nature, the groups earmarked for funding today may change as their effectiveness and utility decreases in different stages of the conflict.
Research
This focus shows the causal factors as to why foreign involvement in the Syrian conflict is predominantly along sectarian lines, which allows for a broad spectrum of analysis as to why Syria is in its current state and why regional powers are willing to further the divisions in a civil conflict. The research focuses on the causes of the domestic to regional relationships, the utility of these relationships, and why each regional power needed to be involved.

Given the Syrian domestic situation’s highly precarious nature, the research allows for the depiction of the origins of vulnerability in Syria that allowed foreign powers to become involved. Research is guided by the question: What allowed this level of foreign influence into Syria? The origins are needed to show the primary parties involved and their ideological affinities. They are also drawn from theoretical explanations drawn from Hobbes and Locke are shown. This level of insecurity that allowed foreign fighters, and nations, to become involved in the fray is depicted as this has high levels of impact on Syrian and regional security. The organizational level and ideological allegiance of all parties involved shows pragmatic and axiomatic linkages between those selected as recipients by their patrons.

This path is undertaken to survey the intermestic nature of the Syrian conflict. It shows the similarity and difference in the parties, both domestic and regional, attempting to retain power and also the similarity in those attempting to attain power. The second aspect of this research is guided by the question: Why is the exacerbation of sectarianism the primary option for each respective nation’s regional policy? The regional nations involved view this as a battle of their states survival within the regional
system, but the policies they are following are creating instability that will have long-lasting consequences. This section focuses on the utility of alliances between Syrian parties to the regional powers and demographic realities. It also discusses the negative side effects for Syria and outside parties involved.

Finally, the paper delves into why the nations involved believe their power to be at risk. This is the heart of foreign relations as it shows the foundation of anarchy, self-interest, and survival. This final aspect of this research is guided by the question: What issues within Syria are regional benchmarks of power? This section contains elements of national historical narratives that have both axiomatic and pragmatic connotations for respective national policies regarding Syria. This also leads to the investigation of why Syria is so important for state power. This aspect also takes into account Syrian demographics, issues regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the current contiguous geographical disposition of Iranian influence in the region. Specifically for Turkey, it represents another facet of Turkish security with the issues surrounding the Kurds and what Syrian instability means for them.

The Structure of the Thesis
Chapter 2 begins with what is known to this point on the subject. A theoretical framework shows the current state of Syria and the current literature on the topic. The cause of the conflict is shown through economic statistics and other causal factors, which demonstrates how the situation devolved into a failed state and humanitarian crisis. In combination, these two theoretical models guide the chapter through issues that transported Syria to its current state of division. Then the literature review covers the
debates concerning sectarianism, ultimately showing a misunderstanding among scholars and journalists as to why sectarianism has manifested itself in today’s Syria.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research plan used to prove that realpolitik is the true driving vehicle of the conflict. This chapter begins with the research questions, my research design, and methodology for executing said research. The heart of this chapter is the data analysis. This section will present the chosen models for surveying the relationship between political bodies in Syria and the primary regional powers that are involved in supporting these elements. The fight over domestic political legitimacy is explained by Hobbes and Locke’s writings that are tantamount with the concept of the Social Contract. This concept explains the origins of society and the legitimacy of the authority of a state over an individual (Gough, 1936, pp.2-3). This need for legitimacy and security is what ties them to their respective foreign patrons namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar. If politics is all about power than it begs the question as to why foreign powers would get involved. To explain this facet of the relationship, I will use the realist political model for international relations. In a Hobbesian state of nature, domestic political legitimacy much like power in foreign relations is a monopoly on violence, and an imposition of will, or influence amongst chaos. This chapter will define the need for power, or legitimacy, as a means of survival at the theoretical level.

Chapter 4 shows the construction of cooperative relationships in the Syrian state of affairs between the allied domestic groups and foreign powers due to the intermestic nature of Middle Eastern politics. The definition of legitimate domestic power structures and the theoretical foundation of realism will show why this relationship exists. These models will be used to answer the research questions. Research will show that the
division that has been produced by these relationships is not primarily about sect, but about power and the retention or attainment of power. Chapter 3’s theoretical basis will be complemented in Chapter 4 with research showing foreign policy patterns concerning Syria and how these patterns line up with the Syrian groups.

The conclusion completes this study in the following fashion. First, it displays what these domestic to foreign alliances mean for Syria and the impact it has on its future, especially on the nature of its territorial makeup. Second, the effects felt by neighboring countries like Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon is given. Third, this study gives prospects for what these associations and their reflective natures mean on larger issues like the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the balance of power between Sunni and Shia nations in light of the Arab Spring. Fourth, the chapter briefly touches on what it means internationally for major non-regional powers and International Governmental Organizations alike. Finally, the culmination of this thesis accounts for the limitations of the study, recommendations for those studying the subject, and the possibilities of future research.
Chapter Two
The Syrian Conflict’s Context

Introduction
Since the Arab Spring began, many analysts have been attempting to forecast as to where all the nations involved are headed politically. The Domino Effect of democratization within the region may have been a misnomer as many nations are struggling to democratize.⁴ In some cases, these opposition movements may not be able to force reformation, or be able to usurp their governments. There are different levels of transformation at which a number of nations reside when it comes to the Arab Spring, but it is important to stress that transformations have begun. However, many see these transformations being built upon sectarian lines as opposed to traditional explanations of power and the pursuit thereof.

This chapter’s aim is to analyze the conflict in Syria, which is at a political standstill. The chapter delves into a literature review of what has been deemed a sectarian conflict. Studies and writings on this topic will be organized into two levels: inter-state parties and regional groups. This will be done as many academics, journalists, and politicians have been portraying the conflict as being sectarian by nature. Due to their observations, it is important to examine what has been said to this point as a means to provide a theoretical framework, which will provide context.

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⁴ Domino theory is a cumulative effect produced when one event sets off a chain of similar events (Domino effect, 2013).
Current Literature: The Conflicts Sectarian Roots
As the Syrian conflict has devolved into mass violence, its demographics, especially within the nations’ centers of power have given the conflict a sectarian identity. There are several religions, to include differing Muslim groups, involved in the Syrian conflict. Some claim that differences in sect cannot be overcome. This sectarian dynamic gives a rudimentary understanding to the conflict at both the domestic and regional levels.

Instances of Domestic Syrian Sectarianism
Much of the current literature about the Syrian conflict is collated with the term: sectarianism. It is important to focus on the internal dynamics of Syria and how the opposition and government have been lumped into this schema. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the Syrian government has a history of selective appointments as a means of survival. This selective appointment of officials gave an advantage to the Alawite and Christian populations alike. Syria’s religious makeup is as follows: Sunni 74%, Alawite and Druze 16%, various Christian groups 10%, and a very small Jewish community (Syrian Demographics Profile, 2013). Given that the majority of the nation is Sunni and the government’s purpose was self-service, the current struggle between the two can be depicted as multiple religious groups against each other. This section shows what is known about the use of sectarianism for all elements of the domestic side of the Syrian conflict. This is broken down into their respective uses of sect as a casus belli, their internal makeup and rule, and finally, the use of sect to attract outside patrons.

The Assad Government and its Supporters
The pro-Assad domestic elements share a message of survival against what the government. This section shows the use of sect, as a means of alignment. The

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5 Both the Alawite and Druze religious groups are offshoots of the Shia sect within Islam.
government’s official stance is that the United States and Israel are in concert with elements of al Qaeda in a conspiracy to create anarchy and usurp a legitimate government (Assad warns West over Al-Qaeda, 2013). For the government, its statements are less about sect as they need to portray the image of a caring nationalist administration; however, it has ultimately conflated all elements of the opposition as an al-Qaeda led conspiracy, which has marginalized legitimate Syrian Sunni activists’ attempts at reformation. At the same time, minorities that did not take part in the uprising are associated with the government by the opposition. For them, the government is their only hope for safety and is some views, a future.

Many Syrian Christians are fleeing the nation in fear of retributive measures being taken by extremist Sunni groups. This fear is established from similar types of violent retributive acts that took place in Iraq after the 2003 invasion (Scarborough, 2013). Christian groups saw this violence as solely based on religion and fear the same occurring in Syria (Suleiman, 2013). Also like Iraq, this conflict has led to large emigrations from Syria to other countries by minority groups. These minority groups, correctly or not, are viewed by parts of the opposition as complicit in government actions. Some of these migrations like that of the Alawite, moving from Syria to Lebanon, have only served to further the idea of a sectarian war in Syria. Tensions between the Alawite residents of Jabal Mohsen and the Sunni residents of Bab al-Tabbaneh have been present since the Lebanese Civil War; however, daily fighting has been a norm since the outset of the Syrian uprising.

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6 These are neighboring neighborhoods in Lebanon’s northern city of Traublus, or Tripoli.
7 The Lebanese Civil War lasted from 1975-1990.
The use of sect has been visible in the government and pro Assad elements calls for outside support. The use of faction dates back to the early 1970’s under Hafez al Assad. The need to be considered Muslim to meet Syrian constitutional requirements led the then president to seek outside legitimacy, which was found in Lebanese and Iraqi clerics: Musa al Sadr and Hasan al Shirazi (Matthiesen, 2013).\(^8\) It was during this decade and subsequent decades that Shia from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon began establishing both a shrine to Sayyida Zeinab and also a formal Hawza.\(^9\)\(^10\) From these historical ties, the Alawite government, under both Hafez and Bashir, have been able to call on outside assistance. This outside assistance has been under the pretext of protecting the Sayyida Zeinab mosque. The pretext given is to protect the mosque from Sunni extremists who may destroy the mosque much as the Taliban destroyed Buddhist ruins in Afghanistan in the 2001.\(^11\) It is within the Syrian government’s tie to the regional Shia Community that further shrouds the conflict in sectarianism.

### The Syrian Opposition

The Syrian opposition is far more diverse as it is an umbrella of groups and organizations fighting against the Assad government’s ability to control the country. As a result, the degree of their use of sectarianism as a casus belli, for internal makeup and rule, and to attract outside patrons differs.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) Both men, now dead, were highly respected Shia clerics.

\(^9\) Sayyida Zeinab is the daughter of the 4th Caliph Ali. She is revered by the Shia. A shrine is commemorated to her in the Set Zeinab neighborhood, which is roughly 12 kilometers south of Damascus. A Mosque and Hawza is affixed to the shrine (Matthiesen, 2013).

\(^10\) A Hawza is a seminary for higher Islamic learning for those of the Shia faith (Marcinkowski, 2010, pp. 103-134).

\(^11\) Ruins were destroyed in the Hazarajat region of central Afghanistan.

\(^12\) A casus belli is a situation or event, or is the pretext for starting, a war or other conflict (Casus Belli, 2013)
The use of sectarianism as a casus belli has predominantly been used by the religiously founded political groups as there is little to no utility in this style of propaganda for groups like the Free Syrian Army; however, the Syrian National Coalition, or SNC, has recently stated its desire to possess a unified army. This desire is anti-sectarian and aiming to appease Western supporters; however its anti-extremist wording could place it at odds with Islamist groups that are also fighting against the Assad government. Hadi al-Bahra, an SNC member stated, “There needs to be a clear and total rejection of any extremist thinking, and of any action that harms civilians, and any targeting of civilians on the basis of religious or ethnic affiliation (Plan to overhaul Syria opposition forces stirs dissent, 2013).” Statements such as these, although positive in western thinking, are likely to fall on deaf ears amongst the Sunni Islamist groups that are seizing control in the northern areas of Syria. Point in case, the Islamic Syria Liberation Front’s, or ISLF, Sheikh Ayrout has said, “If you do not create a balance of terror, the battle will not be decided (Oweiss, 2013).” The rebel cleric was referring to a balance of terror being aimed at Alawite areas in Latakia where he stated civilians should be targeted. He elaborated by saying, “We have to drive them out of their homes like they drove us [the Sunni] out. They have to feel pain like we feel pain (Oweiss, 2013).” It is groups like the ISLF, al Nusra, and predominantly foreign groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, that have driven minority groups to cling to the protection of the regime, or emigrate. Fighting and division has also been taking place amongst Sunni opposition

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13 The Free Syrian Army is a collection of opposition militias fighting against the Syrian government. It is composed of former soldiers and civilians.
14 The Syrian National Coalition is a political coalition of Syrian resistance groups. It’s political body is primarily based in Turkey.
15 The Latakia governorate rests on the Mediterranean Sea in Western Syria.
groups. In-fighting amongst the opposition has also been a poignant trend in the Syrian conflict.

The execution of a sectarian based style of rule in opposition held areas is what truly stands out in the conflict and is the primary means for those framing the conflict to simply use sectarianism as their primary color to paint the conflict. Towns in Northern Syria, like Raqqa, where Sharia is enforced have been prime examples. Ongoing protests by local residents have been ongoing since Islamist forces such as al Nusra, Ahrar ash Sham, and Islamic State in Iraq and Sham have taken control of the city from government forces in March, 2013 (Syrians protest against al-Raqqa’s new rulers, 2013). It is important to note that the latter of these two groups, although purportedly foreign, are controlling towns. Religious committees of these forces have been reported as having enforcing Sharia law through violence with the preferred method of enforcement being flogging (Hassan, 2013). The town is claimed to be friendly to all Sunni opposition forces; however, given the introduction of Islamic law to the town, there has been a great deal of friction between the Islamists and Raqqa’s inhabitants. This level of recognition of “allied” opposition units also varies from town to town. A more violent example of inner opposition sectarianism is the kidnaping and killing of opposition supporter, Father Paolo Dall’Oglio in Raqqa. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claims the Italian priest was kidnapped by ISIS last month, while he searched for two missing Syrian Orthodox Bishops, and murdered in early August (Bacchi, 2013). This stringent enforcement has not only been by Sunni Islamist groups.

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16 The Islamic State of Iraq and Sham has both foreign and Syrian fighters; however, the lack of clarity pertaining to its actual disposition and the fact that it holds territory in Northern Syria results in its placement in the domestic opposition section.

17 Raqqa is located in north central Syria lying on the northern bank of the Euphrates river.
Kurdish areas have also been held aggressively. Kurdish fighters have engaged all forces, both pro and anti-regime, that have come near their territories since mid-2012. They have tried to avoid clashes, while maintaining a degree of independence. The most recent examples have taken place in the last week of July and the first weeks of August, 2013, with the capture of ISIS commanders and soldiers by the Committees for the Protection of the Kurdish People, or YPG. 18

Finally, the use of sectarianism has also been used by the opposition as a means of inviting outside support. For example, the Kurds are especially tactful in this as they have drawn Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzani into the conflict. Barzani has pledged his support for Syrian Kurds who are," under threat of death and terrorism," while adding that Iraqi Kurdistan would be "prepared to defend them [Syrian Kurds]" (Iraqi Kurd Leader Massoud Barzani Issues Syria Warning, 2013). This concept will be elaborated upon in the following section covering the regional sectarian concerns especially concerning the use of Sunni fatwas as calls for jihad. 19

**Regional Powers and Sectarianism**

There are sectarian dynamics surrounding the involvement of regional powers in both the pro and anti-Assad camps. Many commentators have framed regional support for various elements within the Syrian conflict as part of a larger conflict between the Sunni and Shia that some say was reignited during the American occupation of Iraq, while most agree at a minimum, that it has been taking place since the onset of the Arab Spring. Hussein Ibish frames the current Sunni- Shi'ite tensions by saying,” we’re not

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18 ISIS, or Islamic State in Iraq and Sham.
19 A fatwa is a formal legal opinion or religious decree issued by an Islamic leader (Fatwa, 2013)
really seeing the revival of religious and political arguments more than 1,000 years old;’’ however, he does go on to say that this has not stopped countries and groups from framing the Syrian conflict along sectarian lines laced with enmity (Ibish, 2013).

The regional power leading the pro-Assad camp is the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Syrian conflict has been portrayed as an instance of the Shia having to band together to fight an invasive Sunni power, similar to the historical battle of Karbala. In current terms, the invasive power, as Iran claims, is Sunni extremists. These extremists are claimed by the pro-Assad camp as being funded by Israel, the Gulf nations, and the United States (US, Israel, Certain Arabs, Al-Qaeda in Consensus on Syria: Nasrallah, 2012).20 It is within this Machiavellian style of propagation that the Shia historical narrative of persecution is used as a casus belli for supporting the Syrian government.

The pro-Assad parties claim the aforementioned nations and groups aim to destroy Syria (Marcinkowski, 2010). Iran, and its allies like Hezbollah, the Houthis of Yemen, and the Mahdi Army, had initially used the sectarian pretext for protecting Shia holy sites like the Sayyida Zeinab mosque and hawza.21,22 The fuel for this claim is again stemmed from Afghan History as Taliban forces destroyed religious sites that were not congruent with their dogmatic law. In Syria, the Shia establishment is arguing that al-Qaeda style

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20 The battle of Karbala took place on Oct. 10, 680. It was a brief military engagement south of Baghdad in which a small party led by al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and son of ʿAlī, the fourth caliph, was defeated and massacred by an army sent by the Umayyad caliph Yazīd I. The battle helped secure the position of the Umayyad dynasty [which was Sunni], but among Shīʿite Muslims (followers of al-Husayn) the 10th of Muharram (or ʿĀshūrāʾ) became an annual holy day of public mourning (Battle of Karbala, 2013).

21 The three militias are of the Shia faith.

22 The Mahdi Army comes from Iraq and is headed by Moqtada al Sadr.
groups would repeat this style of destruction upon their holy sites (Matthiesen, 2013). Fighters from Iran and non-Syrian Shia assemblies have also been reported to have using the Millenarian aspect of the return of the Mahdi to motivate their fighters against the Syrian opposition (Elali, 2013). It is important to note that this has not drawn all regional Shia groups to arms; however, their use of language and imagery only further leads observers to see the conflict as sectarian based.

The influx of foreign fighters from places like Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen aided the Syrian government in important battles like that of Qusayr. It is with the defeats of the opposition at foreign hands that the pro-opposition groups have enlarged their efforts to aid the opposition groups.

**Pro-Opposition Regional Parties**

The Sunni regional powers and Sunni non-governmental groups supporting the Syrian opposition, directly and indirectly, lend credence to this conflict as being sectarian. Although, the form of language being used by these nations and groups is marginally less fiery than their Shia adversaries, actions by these political entities have thoroughly exacerbated the conflict. This aggravation began covertly in the early days of the conflict, but has now taken a much more pronounced form as Syria’s struggle has devolved into a regional affair.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has engaged itself both diplomatically and unofficially, in its use of its religious clerical body. Saudi Arabia, as a Sunni theocracy, perceives itself

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23 Millenarian refers to the idea of a 2\textsuperscript{nd} coming of a religious figure. In the Shia case, it refers to the “Hidden” Imam, or Mahdi, who is supposed to return to bring peace and justice to the world (Brunner & Ende, 2001, p.40)

24 Qusayr is a city in western Syria near the border of Lebanon and Syria. The battle of Qusayr took place in April and May of 2013. The government and pro-government forces were victorious.
as a vanguard of Islam and with its protection of Mecca and Medina; this is not a perilous claim. In consequence, its state has overt and covert ties to all Sunni parties engaged in the Syrian conflict. On June 6th, Saudi Arabia’s Grand Mufti Abdul Aziz al-Asheikh, praised Muslim cleric Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradawi’s speech against Iran and Hezbollah that poignantly stated, “The leader of the party of the Satan [Hezbollah] comes to fight the Sunnis... Now we know what the Iranians want... They want continued massacres to kill Sunni (Saudi Grand Mufti praises Qaradawi’s stance on Hezbollah, 2013).”

Qardawi’s call to fight against Iran and Hezbollah in Syria came just week before the call for jihad was made by Sunni clerics in Egypt.\footnote{Yousuf Qardawi is well known Egyptian Sunni Islamic scholar. He is on the board of trustees at the Oxford school of Islamic Studies while being barred from entry to the United Kingdom. He also has a regular show on Islam on al Jazeera.} Along non-religious political lines, Saudi Arabia has tied itself to the majority of the opposition elements. Although, Saudi Arabia’s covert relations with Islamist groups have not overtly been shown; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been the breeding ground for extremist Salafist groups for decades, while concurrently maintaining a pattern of supporting any element, from extremist to moderate, that it believes will succeed in a fight, which was shown in Afghanistan (Coll, 2004, pp. 79-84). On the surface, it has been backing the Syrian National Council, Free Syrian Army, and the Supreme Military Council to name a few of its primary recipients. The most evident example of this is the recent Syrian National Council election of Ahmad Assi Jarba as its new president; Saudi Arabia has further
moderated its political tone by backing this member of the SNC. This moderation is not what is being focused on by its enemies, or critics of its Salafist roots.\textsuperscript{26}

Turkey, like all opposition supporters, is hedging its bets when applying aid to opposition. The Syrian conflict has engulfed Turkish Foreign Minister Davotoglu’s 2009 Zero Problems with Neighbors policy, as Turkey has become a primary supporter of the opposition.\textsuperscript{27} Its support, at times in concert with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, of radical Sunni groups like al Nusra, ISIS, and ahrar al Sham, has lumped Turkey into a similar position as the rest of the regional opposition supporters. It is now accused of embracing sectarian warfare in Syria (Idiz, 2013). Although, it is also supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, the Syrian National Council, and a number of other moderate opposition groups; comments like those by Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag calling Hezbollah the party of Satan, at a symposium on Islamic Unity, has only further enriched the claims that Turkey is looking to make the Syrian conflict into a sectarian affair (Tastekin, 2013). Other comments that have also simplified the Pro-Assad coalition into a Shia bloc have been intermittently made by Turkish officials since 2011 supplementing the sectarian dynamic.

Qatar has emerged as a regional player during the Syrian conflict. It has supported all parties involved in the opposition from moderate secular to Islamist extremists. Its patterns of action have been to primarily support radical Islamist groups; however, an unnamed American official stated, “the Qataris felt it didn’t matter who you give to,\

\textsuperscript{26} Salafism is an ideal held by extremist Sunnis who believe themselves the only correct interpreters of the Koran and consider moderate Muslims to be infidels; seek to convert all Muslims and to insure that its own fundamentalist version of Islam will dominate the world (Salafism, 2013)

\textsuperscript{27} The “Zero Problems” foreign policy of Turkey aims at having peaceful bi-lateral relations with the countries neighboring it. It is the brainchild of the current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. The Syrian conflict has abrogated this policy.
what’s important is to bring down Bashar (Khalaf & Fielding-Smith, 2013).” This has allowed Qatar to fund everyone from al Nusra and ISIS, to the Muslim brotherhood, and finally to the broadly based National Coalition. Qatar’s strategy seems to be to establish as many contacts with regional Syrian opposition leaders as possible; however, the funding of extremist groups is causing the divisions that have been discussed in the aforementioned section, which may be detrimental to its aim of deposing Bashar Assad.

The involvement of foreign non-governmental Sunni groups heavily attributes to the “sectarianization” of the Syrian conflict. On June 13, 2013, a conference was held in Cairo by Sunni clerics to discuss Syria (Fahmy, 2013). A fatwa was issued at this conference calling for jihad in Syria. It was based on comments such as, "What is happening to our brothers on Syrian soil, in terms of violence stemming from the Iranian regime, Hezbollah and its sectarian allies, counts as a declaration of war on Islam and the Muslim community in general (Fahmy, 2013)." This statement was made by Mohammed Hassan, a leading Egyptian cleric. Hassan went further by stating what was needed from the Muslim community. Hassan added, “Intl [international] Jihad is necessary for the victory of our brothers in Syria - jihad with mind, money, weapons; all forms of jihad (Fahmy, 2013).” Although this conference was not the initiator of foreign fighters into the Syrian arena, it did get the media’s attention. This foreign jihadi aspect of the Syrian conflict is what Western leaders and media outlets alike have focused on, which has aided in focusing on the conflicts sectarian aspects, as opposed to the fight over power within Syria.

In specific, this is prevalent with groups linked to al Qaeda.
The instances of the call for jihad by clerics in Cairo and the seizing of territory by foreign groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham, or ISIS, have led commentators to draw historical parallels. Even before the June conference, Western analysts had been drawing parallels to the Afghan-Russo war and its association to the birth of al Qaeda. David Ignatius stated, “The rebels fighting Assad deserve limited U.S. support, just as the anti-Soviet mujahedeen did. But be careful: This way lies chaos and extremism that can take a generation to undo if the United States and its allies aren’t prudent” (Ignatius, 2013).” These extremist groups are the heart of the sectarian debate as their anti-Shia rhetoric and violent stance against minorities, as in the Fr. Paolo Dall’Oglio's case, have only substantiated the claims of a sectarian war; however, the funding for these groups comes from nations with political agendas.

Finally, the framing of the conflict as sectarian is correct. As Taufiq Rahim states, “[there are] three concurrent battle lines pitting Muslim against Muslim across the region: militants versus the state, Shiites versus Sunnis (and Salafists versus Sufis) and secularists versus Islamists” (Rahim, 2013).” This indication that the struggle in Syria is culturally based is correct in so far as it describes the cultural makeup of varying powers and parties; however, this is short-sighted. Both domestic and regional parties’ primary objective is the seizure, or holding, of power. As Ibish stated,” If the hatreds were really this deep, endemic and theological, no amount of dictatorship could have suppressed them in the past” (Ibish, 2013).” The exacerbation of sectarianism is rooted in a much older concept: power.

29 Note, although Egypt is not involved as a state, its Islamic university al Azhar, is held by many as having the highest level of Sunni Islamic studies in the world. It was founded somewhere in AD 970 alongside the al Azhar mosque. This is the reason the June 13 clerical conference was held in Cairo.
Varying Regional Approaches Creating a Fragmented Domestic Opposition

An inordinate deal of the division within the opposition itself is rooted in the disjointed policies taken by Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. A major policy of Qatar and Turkey was, and still is, the arming of any groups willing to fight at the early stages of the conflict. For Turkey, it was slowly pulled into the mediating role between Syria and the expat community of the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey (Bhalla, 2012). The initial stages of unrest had the Syrian government proposing reformations to the government, to include a presidential election in 2014, and although many claim that the changes to the Syrian government would have been a charade, the escalation of violence by both sides nullified any chance of finding out. Producing difficulties for the Assad regime and Iran alike was and is beneficial for Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Their efforts affect possible political gains in both the region and Syria; however, for Turkey, its initial policies concerning Syria were still vested in the Zero Problems approach. Turkey became more engaged as its’ dealings with the Muslim Brotherhood grew with its initial hopes being vested in political solutions similar to the hopes within the Damascus Declaration of 2005.

Currently, the arming of radical Islamist groups further complicates the opposition’s attempts to work together, that is to say, to work efficiently against a common enemy. It has handicapped them even at the most basic of political levels: fighting. The division increases as issues of control and political power, from the local to national levels, are

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30 This has lessened as Qatar has begun, to a mild extent, to follow Saudi’s lead. This is primarily the case with the SNC after the election of Ahmed Assi Jarba.
31 The Damascus Declaration is a secular umbrella opposition coalition named after a statement drafted in 2005 by numerous opposition groups and individuals demanding a multiparty democracy in Syria (Damascus Declaration, 2012).
brought to the table. There are a number of cases highlighting this division such as: the Syrian Military Council’s failed attempt a unified opposition army, the divisions within the opposition in towns like Raqaa, radical Sunni opposition groups fighting Kurdish forces, and the rejection of political bodies like the SNC within the opposition.

The problem stems from outside support. Without unified approaches by Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the regional support will be based on realist policies that seek relative gains. Saudi Arabia appears to be slightly more liberal in its selection of opposition members. These relative gains are based on the possible utility of a given opposition group and previously established chains of communication. The non-official tie to radical Islamist groups gives the Gulf nations a superior ability to aid these assemblies; however, private sources of aid in the Gulf, like in Afghanistan, is likely making its way to Syria, which may be directed at sources that are not necessarily in line with Saudi, or Qatari, policy (Coll, 2004, pp. 79-84).32

Turkey did not originally share this degree of contact with radical groups making their strategy of support more moderate than others involved. It still primarily supports the Muslim Brotherhood and SNC, but it has hedged its bets by creating a policy toward the opposition which appears to be similar to its Zero Problems policy of bilateral foreign relations. Turkey is still pressing for political talks regarding Syria amongst international parties in Geneva. This is due to the inherent risk of neighboring a violent conflict (Turkey wants Syria deadline in Geneva, 2103). Saudi Arabia and Qatar, do not share these concerns given their remoteness from the engagement, which allows them to continue to finance fighters as needed as they are on the offensive.

32 Steve Coll’s Ghost Wars details this concept of deniable, or possibly negligent, funding.
Due to outside funding, the radical Islamist groups are better trained and now are better armed, which has led some FSA fighters to al Nusra (Black & Mahmood, 2013). The lack of unity amongst the regional opposition is shown in the domestic political establishment as well. Currently, Saudi Arabia’s sphere of influence is in Southern Syria given its access through Jordan. Many of these areas are under Free Syrian Army control, whereas Turkey’s sphere of control is in the northern regions under a mix of opposition control to include the Kurds (Ottens, 2013). These divisions in policy approaches will be further analyzed in chapter 4’s findings as their realpolitik basis of power has produced this lack of cohesion.

**Regional Focus Outplays International in Syria**

As of the final week of August 2013, Western nations have been pushing for action in the United Nations over the use of chemical weapons east of Damascus in the Ghouta neighborhood. The United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom claims have varied from highly likely to certain that that the Assad government is culpable (*Syria's Bashar al-Assad will fight Western 'aggression,’ 2013*); however, there is no sign that either Russia or China will acquiesce to Western desires, which will block any sanctioned United Nations action in the Security Council. It is also possible, as in Britain’s parliament, that domestic governments may block military action. Whether the conflict escalates into an international conflict is not important to this papers focus. This study examines the foundations that have been built to date between the domestic and regional parties discussed. The parties involved are founded in realpolitik which has

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33 Note: There have also been firefights between the FSA and Muslim Brotherhood (Sheikho, 2013).
34 Ghouta is in the Rif-Dimashq, or rural Damascus, Governorate roughly 9 kilometers East of Damascus. The attack took place on 21, August, 2013.
built a sectarian basis for the conflict that will endure any possible Western, or International, action.

The Syrian conflict’s fractious nature is far more complicated than was the Libyan case (Naim, 2011). Domestically, the moderate Muslim Brotherhood is declining Western involvement in Syria as Ali al-Bayanouni, the deputy controller general stated, “We believe that Western countries, especially the United States, decided to move against Syria now to serve [US] interests only. If the Americans are acting to save the Syrian people, as they claim, then they would have acted a long time ago (Abu Amer, 2013).” There is no doubt a more negative view upon the matter is held by Islamist opposition groups in Syria as a number of them previously fought the US and UK in Iraq after the 2003 invasion. This anti-Western stance taken by elements within the Syrian opposition will complicate any Western response. At the regional level, unlike Libya, regional powers have more vested in Syrian affairs as the Syrian state affects a number of weighty regional issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Lebanese politics.35

Nevertheless, understanding the regional to state level of relations concerning Syria serves to appreciate the entirety of the conflict. The international community may become involved, but regional parties will remain engaged in the fight over power in Syria as their ties to their Syrian counterparts have immediate effects on their standing in the region. Regional involvement will endure far past the Western attention span.

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35 Syrian affects Lebanon on multiple levels which will be analyzed in the concluding Chapter of this thesis.
Remaining Issues
The purpose of this paper is to investigate how sectarianism has become tantamount with the Syrian conflict. This paper explores the concepts of power in its relation to domestic groups within both the opposition and the Assad government. It examines the concepts of power as illustrated through the realist theory of international relations. By reviewing these theoretical concepts along with courses of action taken in Syria by all parties discussed, it is shown that what are known as sectarian alliances are mere temporary vehicles rooted in mankind’s need for grasping power. In political power, there is a means of security, or as some see it, freedom.

Hypothesis
The exacerbation of sectarianism by all parties, both Syrian and regional, is nothing more than the product of the fight for power and political legitimacy.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research plan used to prove that this hypothesis is true. This conflict is a straightforward fight over power where realpolitik has manifested itself from the state to regional level. The chapter begins by describing the research design and methodology. The chapter uses selected elements from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke’s respective writings on the concept of a Social Contract. These concepts guide the research into how Syria became fractured along theoretical lines concerning the basis of government. This section will also define the espoused political foundations for all domestic parties involved. Secondly, the chapter uses realist theory to analyze regional powers actions in and around Syria. This section also defines the adopted political foundations of the regional powers involved in the crisis. The varying concepts all concern themselves with the truest concept of politics: power. Thirdly, the
chapter presents the theoretical structure as to how linkages were made between Syrian parties and their current regional patrons. This section is used to examine the intermestic nature of the relationships and these relationship’s utility for all parties concerned.\textsuperscript{36} This section is founded by John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Carl Von Clausewitz, and the basic principles of realism as used in international relations.\textsuperscript{37} By using these concepts, Chapter 4’s findings give a clear view into the fight for power in Syria and the relationships born from this conflict.

\textsuperscript{36} Intermestic a term used to describe a political issue that retains both domestic and foreign political concerns.

\textsuperscript{37} Karl Von Clausewitz was a German-Prussian soldier and military theorist who stressed the moral and political aspects of war. He lived from 1780-1831. Concepts from On War will be used in this paper.
Chapter Three
Methodology/ Research Plan

Introduction
This chapter describes the qualitative methodology and research plan used to survey all parties involved in the Syrian conflict. This is a contest over power where realpolitik has manifested itself from the state to regional level. This chapter will give the scaffolding for this case study. The purpose of this study is to give depth to the understanding of the Syrian conflict. A primary theoretical vehicle to this understanding is in combining selected elements from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke’s respective writings on the concept of a Social Contract. These concepts guide chapter 4’s findings as to how Syria became fractured along theoretical lines concerning the basis of government. Secondly, the chapter presents the theoretical structure as to how linkages were made between Syrian parties and their current regional patrons by examining the importance of Syria to the nations involved along Realist theoretical lines. Thirdly, the Chapter concludes with the scaffolding of practical concerns for all parties involved in a war setting with the use of Carl Von Clausewitz, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Realist theory. This is done to allow discussion on the necessity, utility, and depth of the domestic Syrian to regional patrons relations. By use of Data Triangulation, this case study arrives at a firmer understanding of the current conflict in Syria.

38 Realpolitik is defined as a system of politics based on a country's situation and its needs rather than on ideas about what is morally right and wrong (Realpolitik, 2013)
Research Questions
The purpose of these research questions is to allow an analysis of the conflict to be drawn at each political level. They provide snapshots of the elements that play into the intermestic nature of the conflict, both individually and in their adjoined form. The utility of these questions as part of the methodology is that they will enable the use of Data Triangulation in this case study. The following questions are ordered for utility of triangulation in the findings section. What Domestic Causes Created the Current Syrian Conflict? How are the Syrian conflict and regional power connected? What are the causes and effects of the Domestic-Foreign relationships in the Syrian conflict?

The primary purpose of this paper is to survey the relationships between domestic Syrian groups and their regional patrons. These questions funnel the research from domestic concerns, to regional interests, and finally to how realpolitik complements, and also detracts from the involved parties’ interests. The trajectories of these interests become more unstable as they have taken an intermestic form with their shared participation.

Research Design
A case study is employed as it is the best method to describe how realpolitik is the underlying nature of the intermestic arrangements within the Syrian conflict. Having a flexible research design, as a case study allows, is key to this type of qualitative study (Research Design Fixed and Flexible, 2013). Given that the survey extracts the underlying political foundations shared by all parties involved, it cannot be quantified through survey, or other means. The inability to quantify data is clear, given the precarious nature of security surrounding the conflict. Rather, this case study arrives at
its conclusions through Data Triangulation.\textsuperscript{39} Data Triangulation is best used in qualitative surveys that draw their sources from multiple research methods. Data Triangulation is useful when a given case has incomplete data surrounding the topic (O'Donoghue, Punch. 2003, p 78). Current explanations on the Syrian clash have concluded that sectarianism is the root cause, or have failed to fully clarify the heart of the engagement.

Given the lack of clarity, Data Triangulation allows this case study to survey the topic through two methods. First, social observation is employed by means of content analysis. Content analysis is used to observe the crisis through up to date primary and secondary sources from both print and audio visual mediums. Second, this study uses formal political theory at both the domestic and international levels. This is done to show the basis of sub-state and state action for all actors involved in the conflict. By using observation and formal theory, the data is triangulated to give a deeper look at the conflict. This aids in the understanding of the conflict as being something more than just another instance of sectarianism.

**Methodology**

The sampling undertaken for this study is done at both the sub-state and state levels of political organization. This is done for both for Syrian political groups and regional actors. All groups taken into account have been done so for their intrinsic impact on the future of Syria and also the region, which is the focus of chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{39} Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing. “Finding...Triangulation is one of the several rationales for Multimethod Research... The term is derived from surveying (Bryman, n.d.).”
The Syrian parties to be covered are the supporters of the current government and the opposition. The importance of analyzing not only the government, but its supporters allows for deeper look into the prioritization of security. In contrast, the opposition has done away with its security at its own risk while vying for a new government. It is important to study the contrary nature of the domestic level of conflict as it has brought Syria to its current disintegrated status. The counterintuitive theoretical bases for all parties involved, highlights both each parties need for outside support and their unrelenting pursuance of victory.

At the regional level, the state and sub-state levels of analysis are maintained. At the state level Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iran are studied as they are the largest patrons to their respective allies within Syria. Their importance in political, military, intelligence and diplomatic support to their respective allies in Syria cannot be overstated. At the sub-state level, groups like Hezbollah, the Mahdi Army, and a myriad of al Qaeda affiliates in Syria are also analyzed as their impact is substantial. It is important to analyze the relationship between the regional players and their Syrian counterparts for a several reasons. Without foreign participation, the Syrian conflict would likely not be as chaotic as it is today. Without the support of regional patrons and fighters, Syrian parties would not have been able to escalate the conflict as they have. That is why it is important to analyze these relationships, as their basis for involvement will keep these parties engaged, which is and will have lasting effects on Syria and the region for decades to come.

The surveying of all regional and domestic parties in Syria is needed as their actions are significant. The current chaos in Syria is not only detrimental for Syria itself, but is
having lasting effects on Iraq, Turkey, and Lebanon. As of now, chaos in Syria has undone boundaries that were made by the French and British during World War I and enforced in 1920. The surveying of these relationships will aid analyzing the longevity of these actions.

Further Methodology
The methodology chosen for this case study is Data Triangulation. Data triangulation, like the triangulation of a location, is meant to use two different methods to arrive at conclusion. By using these two points, this study arrives at a more insightful understanding of the Syrian conflict. The two methodological base points of the triangle are observation and formal theory. By surveying the conflict along these lines, the study shows the apex, or realpolitik.

The observation point, or point A, is conducted through content analysis. The content analysis, reviews the current primary and secondary sources on the Syrian conflict and the region. These publications and audio video sources range from daily periodicals, op-eds, official government statements, and interviews with regional experts and leaders alike. The use of secondary sources on the histories of the actors surveyed will also be used where needed to buttress the findings and analysis of contemporary affairs related to Syria.

Point B, or formal theory, is the use of political theory both concerned with domestic and international power. Question 1, which analyzes the Syrian domestic parties, makes use of the Social Contracts of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Question 2 analyzes the relative gains that are at stake for regional political powers. This question uses the theoretical founding of Realism to explain regional actors’ actions and positions.
surrounding the Syrian conflict. Although there is minor overlap between the domestic and international interests in questions 1 and 2, question 3 focuses on the intermestic nature of the conflict. In doing so, question 3 makes use of the aforementioned theories and theorists, while also using the writings of Carl Von Clausewitz. This writer is needed as his theories are specific to war and alliances. Carl von Clausewitz is used to bridge the domestic and international interests and their utility to each other.

**Data Analysis**

The primary purpose of this paper is to survey the relationships between domestic Syrian groups and their regional patrons. Each domestic group has an antithetical theoretical framework that each is pursuing. It is these frameworks that have made for chaos, which have necessitated foreign influence to enter the Syrian conflict.
Question 1 is framed to show what allowed non-Syrian parties into Syria. Political chaos in Syria resulted from a domestic conflict over state power making it the root of opportunity for regional parties. Question 1 is focused on the domestic view on political power and the pursuits that have been derived from these concepts, which have led to the current failed state in Syria.

Question 2 portrays the regional facet of political power at stake within Syria. In doing so it explores the concept of political power through the Realist lens. This is done to show the importance that lay within Syria to each of the regional nations and groups that have become engaged in the conflict.

Finally, question 3 is concentrated on the domestic-foreign nature of the conflict. Although, the conflict is primarily being fought by Syrians, outside influence carries a great deal of influence on the conflict that is and will have heavy consequences on Syrian and the region for generations. Given the weight that these relationships carry, it is important to study the grounds for their current footing.

**What Domestic Causes Created the Current Syrian Conflict?**
This question allows this study to first analyze the concepts of power at the state level. The causality and structure of the initial security breakdown and subsequent power vacuum is explained at its most primal form by showing the parallels between the regime and Hobbesian thought. This same strategy is also be used to show the parallels between the opposition and the ideas of John Locke. By showing the parallels in thought between the aforementioned, this study shows the practical political nature of the conflict.
To survey the Syrian government, the use of Thomas Hobbes State of Nature and Social Contract gives foundation to the government’s view on political organization. Point B, or political theory, will be used at the header of each section to guide analysis of Point A. By fusing Point A to Point B, it is clear that the foundations of the ethos and actions of the given groups are in line with the most base of political thought: self-service. In the government’s case, it is shown through Hobbesian models that safety, or self-survival, is paramount, which allows governments to act harshly to protect its populace. The structure of the pro-government’s analysis is as follows: Hobbes’s concept of the State of Nature, Hobbes’s concept of the Social Contract, and Hobbes’s view on justice, power, money, and finally, war. The exploration of these concepts aids in highlighting the rationale behind the Syrian governments operations. The concept of war is used to tie question 1 to question 3, which further investigates politics in times of war (Hobbes, 1651).

To survey the ideological foundation of the Syrian opposition, the use of John Locke aids in defining the opposition’s goals and pursuit thereof. After the onset of the Arab Spring, there were increasing signs of collective organization that aimed to change the Syrian government (Ortiz & Masri). This organization is reminiscent of natural law in Locke’s State of Nature (Locke, 1690). The findings are derived from Locke’s State of Nature and his conceptualization of the Social Contract, which leads to the basic ideas behind a commonwealth. The remainder of the Syrian opposition section covers concepts that led to the initial unrest in the Syrian crisis. Like the government section, the opposition section also explores foundational ideas like political rights, absolutism, and civil society; however, this is done as a means to explore the foundations of
causality behind the earliest opposition to the Syrian government. The section then
delves into the makeup of the current elements of the opposition. 40 This is done in
concert with Locke’s ideas concerning the dissolution of government. 41 Finally, this
section delves into the ideas of a failed state and also the division of the opposition,
which fuses content analysis of the Syrian crisis to the underpinning of Locke’s thought
process.

By constructing the theoretical bases of both the pro government groups and anti-
government groups, Point A content observation of the Syrian crisis is further aided by
Point B Theory in arriving at Point C, or the finding. These bases are opposing, which
aids not only in showing their impasses, but also in their need for outside support. This
provides the domestic basis for question 3, which is concerned with the application of
war and the overlap of policy between Syrian parties and the regional powers.

**How are the Syrian Conflict and Regional Power Connected?**
This section investigates the reasons behind why Syria is so important for state power in
the region. The relative gains are analyzed for general and specific importance for each
nation and group involved. Elements from respective national histories and narratives
are also used to show pragmatic actions as related to Syria, or to issues at stake
surrounding Syria. To investigate Syria’s importance to these nations, Point A, or
content analysis of Syria is coupled with Point B, or theory. In this study, Point B
employs the use of Realist theory as it applies to international relations.

This section covers the four main pillars of Realism: Anarchy, Egoism, Groupism, and
Power Politics (Wohlfarth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 131). Anarchy is

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40 Point A of this sections triangulation.
41 Locke’s theory is Point B.
the absence of government in the international political arena (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150). Egoism is the idea that individuals and groups tend to pursue self-interest narrowly defined (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150). Groupism assumes that politics takes place within and between groups (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150). Finally, Power Politics is the concept that egoistic groups interacting in anarchy generate a politics of power and security (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150). These concepts play a supporting role in organizing the actions taken by the regional parties involved.

In each country’s analysis the concepts such as the Balance of Power theory, Hegemonic Stability theory, and the Security Dilemma are taken into accord with each nations interests and how these play out in their policies (Wohlforth, 2010, pp. 141-142). The Balance of Power theory states, “states will check dangerous concentrations of power by building up by building up their own capabilities (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 141).” The Hegemonic Stability theory states that,” powerful states tend to seek dominance over all or parts of any international system, thus fostering some degree of hierarchy within the overall systemic anarchy (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 142).” The Security Dilemma states” in arming for self defense, a state may decrease its security via the unintended effect of making others insecure, sparking them [others] to arm in response (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 142).” These theories carry weight for the nations in question with their utility being in filtering out the inconsequential aspects of each nation’s actions in Syria. By analyzing these elements categorically across all sampled countries, the foundation of their respective foreign policies regarding Syria gives connection to
question 3, which analyzes the approach the domestic-regional connection in the conflict.

What are the Causes and Effects of the Foreign-Domestic Relationships in the Syrian Conflict?
This question focuses on the utility of alliances between Syrian parties to the regional powers and the demographic realities across a war setting. This question ties together the actual and theoretical bases of the conflict; however, given this studies focus on international relations, its case is tested under Realist models. There are three sections used to answer question 3: the introduction of the Syrian conflict in terms of war, the causal mechanisms for the domestic-regional patron relationship, and finally, the causality for regional support. Point A again is content analysis for Question 3, while in this case Point B additionally employs Carl Von Clausewitz to Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke.  

The first section of question 3 begins with the introduction of the Syrian conflict in terms of war. This is done so to show the highly pragmatic nature of the conflict. To explain the pro-government’s position, Hobbes’s thoughts on the “sovereignty by acquisition” are used to explain how the government is retaining the support of its domestic populace. Hobbes states, “commonwealth by acquisition is one where the sovereign power is acquired by force; and it is acquired by force when men are led by their fear of death or imprisonment to authorize all the actions of the man or assembly that has their lives and liberty in his power” (Hobbes, 1651, p. 92).” Locke is subsequently used to give a basis for those joining the differing groups of the opposition.

42 Carl Von Clausewitz was a German-Prussian soldier and military theorist who stressed the psychological and political aspects of war. He died in 1831 (Paret & Morgan, 1992).
The section is then concluded by depicting the current state of chaos from the dissolution of government to all-out war.

The second facet of this section covers the mechanisms behind the domestic-regional relationships. This section covers the essential elements behind each domestic group’s need for foreign support. The elements needed are political, monetary, and physical in terms of hardware and in some cases, manpower. The use of the realist Power Transition theory and the concept of the Balance of Threat are used to show the practical reasoning for foreign parties to become engaged in the conflict. Power Transition theory states that, “dominate states will prefer to retain leadership, that lesser states’ preference for contesting that leadership will tend to strengthen as they become stronger relative to the dominant state, and that this clash is likely to come to the fore as the capabilities of the two sides approach parity (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, pp. 142-143).” The use of Power Transition theory aids to explain the interest in those regional powers in giving support to their domestic partners in lieu of a possible transition in Syrian power. Finally, the Balance of Threat theory is used to support the practical concerns of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Turkey, and various Islamist groups. This is done as Balance of Threat theory analyzes threats across 3 key variables: aggregate capability, geography and perceptions of aggressive intention (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 141). By introducing these theories across the domestic-regional lines, the limits of these relationships are further defined.

The final section of Question 3 covers the theoretical concepts regarding the level of engagement that outside parties are taking in Syria. The section uses Carl Von Clausewitz to support the actual, and in some cases likely, support that is being given to
Syrian groups. The theoretical value in this section is derived from its concentration: fiscal support. The concept of fiscal support is used to illustrate the disposition of regional powers supporting their domestic allies.

By combing these concepts across the current situation in Syria, political pragmatism can be seen from both Syrian interests and regional ambitions. In surveying the Syrian case by way of Data Triangulation, it is easier to arrive at findings in chapter 4 and conclusions in chapter 5, regarding not only Syria, but the region. Although the war is primarily being fought by Syrians, the domestic-foreign nature of the conflict has drawn in regional powers, which will compound the effects felt by both Syria and the region for generations.
Chapter Four
The Syrian Conflict and the Fight for Power: Findings and Analysis

Introduction
The exacerbation of sectarianism by all parties, both Syrian and regional, is nothing more than the product of the fight for power and political legitimacy. The predominant view on the Syrian conflict stems from generalizations on its sectarian nature. No group ideological or otherwise can operate without a political foundation. Foundational concepts need to be taken into account to contextualize the conflict. Each domestic group has an antithetical theoretical framework that they are pursuing. It is these frameworks where chaos was created, which have necessitated foreign influence to enter the Syrian conflict. Finally, the relationships between domestic Syrian groups and their regional supporters share one commonality, the pursuit of power.

What Domestic Causes Created the Current Syrian Conflict?
The Syrian conflict is the result of ongoing fissures within the Syrian political establishment. The pursuit of power by the state and its citizenry resulted in the current war in Syria. Seminal political thought demonstrates that certain basic values need be upheld by nations. Mankind is bound to each other under the concept of a nation for self-interest. Simple concepts such as safety and prosperity suffice to these explanations. It is within these foundations that governments attempt to administer government; however, these foundations can be difficult to attain, or in some cases are perverted in execution.

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43 The Syrian Kurds are viewed in the Opposition section not because they are necessarily with or against the regime or opposition, but because like the Iraqi Kurds, they are aiming for independence, or at least autonomy.
By examining the foundations of Syrian parties participating in the conflict and the concept of the Social Contract, a stronger case can be made that realpolitik is firmly rooted in Syria.

**The Assad Government and its Domestic Supporters**

The concept of security is paramount to the Syrian government. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* the theoretical foundation to governments focused on security. By using Hobbes’s and observations on Syria, it is clear that the foundations of the ethos and actions of the pro-government groups are in line with the most base of political thought: self-service. In the government’s case, it is shown through Hobbesian models that security, or self-survival, is paramount, which allows the government to act harshly to protect its populace. The thematic structure of the pro-government’s findings and analysis is as follows: Hobbes’s concept of the State of Nature, Hobbes’s concept of the Social Contract, and Hobbes’s view on justice to include domestic power, political rights, and money, and finally, war. All of these concepts are buttressed with content analysis of governmental actions over the last two years. The exploration of these concepts aids in highlighting the realpolitik rationale behind the Syrian governments operations since the beginning of unrest in Syria.

Thomas Hobbes’s understanding of government is firmly rooted in security and mankind’s commitment to self-preservation. According to Thomas Hobbes, the State of Nature, or pre-governmental period of man, is for mankind to be at war with itself. The State of Nature to Hobbes is as follows, “every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withal (1651, p. 78).” In
consequence, Hobbes assumes that life in this custom is,” *continual feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short* (1651, p. 78). In order, for people to save themselves from a life of constant war, mankind has produced society to save itself from the State of Nature. In reaching this conclusion, Hobbes states that people must enter a Social Contract with other people surrounding them. His concept of a Social Contract stems from the first two of what he deems to be natural laws derived from man’s endeavor to peace, or at least avoid war. The first of Hobbes’s assumptions about man in the State of Nature assumes that there is a fundamental law for man to seek peace, which as his logic follows allows man to defend himself (1651, p.81). The second fundamental law states, “that a man be willing... to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing anything he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war (Hobbes, 1651, p.81).” This is important as it covers the concept of the necessity for mankind to restrain itself in order to be safe individually. It is the concept of restraint as a means to avoid a life of war that causes men to form a commonwealth.

In Hobbes’s view a person must accept a commonwealth in the following form: “I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition; that thou give up, thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner (1651, p 106).” The concept of a commonwealth as a means to provide oneself with safety is where Hobbes’s theory and the Syrian government intersect. The

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44 Feare and Poore are the original way Hobbes spelled these terms. Note there will be multiple differences in spelling in quotations given the era that all cited Theorists lived in was centuries ago. He also makes use of capitalization for emphasis.
complimentary nature of the Hobbesian writings and Syria was not so much in the acquiescence of the Syrian people to their country, as it was in the states concentration on security. The urge to rid Syria of foreign rule was the primary concern of Syrians.

It is Hobbes emphasis on self-preservation, or security, that Syria’s current commonwealth is firmly rooted. In both the 1973 and 2012 constitutions there are references to colonial powers aiming to subjugate the Syria nation. Although the wording varies slightly, the concept of security is paramount as it is introduced in the first few lines of both constitutions. This prioritization is based on negative foreign involvement in and at times the subjugation of Syria during the past. The current government was born with the current president’s father, the then Defense Minister Hafez al Assad, with his seizure of power in 1970. This type of power seizure is known to Hobbes as conquest (1651, p 123). This was done militarily, although bloodlessly, after fellow Alawite and then Deputy Secretary of the Baath party Salah al Jadid, attempted to court martial Hafez al Assad. This attempt followed disputes between al Jadid and al Assad, over how to officially deal with the Palestinian Liberation Organization during the events that unfolded in the Jordanian Palestinian conflict better known as Black September (Seale, 1990, pp.154-165).

45 Self-preservation is defined as 1. Protection of oneself from harm or destruction; 2. The instinct for individual preservation; the innate desire to stay alive (self-preservation, 2013).
46 These constitutions apply to the respective administrations of the Hafez and Bashir al Assad governments.
47 He formally became president in 1973.
48 Black September refers to the military purge of the Palestinian Liberation Organization by the Jordanian government in September of 1970.
49 Al Jadid deployed Syrian controlled elements of the PLO to Jordan to aid the PLO against the Jordanian army. Hafez al Assad recalled these troops leading to the disagreement between al Assad and al Jadid (Seale, 1990, pp 154-165). At the time, Dr al Attassi was the official head of Syria; however, al Jadid was the nonofficial leader of the country as major decisions were coming from him (Seale, 1990)
Principally, Syria was not much different from other nations. Without the submission to a state mandated system of law, nations are doomed to be by definition: failures (Failed State, n.d.).\textsuperscript{50} It is possible given the current government’s history of the centralization of domestic power and heightened sense of purpose in national defense, that the government may have perverted its’ views on threats which adversely affected the domestic populace.\textsuperscript{51} Where Syria differs from other civilized nations was and is in their application of law, which is where the intersections between Hobbes theory and al Assad governments’ actions further show the character of the government’s nature. The concepts to be covered throughout this section are the style of rule as executed in regards to the concept of justice. The concept of justice is used as an umbrella to cover the foundations of political power, the distribution of money, and finally, the execution of war.\textsuperscript{52-53}

The absolutist style of governing under Bashir al Assad was inherited from his father. In Hobbesian terms the passing of sovereignty through bloodline is known as acquisition by generation (1651, p 123).\textsuperscript{54} The centralization of power, keeps in line with what Hobbes saw as the best style for government to keep man safe, which is in accordance to his first natural law. Hobbes also believed, that without absolutism, order breaks down.

\textsuperscript{50} The Fund for Peace uses the following indicators to indicate failing states: 1) loss of the physical control of its territory, or of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force therein, 2) erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions, 3) an inability to provide reasonable public services, and 4) an inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community (Failed State, n.d.).
\textsuperscript{51} Syrian national and pre-national history is littered with external threats giving them a highly defensive posture.
\textsuperscript{52} Justice is the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments c: the administration of law; especially: the establishment or determination of rights according to the rules of law or equity (justice, n.d.).
\textsuperscript{53} The concept of justice is used for formatting only. As is clearly shown with Hobbes, the only true priority of a commonwealth is security.
\textsuperscript{54} This is the second form of sovereignty by acquisition.
Hobbes saw monarchy, or an absolute sovereign, as being best suited for a nation for five reasons; however, the first reason is the only factor currently applicable to this discussion (Hobbes, 1651, p. 114). The first reason given is that the monarch shared the same interests as the people (Hobbes, 165, pp. 115-116). Hobbes felt that if the populace was of poor means or severely deficient in some regard, then the Monarch by association would be poor, or possibly insecure. Hobbes’s had two ways of viewing a sovereign’s reception of power, which are known as sovereignty by institution or acquisition. First, Sovereignty by institution is the rule by agreement of the populace in which the sovereign would be accountable to the people. Second, is sovereignty by acquisition, this is where sovereignty is taken and maintained by force. Specifically, Hobbes maintains that, “that men who choose their sovereign do it for fear of one another, and not of him whom they institute: but in this case, they subject themselves to him they are afraid of [so long as the sovereign protects the commonwealth] (Hobbes, 1651, p.122).” As stated before, Hafez al Assad took power by conquest. On conquest, Hobbes states, “The only difference is the inception of rule, which in this case is by force (1651, p.122).”

Syria insufficiently met the definition of sovereignty by inquisition prior to the nation’s dissolution insofar as they only offered a referendum to amend the constitution, which was passed by 90% of voters (Professor Imad Salamey Discusses Arab Spring and Syrian Revolution Part 2, 2012). The government amended the constitution in an

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55 In today’s terms this would be a dictator.
56 In Hobbes’s view there are two types of sovereignty: inquisition and acquisition. The first being a government accrued through the agreement of the populace and the second accrued by force (Hobbes, 1651, pp114-129)
57 Given the amount of boycotts and lack of transparency, it is difficult to assess the credibility of the given statistics.
attempt to placate some elements of the oppositions’ demands in the spring of 2012. President Assad responded by allowing Parliamentary elections on the 7th of May 2012, and also by restructuring article 88 of the Syrian constitution concerning presidential term limits (*President al-Assad Sets February 26, 2012 Date for Referendum on New Draft Constitution*, 2012). The presidency now consists of 7 year terms of office with the possibility of two terms and the next election to be held in May of 2014. Also, Article 8, which stated that the presidency had to be held by an Alawite, was removed. The possible sincerity of these initiatives was not realized due to the escalation of violence that occurred in the spring of 2012; however, it is certain that the concept sovereignty by acquisition is far more fitting for the Syrian government.

The concept of justice in Syria conforms to the Hobbesian view on security through sovereignty by acquisition. To Hobbes, “**Condemnation, than absolution more resembles justice** (Hobbes, 1651, p. 97).” If an individual has committed a crime then they have broken the contract with the commonwealth as they are violating the 2nd natural law, which states in part that, “**For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing anything he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war** (Hobbes, 1651, p 81).” As a result, the Assad government also places a premium on condemnation. Both prior to the Arab Spring and currently, the Syrian government has acted with a strict hand as a means of order. Procedures have varied from imprisonment in times of

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58 The Damascus Declaration was a document signed in 2005 by members of opposition parties in an attempt to unify the opposition under the demand for pluralist democracy (Rubin, 2010, p 82). It was a base for unification of what became the current members of the SNC, Kurdish National Party, and Muslim Brotherhood. The National Coordination Committee also demanded elections.

59 The sincerity and reasoning will be further discussed in the Analysis section.

60 The use of justice here is to show the distribution of crime and punishment, money and economics, and civil society.
relative peace to aggressive military engagement with air and land forces against illegal transgressions.

Historically, political cases were prosecuted in the Exceptional Military Court system, which was outside the General Military Court who possessed the ability to prosecute those who went against martial law (Paul, 1990, p 26).\textsuperscript{61} Decree Law no. 6, which was introduced with the declaration of martial law in 1963 mandated that people could be prosecuted in the Exceptional Military Court system if they committed some of the following political crimes such as: Section A “\textit{actions considered incompatible with the implementations of the socialist order, whether they are deeds, utterances, or writing}, and Section C, “\textit{Offenses against the security of the state} (Paul, 1990, p.27).” Paul states that the vague nature of the laws could deem any act of opposition as an act against the state, which led to abuses of law to include abuses of power, torture, and “disappearances” (Paul, 1990, p. 27).\textsuperscript{62} The state security apparatus is comprised of roughly 15 different intelligence sections, the police, military, and the pro government militia also known as the shabiha. It is under this basis that the current security apparatus under the Assad administration adheres to Hobbes principles of condemnation and the consolidation of power.

Although, the government lifted martial law as of March 2012, it entered further military engagements with the opposition during that spring making such action nothing more that ink and paper (\textit{Syria to end 48 years of martial law}, 2012). The history of brutality by the government has been shown from the massacres in the 1980’s to roughly 120,000

\textsuperscript{61} Civilians were brought to this court if they violated Martial Law, which was in place since 1963.

\textsuperscript{62} This refers to the indefinite secret imprisonment, or killing, of suspected political opponents by the security apparatus.
dead Syrians today and nearly 2 million displaced (Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2013). These actions further reflect the notions of absolute power, condemnation, and punishment, while keeping in line with Hobbes’s view on punishment. Hobbes stated that, “For seeing the aim of punishment is not a revenge, but terror (Hobbes, 1651, p. 192).” The high numbers of casualties in the Syrian conflict have resulted from the government’s method of collectively punishing cities. This tactic is used when an area harbors opposition members, which is reminiscent of actions taken in Hama in 1982 (Paul, 1990, p 23). Today this pattern remains consistent with the past. Many of the senior officers in the security apparatus today also served under Hafez al Assad (Abuhamad & Tabler, 2013). Proven methods generally are not done away with, they are institutionalized (Lesch, 2012).

Both al Assad’s, under Hobbesian rules of conquest and generation, placed family members, minority leaders, and prominent Sunnis into high positions within the Army and the Intelligence services to solidify the absolute sovereign. According to an unnamed Syrian Alawite journalist, President Hafez al Assad attempted to placate the power imbalance between the minority Alawite and majority Sunni. This journalist states that, “Sunnis obtained most of the official positions and ministries — except for the presidency — while Alawites held onto sensitive positions in the army and security services (Syria’s Alawites Torn Between Regime, Opposition, 2013).” In consequence, the Assad regime has a security establishment and political class that by theoretical design should maintain a symbiotic relationship. In example, General Maher al Assad, the president’s younger brother, commands the 4th Armored Division. The 4th Armored

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63 It should be noted that the dead are a result from clashes by all sides of the conflict.
64 Again, conquest and generation refers to the different types of rule under sovereignty by acquisition.
is responsible for the protection of Damascus. Fawaz A. Gerges maintains that, “From the beginning, Maher was convinced that the uprising must be put down before any talks take place.” Gerges goes on to say, “The life of the regime depends on Maher’s ability to prevent the rebels from infiltrating Damascus and toppling his brother’s government (Syrian president’s brother, Maher al-Assad, key to regime survival, 2013 cite in bib).”

Both the posting of Bashir al Assad’s brother around Damascus and Maher’s view on the execution of war, speaks volumes to the priority on the centralization of power in the government and the primary use of condemnation and punishment.

Syria like many nations needed other techniques to centralize its power. It did this in two ways. First, as discussed, the government has used its security apparatus. Second, the government used economics. This method aided in maintaining the support of the population in Syria and returns this case to Hobbes. These appointments support Hobbes’s argument that the monarch is best suited for rule. This is true insofar as Hobbes reasons that, “The riches, power, and honour of a monarch arise only from the riches, strength, and reputation of his subjects. For no king can be rich, nor glorious, nor secure, whose subjects are either poor, or contemptible, or too weak through want... (1651, p 115).”

Unlike Saudi Arabia, and other Rentier nations, Syria has not had a large enough economy to pay its citizens for their acquiescence in unchecked rule. As stated above, the government used patrimony to appease those necessary to support the Assad

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65 Rentierism is when the state is independent of society and directly or indirectly supports a large part of the society through the process of spending domestically the rent that it receives from the rest of the world [through the sale of its resources] (Fawcett, 2013, p.114) ..In other words, there is no representation because there is no taxation.
government’s rule. In example, Rami Makhlouf, the president’s cousin, is supposed to own near 60% of Syria’s companies (The Lion’s Den, 2013). The Syrian business class, not including the Small and Middle sized Entrepreneurs, are made up of members from the upper class Christian, Sunni, and Alawite groups.

Both Presidents’ Assad previously also incorporated a large number of Sunni businessmen their system. The societal status of these wealthy Sunni businessmen was used to suppress initial attempts by the opposition to protest on a larger scale against government practices (United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2011). The use of privileged Sunni businessman and licensing to small and medium enterprises aided in controlling the Sunni society, but gradually fueled resentments held by the Sunni poor. A great deal of this resentment was due to the cuts in public employment and cuts in subsidies to the poor, which predominantly affected the Sunni (Phillips, 2012, p. 38). These cuts occurred as the GDP grew in the 2000’s during the liberalization of the national economy. These cuts had adverse effects on the poor preceding 2011. Syria’s Purchasing Power Parity was 138th in the World as of 2011, which when combined with a $4.8 billion trade deficit, made the purchasing of basic goods by the common Syrian extremely difficult (Syria Overview, 2011).

Given the failure of the state and the failure of the economy to the Syrian people, the only component remaining that provides the Assad government with legitimacy is the security apparatus. Intelligence, law enforcement, and the military have been overworked as the oppositions efforts have grown. This strain has grown exponentially

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66 As discussed in section 2.4.
67 Statistics are discussed in section 2.3.
68 Purchasing Power Parity is an economic indicator of the value of a nation’s currency.
as defections have become more prevalent (Syria's Alawites Torn Between Regime, Opposition, 2013). Even with the use of the Sunni shabiha, the opposition is gaining control. As of August, former Prime Minister Riyad Farid Hijab stated that, “President Bashar al-Assad’s regime now controls only 30 percent of the country (Assad only controls 30 percent of Syria: defected prime minister, 2012).” Over the last year and a half the Assad government has aimed to merely survive the conflict. Although 30% percentage is arguable, it does fall in line that Syria is failed and the government is in distress. In the governments eyes it is greed that has led to the failure of the Social Contract between the state and its people. Greed of any type, even political, is contrary to the first and second of Hobbes laws of nature. Man must show restraint to stay inside of the Social Contract (Hobbes, 1651, p. 80). People protesting for better conditions fit this definition of greed to the government.

The government believes its fighting avaricious outsiders. Again Hobbes contends, “For as long as every man holdeth this right, of doing anything he liketh; so long are all men in the condition of war (Hobbes, 1651, p 81).” Even though martial law was terminated, the propaganda used by the government for state action against the opposition is similar to the provisions in Decree Law no. 6. Many statements made by President al Assad, or by his cabinet, made it clear that the majority of the opposition was part of international conspiracy. The government’s official stance is that the United States and Israel are in concert with elements of al Qaeda in a conspiracy to create anarchy and usurp a legitimate government (Assad warns West over Al-Qaeda, 2013). The scope and concentration of those that are in concert with the “conspirators” changes at times;

69 Defections will be further covered in the opposition section.
however, the focus of official statements made by the government conflates the efforts of the Syrian opposition with that of al Qaeda’s. Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia are also indicted as part of the conspiracy.

Currently, the Syrian government’s sovereignty by acquisition is responsible for a small number of minorities and Sunnis that are afraid of an alternative government. Syria has its own version of Tokyo Rose in the Christian populace. “In audio recordings obtained by NOW, Assad’s favorite nun shows how she convinced starved civilians – many of whom have now been arrested – to leave besieged Moadamiyah. (Weiss, 2013)” Mother Agnes is being used against the opposition and is currently in the US to appeal to American politicians and religious leaders to not become involved in Syria. The reasoning for the government’s survival unto itself is clear; however there are also non-political Syrian minorities that fear the both Syrian Salafists and takfirists possible reprisals. Phillips states that, “Christians are wary of the experiences of their Iraqi brethren after Saddam Hussein’s demise, with over a quarter fleeing targeted sectarian killings (Phillips, 2012, p. 38).” Regarding the Alawites Phillips holds that, “many of whom contrary to popular belief did not benefit greatly from the Assad regime, also fear for their future, concerned that they will be blamed for Assad’s violence. (2012, p. 39).

The Alawites fears are founded from alleged statements made like that of the Islamic Syria Liberation Front’s head, Sheikh Ayrout. He said,” We have to drive them out of their homes like they drove us [the Sunni] out. They have to feel pain like we feel pain (Oweiss, 2013).” The rebel cleric was referring to what he called a “balance of terror”

70 The actual number is unknown. This will be discussed in the analysis.
71 Tokyo Rose was the name given to multiple female English speaking Japanese broadcasters during World War II. They made broadcasts aimed at Western fighting men in an attempt to break their morale or initiate surrender.
which is aimed at Alawite areas in Latakia where he stated civilians should be targeted.

Radical Sunni’s have placed minorities between the anvil and the hammer, with some choosing to flee the country. Others have chosen to place their safety in the governments’ hands, but like the near third of Syrian Christians, many are leaving the country (*Syria conflict: Christians ‘fleeing homes’*, 2013).

**Analysis of Findings on the Assad Government and its Domestic Supporters**

The use of Thomas Hobbes and content observation of the Syrian case reflect pragmatic trends toward self-preservation, or security. Although the conflict has been labeled as an ideological sectarian battle, it is evident amongst the pro government elements discussed, that survival through power comes first. The Assad governments’ foundations stem from action in realpolitik. Through conquest, the Assad regime acted through Hobbes’s sovereignty by acquisition; however, in doing so it marginalized its own population as it perverted the enforcement of laws and also failed economically, as a self-acclaimed socialist state. If the Rentier Gulf nations have shown anything, it is that nations have to compensate the populace for unchecked rule.

Hobbes’s main point of escaping the State of Nature through a Social Contract was so that man could be able to live as they choose so long as security is maintained. In Hobbes’s eyes, man could rebel against the sovereign only if the sovereign infringed upon the ability of man to conduct business as a means to prosper, in choosing one’s trade, and finally, in the rearing of children as parents see fit (1651, pp.129-137). Syria violated, or at least failed in respect to all three of these principals. Given the priority of security, the Baath party went as far to institute indoctrination in primary schools, which

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72 Additional quote in 2.5.1b
violates the concept of the freedom to rear one’s child in a manner of one’s choosing (Abdulhamad, 2013). As was shown, the ability for the common Syrian to profit, or at the very least to be able to afford basic goods, was poor at best. Given the lack of economic opportunity in the country side, many poor Syrians moved to major cities to find work. The concentration of people strengthened the ability of protest and opposition groups to organize and protest. Through governmental negligence, via political appointees, and the concentration of wealth being reserved to the political inner circle, the government failed to tend to the other side of security: economics. Hobbes was correct, if a sovereign does not tend to his people economically, his reign becomes insecure as it did in Syria (1651, p 115). At the outset of the protests, many were demanding freedom in Syria (Ortiz & Masri, 2012). This ambiguous term fits Syrian deficiencies as the government stifled their ability to earn and to live securely. Protests devolved into country wide uprisings after the further use of collective punishment by the government against protests that the conflict devolved from opposition to rebellion.\textsuperscript{73,74}

Currently, the Assad government is using all means to attempt a restoration of order in Syria. As previously discussed, it has conflated the large majority of the opposition with a grand conspiracy created by the Americans, Israelis, and Sunni groups like al Qaeda. In doing so it has created a false dichotomy that further disenfranchises elements of the Syrian opposition. This scheme is useful for propaganda as it gives a casus belli for its allies to assist. This is lent credence by Iran and Hezbollah as they are producing similar

\textsuperscript{73} Causality for the Opposition groups is discussed in the following section.  
\textsuperscript{74} The introduction of violence was also aided by foreign jihadist groups, which is discussed in the following section.
statements regarding the conflict; however, the propaganda is nothing more than a tactic. The government, like Hobbes, believes law enforcement is best executed through terror as a means of prevention, or secession, which is why the dichotomy was created. With this dichotomy in place the government can simply demand compliance. Whether elements of the government truly believe this argument, or not, this dichotomy is one of many reasons the government will not be able to come to peace with the opposition. If it does so, it will no longer be part of the “Resistance” against the West, Israel, and al Qaeda, as it will be complicit with its own machination.\(^\text{75}\) That being said, propaganda by its very nature allows for creative license in the future. Given the government’s history with the imprisonment of political opponents and close former inner sect allies as enemies of the state, there is no theoretical or practical pattern for reconciliation.\(^\text{76}\)

The political survival of the regime and those it’s protecting in Damascus, Latakia, and other smaller areas will continue to be done so fiercely. This is founded on two complementary points: necessity and structure. Although there have been defections by politicians and officers of all sects, those whom remain are fighting for their survival. Second, security posts were given specifically to those that would defend it to the end. As discussed, Maher al Assad’s area of control is Damascus. This is indicative of a trend to give commands of the most important areas to those who are firmly tied to the regime. This will further intensify violence and resolve. The patrimonial tendency of appointment in the government has also introduced a weakness. Nevertheless, appointment also brings in a class of politicians and officers that were not committed to

\(^{75}\) Negotiation with those it claims are taking part in the conspiracy violates its own dichotomous line of thought; however, pragmatic politics is not unbending.

\(^{76}\) Salah al Jadid was the most prominent, but there have been many more.
the government so much as they were willing to benefit. Given that there have been
defections and desertions by politicians and officers of all sects from the regime, there
are deficiencies in the Syrian government and military’s capability. This deficiency is
being filled by foreign allies.

The failure of Syria stems in the governments nature. The tendency to be highly
defensive in nature is logical given the history of foreign control of Syrian lands. That
being said the last two presidents placed too much faith in the hands of few, whom then
assembled all domestic issues as matters of Syrian national security, thus making any act
over a politically contentious issue illegal.77 The use of appointment by sect is a political
tool. Sect by no means kept any man safe from prison or death; while sect by no means
barred any man from a post so long he possessed utility for the government. This style of
thought and rule led the current government, and the minorities it’s protecting, to its
failure and the current power vacuum in Syria. Given that the inner political and military
circle is fighting for their survival in the most literal sense, they will fight to the end
using any and all means. This will be done through hard power with its security
apparatus and through soft power with its diplomats. The government and its allies are
appealing to the international community by offering the possibility of peace talks and
also in the allowance of chemical weapons removal teams into the country. These tactics
will aid in keeping NATO, or western powers, placated.78 Soft power in turn aids the
government’s attempt to retake the nation as it limits foreign involvement. A negotiated
peace is unlikely as both President Assad has no intention of stepping down and at the

77 This was shown with Law no 6 and the Exceptional Military Court.
78 This is unlikely given the lack of political will by the Americans, British, and NATO. It is also
impossible given the veto power of Russia and China; however, it needs to be recognized. This is
discussed in the Conclusion of this paper.
same time, the opposition in its many facets, is showing no signs of consenting to his rule (Ex-Syrian official: Assad’s Resignation Not Precondition for Talks, 2013). A negotiated peace is not a realistic option in the Syrian case.\textsuperscript{79} The Syrian government will fight to remain the absolute sovereign it has always been till it triumphs, dies, or flees.\textsuperscript{80}

**The Opposition to the Assad Government**

The Syrian opposition is comprised of elements that are acting on the belief that they are free and can conduct law as they see fit. In Locke’s view, all men are kings. With the onset of the Arab Spring, John Locke’s State of Nature appears to be fundamentally acceptable to the Syrian opposition than that of absolutism. The use of John Locke’s *Second Treatise* and observations accumulated regarding Syria over the last two years are revealing. With the fusion of these two elements it is clear that the fundamentals of the ethos and actions of the anti-government groups are in line with the most base of political thought: realpolitik. That is not to say that other agendas aren’t at play, but the initiation of action within varying elements of the opposition are in line with the concept of realpolitik. The current turmoil in Syria revolves around the disparity in the distribution of justice to include economics and human rights. This section uses the theoretical concepts of the State of Nature, the Social Contract, and a commonwealth to found the political elements of the opposition. This leads into the more specific concepts, which is split into the events preceding to and the all-out revolt against the Syrian government. It is within this revolt and subsequent power vacuum that the hydra of an opposition shows its true motives across what is claimed to be a sectarian conflict.

\textsuperscript{79} This is fully analyzed in the discussion of the intermestic nature of this conflict.
\textsuperscript{80} This section was written as of 29 October, 2013.
In Locke’s State of Nature all of mankind has executive power over his or her own domain. In Locke’s view he defines the State of Nature as, “a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of Nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man (1690, p 106). Locke believes that nature orders itself in that, “all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection (1690, p 106). Within the initial stages of protests, it was noted that calls for freedom and equality were present; however, these calls were highly generalized, which is reminiscent to the optimistic writings of Locke; however, much of the protests seemed to be aimed at something more specific (Ortiz & Masri, 2011). Locke states that, “monarchs are but men; and if government is to be the remedy of those evils, which necessarily follow from men's being judges in their own cases... And if he that judges, judges amiss in his own or any other case, he is answerable for it to the rest of mankind. (1690, pp.110-111) It is within these concepts of the freedom of mankind, fallibility of government and its necessary accountability, that the Syrian facet of the Arab spring took root.

During the initial protests the general opposition sought political change. The degree of desired change varied in the beginning. Some elements of the opposition wanted to uproot the existing government, whereas others merely wanted elections in the hopes that violence would end (The Vision of the Local Coordination Committees on International Protection, 2011). Locke saw man as inclined to work in communion and in the beginning of the protests there was a sense of unanimity. Locke states that, “a life
fit for the dignity of man; therefore to supply those defects and imperfections which are
in us, as living single and solely by ourselves, we are naturally induced to seek
communion and fellowship with others: this was the cause of men's uniting themselves at
first in politic societies (Locke, 1690, p. 106) Locke’s primary argument for entering a
commonwealth was the formal protection of property as a means to protect livelihood.
Locke admits that even though morals exist in the State of Nature that war can happen as
a result of property disputes (1690, p.112) In Locke’s view, “To be free from such force
[an aggressor] is the only security of my preservation, so that he who makes an attempt
to enslave me thereby puts himself into a state of war with me (1690, p.112) It is to
prevent possible aggression unto one’s property that bonds mankind into political
unions. 81

The concept of commonwealth in the Lockean view is complimentary to the goals of the
Syrian opposition. The common goal to rid the state of Assad rule is based on very
verbose concepts. “Common-wealths themselves take notice of, and allow, that there is
a time when men are to begin to act like free men, and therefore till that time require not
oaths of fealty, or allegiance, or other public owning of, or submission to the
government of their countries (Locke, 1690, p131).” The concept of a commonwealth is
based on the protection of life, liberty, and the protection of property. As stated before
the Syrian opposition stems from general ideas of liberty. The Lockean view of liberty is
that, “Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully,
so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as
much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind.” This is the crux of John Locke’s

81 This concept will be further discussed with the union of Islamic parties against efforts by the SNC (Geneily, 2013)
argument of the nature of man. He concludes by stating that, “*and may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another* (1690, p. 107).”

Before an understanding can be drawn on the perpetuation of these concepts by the current opposition, it is important to highlight where these concepts of life, liberty and the protection of property gestated in the Syrian opposition.  

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**The Lead up to Revolt**

The period preceding and up to the conflict in Syria is marked by absolute power by the Assad government. Life for the common Syrian was poor economically and civilly as was shown; however, for the common Syrian, the concentration of power, even under the pretext of national security, was not promising.

The concept of self-preservation is clearly heralded across the Syrian opposition. Locke states:

> “by right of self-preservation, as every man has a power to punish the crime, to prevent its being committed again, by the right he has of preserving all mankind, and doing all reasonable things he can in order to that end: and thus it is, that every man, in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from doing the like injury, which no reparation can compensate (1690, p 109).”

It is this concept of self-preservation that is currently used by the opposition, which has turned average citizens into combatants. Former teachers, like al Nusra Front’s Abdel Basset Hussein, protested the government only to turn to warfare (Hassan, 2013). His allegiance to al Nusra came only after being arrested for attending protests held at the

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82 This closing sentence needs to be reworked, but make sure to base the next two section off of it.
onset of the Arab Spring. It is within Syria’s history of centralized power through tyranny and patrimonial rule that it marginalized its own citizens.

The Syrian population was disregarded by years of absolutist government, which can be perceived as an illegitimate; however, the effect of marginalization upon the Syrian populace has a deeper meaning. There is a Middle Eastern proverb that states, “Parents are slaves to their child during its first seven years (Gregg, 2005, p.214).” This concept is held by some Syrians to be applicable to governmental care for its populace. 83 Locke’s view on absolutism is shown through his view on paternal power. Locke states, “Nay, this power so little belongs to the father by any peculiar right of Nature, but only as he is guardian of his children, that when he quits his care of them he loses his power over them, which goes along with their nourishment and education (1690. p. 131).” Basher al Assad’s patterns of governing produced discord and disenfranchisement within his general population. His failure to care for his smallest of children, the poor, resulted in his failure as a “father.”

Economically the common Syrian fared poorly, which could only be avoided if the given Syrian offered some utility to the Assad government. Christopher Phillips maintains that, “In general, the most persistent sources of opposition activity since 2011 have been in poorer religious Sunni Arab areas (2012, p. 38).” Given that approximately 74% of the country is Sunni and 90% of the country is Arab, the sense of dispossession was well spread across the country in areas like Deraa, Jisr al-Shughour, Homs, Idleb, Douma and Hama (Syria, 2013; Phillips, 2012, p38). That being said, poverty was not sect specific; however, these statistics and areas are worth noting as

83 The metaphorical value of paternal power and state power is held by a number of Syrians I have spoken with. Unfortunately it was not done in formal survey.
they later become vehicles for alliance with regional parties. As of October 2012, the United Nations Development Programme listed Syria at 116 of 186 countries listed on the Multidimensional poverty index (MPI: Multidimensional poverty index, 2012). As shown, poverty’s’ effects were not sect, or, religion specific.

Poverty in Syria lay at the hands of patrimonial appointment and the concentration of power to include wealth. An Alawite resident of Latakia stated, “that corruption is rampant throughout Syria and that it is not the corruption of one sect, but that of a regime that includes corrupt people from all sects. She argued that Alawites are “now paying the price for this (Syria's Alawites Torn Between Regime, Opposition, 2013).” This resonates as political appointments were used as a means to maintain absolute power. This style of governing allows for the appointment of political authorities and technocrats alike, who are not qualified for their position. Referring to rural agricultural programs in 2007-2010, Phillips maintains that, “inept government exacerbating matters through mismanagement of agricultural resources (2010, p. 38).” This period of mismanagement was compounded by a severe drought and economic adjustments. During the 2000’s, the government was in the process of liberalizing the economy, which cut some subsidies to the poor and also low level government employment (Sara, 2011, p.19). These hardships were further multiplied with Western sanctions placed on the government, which placed the Syrian people in an economically deficient state.

84 The Multidimensional poverty index is the composite measure of the percentage of deprivations that the average person would experience if the deprivations of poor households were shared equally across the population (MPI: Multidimensional poverty index, 2012). This ranks those with the lowest level of MPI at 1
85 17 % of the economy was in agriculture (Syria, 2012)
86 Note: 67% of the economy was service based. If the economy is on
The failure of paternal, or absolute, power was one causal factor for the collectivization of desperate citizens angry with the government.

The other facet that led to the dispossession of the Syrian people preceding the onset of the conflict was the brutality of the government. Locke sees despotism as an act of war. He states, “And thus captives, taken in a just and lawful war, and such only, are subject to a despotic power, which, as it arises not from compact, so neither is it capable of any, but is the state of war continued. For what compact can be made with a man that is not master of his own life (Locke, 1690, p. 181).” The security apparatus aided in creating today’s opposition. The use of collective punishment, its secretive and highly aggressive enforcement of laws marginalized it’s the populace. People can only be told that they are part of some outside conspiracy for so long.  

Syrian civil society took to the streets in March of 2011 in Dera’a and Damascus. The original protests were for the release of political prisoners. The protestors had the will to take to the streets in part due to protestors’ successes against similar totalitarian governments in Tunis and Egypt (Phillips, 2012, p.38; Ortiz & Masri, 2011). The Army responded with massive violence against the protestors. Over time this violence emboldened a larger amount of Syrians to the streets in protest of the government. Locke and most Syrians agree that absolutist governments and civil society are incompatible (1690, p. 143). This incompatibility multiplied exponentially. With the escalation of violence and resolve on behalf of the opposition, significant political change became a

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87 To reiterate, the conspiracy is supposedly created by an allied al Qaeda, US, and Israel according to Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah propaganda. According to these parties, Turkey and the Gulf nations are also in concert with these machinations.
more common demand with variances in the level of totality (*The Vision of the Local Coordination Committees on International Protection*, p.2011).

For the Syrian opposition, this moment is a product of systemic problems. The Arab Spring encouraged Syrians to take the streets; however it was through years of absolutist, or at the least oligarchic, rule that the Syrian opposition gestated. As Locke states, “such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs. *Great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty, will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur* (1690, pp.203-204).” The Syrian case has not transitioned smoothly as did, Tunis, or as had originally appeared to have happened in Egypt. As such, Syria has slipped into a power vacuum. The opposition’s varying goals accompanied by concurrent fights over territory, representative rights, autonomy, and rule have led to chaos. All of this has occurred while the opposition is attempting to engage government forces.

**The Opposition’s Current Form and Style of Operation**
The current composition is a hydra of sorts. The opposition is composed of both political and armed resistance elements. There are also elements that are not fighting with the sovereignty of Syria in mind. There are multiple alliances with degrees of overlap; however there is one shared principle amongst the Syrian armed elements: the removal of what they see as detrimental to their safety. Locke deems it justifiable to strike and use force if:

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88 The Kurds are discussed here as even with their neutral stance they are still separate from all a sovereign Syria. Small pockets of foreign jihadists are also discussed in 4.3 as they directly affect the opposition even with their low numbers relative to the resistance.
..the reason whereof is plain; because the one using force, which threatened my life, I could not have time to appeal to the law to secure it: and when it was gone, it was too late to appeal. The law could not restore life to my dead carcass: the loss was irreparable; which to prevent, the law of nature gave me a right to destroy him, who had put himself into a state of war with me, and threatened my destruction (1690, p.196).

This justification of force against tyranny is highly applicable not only to the oppositions actions against the government, but also in the oppositions internal fight.\textsuperscript{89} Given the current power vacuum, opposition groups with divergent objectives are attempting to seize and control territory at the cost of the opposition’s collective fight against the government. These groups act with a collective sense of embitterment against the Assad government.

\textit{Political Groups}

The political elements of the Syrian opposition vary in effectiveness, purpose, and credibility amongst the Syrian people. Their use of force against what they perceive as tyranny is executed through numbers and in most cases, soft power. The political elements of the Syrian opposition are vying for power through alliances. The Syrian Opposition Coalition with its political body, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, is an opposition umbrella for multiple political parties, service institutions, and armed groups.\textsuperscript{90} One of its major political arms is the Syrian National Council. There is also the National Coordination Council, which is not under National Coalition the umbrella. The National Coordination Council seeks a new government through democratic process as opposed to violence. The National

\textsuperscript{89} This quotation from Locke speaks of force in reference to tyranny.

\textsuperscript{90} Also known as the Syrian Opposition Coalition. The Syrian National Coalition is the political body. It is also at times referred to as the National Coalition.
Coordination Council is comprised of major Syrian parties that currently reside within Syria. Both the Syrian National Coalition and the National Coordination Council are working towards a new government in Syria, while their approaches are vastly different, their goals do share commonalities.

The Syrian Opposition Coalition is horizontally structured. Under the Syrian Opposition Coalition umbrella, there is the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, or National Coalition (National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 2013). There are four bodies that comprise its structure: main external political groups, main inner political groups, the Supreme Military Command, and the transition government. As of 12 November, the National Coalition elected 9 interim ministers to rule over sections of Syria (Syria's opposition coalition picks cabinet, 2013). A major political group under this political umbrella is the Syrian National Council which aims to organize opposition groups both inside and outside of Syria.91 Also, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Coalition of Secular and Democratic Syrians, the Syrian Democratic People Party, and finally, the signatories of the Damascus Declaration fall under the rubric of the Syrian National Council, which falls under the National Coalition (Syrian National Council, 2013).

The Syrian National Council current purpose is to, “overthrow the regime and the establishment of a pluralistic democratic system (Syrian National Council, 2013).” It is positioning itself as a Syrian government in absentia to: “1-To deliver the voice of the Syrian revolution and its demands to the international community, 2- To secure political support for the peaceful revolution, 3-To promote national unity during the transition

91 The Syrian National Council is under the National Coalition’s umbrella.
phase, 4-To ensure there is no political vacuum, [and] 5- To develop a roadmap for
democratic change in Syria (Syrian National Council, 2013).” The applicability of these
principles is largely a debatable point. The group as early as 2012 was criticized by
former US Secretary of State Clinton for not being able to, “speak to every segment and
every geographic part of Syria (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition,
2013).” It also is criticized for being, “consumed by infighting and [again being] little
respected on the ground (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013).
This was in due in part to differing goals amongst Syrian National Council members
who are further enabled by foreign backers. In response to the infighting produced, the
West pushed regional supporters to assist the Syrian opposition in forming a new
political opposition that superseded the SNC (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political
opposition, 2013). Also, the Syrian National Council was for Western military strikes in
Syria during September 2013, which is not accepted by much of the opposition as a
whole (Syria’s FM says SNC not welcome at peace talks, 2013).

The National Coalition’s self-anointed transitional government is headed by Ahmad
Jarba. This rebel government is however wracked with difficulties. The National
Coalition is accused of being controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood; however,
numerous sources show the Muslim Brotherhood’s membership to be anywhere between
10%, which the MB head Riad al Shaqfa claims, and the claimed 60% (Khalaf &
Fielding-Smith, 2013). Claims such as this are consistent with patterns of infighting and
credibility issues within the opposition; however, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood
have years of experience in oppositional politics from absentia. The Syrian National
Council claims to have over half of its members within Syria (Syrian National Council,
2013), and this is possible due to the porous borders in neighboring countries and also with the oppositions experience in navigating security forces. The Syrian National Council is still seen by some within the Syrian opposition as an outsider party. This problem is shared by the National Council which was shown by the Free Syrian Army’s rejection of the previous election of former prime minister of the National Council Ghassan Hitto (Barnard, 2013). Some claimed that Mr. Hitto should have been elected by popular vote. The credibility problem arose again in May 2013, when a letter written jointly by rebel leaders in Syria, accused the National Coalition of being controlled by outsiders while also failing in general. In response, the National Coalition elected Ahmad Jarba (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013).

The National Coalition and the Syrian National Council’s “outsider” reputation detracts from their ability to perform successfully and more importantly, to avoid the power vacuum they aimed to stop. The recent acceptance to attend Geneva 2 may further distance the National Council from Syrian rebels; however, the National Coalition stipulated that the Assad government is not allowed to attend, which makes Geneva 2 unlikely and purposeless (Syrian National Coalition agrees to attend Geneva peace talks, 2013).

Also under the National Coalition’s umbrella is the Local Coordination Committees. The LCC is network within Syria for ordinary protestors that organized local peaceful initial protests were peaceful with the hopes that Assad would be accountable to the populace (The Vision of the Local Coordination Committees on International Protection, 2011). It currently has representatives to the Revolutionary Council of the Syrian
Opposition Council and is supported by the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army (*Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition*, 2013).

The Muslim Brotherhood acts within the National Coalition and its subsets, while also within its own devices. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Syria in 1946. The group continued to organize and act politically, even while being officially banned and targeted after acts of resistance against government rule under measures such as Law 49 (Rubin, 2010, p. 78). Like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood did under Mubarak, it unofficially participated in parliament and called for political pluralism. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has retained relevancy even after the 1979 Aleppo Artillery Academy incident and the retributive actions of the government in the 1982 Hama massacres. The Muslim Brotherhood’s relevancy was displayed in 2005 when elements of the Syrian opposition reached out to the Muslim Brotherhood to be part of Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change (Rubin, 2010, pp. 83-84). The true extent of its organizational capability is hard to display given its necessary level of secrecy, however, radical Islamic groups like Hamas and Hezbollah model the Muslim Brotherhood’s use of da’wa through Islamic Service Institutions, which is an important vehicle for political proselytizing (Roy, pp. 22-26). The Brotherhood’s established zakat collection outside of Syria will allow it to draw in needed funding from Muslim donors in the Gulf, namely Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and expatriate supporters in Europe. Some of the group’s main tenants have been to regain the Golan for Syria, to establish a Palestinian state and also to implement shari’a nationally; however, the latter of these was rescinded as political necessity dictated. It later became anti sectarian as

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92 The 1979 Artillery Academy incident was the killing of roughly 80 Alawite officers at the hands of Army officers in the Muslim Brotherhood (Collelo, 1987).
was reiterated in documents like the Covenant of National Honor for Political Action (Rubin, 2010, pp.81-83). This was implemented recently with the announcement that it would allow non-Muslim Syrians to be part of the party.

As it is reinventing itself, the Muslim Brotherhood will now be known in Arabic as al Wa’ad, or the Promise, and will be known internationally as the National Constitution and Freedom Party (Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood to announce political party, 2013). The new party will be comprised of 1/3 Muslim Brothers, 1/3 Islamists, 1/3 liberal and varying nationalist political figures with a Catholic priest as the party’s deputy (Syria’s Muslim Brotherhood to announce political party, 2013). Although they initially were reticent to join an opposition that was fully engaged against the government, they are now fully committed. They are supporting, but not officially linked, to Durou al-Thawra, an armed group that operates in Idlib and Hama (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013). The new Wa’ad party is established politically and logistically, with leadership base in Turkey. It did not support a Western military strike which was contrary to the Syrian National Council’s position (Amer, 2013). According to Talal Salman, the Wa’ad is at the forefront of the fight for power in Syria (Salman, 2013).

The National Council represents all Syrians so long as they are against the Assad regime. Alawite Tawfiq Dunia said that, “The Syrian regime is not an Alawite sectarian regime ... the Alawite sect was and is being held hostage by the regime (Laessing, 2013).” The Syrian National Council member said this as he called for Alawite members to defect from the military and government. There have been defections from the upper

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93 The Wa’ad member is unnamed as of 12 November, 2013.
echelon of the Syrian government while there has also been a steady flow of civilians fleeing Syria; however the National Council has also taken social services under its umbrella to meet needs other than official diplomacy and warfare.

Under the Syrian Opposition Coalition banner, the Ngo’s working to rebuild the state are: the Syrian Emergency Task Force, The Syrian Expatriate Organization, and United for a Free Syria, Syrian American Council, and the Syrian American Alliance. All of these groups are political advocacy groups and are heavily pushing for American assistance. The former two groups are also dealing with aid from technical NGO’s like: Syrian Relief and Development, Syrian American Medical Society, Muslims Without Borders, and the Sunrise Foundation. These groups are all based in the US and send aid, e.g medical supplies or money, to pay municipal workers, to the political action groups above them. The above groups then take aid, salaries, and workers into Syria through contacts within the Local Coordination Committee, Local Governance Councils, the Supreme Council of Syrian Revolution, and the Syrian Revolution General Commission (Anonymous, 2013). These types of operations were outlined in” The Day After Project” by the United States Institute of Peace (The Day After Project, 2013). Further outlined by the United States Institute of Peace, is the priority of aiding in programs that execute the rule of law and justice, which needs to be a primary goal so outside agitators cannot bring division, or groups like al-Nusra to bring their perverted form of justice into the streets.

Another major political body is the National Coordination Committee. The National Coordination Committee, also known as the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change, is not under the National Council political umbrella. It is taking a different tact
in the fight for regime change: non-violence. The National Coordination Committee is non-sectarian organization made up of roughly 16 left leaning parties, three Kurdish parties, and local activists (*Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition*, 2013). It was founded in September of 2011. According to the BBC, the National Coordination Committee wants the regime removed through dialogue after a ceasefire is in place. It is a non-violent group; however, it does recognize the Free Syrian Army as a major component of the revolution. Its priorities are the safety of civilians, accomplishment of the revolution, democratic resolution to the “Kurdish national case,” and finally, the protection Syrian territorial and social integrity (*Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition*, 2013). It was at the forefront for the call to end Article 8 of the constitution, which stated that only Baath party members were allowed to be President. It ultimately wants a plural democratic state.

The National Coordination Committee is a nationalist organization with the majority of its membership belonging to left leaning parties. It consistently accuses the Syrian National Council of being controlled by Turkey and the Gulf nations. It also has rejected foreign military intervention since the beginning of the conflict, while condemning jihadist strikes against minorities (Abd, 2013; Mouzahem, 2013). The National Coordination Committee is politically recognized as a legitimate representative to the Syrian people by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States, France, and Great Britain; however, relations have been consistently strained due to varied views concerning the correct approach in relations to the Assad government (*National Coordination Body for Democratic Change*, 2012).
Finally there are the Kurdish Syrian Parties. These parties are autonomous in regards to the conflict as the opposition refuses to acknowledge that the Kurds are a politically distinct people within Syria; however, their use of military force is generally constrained to Kurdish areas as they People’s Defense Units maintain Kurdish security. The People’s Defense Units, or YPG, are under the People’s Democratic Party’s, or PYD, control (Pollock, 2012; Van Wilgenberg, 2013). These units ejected government troops in July of 2012 (Pollock, 2012). The PYD is aligned with the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers Party. The Kurdistan Workers Party is known for attacks against the Turkish government, which were previously supported by the Assad government (Van Wilgenberg, 2013). It is within these events that political differences have raised with the newly formed the Kurdish National Council. The Kurdish National Council is led by Massoud Barzani. The Kurdish National Council and People’s Democratic Party have aimed to cease infighting. Infighting came about due to issues over the Kurdistan Workers Party attacks against Turkey. Infighting has also risen due Workers Party and attacks against current ally PUK, or the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. It is important to note that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan still maintains cordial relations with Iran (Van Wilgenberg, 2013). Due to these factors, Syrian Kurdish political parties have been divided over the conflict both inside of Syria and also within the greater Kurdistan Regional Government; however, the Syrian Kurdish groups are protecting their territory (Chomani, 2013). As of the 12th of November, 2013, the People’s Democratic Party’s, or

94 Also known as Popular Protection Units.
95 This group is comprised of approximately 15 Syrian Kurdish parties.
96 This group is new in relative terms. It was formed in 2011 by KRG Massoud Barzani and the Syrian National Council.

Syria’s political opposition is earmarked with division and questions of credibility. Unless the international community forges a force to either peace impose, or peace keep, the heaviest of consequences will continue to lay with those actively fighting in the country.

*Armed Rebel Groups in Syria*

Although Locke’s reference to the use of force against those that intend you harm is carried out through via soft power by opposition political parties, those executing this force in the most literal sense are the armed elements of the opposition. According to the British Broadcasting Corporation, there are roughly 100,000 rebel fighters who make up nearly 1000 groups with various alliances and enemies (*Syria crisis: Guide to Armed and Political Opposition*, 2013). The majority of the armed opposition is Syria aims to take control of the country region by region; however, the armed groups also vary in their political ideologies, which can make the execution of force and rule more or less popular to the population and also to the outside world. The difference in political ideologies spans from secular, Sunni Islamist, and finally, to Sunni Jihadist. Within the Free Syrian Army, ideology between units varies from politically secular to varying degrees of Islamist. Finally, there is also a foreign element of Sunni Jihadists, albeit a small number, operating in the country which further inhibits the opposition’s goals.⁹⁷

⁹⁷The difference between Islamist and Jihadist in this respect is that the Sunni Islamists are fighting under Islamist character and principals, their goals are interlaced with Syrian nationalism. Sunni Jihadists are fighting this war in the hopes of introducing a Sunni caliphate to the region. The Jihadist groups discussed are Islamic fundamentalists that aim to reintroduce Islamic law, or shari’a, to Syria and the region over. These groups in particular are linked to al Qaeda.
The general opposition is run under the Syrian Opposition Coalition’s banner. These groups are under the Supreme Military Command, which is comprised by the Free Syrian Army and the High Military Council. The High Military Council is composed of defected high ranking members of the Syrian Army like its Chief of staff General Salim Idris. The Free Syrian Army loosely answers to the High Military Council and is composed of defected soldiers and civilian volunteers giving it needed experience, knowledge of the military practices of the regime, and area knowledge. Its actual composition is horizontally structured, as there are regular FSA units spread across five fronts in Syria: Northern (Aleppo and Idlib), Eastern (Raqqa, Deir al-Zour and Hassaka), Western (Hama, Latakia and Tartus), Central (Homs and Rastan) and Southern (Damascus, Deraa and Suwaida) (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013). These five regions are split between the Supreme Military Council senior officers and are executed through the following Free Syrian Army brigades: Northern Storm, Ahrar Souria, Martyrs of Syria brigade, SILF- Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Farouq Brigades, the Islamic Farouq Brigades, Front, Liwa al-Tawhid, Liwa al-Fath, Liwa al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, and the Deir al-Zour Revolutionaries' Council (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013). It is important to reiterate that this is not one homogenous group, which makes the level of cooperation, and in some cases mere tolerance, vary with these brigades and jihadist elements of the opposition. Currently it is said that the Free Syrian Army and the opposition as a whole has taken control of the majority of the country taken over; however, it is contested in the north by foreign jihadist groups and al Nusra (Assad only controls 30 percent of Syria: defected

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98 Also known as the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, or Syrian National Coalition.
99 The SILF has the largest force in the SMC’s arsenal. It boasts nearly 40,000 men.
Free Syrian Army units work alongside of any group that stands against the government; however as in any power vacuum there are elements that have divergent interests.

There are also paramilitary groups that remain independent of political affiliation within the opposition. Groups like the Syrian Islamic Front, or SIF, maintain political flexibility and cooperate with both Free Syrian Army brigades and also jihadist units. The Syrian Islamic Front maintains nearly 40 thousand fighters under a hardline Syrian Islamist banner. Other independent groups such as ansar al Sham, Asala wa al-Tanmiya, Afhad al Rasoul, Jaysh al Tawhud, and Mujahidi al Sham Brigade. These groups, and several others, collectively possess roughly 50,000 men and are displaced around all provinces of the country (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013). They range politically from hardline Syrian nationalist Islamists, to moderate Islamists in Doura al Thawra, and finally, to secular democrats in the National Unity Brigades (Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013).

There is also the newly formed Islamic Front. The Islamic Front formed in November 23rd 2013 as a means to fight government and pro regime foreign forces more effectively in Qara and Qalmoun (Key Syrian rebel groups merge, 2013). Although the Islamic Front states it will not work with the Syrian National Coalition, some of its members, like Liwa al-Tawhid, have been affiliated with the Free Syrian Army. Its ultimate political goal, after defeating the Assad government, is an Islamic Syrian state. The Islamic Front claims it will uphold dhimmi status as required for non-Muslim citizens under Islamic law in a future state (Syrian Rebel Front Unveils its Vision for State, 2013). At the same time, the newly formed Islamic Front also calls for the praise of the
foreign “brothers who have come to protect us,” while also marginalizing al Qaeda groups (Syrian Rebel Front Unveils its Vision for State, 2013; Weiss, 2013). The group has also said it is treasonous to collaborate with members of the Assad government (Hassan, 2013). The Syrian Islamic Front, Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Kurdish Islamic Front and Jaysh al Islam are all now part of the Islamic Front, which makes its forces range between 45-60 thousand men and are spread across the country (Weiss, 2013; Zellin, 2013).

There are also groups that have political goals that supersede Syrian national sovereignty. The Kurds and Jabhat al Nusra, or the victory front, operates with political goals that are contrary to Syrian sovereignty.

The Kurds political goal of an autonomous Kurdish region in north eastern Syria was announced on the 12th of November, 2013 (Syrian Kurds declare autonomous government, 2013). The Popular Protection Units, or YPG, is under the political control of Democratic Unity Party, or PYD. This fighting force has defended its territory against all comers from both the opposition and the government. Its most heated battles have come in consequence to firefights with jihadist groups like the Jabhat al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham. In one case, after a ceasefire had been reached between the jihadists and the Kurds, the YPG entered Alouk in Ras al Ain. The Popular Protection Units moved in and protected local Syrian Arab residents from the jihadist execution of rule (Wilgenburg, 2013). One Kurdish fighter said of the inhabitants in the Alouk area said, “We Kurds see the Arabs as brothers. The Kurds have always protected the Arabs, but the Arabs didn’t protect us. Now they build their own community. If they want help from us, we will help them.” The Kurds possess roughly 15,000 known
fighters (*Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition*, 2013). The Kurds have also been taking territory that neighbors their territory in the north.

Jabhat al Nusra is a Sunni Salafist militia that was founded in the fall of 2011. It has 5-10 thousand fighters most of which are Syrian born, but in reference to its composition its leaders boast to have, “*brothers from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, Lebanon, Turkmenistan, France and even from Britain* (Sherlock, 2012). The group was claimed by Ayman al Zawahiri as al Qaeda’s sole affiliate in Syria as of 9 November (*Al-Qaeda’s Zawahiri disbands main faction operating in Syria*, 2013). The group maintains a goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in the Levant (Jabhat al Nusra, n.d.). The use and training of foreign fighters, its ideology, and ties have landed it on the majority of Western nations list of terrorist groups; however, the group can be very popular in Syria (*Military consultant says half of fighters in Syria are militant Islamists*, 2013). The reasoning for their popularity is rooted in is their effectiveness, cohesion, motivation, stabilization of towns, social services, and also in the detail that the bulk of their membership is comprised of ordinary Syrians (Hassan, 2013). Due to these factors, there have been large waves of defectors from the Free Syrian Army such as the defection of “Division 11” in Raqqa in the 3rd week of September (Weiss, 2013; Black & Mahmoud, 2013). Al Nusra is well equipped as its’ weapons and funding are likely imported by al Qaeda’s Iraq branch and other foreign sponsors. Finally, they have frequent clashes with the opposition, regime, and Kurds alike. Even in light of that, they are willing to work with others on a case by case basis. As of the 26th of September, al Nusra joined an alliance with several other groups to include Islamist members of the Supreme Military Council affiliates, to work together in bringing down the regime under an unspecified
Islamist Framework (Gebeily, 2013). Currently, al Nusra fits the profile of those jihadist groups that are solely concentrated on the “Near Enemy.” Fawaz Gerges makes a distinction between jihadist groups that focus on the “Near Enemy” as those groups that are at war with their own domestic governments who they see as apostates. Although al Nusra is aligned with al Qaeda, and loathes the West, its current target is Syrian secular rule, as opposed to the base of al Qaeda whose target is primarily the West, or “Far Enemy” (Gereges, 2005).

Finally, there are jihadist groups that have no political loyalties to Syria. Groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/Levant, or ISIS/ISIL, and Jaysh al-Muhajirin wa al-Ansar have come to Syria to fight for the establishment of transnational Islamic rule. These groups range near from 5,000 to 6,000 men. As of the 9th of November, Ayman al Zawahiri called for Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/Levant to be remove itself from Syria and to return its full attention to Iraq (Al-Qaeda’s Zawahiri disbands main faction operating in Syria, 2013). These groups have targeted, or at least fought, all other groups Syria and have disrupted Syrian attempts, especially that of al Nusra, to work against the regime, which is bad for al Qaeda’s reputation. They have been known for sectarian killings. In August, the ISIS/ISIL and Jaish al-Muhajireen Wal-Ansar executed 67 pro-government Alawite civilians and took 200 others hostage from villages in a coastal area of Latakia (Syria rebels executed 67 Alawite villagers, HRW says, 2013). They have been successful in taking control of towns, which is where the friction between the foreign groups and local Syrians stems from. The tipping point may have been the beheading of Youssef al-Abbas an officer in Liwa al Tawhid group. Liwas al

100 This changes its name back to the Islamist state of Iraq.
Tawhid is allied with al Nusra and the Supreme Military Council (Gebeily, 2013). Foreign groups like ISIS/ISIL are comprised of Iraqis, Saudis, the Yemeni, Chechens, and Pakistanis to name a few of the many nationalities in their ranks. Many of these fighters are veterans of the most recent Afghan and Iraq insurgencies against the West and any group deemed an enemy (Weiss, 2013; Syria crisis: Guide to armed and political opposition, 2013). These foreign groups have shown no sign of leaving Syria (Expert: About 600 Saudi fighters are in Syria, 2013). On November 9th, the Islamic State in the Levant raided a wedding in Aleppo and warned the wedding party that if music were invited back, the person responsible for the invitation would be arrested for being immoral (Al-Qaeda in Syria raids wedding party, warns against music and singing, 2013).

**The Opposition’s Execution in Theory and in Action**

John Locke’s reasoning for one to enter a commonwealth is to collectively protect private property. The Assad government’s history of economic shortcomings, utter disregard for civil rights, and patrimonial privilege are evident. As the Syrian people began to protest the Assad regime invaded the property of the Syrian people. The true tipping point was in the use of collective punishment of the populace in the decimation of towns. In Locke’s view, “The legislative acts against the trust reposed in them, when they endeavor to invade the property of the subject, and to make themselves, or any part of the community, masters, or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties, or fortunes of the people (Locke, 1690, pp.201-202). The use of collective punishment against and complete destruction of towns across the nation by the Assad government has had highly

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101 This officer’s actual role in al Tawhid is disputed between having been an intelligence and financial officer.
detrimental effects. In Homs, there are sections of the city that are 60-70% destroyed or unsuitable for living (Two thirds of Syria’s Homs rebel area destroyed, NGO group says, 2013). The use of artillery and the air force to collectively punish the population has pushed the opposition from adversarial to hostile.

For the opposition, this hostility through the persistence of all Syrian parties has brought the opposition into rebellion. Locke views rebellion positively. Locke states:

*The end of government is the good of mankind; and which is best for mankind, that the people should be always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny, or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed, when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power, and employ it for the destruction, and not the preservation of the properties of their people* (1690, pp. 205-6).

With the opposition having turned to armed resistance as a primary measure to attain its objectives, the level of security in Syria has dropped to a negligible sum. Within this power vacuum, those left in neighborhoods rely on the opposition force holding the territory to protect them. The level of protection and style of law enforcement have varied pending the inhabiting group’s political and ideological foundation.

Within many of the rebel held towns there is a sense of liberation from the Assad government; however, what they share in spirit, they are lacking in political cohesion. This has resulted in multiple independent communities. Locke names all leaders of independent states as such, “whether they are, or are not, in league with others: for it is not every compact that puts an end to the state of nature between men, but only this one of agreeing together mutually to enter into one community, and make one body politic
The current communities are attempting to protect life, liberty, and property, but they are at times independent of other communities. Given that the commanders are varying in political alliances and ideological allegiances there has been a heavy amount of friction both within the opposition and also between the groups and the populace in their spheres of control.

The execution of security in independent communities in Syria has caused rifts in the opposition. While there is growing cohesion amongst opposition communities, especially in the south, there have been some cases where serious rifts have highlighted the political difference between the ruler and the ruled (Weiss, 2013). The concepts of freedom and liberation are highly relative within a security vacuum where the rule of law is held by force. As Locke sees it, “where it is necessary, destroy things noxious to them, and so may bring such evil on any one, who hath transgressed that law, as may make him repent the doing of it, and thereby deter him, and by his example others, from doing the like mischief” (1690, p. 108). Locke speaks simply about the removal of tyranny, but the inherent value in terms like liberty and tyranny is subjected to who is ruling.

As was historically shown, the relative nature of interpretation can be highly combustible in a security vacuum. The fight for control over towns like Raqqa, Ras al Ain, Maaloula, Aleppo, and several others has highlighted these rifts in the seizure of territory and the execution of law and justice after control is taken. These fights have also shown the attempts of groups to “destroy things noxious to them.” Groups like al Nusra, ISIS/ISIL, Jaish al-Muhajireen Wal-Ansar, ahrar al Sham have been instituting shari’a in towns they have taken control of. The level of tolerance for local custom
varies from group to group. The Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham over the last few years appears to be the most intolerant of groups operating in Syria. In Raqqa, “Religious Committees” have instituted laws that they have formulated from their strict interpretations of Sunni Islam (Hassan, 2013). The enforcement of their interpretation of halal standards in their areas of control have affected locals daily life from clothing, to the banning of music, and even with non-permitted Muslim fundraising (Hassan, 2013; Al-Qaeda in Syria raids wedding party, warns against music and singing, 2013). The punishment for non-Islamic actions ranges from verbal warnings, to physical beatings, and finally, in extreme cases, death. In Raqqa and Aleppo, there has been a growing sense of discontent by civilian citizens to the more extreme Islamist styles of rule. Ahmad of Raqqa Youth Coordination, a grassroots movement under the Local Coordination Committee, said, “We went out in protest on Al-Wadi Street under the slogan of ‘pre-liberation’ in an attempt to remind everyone of the principles of the revolution for which we took to the streets (Hassan, 2013).” The local citizenry in towns such as this are pleased to have gotten rid of the regime as they believe they have the ability to start a better life, but many are displeased as some feel that they have traded one group of tyrants for another (Hassan, 2013).

Conversely, the Free Syrian Army has taken a different approach by using a level of deference to locals. The Free Syrian Army is currently holding controlling an area spanning from Damascus to Dera’a. According to Michael Weiss, the Free Syrian Army has been effective in the south of the country because it has integrated its power with representatives from local communities and tribal leaders (Weiss, 2013). The value
assigned to concepts like life, liberty, and property vary, which the Free Syrian Army is respecting in the execution of rule.

The Kurds are largely unaffected internally the north east of the country. The north east of Syria is predominantly Kurdish and is protected by the People’s Defense Units, or YPG. Internally, the Kurdish system of rule has remained constant as most mechanisms were in place prior to the Arab Spring; however, there are stark differences between the Democratic Unity Party, who proclaimed autonomy on the 12th of November, and the Kurdish National Council (Syrian Kurds declare autonomous government, 2013). This is due to a few crucial differences. The first is resulting from the Kurdish National Council’s rapprochement with Turkey and Turkey’s use of Salafist jihadists as proxies in Syria, which is disparaged by the Democratic Union Party and their ally the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. The Kurdistan Workers Party has been at war with Turkey for decades over Kurdish autonomy in Turkey (Zaman, 2013). It is also resulting from the Democratic Union Party’s autonomy announcement, which is now deemed hostile by the Syrian National Council (Syria opposition says armed Kurds 'hostile', 2013).

Finally there is the issue of fighting for control within the opposition. Locke states, “And hence it is, that he who attempts to get another man into his absolute power, does thereby put himself into a state of war with him (1690, p.112).” Inner opposition workings mirror this statement. Although, there are trends within the opposition to get away from an uncoordinated state, the various members are fighting for land as there is the opportunity to do so. All parties within Syria are highly vulnerable.
The Kurds have had multiple clashes with al Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant, but have held their territory \textit{(At least 41 killed in Syria Kurd-jihadist fighting, 2013)}. Many of these skirmishes are resulting from jihadists’ movements from Turkey through Kurdish land (Zaman, 2013). The jihadist groups have fought the Kurds multiple times during the conflict. There have been attempts to establish ceasefires that continually fail as both sides are attempting to take territory. The People’s Defense Units took sections of the “Arab Belt” in mid-October this year. \(^{102}\) Subsequently they took the other half of city of the Ras al Ain this fall from elements of al Nusra and The Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant. The Kurdish fighters were well received by local Arab residents as they prefer the Kurds to the patterns rule and instances of looting by the jihadist elements (Wilgenburg, 2013).

Chafing is also occurring between al Nusra, nationalist groups, and the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant across the north of the country and in parts of Damascus. Islamist groups of all types have fought against the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant over territory and rule across the nation. Friction between all Syrian parties and the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant was part of the reasoning behind the Islamist alliance in late September, 2013 (Gebeily, 2013). The sense of distrust for the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham/ Levant is based on its imposition of rule over Syrians and most importantly, for its inability to restrain itself. This group has alienated itself with its indiscriminate killing even of those it’s supposed to be allied with; however, at present, it has the force to hold small areas.

\(^{102}\) The Arab Belt is an area where the government displaced 140, 000 Kurds from the Hassekeh province and gave their villages to Syrian Arabs. This was an official policy mandated in 1973 (Wilgenburg, 2013)
Analysis of the Syrian Opposition

The Syrian opposition was founded on the need for a commonwealth as a means to protect life, liberty, and property. As Locke notes, when a father, like a paternal power, does not guard, nourish, and educate his children, then he loses all power over them (1690, p. 131). The Syrian government lost its legitimacy as a paternal power years back; however, the Syrian opposition needed a thrust, which was provided within the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring showed Syrians that Middle Eastern autocracies were vulnerable. This was clear not just to the protestors, but also to members of the Syrian security apparatus who subsequently defected to the opposition, which lent the oppositions efforts a great deal of technical knowledge and credibility. The opposition however has been plagued with problems that are inherent in politically unstable environments.

The chafing within the domestic opposition and armed groups is a byproduct of the opposition’s success and its subsequent power vacuum (Assad only controls 30 percent of Syria: defected prime minister, 2013). Currently the Syrian opposition has nearly surrounded the Assad government at its power bases by cutting off many support routes; however, without taking these areas the opposition will never actualize itself into a state. The opposition has great deal of overlap between elements, but it is within the few present divisions which handicap its offensive effort. These divisions are also opening new fronts in the Syrian War. Attempts to consolidate power between multiple armed and political units, whose affiliations and abilities vary, have created a myriad of problems. The largest problem resulting from the Syrian security vacuum is the Islamic State is Iraq and Shams ability to control territory. The opposition does have a long way
to go, but it is very early in the conflict. There will be years for the opposition to develop
while it fights the Syrian government for land and legitimacy.

The Syrian opposition is doing its best to capitalize on the opportunity to remove
President Assad and the Syrian government. Within the last few months the opposition
is showing cohesive trends within the political and military spheres. The ability of
nationalist Islamist groups, like the Syrian Islamic Front and newly formed Islamic
Front, to work both with extremist Syrian groups and the Free Syrian Army under the
Supreme Military Commands control is a pragmatic trend. The Islamic Front’s ability
to work with both sides creates a mild consolidation of power as a means of operation
against the government. These cohesive trends are attempting to keep anti-Assad
fighters tacitly connected against Assad and also the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham.
That is not to say that the Free Syrian Army and al Nusra will work together, but it does
provide mediated channels between al Nusra and the Free Syrian Army brigades, which
can aid in dealing with counterproductive inner opposition conflicts that are present.

Al Nusra is growing in strength. This trend of growth may be indicative of al Nusra’s
lower ranks not being as ideologically extreme as their commanders. Al Nusra’s ability
to recruit stems from its maturity as a fighting group. The group is well funded, well
equipped, disciplined, highly motivated, able to provide social services, and is taking
territory, which is enticing to less successful Syrian opposition militia members. Like
Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Muslim Brotherhood before it, a portion of al Nusra’s

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103 The umbrella group Syrian Islamic Front and the Islamic Front share Ahrar al Sham and Liwa al-Haq as members. The Syrian Islamic Front, Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, Kurdish Islamic Front and Jaysh al Islam are all under taken into the Islamic Front (Weiss, 2013).
popularity is rooted in its local social services, which are lacking amongst the overall opposition.

The Free Syrian Army has also remained an effective force having drawn experienced fighters from citizenry, and also former members of the Syrian security apparatus. It also maintains the ability to draw from a larger regional and Western aid pool, which gives it quality equipment and training. Its ability to receive aid from the West is also its Achilles heel. This is where the Islamic Front is attempting to separate itself. By maintaining a nationalist Islamist character, the Islamic Front will be able to fight and grow without making itself a target for other opposition groups like the Islamic State or al Nusra. The ability of nationalist groups to act as mediators between the politically secular groups and Syrian extremist groups can aid in future coordination attacks against the regime, which are needed in Damascus, Latakia, Qalmoun, and against other government assets. The ability of these independent nationalist groups helps to maintain the Syrian character of the conflict as they have aided in marginalizing the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham (Gebeily, 2013). The level of Islamic character within the opposition is problematic for future secular rule and relations with the West, which will in turn further handicap the armed oppositions’ relations with the Syrian National Coalition.

The Syrian National Coalition and Syrian National Council are politically weak for multiple reasons, but the most important reason is that they are viewed as an external party in the conflict, which is detrimental to their credibility. Currently, there are numerous political cartoons made by Syrian opposition members that portray the external opposition living in luxury while the domestic opposition carries the full
Distrust for the Syrian National Coalition is found in the National Coordination Committee, the recently unified Islamist Front, and Free Syrian Army. The latest disagreement is over the Syrian National Coalition’s and Supreme Military Council’s acceptance to attend the Geneva 2 conference in January, 2014. The Free Syrian Army, as with the entire armed section of the opposition, has vowed to continue fighting regardless of the conference’s outcome. The Islamic Front is calling participation in Geneva 2 traitorous. The pursuance of domestic credibility while also lobbying the West and regional powers has placed the Syrian National Coalition between 2 fires. The Syrian National Coalition needs the support of outsider powers for fiscal and diplomatic support, but this is pointless if they cannot appease domestic security concerns. This outside in approach to seizing power is difficult; however, there are signs that members of the external opposition are attempting to develop as the need to attain power dictates they do so. The Wa’ad party’s announcement to accept members of all religious backgrounds to include Islamists and Christians is an earmark of pragmatism. Its success remains to be seen; however, the Wa’ad party’s history within the Muslim Brotherhood contains a great deal of experience.

The Syrian National Coalition’s has made finances one if it’s top priorities. The Syrian National Coalition needs to bridge their reputation deficit through their contacts in the Local Coordination Councils, nationalist Islamists, while attempting to attain the support of the National Coordination Committee as it is based in Syria. The Syrian National Council has made successes to import salaries, social services, and other aid through

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104 Although there are multiple cartoons of this theme, there is one in specific of an internal opposition member carrying a boulder, which represents the Syrian revolution on his back. On top of the boulder is an external opposition member with cheering the weary and bloodied internal opposition member on. To view visit http://zamanalwsl.net/en/uploads/ecddc787e85dd53adc4f25e9.jpg

105 This referred to unification is the one that took place in September of 2013.
gains made with the West and in the region, but this has not shown to be enough. The Syrian National Coalitions use of the Wa’ad party has aided in this initiative. The Muslim Brotherhood, now Wa’ad party, has years of experience in surreptitious aid. Given its new formation, the Wa’ad party will be able to use its external zakat collection and its relations with foreign powers to aid in social services in Syria. Poor economic distribution within Syria was one of the main causes for the revolt, and because of this, economics will remain a litmus test for of the Syrian National Coalition’s success as international recognition does not alone feed and shelter the Syrian people.

The Syrian opposition as a whole is merely a series of components attempting to fill the various voids created in a failed state. Some are focused on hard power, while others are focused on soft power; however, there are small indicators that they are recognizing the importance of the other even in the conflicts infantile stages. This is present in between opposition groups in Syria as they have not been able to overthrow the government; however, there is still little trust for external opposition groups. Given the level of disorder in the country, many groups are highly focused on the seizure of power as it is the only way to begin a commonwealth. The concept of Locke’s commonwealth is nothing more than a union in the name of protecting life, liberty, and property. Syrian opposition groups, including the Kurds, are attempting to consolidate power with varying definitions of liberty.

The apprehensive and militarized setting polarizes the view of the conflict through paranoid participants, a sensationalized media, and misinformation campaigns; however, there are underlying trends toward cooperation based on national, not sectarian, success and safety. If any party wishes to be the sole provider for the Syrian people, it will have
to fully court nationalist Islamist groups and other independent groups, who have large numbers of fighters and possess renown in their communities. To consolidate and court the independent groups and Syrian civilians, the larger external and internal bodies will respectively have to provide money, social services, weapons, and political representation with Syrian character. Currently, there is no group with both internal and international recognition, but the opposition in its many forms is attempting to consolidate itself.

**The Syrian Conflicts Product to Date**
The current conflict in Syria has created a failed state. Currently there are approximately 120,000 dead, over a million internally displaced, and over 2 million refugees. There is no sole Syrian authority that can physically control all of Syria. There is no single power that can collectively lead the Syrian people and provide it with social services. Finally, there is no Syrian party that is able to interact with full recognition of all of the international community. The Syrian government’s lack of internal legitimacy and the opposition’s lack of cohesion do however share two similarities: motivation and capability.

All sides of the conflict are highly driven to maintain and take control of territory, but neither can do this alone. All sides need soft and hard power imported by non-Syrian parties. The need for military aid in the form of personnel and hardware is needed by both the regime and the opposition. The need for diplomatic recognition and lobbying to the international community on behalf of their allied party is also a necessity. Finally, both sides are unable to provide social services to their respective civilian populaces.

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106 The pillars of a Failed State were taken from The International Committee of the Red Cross’s website and Princeton University’s definition.
without outside assistance. Without civil aid, neither side will retain any semblance of legitimacy.

Due to these needs, there is a heavy reliance on regional powers by all Syrians. The allowance of aid lends a heavy degree of weight to their successes and failures as a nation, but aid is not produced as a result of the idealistic nature of regional powers. The foreign policies of the involved regional powers, has produced differing levels of commitment based on the risks and rewards embedded in their engagement in the Syrian conflict. Like Syrian groups in their respective territories, each regional power must manage the threats to their nation’s well-being. As Locke states, “it being reasonable and just, I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction” (Locke, 1690, p.112).” Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and Iran all have varying management styles in their pursuit of security and the maintenance of power.

**Regional Powers: How are the Syrian Conflict and Regional Power Connected?**

The Syrian conflict is making a having a massive impact on the Middle East. The current balance of power in the region is being battled for across the region by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, Turkey and foreign non-state organizations. The style of engagement varies with each nation’s foreign policy goals and the amount of risk they are willing to assume in the pursuit of. Although attempts to support each nation’s respective ally ranges from surreptitious to overt endeavours, what is shared are a few overlapping concepts: egoism, anarchy, groupism, and power politics (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 131).
Regional Pro- Assad Allies
The Assad government is in a very vulnerable state militarily, politically, and economically. The Pro Assad allies in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hezbollah, the Mahdi Army and other Iraqi offshoots, and several smaller non state groups are working to maintain the power of the Assad government. These political bodies are threatened with losing a major ally in the region. If the Assad government is replaced with a Gulf friendly Syrian administration this could be devastating to the political capacity of each party.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been highly pragmatic in its attempts to further revise the regional Balance of Power. Iranian calls for action in Syria are derived from its national view of a polarized world, which is represented by two sides: the conquering and the conquered (Thaler et. Al, 2010, pp.5-6). The national policy of moqavama dud zolm, or resistance against injustice, is an important element of its nationalism as it provides a zero sum outlook to foreign political fluctuations (Thaler et. Al, 2010, p. 13). 107 Injustice, according to Iran, is continually perpetrated by powers that seek to dominate Iranian nation and its allies (Thaler et. Al, 2010, p. 14). 108 Iran has a history of foreign interference against it both as a nation and in its history as a religious sect which is now nationally institutionalized. Iran draws part of its national identity from the persecution of the Iranian Shia under the Umayyad Caliph Yazid, the Shah of Iran Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and also at the hands of foreigners. The Khomeiniist, or activist version of Shiism, is a departure from the quietest approach found in traditional Shiism, which sets the Iranian theocracy apart in the region (Marcinkowski, 2010,

107 This policy stems from Shia activist teachings.
108 Groupism assumes that politics takes place within and between groups (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150).
The Iranians, as with Hezbollah and other allies, emulate what they see as a revolutionary spirit of the Imam Hussein who was killed in battle in 680 C.E. at the hands of the Umayyad Empire (Norton, 2007, p. 50). This history lends a great deal of weight to the approach of Iranian theocracy. Their character takes on a militant revolutionary identity that seeks retributive, or revisionist, action in an anarchic international system.

In an anarchic system, Iran views many nations with apprehension and contempt, which explains their constant pursuit of security (Thaler et al., 2010, p. 14). Various political interferences in Iranian affairs by Russia, Europe, and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and 20th century have lent to its national identity of the conquered. Further interferences occurred again during the Cold War at the hands of Britain and the United States, or as Iranians know, it “Great Satan.” Since the 1979 revolution, Iran’s apprehension stems from its neighbors. An 8 year war with Iraq decimated Iran. Additionally, Iran also sees Gulf nations as dominating the region politically (US, Israel, Certain Arabs, Al-Qaeda in Consensus on Syria: Nasrallah, 2012). Iran’s anxiety concerning security has multiple reasons. First, Iraq given its proximity continues to be a massive source of instability for Iran. If instability in Syria allows for, as it sees, takfiritst groups to grow, this in turn creates more threats for Iran to contend with. Second, neighboring Gulf nations like Qatar and Saudi Arabia have a track record of supporting groups that work against Iranian interests and its’ allies, notably in Lebanon and Iraq (al Rasheed, 2010, p. 240). Third, the Gulf has a long history of positive relations with the US, which is problematic.

Traditional Shiism was not instituted in the state. Although there is a hierarchy in this sect of Islam, the senior religious leaders could only become official Marja I Taqilid, or source to imitate/follow, if they were recognized by students and followers. The state instituted version of Shiism assigns value, character, and federal hierarchy to the belief system (Marcinkowski, 2010, pp.103-134).
due to the US’s involvement in the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq and with the US’s support of the Shah.\textsuperscript{110} Fourth, the US is also an ally of Israel, or “Little Satan,” who is an enemy of Iran. Given the high level of perceived threats against Iran and its interests, it seeks to dictate its safety within the region.

Due to the breaches in security over the years, Iran is taking a similar offensive approach to that of the Soviet Union after World War II as a means of insuring security. Iran has expanded its power regionally through traditional soft power in diplomacy. It has created an, “Axis of Resistance,” as part of its propaganda campaign and alliance system (\textit{Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran agree to ‘axis of resistance’}, 2013).\textsuperscript{111} It has also made alliances with political parties and religious groups in Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq, and Yemen. Currently, it is attempting to make diplomatic rapprochements with regional powers and also the West; however, these developments are undeveloped. At the hard power level, its “exportation of the revolution,” to nations in the region, is a means of creating, or assisting, friendly political bodies, especially paramilitaries, which assist Iran in tilting the regional balance of power in its favor (Thaler et. Al, 2010, p.p.13-14).

Iran is also employing a high level of power politics in the Syrian conflict as it is principally driven by self-interest in chaos (Donnelly, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p. 150). As with most nations, offensive political and military efforts need a casus belli to justify its actions. In Bashir Nafia’s view, Iran at times uses the pretext of a sectarian war against it to execute its geopolitical initiatives (\textit{Sectarianism}, 2013). Initially Ayatollah Khamenei believed that to emerge from isolation and assure its

\textsuperscript{110} Although there are current rifts in this relationship, there are no signs that they will be severed.

\textsuperscript{111} The Axis of Resistance is composed of Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria (\textit{Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran agree to ‘axis of resistance’}, 2013)
regional security, Iran had to limit the exportation of the revolution; however, following the US Invasion of Iraq and the disorder created by the Arab Spring, Iran took a more aggressive stance in deploying the Revolutionary Guard to the region (Thaler et. Al, 2010, p. 16). Former President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad felt that Iran should fill the security vacuum created by political upheavals in the region (Thaler et. Al, 2010, pp.17-19). This effort was done in concert with Bashir al Assad who supported Sunni militants’ deployments in Iraq against the United States. From Syria these groups fought American forces, former Iraqi Baathists, and selected Sunni groups (Hassan, 2013). The Iranian state has lent unflinching support to the Assad government. This support is being given as Syria is not only an ally, but a geographically important area that allows the maintenance of its other regional interests.

If Iran is to lose Syria as an allied nation, this would be highly detrimental to Iranian security. Iran and Syria have been allied since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Although this relationship was briefly strained during the Iran Iraq War and the Lebanese civil war, this alliance was strengthened both after the Ta’if agreement in Lebanon, and also during former American President George W Bush’s tenure (Rabil, 2006). Current Syrian instability compliments threats not just from its periphery in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf, but unto extended Iranian interests. A contiguous line of instability can be drawn from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea as proxy fights have flared up in Lebanon again. This highlighted in the bombing of the Iranian embassy in November, 2013 (Beirut: 23 killed in Iran embassy bombings, 2013). Lebanon is a considerably important nation in the fight for the regional balance of power (Hirst, 2010). As a result, Iran pours a large amount of aid to the Southern end of the country (Norton, 2009). Given Lebanon
and Syria’s incestuous origins and history, the ability of Iran to maintain a friendly ally in Syria will allow Iran further political maneuverability in Lebanon.

Iran’s relations with Lebanon also stem from its conflict with Israel (Berti & Gleis, 2012, pp.44–45). The Balance of Power theory states, “states will check dangerous concentrations of power by building up by building up their own capabilities” (Wohlfarth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 141).” Instability in Syria affects its “exportation of the revolution” through allies Hamas, and Hezbollah (Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran agree to ‘axis of resistance’, 2013). In more pragmatic terms, Iran uses Lebanon and the Levant, as a base for military and intelligence operations against Iran (Iranian Ambitions to Dominate Politically and Militarily, 2013). Given Iran’s priority in fighting Israel as part of the “Axis of Resistance,” the loss of Syria would be a major blow to its defenses. Iran’s ability to aid Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon’s Hezbollah through arms, economic, and social service support would be handicapped. Ties between Iran and Hamas have already been tested as Hamas supports the Syrian opposition. Hamas also disagrees with Iran’s tentative nuclear deal under the Joint Plan of Action with the P5+1 (Hashem, 2013; al-Ghoul, 2013). To protect itself, Iran’s defensive strategy is in its traditional armed forces and nuclear program as a means of deterrent at home, while its offense is the deploying of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps to train and support Hezbollah and Hamas against Israel (Berti & Gleis, 2012; Totten, 2012, p. 178). Given the vulnerability of arms shipments, Israel has begun targeting shipments through Syria that are claimed to be destined for Hamas and Hezbollah.

\[\text{P5+1 = the Permanent 5 members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany.}\]
which is damaging Iran’s strategy (Syria threatens to hit back after deadly Israel raids, 2013).

Iran has shown a high degree of pragmatism and strategic thinking in dealing with Syria. With the election of the politically moderate President Rowhani, an unnamed source stated, “Syria is a matter of national security and that’s why the president can’t solely manage it. It had to be discussed with the supreme leader, the Revolutionary Guards and the National Security Council (Hashem, 2013).” There are no signs that the Supreme Leader, Revolutionary Guards, or the National Security Council’s support will weaken its support for a friendly Syrian state. Iran has aided Syria militarily with military advisors, material, and economic support. It has supported Syria in diplomatic efforts by further courting the Russian and Chinese diplomatic corps (Parasiliti, 2013). This served to protect Syria from any actions taken by the United Nations Security Council. Russian and Chinese interests in Syria are based on international power and achieving gains at the expense of American power. This has made alliances easier for Iran to achieve to protect Syria. Russia notably, has a naval base in Tartous and is a large contributor of arms to Syria and Iran. Iran’s ability to ally itself with world powers that are adversarial to the West, allows for greater diplomatic mobility in the international arena. Iran, Russia, and China have pushed for a political solution as a means to maintain the legitimacy of the Syrian state, which the West has also worked toward. Iran has further aided Syria by allowing a tentative nuclear deal regarding its program to initiate between itself and the P5+1 under the Joint Action Plan. This has placed the Syrian conflict by the wayside (Abdulhamid, 2013). Iran’s ability to replace its pursuit of a nuclear deterrent will be far easier to replace than an allied state in Syria however,
The Joint Action Plan may have difficulties. Through the words of nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi, said that Iran will never abandon its Arak heavy reactor which is able to produce weapons grade plutonium (Iran ‘Will Not Abandon Arak Heavy Water Reactor,’ 2013). The possibility of the development of weapons is present given the need for a deterrent due to a security dilemma that exists between itself, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Also aiding the Syrian government is Hezbollah. Hezbollah, shares many of the same Shia cultural and political origins with Iran. Like Iran, it too is committed to a political culture of “resistance” against the conquerors. While having a Lebanese character, the group maintains the similar zero sum outlook shared by Iran as it views itself as being in a constant response to outside aggression. The group’s initial use of forces in Syria, like that of the Iranian advisors, was under the guise of protecting the Sayyida Zeinab mosque and Hawza from Sunni takfirists. Although, there is some truth for the need of protecting the mosque, its primary interests are political.

Power politics plays heavily in Hezbollah’s decision to commit fighters to Syria. Subhi Tufayli reiterates that contrary to Hezbollah’s repeated religious justification as a call to war, the group’s action in Syria is merely serving Hezbollah’s political interests (Studio Beirut: Subhi Tufayli, 2013). Given the lack of security within Lebanon, in Syria, and between Lebanon and Israel, Hezbollah is doing everything it can to dictate its security by supporting the Syrian government. The Balance of Power amongst groups in the region is crucial to Hezbollah’s success. As with Iran, the loss of a friendly Syrian government would handicap Hezbollah’s efforts to battle Israel and also contend with other parties in Lebanon. Hezbollah seeks to check dangerous concentrations of power
with its supporting of allied Syria (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 141).

A concentration of enemies and adversaries alike, presents Hezbollah with a number of problems. First, the loss of Syria presents Hezbollah with the possibility of a future Syrian political body that will be politically amicable with the March 14th political alliance in Lebanon, which will aid in countering Hezbollah’s domestic politics. Second, the Syrian conflict creates a neighboring nation with groups that could attempt additional, and possibly larger paramilitary or terrorist operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The current power vacuum is likely not dissipating in the near future. The group’s ability to take the battle away from their territory is in line with an offensive style of realism. As Hassan Nasrallah stressed after the assassination of Hezbollah officer Hassan Laqis, Hezbollah is engaged in a pre-emptive war to keep extremists from entering Lebanon from Syria (Translator: Ghoussoub, 2013). Although, the group’s propaganda conflates extremists in Syria and the general Syrian opposition, multiple attacks in Hezbollah held Dahiyeh and against Hezbollah interests like the Iranian embassy, due give credence to the threats of extremism in Lebanon; however, these security interests ride the coattails of Hezbollah’s need and assistance of an allied Syria. Third, the loss of Syria as a logistical pipeline for arms and aid from Iran would make the group weaker (Totten, 2012, p.178; Syria threatens to hit back after deadly Israel raids, 2013). The high importance of Syria as an ally is portrayed in Hezbollah’s willingness to damage its relations with Hamas over Hezbollah’s support of the Assad government (al-Ghoul, 2013). Security for the Syrian regime is security for Hezbollah and its interests in the future.
For other supporting groups like the Houthi of Yemen, the Mahdi Army and other militant Shia groups from Iraq, their military support of the Syrian regime is also a chance to check a buildup of aggression in the region. Government troops and pockets of fighters politically aligned with Gulf nations have been in conflict with the Mahdi Army in Iraq, and the Houthi in Yemen as a result of the overthrow of the instability in Iraq and Yemen. For the Mahdi Army, the consolidation of territory by the Syrian opposition along the Euphrates, will allow for supply lines to run from al-Nusra held territory bordering Turkey in Syria, to al Qaeda held territory in Iraq’s al Anbar province, which can strengthen takfirist and Sunni groups alike in Iraq. For the Houthi, they are attempting to mirror deployments of Yemeni Sunni jihadist fighters in the Syrian opposition (*The Houthis are sending their fighters to Syria*, 2013).

Despite their diverse political goals, fighters from Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, the Mahdi Army, and the Houthi in Yemen give a great deal of support to Assad’s men, as they are all battle experienced, disciplined, well equipped, and well trained.

**Regional Pro-Opposition Allies**

Chaos in Syria means very different things for opposition allies. Turkey, given its proximity to Syria, has far more at risk than Qatar or Saudi Arabia with the outcome of the war. For Saudi Arabia and Qatar, their ability to support proxy forces in the opposition is just part of the larger fight over the balance of power in the region. The three of the nations have committed whatever means necessary to pursue their national goals.
Qatar has elevated its geopolitical positioning through its engagement in the Syrian conflict. It has attempted this through soft power and the arming of rebels. In the eyes of Bernard Haykal, Qatar’s foreign policy is rife with contradictions; however, their power politics befit both their style of egoism and the country’s material attributes (In Depth: Qatar’s Foreign Policy, 2013). The al Thani ruling family attempts to model their style of diplomacy after the Prophet Muhammad, especially in his ability to gain political prestige from his role as a mediator (Fromherz, 2012, p.87). This element is ingrained in the egoism of Qatar’s constitutional theocracy. It lends weight to Qatar’s ability to maintain diplomatic relationships with multiple parties whom, at times, maintain disdain for each other. Qatar has been able to simultaneously operate diplomatically with Iran and Qatari elements of Islamist extremist groups, even while the US conducts military operations from a CENTCOM based in Qatar at al Udeid Air Base (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 99-100). Qatar also maintains relations as a mediator between Israel, the West, and Hamas (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 89-104). Qatar’s diplomatic flexibility has placed it on an even keel with its neighbors. The nation has placed a heavy deal of trust and investment into this facet of its foreign policy (El-Shenawi, 2013). A large amount of its soft power is vested in trade, namely in natural gas of which Qatar has the 3rd largest reserve in the world (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 90-91; Energy Information Agency, 2013).

Qatar’s actions in Syria seem to be counterintuitive as its national concentration is on neutrality and prosperity; however, there are two explanations for its actions: security at home and an influence vacuum abroad. To reiterate, Balance of Power theory states,

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113 It has also done so through its support of the Libyan opposition to Gadhafi.

114 Although Wahhabi, Qatar displays a degree of religious tolerance by allowing minority faiths to
“states will check dangerous concentrations of power by building up by building up their own capabilities (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 141).” There are two styles of dangerous concentrations of power in and near Qatar: Iranian power and transnational jihadism. Iranian power has grown over the last twenty years, but it has grown exponentially after the dissolution of Saddam Hussein’s government, which was a traditional counterbalance to Iranian power. Furthermore, the Arab Spring has introduced instability and civil empowerment to the dispossessed in neighboring nations like Bahrain and fellow peninsular Yemen. After the fall of Saddam and the onset of turmoil in the Arab Spring, Iran under Ahmadinejad, became far more aggressive in its deployment of soft and hard power assets especially in Bahrain, Iraq, and Yemen (Thaler et. Al, 2010, pp.17-19). Iranian political gains amongst Shia populations in states neighboring Qatar have made Qatar insecure. Given its size and limited resources, Qatar has to build relationships with any party it can to ensure its safety in an anarchic environment.

Internal and neighboring concentrations of transnational jihadist groups like al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula pose a possible threat to Qatari power (Fromherz, 2012, pp. 97-100). Qatar learned from Saudi Arabia’s experience of being named an apostate by Osama bin Laden in the 1990’s that extremist elements need to be handled carefully. Qatar while allowing the US to operate militarily and maintaining an economic office in Israel, meets Ayman al Zawahiri’s definition of states that are apostates and therefore enemies (Fromherz, 2012, p. 101). While it meets al Zawahiri’s criteria for an enemy, Qatar supports the extremist elements that are waging jihad in Syria, which allows Qatar some political breathing room. The allowance of Sunni cleric Sheikh Youssef al-
Qaradawi to broadcast a call for jihad from Doha, decreases its domestic threats from Qatari and neighboring Sunni extremists *(Top cleric Qaradawi calls for Jihad against Hezbollah, Assad in Syria, 2013)*. In addition, supporting the rebels also exports some local Sunni extremists to places like Syria and Iraq, which also physically eases security. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is highly active near Qatar which is problematic.

Qatar has a great deal of economic infrastructure, primarily in gas production and refining, that it needs to protect to survive as a Rentier nation (Fromherz, 2012, p. 101). Places like refineries and pipelines are regular targets of al Qaeda elements across the Middle East and North Africa. These types of attacks drove Foreign Direct Investment out of nearby Yemen over the first years of the 2000’s (Energy Information Administration, 2013). Qatar’s support of jihadist and Syrian fighters operating in Syria also allows it to handicap Iran’s political operations there.

Qatar’s pragmatic style of politics is not lost in its operations regarding Syria. Its ability to work with all sides has not only elevated its global political standing, but is also keeping Iran focused on Syria (Maksad, 2013). Qatar has acted unilaterally, and also urged multilateral operations, to end killing of innocent Syrians at the hands of the Assad government. Both of these efforts aid in balancing regional power. Since 2011, it is reported that Qatar has spent between 1 and 3 billion dollars in its support of the Syrian opposition (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013; Oxfam: Qatar, Russia and France among countries failing Syrians, 2013). The disbursements go towards all efforts of the opposition. This ranges from military arms, logistical and support costs for the rebels, support for the external political parties and even to defection incentive packages.

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115 Opposition members claim 1 billion, while unnamed sources close to the government are claiming 3 billion dollars.
for members of the Syrian government; however, Qatar is criticized for its lack of humanitarian aid which displays Qatar’s true focus: power (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013). Qatar is following similar procedures that were taken with the Libyan opposition’s effort to remove Muammar Gadhafi (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013). Qatar uses all means available to support the opposition. It has attempted, but failed to deploy troops within a concerted Gulf Cooperation Council action. Its efforts have also ranged from attempts to court Western political involvement, and to calls for the Syrian opposition to attend Geneva II (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013). Poignantly, it has maintained bilateral relations, to include bilateral security and economic agreements, with the Iranian government even while it works against Iranian interests through proxies. This delicate style of diplomacy enabled Qatar’s successful mediation deal that led to the release of two kidnapped Turkish pilots from an unnamed Lebanese militia and nine kidnapped Lebanese Shiite pilgrims from Syrian opposition members in Azaz (Fromherz, 2012; Freed Lebanese pilgrims, Turkish pilots arrive in Beirut, Istanbul, 2013).

Keeping Iran focused on Syria alleviates some of the pressure of being a nation physically and politically stuck in between two political rivals: Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran has shared economic interests in Qatar’s gas fields, but with Saudi Arabia, Qatar has contiguous borders and a shared religious history, which scarcely compliments any sense of groupism. The commonalities between Saudi Arabia and Qatar are founded in a Wahhabi past and more importantly in similar security interests (Fromherz, 2012, p. 89).

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116 One reported defection package was claimed to be worth $50,000 just to relocate the government member and his family.
117 This occurred on October 19, 2013. Parts of Azaz were controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham at the time of the deal.
Both Qatar and Saudi Arabia have shared security interests ranging from Iraqi hostility during Saddam Hussein’s reign, friendly relations with the US military, growing regional instability, and finally to the growth of Iranian influence in the region. Even with a level of mistrust, shared security interests and the recent growth of the Saudi political role within the Syrian opposition have allowed Qatar to piggyback Saudi gains against Iran. This is beneficial as Qatar never intended to have such an exposed role (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013).

Saudi Arabia is currently attempting to relinquish political gains made by Iran during the recent waves of instability that have swept across the region during the last decade (Panorama: Iranian Ambitions to Dominate Politically and Militarily, 2013). During the last two years, Saudi policy has transitioned from a reactionary to aggressive stance. This has been done to meet its goals in a conflict that has in some cases redefined Saudi relations with its allies. Riyadh’s ability to take Syria as friendly state from Iran would deal a major blow to Iranian politics. Saudi Arabia is a Wahhabi theocratic monarchy that protects the religious cities of Mecca and Medina. As a leader in the Arab Muslim world, the Saudis political interests can be lined with what it identifies as a responsibility to the Muslim community. In consequence, some of its actions within the Kingdom concerning Syria take a highly religious tone. The Saudi Grand Mufti’s praising of sunni cleric Qardawi’s aggressive stance toward Hezbollah was a poignant example of this; however, Saudi actions in the Syrian conflict revolve around power and calculations of balance, stability, and the maintenance of its regionally dominant standing.

Saudi Arabia’s aim of ending Assad rule in Syria has forced it to take a highly active role (The Awakening Sunni Giant, 2013; Obaid, 2013). In the Kingdom’s eyes, Syria is
being occupied by Iranian and Hezbollah forces allied to the regime (Saudi Arabia: Syria Can Only Be Considered an ‘Occupied Land,’ 2013). Given heavy Iranian involvement, as in Iraq after 2003, Saudi Arabia is sending support to Syrian rebels to fight Iranian forces and remove Iranian political gains. At the same time it is monitoring the flow of foreign fighters in and out of Syria heavily (al Rasheed, 2010, p 240). This is a response to lessons learned in Iraq. After domestic threats were created by Saudi jihadist veterans of the current war in Iraq, the Saudi domestic security services became highly active in monitoring the flow of fighters in and out of their nation (Barkey, Lasensky, & Marr, 2011, pp.107-112). Saudi Arabia is attempting to control the Syrian crisis by using all facets available to ensure the nation’s security.

At the soft power level, Saudi Arabia is using a mixture of bilateral and international diplomacy. In the early stages of the Syrian conflict, both Qatar and Saudi Arabia used the Gulf Cooperation Council as a tool. The GCC invited nations like Jordan and Morocco in 2011 to become members. The addition of nations to the Gulf Cooperation Council was meant to further tilt the balance of power against Iran. The addition of Jordan also gives more diplomatic weight to the condemnation of the Assad governments’ actions in Syria (Hamdan, 2013). Saudi Arabia also used the Gulf Cooperation Council to impart greater weight to its position when lobbying the West and the United Nations. GCC statements and judgments were aimed at the UN’s Responsibility to Protect, or R2P, which was created in 2005. The GCC has claimed that the Assad government and its allies have committed war crimes, which is a trigger

118 This is in consequence of threats emerging from Saudi fighters that fought in the Russo-Afghan war.
119 If R2P were invoked, it gives the international community a legal backing for peacekeeping operations in conflicts that contain genocide, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing (The Responsibility to Protect, 2013).
for action under the Responsibility to Protect (*GCC Condemns Hezbollah’s Incursions in Syria*, 2013). Saudi attempts to court the United Nations, and the West to strike Assad militarily in September of 2013, failed. In response, Riyadh refused a seat as a rotating member of the Security Council. It cited the division of the Security Council over the Syrian crisis, the United Nations’s impotence in solving the Palestinian-Israeli issue, and at the time, the UN’s failing to rid Syria of chemical weapons after the attack in Ghouta, as the Kingdoms’ primary reasons for refusal (Allam, 2013).\(^{120}\) Bilaterally, Saudi Arabia attempted to fiscally sway Syria and Iran’s largest ally in the United Nations Security Council. Prince Bander bin Sultan offered to buy $15 billion in Russian arms in exchange for the withdrawal of Russian support of the Syrian government, which would have likely have included the negation of Chinese support as well (*Russian President, Saudi Spy Chief Discussed Syria, Egypt*, 2013).

The tacit diplomatic rapprochement between the US and Iran served to portray the anarchic nature of the political system for Saudi relations. In response, given France’s initial reticence concerning Iran’s the Joint Plan of Action Saudi Arabia took the opportunity to enlarge its diplomatic relations with the French. Saudi Arabia did this with billions of dollars in both frigate refurbishing and arms deals. This was done in the hopes of spoiling an agreement between Iran and the United Nations Security Council; however, this also failed (*French Defense Minister Talks Deals in Saudi Arabia*, 2013). The repeated failure through liberal international bodies encourages Saudi Arabia to further its aggressive stance in Syria.

\(^{120}\) This action was applauded by Qatar.
With the past two years, Saudi Arabia has attempted to dominate the regional system at all political levels. In its attempts to balance it has become very aggressive. This has been exacerbated as it has not been able to rely on the Unites States to take, as traditionally shown since 1979, a heavy hand against Iran. The Hegemonic Stability theory states that,” powerful states tend to seek dominance over all or parts of any international system, thus fostering some degree of hierarchy within the overall systemic anarchy (Wohlforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 142).” Saudi Arabia’s re-emergence as a large power has been shown through its attempts to dictate liberal institutions actions and attempts to court allied and adversarial nations. A focus on supporting Syrian rebel groups remains its most successful initiative. As of spring 2013, rebel sources are claiming that Saudi Arabia’s fiscal support was greater than the $1-$3 billion approximation of Qatari support (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013). Its’ funds, like Qatars, are being spent across the oppositional spectrum. They have vested funds to the Syrian National Coalition, especially in their support Ahmed Jarba, and militarily to the Free Syrian Army and assorted Islamist coalitions. The Saudi government offers much needed political recognition to opposition members and coalitions, which will be needed if the opposition takes the country. The election of Saudi friendly Ahmed Jarba was a sign that Saudi Influence is overtaking Qatari influence (Khalaf & Fielding-Smith, 2013). Riyadh is also taking a more prominent stance with its funding. General Salim Idriss of the Supreme Military Council stated that Saudi security has promised “whatever it takes,” to depose Basher al Assad (Weiss, 2013).

Saudi Arabia is currently supporting the Free Syrian Army and newly formed Jaysh al Islam in Southern Syria from Jordan and assorted rebel elements in Northern Syria from
Turkey (Kerr, 2013; *Syria crisis: Saudi Arabia to spend millions to train new rebel force*, 2013). Saudi intelligence is providing training, weapons, and logistics to fighters of all political leanings. Focusing on Syrian born rebels allows Saudi Arabia to choose from a large pool of experienced fighters with area knowledge and renown. Reports of Saudi born jihadists fighting with al Nusra or other al Qaeda groups is low (*Expert: About 600 Saudi fighters are in Syria*, 2013). Saudi Arabia appears to be selecting which opposition members to be backed based on their likelihood of success and acceptance by Syrians, which will allow a smoother possible transition away for Syria from Assad and Iran. They are also appearing to address domestic security cleavages at home while dealing with the Syrian conflict. These domestic security problems were the result of allowing large numbers of Saudi citizens to fight in Afghanistan in the 1980’s and Iraq in the 2000’s (Barkey, Lasensky, & Marr, 2011, pp.107-112). Although there are likely private Saudi donors, it may be politically advantageous to allow Qatar, the Emirates, and Turkey to have more exposure in their ties to extremist groups; however, coordination between these nations is likely given due to the need to effectively support their chosen surrogates against a common target. Success in Syria is part of a larger fight against Iran in the region.

An old Levantine saying states that when Syria sneezes, Lebanon gets the flu (Jouejati, 2012). This saying is referring to the politically incestuous nature of the two nations. Lebanon is feeling the effects of chaos in Syria, but in addition to its incestuous binational relationship, Lebanon borders Israel, and is crucial to a fight over the balance of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Hirst, 2010). The loss of the Assad

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121 This is now part of the Islamic Front.
government affects Lebanese and Palestinian political parties in terms of funding, alliances, and weapons.

Saudi efforts to take Syria from the Assad government could force Palestinian groups to rely more on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf as Iranian weapons shipments through Syria are being handicapped, if not outright interdicted. This could force Hamas to further stray away from an already strained relationship with Iran. Given Hamas’s need for outside political and financial support, this could strengthen relationships between Hamas and Saudi Arabia, which would raise Saudi prestige within the Islamic community and hardline Islamists at home. Iranian born weapons are at times transported from Syria, to Lebanon, and then, pending Iranian intentions, to Palestinian groups (Norton, 2009; Totten, 2012, p. 178). Efforts to deny Iranian influence in Syria also handicaps Iran’s efforts to support Lebanese allies and operate politically from Lebanon. Iran’s losses in Palestine and Lebanon are Saudi Arabia’s gain.

Turkey pursued positive relations with regional nations prior to the onset of the Arab Spring, but was faced with a security vacuum that created threats to its well-being as a nation (Barkey, Lasensky & Marr, 2011, pp.58-60). Although, it aimed to minimize conflict, Turkey’s Zero Problems with Neighbors Policy has been thoroughly tested during the Arab Spring (Without Borders: Turkish Foreign Policy, Pts. 1 & 2, 2012). Many critics of Turkish politics have criticized the lofty goals of Zero Problems. The Zero Problems policy was a means to expand Turkish Policy through diplomacy and although it contains regional specific liberal phrasing, the policy was meant to serve Turkish security both physical and economic. Some analysts believe that Zero Problems was an attempt to reintroduce an Ottoman style of rule (Barkey, Lasensky & Marr, 2011,
The regional transformation inherent in the Arab Awakening has allowed Turkey to expand its interests. The most vibrant examples of this are in Syria and Iraq.

Given its proximity to Syria, Turkey has had to take a far more nuanced approach to protecting its interests. Its ability to deal with Syrian opposition and Kurdish groups is very important. Ankara must establish relations with what could be future ruling parties in Syria while also securing its borders. Chaos in Syria is not only a security vacuum that affects Turkish borders, but it is an influence vacuum. The inability to engage with Syrian opposition groups and Kurdish forces, allows political gains to be made by other regional powers. According to Foreign Minister Davutoglu, “we will help you now, but one day we may need help, and you’ll help me (Without Borders: Turkish Foreign Policy Pts. 1 & 2, 2012).” He referred to political groups that Turkey is aiding in Syria. This illuminates the quid pro quo type of relationships that Ankara favors. Davutoglu went on to say, “Sykes Picot defined unnatural borders (Without Borders: Turkish Foreign Policy Pts. 1 & 2, 2012).” Quotes such as this give evidence that Turkey is willing to redefine the region as needed for Turkish prosperity and safety.

The prioritization of Turkish security has been displayed through multiple examples. First the parliament has approved the Turkish military deployment in Syria as needed. Second, the control of Turkish territory is also displayed in the control and allowance of Syrian refugee camps, in the monitoring of Syrian opposition logistical operations, and through its monitoring and engagement of Syrian opposition groups from its soil (Turkey renews permit to send troops to Syria, 2013; Tastekin, 2013). The monitoring of opposition groups is crucial to its safety and national image. Any opposition operations
that are carried out from its soil, regardless of the level of Turkish participation, will be regarded by others as having a level of Turkish complicity and as a result poses risk (Tastekin, 2013). It is advantageous for the Turkish government to be as involved with the Syrian opposition as much as possible.

Ankara is checking dangerous concentrations of power near its border by creating new alliances. Diplomatic efforts are serving to enhance Turkish security. The Iraqi and Syrian conflicts have allowed for a rapprochement between the Kurdish Regional Government and the Turkish government, which positively affects its economics, border security, and relations with its own Kurdish population. This has created bilateral economic and security operations between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government whom backs the Syrian Kurdish National Council (Barkey, Lasensky & Marr, 2011, pp. 55-58; van Wilgenberg, 2013). These arrangements are aimed at mutual economic benefits, placating Turkish Kurds at home, and at the Kurdish Regional Government’s assistance in operations against the Syrian Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK. The Kurdish Workers Party has a history of paramilitary and terrorist operations against Turkey. Some of these attacks have been supported by Iran (Hale, 2013, pp. 238-242). The ability of Turkey to build positive relations with Syrian Kurdish parties is an attempt to eliminate both an existing threat in the Kurdish Workers Party, and also negative Iranian influence. Recently, Turkey has taken another track by beginning talks with Salih Muslim head of the Democratic Union Party and newly self-proclaimed autonomous Kurdish regions of Syria. The Democratic Union Party is a close political ally of the PKK. As of 2012, the Democratic Union Party was considered a threat by the Turkish government, which may indicate that these meetings are indicative of an
adjustment in official Turkish thinking (Candar, 2013). These talks came shortly after Turkish supported elements of the Syrian opposition were expelled from Ras al Ain in Northern Syria by the Popular Defense Forces, or Kurdish YPG (Candar, 2013). Concurrently, the support of Turkey to jihadist elements has recently waned during 2013 (Zaman, 2013). It is possible that some of the opposition and extremist groups have outlived their utility, while the need for positive relations with the Kurds has grown more valuable. Like the Kurds in Northern Iraq, the Kurds in Northern Syria provide a barrier to instability and extremist Sunni groups that aim to destabilize the region (Barkey, Lasensky & Marr, 2011, pp. 54-55). Ankara appears to be marginalizing Iranian influence at its border, and trying to maintain a buffer between themselves and instability. Due to this, relations between the Turkey and the Kurds will grow.

Turkey’s attempt to make political gains in the Syrian conflict has been executed through all levels of statecraft. Turkey has built its capabilities as a means to dictate the power vacuum in Syria (Wohlfforth, cited in Reus-Schmidt & Snidel, 2010, p 141). At the international level Turkey has attempted to draw in fellow NATO members in the West and the United Nations to multiply its strength. Turkey’s diplomats have threatened the world community with parallels between Afghanistan and Syria. Turkey’s has also attempted to stoke the UN’s Right to Protect by calling on the need for a humanitarian response in the wake of the chemical attacks in September, 2013 (Syria conflict: Turkey calls for humanitarian response, 2013). They did this in hopes that the UN, primarily the West, would strike the Assad government through a Kosovo style operation (Tastekin, 2013; Turkey president: Syria becoming ‘Mediterranean

\[122 \text{ The YPG expelled fighters from the Free Syrian Army, al Nusra, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham.} \]
Afghanistan,’ 2013). Ankara did this in concert with the Turkish quartered Syrian National Coalition’s desire that the West decimate the Assad government. If this attempt had succeeded, Turkey would have gained a pro-Turkish Syrian party that could take power in Damascus.

Regionally, Turkey has worked with Saudi, Qatari, and Emirati intelligence services to on its territory to coordinate operations with Syrian opposition groups (Kerr, 2013). Aside from diplomacy, Turkey’s ports and airports receive hardware and other logistical support for the Syrian opposition. It also houses the Syrian National Coalition, Syrian National Council, the Wa’ad party/Muslim Brotherhood, a large portion of the Supreme Military Council, and other elements of the opposition, which if any of these parties are successful will raise Turkish regional power and ensure its security. 123

Turkish efforts, like that of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, began by supporting a wide array of the internal Syrian opposition groups against al Assad; however, like Saudi Arabia, Turkey is now officially only supporting Syrian groups that are non-extremist. It has even officially labeled al Nusra a threat after al Nusra pledged its allegiance to al Qaeda (Gursel, 2013). 124 It is also freezing the assets of extremists in Turkey; however, extremist groups are still moving with ease through its borders to Syria (Idiz, 2013). Even though it is in a proxy war with the Iranians, Turkey’s President Gul has recognized the importance of Syria for Iran and the necessary inclusion of Iran at Geneva II, which is a mild attempt to redress strained relations (Idiz, 2013).

123 The other portion of the Supreme Military Council is in Jordan.
124 This was also likely done to appeal to its Western allies.
Turkish affairs concerning Syria are rife with self-service. It is doing all that it can to further its interests in the conflict, but keeps an operational flexibility that is needed as it fights a proxy war at its borders. Its policy is produced due to its high level of risk. It has done its best to eliminate the Assad government by using all elements available, but when support of extremist groups became counterproductive Ankara dropped its support.\(^{125}\) It also has supported both international military operations in Syria and the Geneva II conference, which is contrary to the wishes of the majority Syrian oppositional elements that it supports. Turkey has also operated in the conflict while attempting to maintain at least tacit relations with all parties, both regional and international, as a means to manage its risk, while expanding its power.

*Regional Powers Summation and Geneva 2*

The pursuance of national power is the primary cause for regional involvement in Syria. Instability in Syria has allowed for massive power vacuums to appear in the heart of the region. Chaos in Syria has permitted Qatar to prudently enlarge its political clout in the region. Chaos has allowed Saudi Arabia an opportunity to eliminate Iranian attempts to revise the regional balance of power. For Turkey, their priority is national security, but Turkey is also primed to make political gains by eliminating Iranian influence near its border. Syria retains the key to other regional benchmarks of power, which Iran had dominated prior to the Syrian uprising.

Currently, all of the regional supporters of Syria are invited to the Geneva 2 conference (*Geneva 2 Invitation to KSA Rekindles Hope for Syrians*, 2013). Geneva 2 allows regional patrons of the opposition to attempt to further the international recognition of

\(^{125}\) Clashes between extremists and the Kurds brought the war too close to its border.
selected Syrian opposition diplomats. This is needed to further court the 5 Security Council members and other world powers as they are reluctant to act in Syria. For Iran, initiating Geneva 2 is an opportunity to maintain the political legitimacy of its ally. At the start of the conflict Turkey’s tone was magnanimous. Prime Minister Davutuglo said, “we will continue to guide the winds of change in the Middle East and be its leader” (Idiz, 2013).” Although Turkey postured aggressively at the outset of the conflict, they will not be able to edge exceed Saudi Arabia’s representation of the opposition. In consequence Turkey is focused on domestic safety. It continues to pursue border security through its relations with the Kurds. Its recent meetings with the Kurdish Democratic Party, Kurdish Supreme Council, and Kurdish National Council were a preparation for initiatives to be presented at Geneva 2 (Geneva 2 Invitation to KSA Rekindles Hope for Syrians, 2013). Saudi Arabia has not received its invitation to Geneva 2 positively. If Riyadh wants to efficiently maintain its legitimacy with the internal Syrian opposition, the Saudi’s have to uphold an adversarial tone to Iran and to negations with the Syrian government. This should be easy for the status quo power, as they are attempting to remove Iranian influence and the Syrian government from Syria. Qatar will maintain its relations with all parties. Syria, like Libya, allowed Qatar to elevate its political standing; however, Qatar has been careful not to over expose itself. Qatar appears to have no problem with Saudi Arabia taking a more primary role in the support of the opposition. This should prove useful as Qatar’s traditional role as a mediator is needed at Geneva 2. Although, it is a supporter of the opposition, Qatar has extensive experience as a go between within hostile parties. This will play a large role

126 Practically, it was also was a failed attempt to create a ceasefire, which would have allowed the Assad government its allies time to further regroup its forces prior to the Qalamoun offensive.
between Saudi and Iranian diplomats, which again enhances Qatar’s utility and power in the Gulf.

The possibility of constructive talks at Geneva 2 is low. Even if Syrian diplomats and regional powers can come to terms, there is no way to implement internal changes unless President Assad is removed from power. Geneva 2 seems to be more favourable to the external opposition and regional parties. For Syrian parties, both pro and anti-Assad, the proposed talks have been plagued with their own unrealistic preconditions for attendance. Difficulties are further compounded with the internal opposition’s vow to continue fighting while Geneva 2 takes place in late January. Some large opposition elements, like the Islamic Front, have declared any form of collaboration with members of the Assad government treason (Weiss, 2013). Unless the Assad government can find a way to remove the president, but maintain the government, success at Geneva 2 is a pipe dream for the external Syrian opposition. Initial proposals by the government have included President Assad as the transitional government head, which further compounds the unlikely success of the proposed talks (Assad 'to Remain' President in Transition, 2013). Mere negotiation with the government by the opposition will create further trust issues within participants of the opposition.

What are the Causes and Effects of the Foreign-Domestic Relationships in the Syrian Conflict? An Analysis of the Relationships
The relationships present in the Syrian conflict between Syrians and regional powers are marriages of convenience. These relationships are based on the seizure and maintenance of power and the necessary tools to do so. As Syria is a failed state, the groups fighting for territory and political power are attempting to fill the gaps needed to restore Syria to
a functioning level. Nevertheless, both the Syrian opposition and government are relying upon patrons whose priorities lie with the regional balance of power and security. Aid is requested by Syrians to establish a monopoly on violence, sustained societal rule, and an externally recognized authority. The difference in political priorities between Syrians and their patrons creates an enormous difference in commitment levels, which is the inherent nature of proxy wars.

Prior to the Arab Spring, the Syrian populace and government were operating towards different purposes. The failure of the Syrian state to provide for its people introduced political fissures, which furthered unrest. Karl Von Clausewitz said, “Politics is the womb in which war develops - where its outlines already exist in their hidden rudimentary form, like the characteristics of living creatures in their embryos (Von Clausewitz, n.d.).” These rudimentary forms existed prior to the Arab Spring. A marginalized populace needed a symbolic push which was found in the Arab Spring. This allowed Syrian protestors to oppose poor economic and civil conditions that were created by an absolutist Syrian government. The government’s failed attempts to quell unrest across the nation and the Syrian oppositions unbending pursuit of new government has led Syria down a difficult path. Over the last two years Syria went from political unrest, to turmoil, and finally, to a failed state amidst an all-out war. Each stage of unrest has allowed non-Syrian parties to either enter the conflict, or in some cases further their involvement. This is having a damaging effect upon the nation’s ability to mend itself. The transition from normality to chaos has been primarily a Syrian effort; however, assistance of all types from outside sources has brought war to life.
All Syrian parties need assistance in creating three things: a monopoly of violence that can control all Syrian territory, an internally recognized functioning political body that can make collective decisions and provide public services, and finally, Syria will need a political authority that is able to interact with full recognition of all of the international community (Failed State, n.d; Failed State, n.d.).

Given the failure of the Syrian state, domestic parties are using war as the continuation of policy by other means to operate in Syria (von Clausewitz, 1873, pp. ch. 2).

The capability of all involved parties is based on what they have the funds for. Carl von Clausewitz draws a correlation between armies funding and their level of capability, which is applies to Syria. Von Clausewitz states:

*The financial means, the contents of the treasury, the state of credit of the enemy, were approximately known as well as the size of his army. Any large increase of these at the outbreak of a war was impossible. Inasmuch as the limits of the enemy's power could thus be judged of, a State felt tolerably secure from complete subjugation, and as the State was conscious at the same time of the limits of its own means, it saw itself restricted to a moderate aim. Protected from an extreme, there was no necessity to venture on an extreme* (von Clausewitz, 1873, Bk.1 Ch. 6A-6B).

The ability of the Syrian government and opposition to draw funding and supply from external parties has dictated ability and the monopoly of violence in Syria. The style of fighting to date does not indicate that there is any shortage of funding or support for either the government or opposition. For the government, this is shown in the continued

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127 The pillars of a Failed State were taken from The International Committee of the Red Cross’s website and Princeton University’s definition.
operation of the government, military, and notably, its air force. It is also present in the
growth in strength and sophistication of attacks within the Syrian opposition.

The government has had funding shortages, which years of sanctions and a nonexistent
economic sector have compounded; however, the Iranians have been compensating this
deficit since 2012. These funds go toward operating the government, the military, and
the payment of wages (Starr, 2012). The military needs to maintain itself to counter the
opposition with devastating attacks from the air. The Syrian air force and army are the
primary reason the opposition cannot hold large metropolitan areas. Wages need to be
paid regularly as members of the government and military have been drawn by Qatari,
and likely others, defection incentive packages (Khalaf & Fielding Smith, 2013). Aside
from maintaining manpower, the Iranians, Russians, Hezbollah, and other allies are
providing manpower, aid, and equipment to continue the fight against the Syrian rebels
(Borger, 2013; State Dept.: Russia, Iran Still Arming Syria’s Assad, n.d.). Amongst the
regime and its allies, this alliance has between 200,000 and 300,000 men (Alami, 2013;
Borger, 2013). The joint Iranian-Hezbollah force was estimated at 50,000 in the spring
of 2012. It is likely that this has grown near 100,000 for the current battles around Qara
and across the country in fall of 2013. It has so far proved successful as they are taking
territory around Qara and Qalamoun and have taken the Damascus/Aleppo M5 highway
between Homs and Damascus (Syrian Regime Forces Advance in Qalamoun, 2013). In
von Clausewitz’s view, auxiliary forces like Hezbollah and the IRGC are deployed
based upon specific policy needs of their controlling body. He states, “and the
contracting parties usually only agree to furnish a small stipulated contingent, in order
to employ the rest of the forces according to the special ends to which policy may
happen to lead them (von Clausewitz, 1873, Bk. 8Ch. 6). The amount of men that the regional Assad supporters are deploying speaks volumes of how strategically important Syria is to Iran and Hezbollah (Borger, 2013). This commitment level will be needed to contribute further aid as the Syrian government lost a major oil source in the al Omar field in Deir Al-Zor to the opposition (Syrian Rebels Seize Major Oil Field, 2013). This will make the government more reliant on imported oil for its military, which will be brought in by allied Iran and Russia through government held Latakia.

The opposition’s ability to monopolize violence in Syria is severely fractured. The opposition needs funding, training, organization, and experienced fighters. Although, the opposition has made gains across Syria, the early success is shared by the opposition only in the fact that the government is not controlling all of Syria. As shown, towns across the country are held but a multitude of groups with various allegiances. Early funding by regional powers was going to the Free Syrian Army, al Nusra, and extremist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham (Weiss, 2013; Tastekin, 2013, Abed, 2013). The reasoning behind this was these groups had men that were trained, organized, and motivated. To reiterate, von Clausewitz said, “and the contracting parties usually only agree to furnish a small stipulated contingent, in order to employ the rest of the forces according to the special ends to which policy may happen to lead them (von Clausewitz, 1873, Bk. 8Ch. 6). Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia would need to employ forces that would dislocate Assad. Qatar in specific has had no qualms funding foreign jihadist groups (Khalaf & Fielding-Smith, 2013). Qatari assistance went to groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham, and al Nusra as many members of these groups were extremely violent experienced guerilla fighters from wars in Iraq, and to a lesser
extent Afghanistan and Chechnya. These fighters brought Qatar far more utility in displacing the Assad government. In the early stages of the conflict, extremist utility as proxy fighters surpassed the Free Syrian Army who were also funded by Qatar (Shishani, 2013; Foreign Extremists Dominate Syria Fight, 2013; Military consultant says half of fighters in Syria are militant Islamists, 2013). Since aid and fighters were coming in from Turkey in the early stages of the conflict, Turkey was at risk of having large military engagements with the Syrian army. Extremist fighters gave Turkey breathing room as these groups dislodged Assad from areas bordering Turkey.

Aside from having the ability to seize towns, opposition groups have to administer territory to be a state. The second pillar of statehood is currently not possible as the country is split. The north of Syria is being held by fragmented parts of the opposition, the Kurds, and extremist groups. This is creating a second front within the opposition as groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham are fighting one and all to include al Nusra (Syria Conflict: Foreign Jihadists 'Use Turkey Safe Houses', 2013). Fights between these groups have occurred in multiple key areas. This includes Azaz and its crossing into Turkey through the Bab al Salaam, in the Hassekeh province, and in Raqqa which is a major provincial capital along the Euphrates (Weiss, 2013; Jihadists push Syria rebels out of Raqqa, 2013). For the Kurds, the Democratic Workers Party is attempting to claim autonomy, which is not supported by all Syrian Kurdish political parties. The necessity of political support is however a debatable point as the People’s Protection Units, a close ally of the Democratic Workers Party, are the primary force protecting the Kurds. The People’s Protection units are protecting their areas from all possible threats (Hamidi, 2013). The Kurds largest threat is the Islamic State in Iraq and
al Sham. The Free Syrian Army is holding large areas in the south from Damascus to Dera’a. The Free Syrian Army initially made gains due to its style of conquest. The Free Syrian Army’s approach was initially effective “because of its integration with local tribes and communities;” however, the FSA is losing power (Weiss, 2013). All elements of the opposition have focused on major metropolitan areas; however, according to al Arabiya, “Although the rebels have taken a great deal of territory, there are very few full metropolitan areas that are fully rebel held (Syria: new massacre unfolds in Nabk, 2013). Similar to the opposition’s attempts to hold cities, it has taken public works like the Tabqa hydroelectric dam and oil fields, which are needed to be legitimately recognized as a government by the populace. These areas are also needed by Syrian groups to maintain military operations. Taking these points of interest creates a slightly smaller reliance on foreigners while denying the government resources it needs to operate its air force and army. Regardless of these gains, the opposition has been highly susceptible to division. This has caused the opposition to lose ground to the government and other opposition members (Syrian Rebels Claim Capture of Euphrates Dam, 2013; Gebeily, 2013). The government’s offensive along the M5 highway between Qara and Qalamoun has made the opposition appreciate the need for unification.

The need for a unified front is the primary reason behind the creation of the Islamic Front; however, the Islamic Front with its size and Syrian basis, is not currently as effective as al Nusra and ISIS given the Front’s fledgling status. Recent unifications are complemented with fighting experience that non extremist elements of the opposition have gained over the last years, which gives these groups more utility, but further
assistance is needed for their success. There are signs that regional funding will be focused on newly unified Syrian groups.¹²⁸

The regional opposition to one degree, or another, were complicit in the employing of extremists groups in Syria. Extremist groups were highly effective in the early stages of the war against the regime; however, their utility is waning as some are becoming counterproductive in the attempt to dismantle the government. Although Qatar funded extremist groups, their recent deference to Saudi initiative within the opposition may further drive the focus of funding into a new direction (Khalaf & Fielding-Smith, 2013). Current concentrations of Saudi funding are going to training the non-extremist Syrian opposition through Jordan into Southern Syria and through Turkey in the North (Weiss, 2013; Kerr, 2013; Syria crisis: Saudi Arabia to spend millions to train new rebel force, 2013). Training large amounts of unified Syrian fighters, like the Islamic Front and Free Syrian Army, can enable the opposition to fight effectively against the government. Unification also supports the elimination of the need for al Nusra or the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham.¹²⁹ If these newly bound opposition forces are effective, this may be an inviting trend to other Syrian fighters in the future. As von Clausewitz states, “that the allies of the enemy secede from him, and others join the conquerors (1873, Bk 7 Ch 21). The Islamic Front’s success and al Nusra’s self-marginalization through its allegiance to al Qaeda, may lead to the defection of moderate Syrian Islamists to the Islamic Front from al Nusra. Current gains by the Islamic Front may also lead to further defections from the Free Syrian Army. Al Nusra and the Islamic Front are not allied, but are not

¹²⁸ There is also funding from Kuwait, the UAE, and other private sources going to foreign men who want fight in the Syrian Jihad; however, there are number are negligible in the overall opposition (Foreign Extremists Dominate Syria Fight, 2013).
¹²⁹ Al Nusra may have handicapped its long term goals by officially pledging its allegiance to al Qaeda. This could lead to defections from al Nusra as the conflict progresses.
adversarial. This would allow an easier transfer of fighters to occur. The Islamic Front has taken multiple Free Syrian Army territories in December. However, gains made by the Islamic Front against the Free Syrian Army are possible due to the high level of overlap between members of the two groups. Not all of the land taken is from fighting. Areas in the northeast are seeing the disintegration of the Free Syrian Army as the Islamic Front’s ranks swell (Rise of Islamic Front Disaster for Syria, 2013). The Islamic Front’s success remains with its fighting ability, large size, and its ability to appear anti-western. To appear anti-Western, contrary to the Free Syrian Army, allows the group to focus on fighting the government and does not create any new fronts with al Nusra, or foreign al Qaeda affiliates (Syria: Islamic Front Denies Meeting US Ambassador, 2013).

To Turkey’s political end, Turkey has compounded the effort to marginalize extremists from the conflict by freezing funds headed to extremist elements. This is advantageous for the non-extremist opposition. This is needed as most of the extremist held territory is bordering Turkey (Gursel, 2013; Idiz, 2013). If the Free Syrian Army and Islamic Front can control towns for a longer period of time, the domestic opposition may be able to eventually administer government and fund social services, which is the second pillar of a functioning state. Nevertheless, the first pillar of a functional state, the monopoly of violence, is still being fought over across Syria.

The Syrian opposition and Syrian government are also attempting to achieve the third pillar of a functioning state. The maintenance of political recognition from a near unanimous international community is crucial to Syria’s future (Failed State, 2013). Without near international political recognition there will be no political legitimacy for any group in the future, which will debilitate it diplomatically and economically as
happened under President Assad. More importantly it would also have negative effects on Syrian reconstruction. The ability to receive this recognition is being done by each groups’ diplomats, which is being further lobbied through regional patrons unto the world community.

The Syrian government has an advantage over the opposition. Irrespective of accusations, the United Nations has not enacted the Right to Protect, which will likely keep any international effort to remove Assad from office off the table. For now, this has been blocked primarily by Russian and Chinese efforts in the United Nation’s Security Council. The will of the international community to date, is to avoid involvement in the Syrian conflict. Successful Russo-Chinese efforts are compounded with the West’s inability to find a large source of support for international military action within the Syrian opposition. This is present even in the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a large part of the Syrian National Coalition. The lack of international action gives Bashir al Assad de facto political legitimacy as there is no clear other option for the international community to support. Iran has supported this trend by changing the focus of international conversation to its nuclear program with the Joint Action Plan. Combined allied efforts also played a role in keeping the international operations focused only on the removal of Syrian chemical weapons. There has been no official accusation of complicity. Pro Assad allies further diplomatically aid the government by keeping the international community’s focus on the upcoming peace talks at Geneva 2, which are likely to fail.

By calming the international community, Iran, Russia, and China have allowed President Assad to remain the sovereign in Syria. This effort has bought the regime time to
reorganize with its allies and start new offensives against the opposition. For Iran and Hezbollah, this may also be a period that they can formulate a contingency plan for Syria as happened in Yemen with former president Saleh. This is a low percentage possibility that will only be attempted if it seems that the Syrian government may ultimately fail militarily. Iran and Hezbollah need to maintain its regional political gains, as represented by Syria, at all costs. Iranian, Russian, and Hezbollah propaganda of a terrorist conspiracy has a small degree of credibility. Although the majority of the Syrian opposition is not affiliated with al Qaeda, there are enough Sunni extremist groups in Syria to alert the West. These propagations and their correlated diplomatic efforts serve as a small reminder to the West of how complicated a possible peacekeeping, or peace imposition operation would be. The loss of the Syrian state would handicap Iran and Hezbollah’s political and military power, which by zero sum logic, decreases their security while creating gains for their adversaries and enemies alike.

Political recognition for the Syrian opposition is present, but like its disposition, recognition is fractured and funnelled toward a few external political bodies. Groups like the Syrian National Coalition, the Syrian National Council, and the Supreme Military Council were hoped to present both a recognized government and military leadership in absentia for the Syrian opposition. Even, with their formative attempts at governance and their ability to produce aid from groups like the Friends of Syria, the external opposition is largely seen as an outsider by the internal opposition. The Supreme Military Council has also been racked with problems between it and its own fighters in the Free Syrian Army. The rift between the internal opposition and the external
opposition has been further exacerbated by Geneva 2 and the desire by the external opposition for international military involvement. As Locke states,"

The delivery also of the people into the subjection of a foreign power, either by the prince, or by the legislative, is certainly a change of the legislative, and so a dissolution of the government: for the end why people entered into society being to be preserved one entire, free, independent society, to be governed by its own laws; this is lost, whenever they are given up into the power of another (1690. p. 200)."

Much of the external opposition is still not trusted as they are seen as beholden to foreign powers that will deliver Syria to further subjectivity. A level of historically based distrust for political alliances with outsiders may lie with numerous cases of foreign interference in Syrian politics. Notably, the Egyptian domination of Syrian politics under the Pan Arab United Arab Republic is still in older generations’ memories (Country Studies: Syria, 1987). This provides the fear that a future Syrian power, like those in the Syrian National Coalition, will not be primarily accountable to the Syrian people. This fear divides the internal and external opposition. For the internal opposition the Syrian revolution is for Syrians, not the regional balance of power or any other international considerations. The external opposition persists regardless of their lack of credibility, as regional powers are financing the groups best suited for the diplomatic side of the war.

Regardless of memories of the past, the internal opposition is primarily focused on fighting for territory. If these groups are able to overthrow the government and begin to administer a government under relative peace, only then will they be able to start
worrying about external recognition and foreign aided reconstruction. The Islamic Front, the Free Syrian Army, and other new unified groups need to bridge the trust gap between the internal opposition and the Syrian National Coalition. This is where the Saudis, Qatars, and Turks can come into play. These nations have already gone to great diplomatic and monetary lengths to support the failing Syrian National Coalition and Syrian paramilitary groups. The regional powers could over time attempt to bridge the gap between the internal and external opposition possibly through the Local Coordination Councils. Foreign support has been given where it will perform favorably for the regional powers interests. This style of support will continue from the regional partners in Syria as the opposition creates political gains. There are also limited options for regional powers to support. This will only change if a popularly trusted political branch can emerge from the newly formed Islamic Front or another large internal opposition group to perform diplomatic duties.

Aside from the pro Assad camp, the Kurds are the one diplomatically successful group thus far in the conflict. The Kurds utility to Turkish security has allowed for talks between Ankara and the majority of the Kurdish parties to include the Democratic Union Party, or PYD. Talks thus far are rumoured to have produced an initiative that Turkey will introduce at Geneva 2. This initiative may call for the opening gates in Kurdish territory separated by national borders (Turkey holds Geneva 2 Negotiations with Syrian Kurds, 2013). This would be a mild reshaping of boundaries founded by the Sykes Picot agreement, which was put in place at San Remo in 1920.

Although commentators, propagandists and sensationalists alike have compared Syria to Afghanistan, there is a large difference that is not being accounted for. Syria is a nation
that is traditionally internally interconnected. Additionally, it is in the heart of the Middle East. This is a region that is highly connected through commerce, culture, and politics. Decades of instability in Syria are not beneficial for any regional power, especially bordering Turkey; however, instability is temporarily necessary. Constant instability produces a new area for extremists to train and operate, possibly against the regional opposition’s expense. At the inception of the conflict, regional powers and the Syrian opposition did what they had to do to dislodge the Syrian government from a firm footing, which welcomed foreign fighters into Syria. The next stage will only be seen in a positive light internationally if a unified Syrian front and foreign patrons can marginalize extremists from the opposition. As of now, the West does not see a better option to Assad. Although Western military intervention is not wanted by the West nor the Syrian opposition, heavy amounts Western military aid would be welcomed by the opposition, which it needs to use against government forces.

The Syrian government and its allies view the conflict in terms of survival. The Syrian government’s position is clear as it either fights or ceases to exist. For Iran, Hezbollah, and their Iraqi and Yemeni allies, it is about the loss of a regional ally, which would tilt the balance of power in the favor of their enemies in the region. Currently, the government and its allies hold an advantage in the international forum. Although, they may not be seen positively, international inaction has allowed for the pro-government bloc to rally, and to continue using a heavy hand against the opposition and the domestic populace.

The fight for Syria is not going to end in the near future. To the victor go the spoils of war. These come with the Syrian group that can actually stabilize the nation in the
coming years. Whoever attains this privilege has an uphill battle as there will no doubt be pockets of foreign supported fighters resisting the new government and also a massive reconstruction effort needed. Diplomatic recognition is the key to producing reconstruction. Due to the fluctuating number of nations that recognize any of the Syrian parties, regional allies will be needed. As of September 2013, the very roughly estimated rebuilding cost is at 73 billion dollars (Syria Reconstruction Would Cost $73 Billion, Report Says, 2013). Syrian regional allies will either have to pay for these costs, lobby for it internationally, or risk seeing the victor government overthrown. The Syrian people will again desire more than just security. Justice and prosperity will need to be brought in from an untried government. In a likely unstable environment, a new government and its enemies will continue to hold the regional balance of power hostage to attain the essential aid needed from regional powers.

It is within the spirit of necessity and animosity within Syria that regional powers can aid in maintaining a Syrian civil war. There is no Syrian party that is willing to concede power. Although Qatar and Turkey’s interests are related to the seizure of power and security, their efforts will take a cautious form as their interests in power and security are met. Neither of these countries have the capacity to outlast Iran or Saudi Arabia. Iranian and Saudi support will eventually overshadow all others as the long term fight for regional supremacy will keep these powers engaged. Their positioning in the Gulf allows Iran and Saudi Arabia to fight strongly through proxies as there is no physical risk to their respective nations. The ability to retain Syria as an allied nation is the key to many other prominent regional political issues that affect the balance of power. The
proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran will keep advantageous Syrian groups armed, trained, funded, diplomatically and militarily supported for years to come.

**Other Considerations for the Region and Future Study**
The Syrian conflict is having lasting effects on the Middle East. Although it is most heavily affecting its neighbouring nations, the spill over of this conflict is reshaping politics far beyond Syrian borders.

Iranian-Saudi relations have escalated from adversarial relations in Iraq and across the region after the Arab Spring, but are now coming to a head over Syria. Iran is attempting to revise the balance of power in the region. Given its gains abroad and its nuclear development over the last 30 years, Iran has considerable leverage in the international community. It has successfully used this leverage to retain its ally Syria. Western rapprochement with Iran through the Joint Plan of Action, the disarmament of Syrian chemical and biological weapons, and negotiations concerning Geneva 2, have created a sense of political abandonment in the Saudi government (Allam, 2013). In response, the Saudis are contributing to the beginnings of a security dilemma between itself and Iran. Saudi anxiety is rooted in Iran’s large defense establishment, regional paramilitary proxies, and weapons grade capable Arak Nuclear plan. As the Saudis have temporarily lost a usually staunch anti-Iranian ally in the United States, Riyadh in an anarchic international system has turned to its own devices to recover its recent losses in political leverage. As a result, Saudi Arabia is attempting to form a shared military through the Gulf Cooperation Council (al Rasheed, 2013; Khan, 2013). It is also a possibility that is attempting to attain nuclear capability with help of the Pakistan (GCC to Form Unified Military Command, 2013; Saudi Nuclear Weapons 'On Order' from Pakistan, 2013).
These developments are in line with the Saudi trends to check aggressive Iranian concentrations of power. As of 2010 Riyadh began building its own national military capability, which is uncharacteristic as it normally relies upon the United States (Bumiller, 2010). To date Saudi Arabia and Iran have fought over the Balance of Power through proxies in other nations like Lebanon, Bahrain, and Iraq; however, these new developments are trends that are bringing Saudi Arabia closer to conventional warfare. With the proximity of the two nations and their interests in the Gulf, especially Bahrain or Iraq, these defensive developments could become problematic in years to come.

Lebanon shares historical, ancestral, economic, political, and cultural ties with Syria. With a decentralized and at times, fractured political system, Lebanon has the most at risk of all nations neighboring Syria. There are three areas where Lebanese sovereignty has been and will be encroached upon by the Syrian conflict. First, physical security has been heavily affected in Lebanon. It has placed pressure on relations between on Sunni and Shia political parties in an already strained sectarian based political system. The conflict is polarizing Shia-Sunni political relations. This not a wholesale development across the Lebanese populace, but it is radicalizing small pockets of these groups. The Syrian conflict has reignited a historical fight between two adjacent neighborhoods in Tripoli. The rival Lebanese pro-Assad Alawite in Jabal Mohsen and Lebanese pro-Syrian opposition Sunni in Tabbeneh, have engaged in near daily firefights since the Syrian conflict began. The large weapons shipments being flown daily into Tripoli are also exacerbating both the fights in Tripoli and armed militants in Syria (Hisham Jaber & Wehbe Katicha, 2013).\(^\text{130}\) Other limited attacks are also occurring across the country.

\(^{130}\) Hisham Jaber & Wehbe Katicha (2013) bi moudouiyeh, MTV, Beirut, 2 December.
In example, friction between loyalists of Sunni cleric Sheikh Ahmad al Assir in Sidon and Hezbollah occurred during the conflict resulting in a political struggle and armed clashes between followers of each group. The conflict ended with the Lebanese Army taking the Bilal bin Rabah mosque by force in an attempt to arrest al Assir on a murder warrant (Rowell, 2013). The Syrian conflict has also affected Lebanese political relations displayed through the assassination of Lebanese Army General Wissam al Hassan. The conflict is also affecting the diplomatic abilities of foreign nations in Lebanon that are involved in Syria. This was displayed in the November bombing of the Iranian embassy by the al Qaeda affiliate Abdullah Azzam Brigade (Lebanon Blasts Hit Iran's Embassy in Beirut, 2013). The Syrian conflict is also exacerbating existing rifts between the March 8th and March 14th camps and also within the March 8th camp. This was displayed in the fracture of relations between the Free Patriotic Movement and Hezbollah (Rowell, 2013). Additionally, there have been a multitude of calls for national action to end Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria by March 14th aligned parties; however, neither the Lebanese Army nor the government have the unitary will or power to do so. Finally, the largest threat to Lebanese security is the possibility that battles in Syria spill over the border into Lebanon during the Assad governments Qalamoun offensive (Hisham Jaber & Wehbe Katicha, 2013). Whether in Qalamoun or another border town, Syrian battles bordering Lebanon and Lebanese involvement in Syria will sustain this possibility.

Secondly, turmoil is having a devastating effect on the economy. According to the Lebanese ministry of tourism, the tourism sector has “catastrophically” dropped as Gulf

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131 These operations are alleged to have been done by men working for former Lebanese Minister Michel Samaha. Samaha’s National Gathering party is a pro-Syrian part (Chulov, 2012).
countries are issuing travel warnings to their citizens. Gulf citizens make the bulk of the tourists who visit Lebanon which has led to an estimated 10-17% drop in tourism revenues (Lebanon Tourism Suffers amid Regional Instability, 2013). Unemployment and poverty are also being affected as Syrian refugees are replacing Lebanese workers. Syrian refugee’s ability to work for lower wages than the Lebanese will add 170,000 Lebanese to the already 1 million Lebanese living at or below the poverty line. This is expected to occur by the end of 2013 (Lebanon Bears the Brunt of the Economic and Social Spillovers of the Syrian Conflict, 2013).

Finally, approximately 1.2 and 1.6 million Syrian refugees are settling in Lebanon for a long term period (Tabler, 2013). The number is approximated roughly 22-30% of the size of the Lebanese population. (Lebanon Bears the Brunt of the Economic and Social Spillovers of the Syrian Conflict, 2013). Aside from the effects that it will have on the economy, a small portion of this population brings the war with them. Like the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the 1970’s, some Syrians will still be involved in the conflict, which will draw action from both Syrian and Lebanese enemies pending affiliation (Tabler, 2013).

Iraq and Jordan face similar refugee problems. Iraq, aside from a smaller flow of refugees is having similar Syria related security problems due to political alliances across shared borders between corresponding Syrian and Iraqi parties. Its share of civilian refugees is primarily Kurdish. The Kurds are taking refuge in Kurdish controlled northern Iraq (Iraqi Kurd Leader Massoud Barzani Issues Syria Warning, 2013). Jordan is feeling the effects of the conflict economically and in its security. The nearly ½ million Syrian refugees are scattered between camps and Amman. To be released from
the camps like Zaatari camp, a Jordanian has to pay for a Syrian refugee’s entrance to Jordan (Stoter, 2013). People that are released are replacing Jordanian workers, which have led to an increase in Jordanian poverty. Like Lebanon, refugees have brought parts of the war along with them. Syrian intelligence agents and militants, both pro Assad and pro opposition, are operating in Amman, which decreases Jordanian security (Stoter, 2013). The conflict has also brought intelligence and military officials from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and likely Iran, which further weakens its security.

There are also effects being felt in Israel and Palestine. Relations between Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran have been strained due to Hamas’s support of the opposition; however, weapons still need to be shipped to Hamas as they are needed by Hamas and Iran. Hamas is part of Iranian defense against Israel. The conflict makes weapons shipments vulnerable to the Israeli Air Force, which has been destroying convoys as needed (Caspit, 2013). Finally, there is the issue of the Golan Heights. The kidnapping and later release of United Nations peacekeepers by members of the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade of the Syrian opposition was merely a reminder that the Golan is an issue for Syrians (UN Peacekeepers Kidnapped in Golan Released, 2013). The Golan will be a point of interest if the Assad government falls. If a new government takes power that is hostile to Israel there could be future security issues. The loss of the Golan Heights in the 1967 war is a national embarrassment for Syria area; however, both Assad administrations maintained somewhat civil relations with the Israelis. Even with a future Syrian government that maintains civil relations, there is no monopoly of violence
nationwide, which could be exploited if extremist groups can make their way south near the Golan.

The international community is now vulnerable to the spread of three Syrian born transnational epidemics: Polio, a “lost Syrian generation,” and extremism. The World Health Organization has commenced the largest polio immunization campaign ever undertaken in the region (‘Largest Ever' Polio Vaccination Campaign Follows Syrian Outbreak, 2013). This is due to reported cases in Syria, which were the first of their kind since 1999. In response, the World Health Organization is immunizing 23 million Syrian refugee children in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Turkey as these are the primary destinations for refugees (‘Largest Ever' Polio Vaccination Campaign Follows Syrian Outbreak, 2013). The United Nations Children’s Fund is also alarmed at the development of what they call a “lost generation.” This concept refers to the 4 million Syrian children under the age of 18 in need of aid who as UNICEF puts it, have no futures. Syrian children have become casualties of war, disease, and, malnutrition (Press Release, 2013). Aside from the tragic loss of life and health, an underdeveloped generation of Syrians will have negative consequences on the country’s ability to administer itself politically in the future, which debilitates any notion of democratic change the opposition had hoped for in 2011. This trend, if unsettled, will also complement current trends in Syrian employment. The rise of black markets across Syria could blossom given the lack of options for uneducated youth (‘War is Great Business!' Syria Gun Sellers Cash in on Conflict, 2013). A “lost generation” will complement an already existent negative trend upon the regions poverty level and employment standards. Like many people from war torn nations, Syrians have and will
continue to seek employment outside of Syria. This will drive down wages for natives of a target country, like Lebanon, which will raise the given country’s poverty level and lower the standard of living. Trends such as this can also raise animosity between natives of a nation, the migrants, and the groups protecting the migrants. Finally, the massing of transnational extremist groups in Syria is disconcerting. Although, there are politically aligned groups in Syria, the rise of extremist groups in northern Syria is troubling for the region. Currently, al Qaeda affiliates both Syrian and foreign, control large areas across the north of Syria and along the Euphrates river leading to al Anbar province in Iraq. To reiterate, it’s not that Syrians are drawn to this style of Islam, but the conflict has thus far allowed extremists to gain a foothold. These groups are supported by private donors, and possibly to some degree by the governments of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf nations, and Iraq (Shaheen, 2013). Like Afghanistan in the 1980’s or modern day Yemen, Syria allows the creation of operations and training bases for foreign jihadists. These groups can either continue to fight in Syria and Iraq, or export their experience and possible learned terror tactics to their home states, or the West. This provides solid reasoning for why relations with the Kurds and groups like the Islamic Front will improve. Given the Islamic Front’s proximity to extremists and history of engagements, pro-opposition nations will need to rely on non-extremist groups to eliminate al Qaeda affiliates. Whoever the future Syrian power may be, foreign extremist groups present a stumbling block for reconstruction attempts. Aside from foreign aid, Syria will have to rely on its production of crude oil to aid redevelop the state and economy. It currently is ranked at 33rd in proven reserves in the world (Energy Information Administration, 2013). Al Qaeda affiliated groups tend to
target economic infrastructure as they have been easy targets in Iraq, Yemen, and across the Middle East (Energy Information Administration, 2013).

The Syrian conflict, Arab Spring, and US invasion of Iraq has introduced serious deviations from the working order of the Middle East. This has allowed for both domestic and foreign groups to vie for power in the freshly formed power vacuums. Although domestic powers primarily fight under nationalist banners, the necessity of foreign assistance perverts these attempts. Where the regional powers choose to spend their money in Syria will ultimately dictate the health of Syrian and by correlation, the region. Given the need of regional powers to positively dictate power in their favor, it is unlikely that the situation will get better before it gets worse. The only powers truly at risk due to their proximity are Turkey and Hezbollah, which is why their involvement has snowballed over the duration. The ability of Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia to fight a proxy war far from their soil will allow them to solely concentrate of the domination of regional power, which will drag out the war. Any Syrian party with weapons, aid, and motivation will continue to fight for their soil.
Chapter Five
Conclusion and Generalization

The exacerbation of sectarianism by all parties, both Syrian and regional, is the byproduct of competitive self-interest. The Syrian conflict has caused the nation not only to fail politically, but has devastated it physically. After nearly 3 years of domestic unrest and war, Syria has lost approximately 130,000 people and has nearly 2 million people either internally or externally displaced. The Assad government and opposition’s respective determinations have been enabled by regional assistance, which initially gave rise to assertions that the war is driven by sectarianism.

This study was driven by the following proposal question: Why did the aggravation of sectarianism by regional powers in Syria come to be? This question was used to analyze regional power relations and the role of proxies in the conflict. The initial proposal question was limited in its language; however, it was a causeway to understanding the value that regional powers place on Syria as a nation. The proposal question also led to the necessity of understanding all groups that claim to be acting on behalf of Syrians. To analyze Syrian groups and the values they place on political power displays what is offered to regional powers for utility in the fight over the regional balance of power. More importantly, by focusing on political power some diagnostic and predictive value concerning Syria and the region can be attained. Sectarianism as a causal explanation cannot contribute as deep of an understanding into the conflict as it relates to International Relations. Finally, the ability to diagnose the conflicts foundations was also needed to assess the impact that the conflict is having not only on those engaged in the conflict, but on nations that are attempting to disassociate themselves from the conflict.
Chapter two of this study provides the context of the conflict as of the August 2013. This was done by providing statistics, existing viewpoints on the conflict, and by viewing it through existing theoretical frameworks. The popular view that the Syrian war is sectarian originated from two sources: pro-Assad propaganda efforts and power vacuums that allowed small pockets of Sunni extremists to enter the conflict. In the initial stages of the conflict, the Assad government and its allies Hezbollah and Iran maintained that the Syrian domestic unrest that began in 2011 was part of a grand conspiracy created by America, Israel, and al Qaeda. The Assad government claimed that the Syrian uprising was a sectarian scheme to allow Sunni terrorist groups to take over the nation. In so far that there are Sunni takfirist groups operating in Syria there is no doubt; however, the pro-Assad alliance generally conflates the entire Syrian opposition with a few limited takfirist groups that have had success in Syria to date. As shown in chapter four, under Presidents Hafez and Bashir al-Assad, the Syrian government historically has been quick to attach the enemy of the state, or terrorist, label to any degree of domestic opposition. The Syrian government has also historically used imprisonment and violence against enemies of the state and has also used collective punishment against the areas that harbored the accused; however, it begs the question as to why a state would risk marginalizing its population? Furthermore, why would allied Iran and groups like Hezbollah vest so much in the Assad government?

To the Syrian oppositions end there is limited truth to the assertions that they are fighting for sectarian power. There have been a number of statements and actions taken by the Syrian opposition, foreign extremist groups, and amongst non-Syrian Sunni clerics that give the opposition the reputation of having sectarian objectives. Chapter two
gives evidence of executions, kidnappings, and attacks based on sectarian lines by foreign extremist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham; however, these are limited cases. A high number of Sunnis amongst the opposition and their patron nations’ populaces also superficially reinforces the sectarian title; however, these are merely demographic realities. Demographics alone cannot explain why there were a number of Sunnis fighting with the Assad shabiha, or why Sunni elements of the opposition are so highly politically fragmented.\textsuperscript{132} Sectarianism also fails to fully explain why Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey began supporting the Syrian opposition. People and nations alike do not risk their own security unless there are gains to be made, or war is forced upon them.

Chapter three introduced the chosen methodology to survey the Syrian conflict and its impact in regional relations. Data Triangulation was used in this case study to survey the Syrian conflict through two methods. First, social observation is employed by means of content analysis. Content analysis is used to observe the crisis through up to date primary and secondary sources from both print and audio visual mediums. Second, seminal theories from Locke and Hobbes on political power were also used to aid in the defining Syrian domestic political priorities. This was done to show the utility and conduciveness of Syrian groups to regional powers. The ambitions of regional powers are analyzed through realist theory as it is the best theory to explain power relations in an unstable setting. There is no overarching regional or international political body that can regulate the conflict. As such nations must rely upon their own initiative to dictate

\textsuperscript{132} The Shabiha are armed non-governmental militias fighting for the Assad government.
their own security. By using observation and formal theory, the data is triangulated to give a deeper look at power relations in the conflict.

Chapter four’s findings and analysis are guided by three questions that map out the conflict linearly from initial unrest, to the introduction of foreign groups, and finally, to its current politically convoluted state. Question 1, or what domestic causes created the current Syrian conflict, produces an understanding as to why Syria fell into chaos. The domestic political failure of Syria is rooted both in the government’s understanding of security as being a nation’s primary function and the government’s lack of accountability to its populaces well-being. This is highlighted by the Assad government’s use of collective punishment and patrimony to ensure security through centralized power. The government’s focus on the centralization of power led to an exceedingly violent authoritarian regime that also did not produce economic opportunity for its people. In result, the Syrian populace was marginalized by its government politically and economically. The Arab Spring gave the Syrian people the confidence they needed to pursue government reformation, and later revolution, in the collective pursuit of something better. The escalation of violence by all groups taking part in the engagement allowed foreign non-state and state actors to become involved. Syrian groups need regional assistance to replenish the 3 pillars of statehood. These pillars are a monopoly of violence across Syria, centralized administration and public service, and near international recognition. Various sources and types of aid progressively flowed into Syria in an attempt to provide chosen proxies with the means of capturing power.

Question 2, or how are the Syrian conflict and regional power connected, provides the causality for regional involvement in Syria. The conflict introduced a political influence
vacuum for regional powers to fight for. It was found that regional statecraft within the conflict fits patterns consistent with realist thought. Qatari and Turkish pursuits of power have been concerned with moderate political influence expansion and for Turkey, the protection of enhancement of its national security. In relative terms, Qatar and Turkey’s modest aims have provided cautious approaches to their involvement in Syria. Like Turkey, Hezbollah’s interest is in defense. The Lebanese group stands to lose a political ally and pathways for military and monetary support. If the Assad government is overthrown, this will negatively affect the groups’ attempts to expand its power in Lebanese politics and its military capability. At the same time, Hezbollah is also using an offensive approach to meet threats outside of its borders. Saudi Arabia and Iran’s approaches have taken highly pronounced forms as the conflict has progressed. Proxy support in Syria is escalating due to Syria’s value as a key to the domination of the regional balance of power. A potential allied Syrian government to either the Iranians or Saudis provides the keys to favorable political conditions given Syria’s proximity to Lebanon, Kurdish territories, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine-Israel. Syria has also added to a growing security dilemma between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which exacerbates efforts by the two powers to polarize regional politics. For Iran, the maintenance of a Syrian ally is part of an ongoing attempt to revise the regional balance of power that Iran views as being favorable to Saudi Arabia. For Saudi Arabia, the Syrian conflict is a chance to maintain the status quo and continue to dominate regional power by relieving Iran of a regional ally in the Assad government. In either case, both are acting with a zero sum policy in mind.
Question 3, or what are the causes and effects of the foreign-domestic relationships in the Syrian conflict, provides insight into the utility and trajectory of alliances between Syrian parties and regional powers within a power vacuum. It was found that symbiotic relationships have been generated between regional patrons and their Syrian proxies. These relationships provide the opportunity for power multiplication for Syrian groups and regional powers alike. The will to battle by Syrian groups allows the reception of intelligence and diplomatic support, and civil and military aid from their respective regional patrons. The types and quantity of aid has varied from nation to nation over the last few years. Initially the opposition, both Syrian and regional, were to some degree willing to tolerate foreign extremist involvement amongst the opposition. Groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham thrive in and can further induce chaos. The foreign extremist’s ability to aid in dislodging the Assad government from its major footholds of power was initially needed by the pro-opposition; however, these groups are losing their utility as they are counterproductive to pro-oppositional efforts. There are trends of opposition unification within the armed Syrian opposition as the opposition is becoming more experienced. As a result, unification allows the general opposition to counter foreigner extremists. At the transnational level, unified Syrian militias provides Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia with better odds that their influence will continue to grow past what they’ve already gained. This will be more likely in the coming years as a larger unified force will likely work more effectively against the government. Unlike the opposition, the Assad government has been centrally organized, is technologically advanced, and has instituted exacting violence. These factors allow outside troop support from Hezbollah and Iran to be brought in ease. Given their size, level of organization, and sizable level of outside support, the Assad government has been able to solely hold a
large portion in the west and recently have begun making gains outside of their stronghold. Recent pro-Assad gains drain much needed resources from Iran and Hezbollah, which will likely continue as the pro-Assad camp stands only to lose. The difference in commitment level is the pro-Assad alliance is willing to commit manpower to their ally as they stand to lose a great deal of regional power. Contrarily, the majority of the pro-opposition camp stands to gain, but is largely only contributing high levels of material and funds to their proxy. The commitment of Saudi or Qatari forces would aid their Syrian allies in the short term; however, it could likely prompt an actual war between the Gulf nations and Iran. The threat of a larger war should keep these respective styles of aid in place. Both within the Assad government and opposition, large amounts of aid and diplomatic support maintain the Syrian stalemate, which makes international peace talks a negligible point. Chaotic trends will continue as there are regional political gains being vied for between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Politics in relation to the Syrian conflict are rooted in competitive self-interest. Regional powers, are using the Syrian people as a means to project, or protect their own national power. As has been shown, liberal inter-governmental organizations like the Gulf Cooperation Council and the United Nations have been incapable of dictating events in Syria. Liberal regional bodies like the Gulf Cooperation Council are used by Saudi Arabia and Qatar as a diplomatic tool. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey’s political maneuvers show the region to be marred by competitive self-interest as each nation has country specific objectives. Relations over Syria are characteristic of past trends. Of late, the region has been destabilized by the 2003 US-Iraq war and the Arab Spring. Fiery regional competition due to subsequent power vacuums surrounding these events have
ensued. Power vacuums by definition are political instances where there is no true central authority over an area. It is within this base concept of international relations that the Syrian file conforms to realism. Syria’s importance to geopolitics has transformed a national conflict into a proxy war, while also testing the historic imperial desires found in the Sykes Picot agreement. The realist trends of regional powers will continue to place Syria and its neighbors in a perilous setting that is expanding exponentially.

**Limitations and Recommendations**
This study was wracked with limited sources of data. Relatively speaking, little time has passed since the Syrian conflict’s beginnings. As a result there are limited primary and secondary sources. Although the polling samples that were used were small, this data was supported by other studies prior to the Syrian uprising that supports the findings of the data. Sources were hard to attain for polling as it took place in Lebanon. Due to security issues, no interviewees questioned allowed the researchers to disclose interviewees’ names let alone solicit further interviewee sources for the study. Security also handicapped and further debilitates researchers from interviewing sources in Syria.

As a recommendation, further research needs to be done with Syria and the Arab Spring using the gauges from *Wave of Democracy* and *Middle Eastern Exceptionalism* model. Respectively, both of these models account for hard political indicators as to the success or improbability of a movement towards democracy, or at the very least political change. The Syrian conflict partially confirms both Samuel Huntington’s *Wave of Democracy* model, while also affirming the pillars of *Middle Eastern Exceptionalism*. It is very early

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133 This study was undertaken in the Fall semester of 2011 at the Lebanese American University in Beirut.
in the transformative stages of the Syrian conflict and the Arab Spring. This is why neither of the models can solely explain what is happening in Syria. An authoritarian regime with a well-funded security apparatus founded on patrimony is incredibly hard to dislocate. A strong security apparatus can physically deny attempts to democratize as has been done by the Assad government and its allies (Bellin, 2004). This is highly evident when a government is fighting for its survival. Egypt and Syria have been prime examples of the debilitating effects that a robust security apparatus has on democratic initiative, or any break from the political status quo. International alliances also play a huge role in whether a nation will democratize. As Samuel Huntington has shown there are two sides to international support. The influence of pro and antidemocratic powers plays a role in political transformation or the denial of change. The Syrian regime has anti-democratic allies in China, Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah to support the government both diplomatically and militarily in operations against its own people. Various Syrian and foreign extremist groups have also aided in deflecting the support of major democratic powers like the United States, Britain, and France from aiding the Syrian opposition. Western fears of replacing Assad with extremist groups like al Nusra, or the Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham, debilitates international support for the Syrian opposition. Although these groups may not represent the bulk of the opposition, they are taking control of areas, which gives them the most base of political power.

The Syrian conflict offers a myriad of other issues to be studied. They range from the conflicts’ effects on the economies, the methamphetamine trade, security, and politics of neighboring nations, to the rise of a possible security dilemma between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Nationally, the growth of larger unified opposition groups inside the country
presents a counterweight to the Assad government and its allies in Syria, and also to extremist groups in the nation. The evolution of these groups needs to be studied as their respective abilities will not only dictate the stability of Syria, but also what style of government ensues in the conflicts wake. A new government’s successes and failures should be analyzed to gauge whether the desires of the Syrian opposition as of 2011 was met, or if the new power has deviated course. This would further the study of the residual effects from international participation with domestic political transformation. In any case, whatever style of Syrian government emerges from this conflict will have massive effects on the regional balance of power and the security of the Middle East.


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