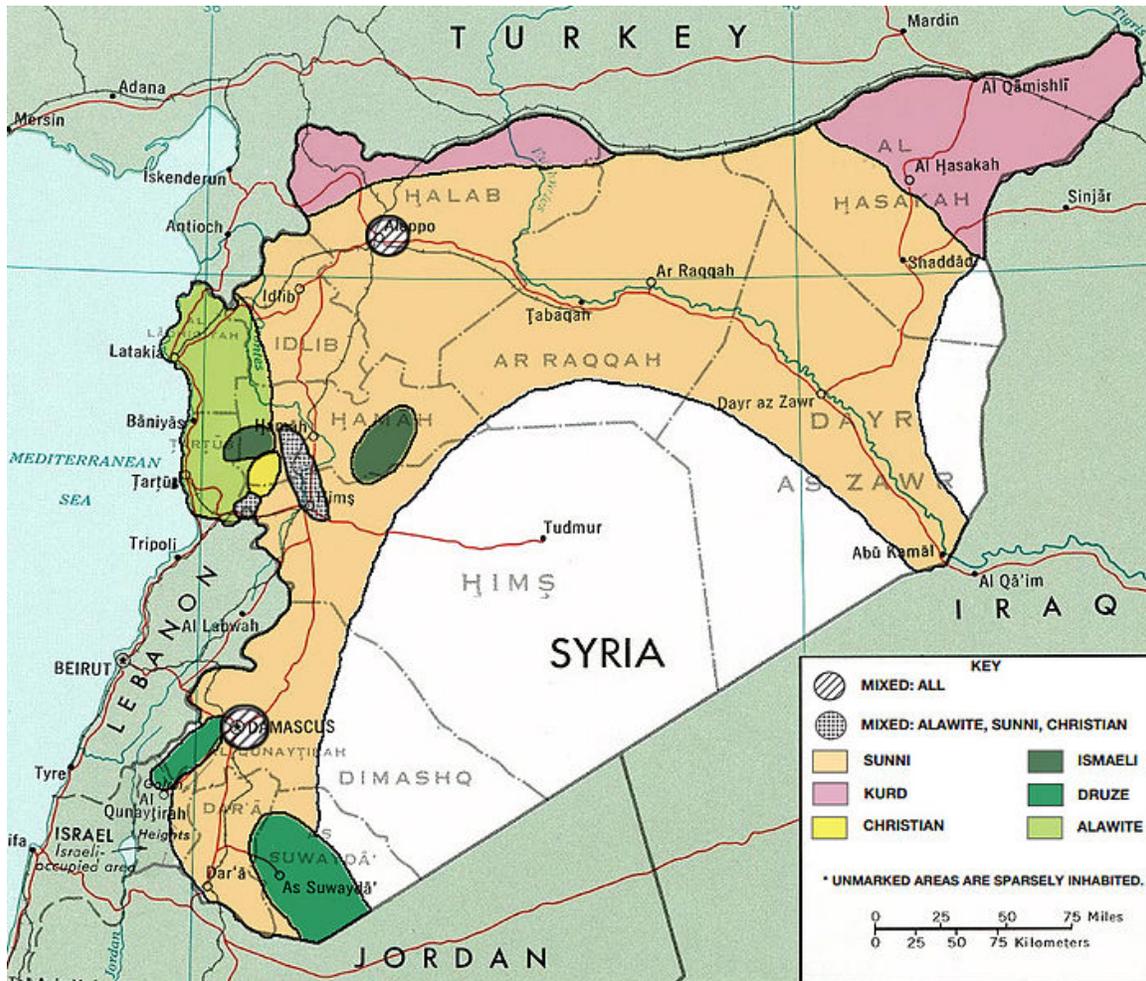




Syria & the Levant: After the Civil War



Disclaimer: This is a theater strategic level cultural product prepared by the US Army War College and the Army Culture and Foreign Language Directorate (ACFLD) in support of the the 55th Military Engagement Team and ARCENT's Military Engagement Program and does not necessarily reflect the views of any actual command headquarters. Please refer inquiries to Adam L. Silverman, PhD; Cultural Advisor, US Army War College/ Team Leader, ACFLD Cultural Operations Support Team, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013. Contact information: adam.l.silverman.ngo@mail.mil or 516-712-5384.



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MEMORANDUM FOR: Commandant US Army War College

SUBJECT: Culture and Foreign Language Report: Syria and the Levant: After the Civil War

1. This analysis was conducted in response to a request for cultural operations support by the 55th Military Engagement Team. Enclosed you will find an in depth theater strategic level analysis of the socio-cultural dynamics, focusing on potential outcomes for Syria and the Levant as a result of the Syrian Civil War.
2. The Cultural Operational Support Team at the US Army War College and TRADOC G3's ACFLD has prepared this report from open source materials from a variety of sources. Citations will be found as footnotes throughout the text.

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Introduction

As the Syrian Civil War approaches the end of its second year the Assad government has managed to survive where the Mubarak, Qathafi, ben Ali, and Saleh governments have not. While it is unclear if the Assad government will survive, the ongoing humanitarian crisis has further destabilized an already unstable region. The purpose of this US Army War College and Army Culture and Foreign Language Directorate Cultural Operations Report is to explore potential outcomes to the Syrian Civil War and their socio-cultural impacts for both Syria and the Levant.

The stakes in both Syria and the region cannot be higher. None of the states and societies in the Levant has evolved the political, social, economic, and religious cultures and institutions that would make them individually or regionally resilient. While Israel and Turkey are much more resilient, the unique nature of their socio-political and societal establishment and evolution places them at risk for considerable negative effects should Syria continue to disintegrate leading the Levant farther into instability and turmoil.

It may also not be possible to contain the turmoil within Syria and the Levant as several of the other regional powers, primarily Saudi Arabia and Iran¹, may not be able to avoid being pulled into the conflict in a more direct way than they already are. While Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Qatar² seem to be the primary external financiers of the various factions within the Syrian Civil War, it is also clear that it is also a proxy war between the Saudis and the Iranians for influence and control within not just the Levant, but also the Middle East, Arab North Africa, and parts of Central Asia. Both of these states are pursuing strategies in their near abroad to extend their influence and consolidate their power to establish either a Sunni or (Twelver) Shi'a hegemony.

The potential for the dissolution of Syria to create a Levant wide humanitarian crisis that destabilizes the entire region should also be of utmost concern. Not

¹ Philip Giraldi, "Who's Turning Syria's Civil War into a Jihad?", *The American Conservative*, 28 FEB 2013, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/whos-turning-syrias-civil-war-into-a-jihad/>

² "Iraq Accuses Qatar of Financing Jihad Groups in Syria", *Foreign Policy's The Cable*, 4 MAR 2013, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/04/iraq_accuses_qatar_of_financing_jihadi_groups_in_syria



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only because of the immediate potential for loss of life, suffering, and the humanitarian toll of a prolonged Civil War with the potential to devolve into a proper classic insurgency, but also because such a humanitarian crisis has the real potential to destabilize Syria's neighbors in the Levant. Lebanon, as evidenced by the events of the mid 1970s that resulted in the Lebanese Civil War, does not handle population transfers well; especially refugees. Jordan, meanwhile, continues to exhibit an almost inexplicable resilience whereby the Hashemite monarchy and state survive political, social, and economic structural weaknesses even when many observers have expected other outcomes.

This cultural operations report will focus on potential outcomes of the Syrian Civil War through the lens of differential social organization. How Levantine states and societies are organized will have a huge effect on their abilities to deal with the Syrian Civil War, the potential humanitarian crisis, and their aftermath. This report will also use components of two different socio-cultural frameworks: the Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP) and the British Cultural Intelligence Model (BCIM). By doing so we intend to provide greater insight into what could happen in Syria and the Levant in order to allow for the better formation of US theater and national strategies to deal with both the immediate crisis and its aftermath.

The Differential Social Organization of the Levant

A society is differentially socially organized when it has developed institutions, social/societal structures, norms, and the resulting identities and behaviors that allow them to survive living in the conditions that are prevalent and extant in the states within which they reside. These conditions can include, but may not be limited to, a society that is uncertain, capricious, despotic, tyrannical, and/or authoritarian, formally or informally theocratic, as well as poor and economically deprived. Societies, and their sub-cultural components develop differential social organization in order to survive in the political, social, religious, and economic environments they have had to live in; *it is a survival mechanism!*

Essentially, authoritarian, despotic, and/or tyrannical states are not disorganized or malorganized, rather they are organized in line with the structural conditions that are found there. In short they are differentially organized. This then drives the creation of a set of behavioral drivers (values) that are rooted in the social, political, economic, religious, and physical differences in characteristics that exist within these states and the surrounding region. Together they create the conditions for the development of values that are specific to that state, its society,



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and its sub-cultures.³ Once this occurs the normal process of social learning takes over and transmits these alternative forms of organizations - norms, values, institutions, etc - which are then facilitated through associational life, imitation, and reinforcement for engaging in these different behaviors that are consistent with the differentially organized nature of these societal elements.⁴

Differential social organization will manifest itself within the Levant in several ways. Regardless of the outcome of the Syrian Civil War, Syria's differential social organization will partially determine what actually emerges as a new normal as the Syrians seek to fully transition from the current tyrannical, authoritarian, and/or despotic forms of governance and society into something else - hopefully more liberal, democratic, and free social, political, economic, and religious systems. The differential social organization in the other Levantine states will drive their abilities to respond to the humanitarian crisis, specifically in responding to inflows of refugees that are the result of the Syrian Civil War. This will be especially important in regard to Lebanon and Jordan, which are already beginning to show signs of stress and instability as a result of the inflow of Syrian refugees.

The Syrians have been living in a society that has been socially, politically, economically, religiously, and physically distorted by over forty years of military authoritarianism in order to protect and preserve the privileges of the Alawite minority. Syrians are socialized and normalized to this structural and behavioral reality. And while they certainly have an understanding and appreciation of what freedom and liberty are or could be (depending on their own life experiences of travel, study, and/or living abroad), as Syrians in Syria, many, if not most given the youth bulge, have lived only under this set of structural and ideational conditions. Whatever happens in Syria over the next several months in terms of who will stay in or come to power will be bound within the context of a population that has been treated and ruled despotically and tyrannically. When they do finally break free and set up new systems and institutions and remake their societies, despotically treated populations often set up new tyrannies or take a long time to exorcise the despotic, tyrannical, and authoritarian impulses from their structures, institutions, norms, and values.

³ Edwin Sutherland (1974), *Criminology*, JB Lippincott Company. This is adapted from Sutherland's original formulation, which was focused on the study of neighborhoods that have high levels of deviance, delinquency, and crime.

⁴ Akers, Ronald L. and Adam L. Silverman (2004), "Toward a Social Learning Model of Violence and Terrorism." In *Violence: From Theory to Research*. Margaret A. Zahn, Henry H. Brownstein, and Shelly L. Jackson (eds). Anderson Publishing.



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Even if the Syrian Civil War should come to a quick and positive end, it does not mean that the trouble will be over. The hardest part of reconstruction is actually the societal reconstruction. As we have seen with Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Egypt and to a lesser extent Libya, societal reconstruction and the achievement of a new normal is not a straightforward or a linear process. Rather it is convoluted, works in fits and starts, is often violent – either in ongoing low level violence punctuated by very bloody bursts or in smaller more discreet events, and will take generations to complete. Even in the US, with all the industrial, economic, and political advantages that Americans have, we are still, 150 years on from our own Civil War, dealing with its prime causes and have not actually completed our own societal reconstruction pertaining how to institutionalize governance, organize the economy, or integrate societally as a pluralist representative democracy. Given the incomplete nature of our own experience, imagine how much harder it is going to be in Syria or the other Levantine states and societies that do not have the advantages in wealth and opportunity that the US does.

This is also going to be true for the other Levantine, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian states in the region, which all exist in their own local variation of differential social organization. It is even true for the Turks and the Israelis. While both of these societies are democratic, and for the region exemplars of liberal governance, they are still very different than the liberal democratic states and societies of Western Europe, North American, Australia, and New Zealand. The security realities of living in the region, and the manner in which they have both dealt with their internal other populations – the Kurds and the Palestinians respectively, has led to the development of uniquely Turkish and Israeli differential social organization. It is important to remember that any third parties seeking to assist these transitions, face the stark reality of having to try to overcome the differential social organization that have developed as protection mechanisms to allow these societies to survive for generations under illiberal, tyrannical, despotic, and/or authoritarian conditions.

The Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy

The ACFSP has three component parts: **identity**, **institutions**, and **resilience**. Identity seeks to provide the focus and clarity on the “who am I”, or in this case of societal/state level analysis, the “who are we” question. Identity is formed when individuals collectively coalesce around a set of commonalities and can be either objective or subjective. These can be based on ethno-national, ethno-religious, ethno-linguistic, gendered, class, caste, kinship (family, clan, tribe, moiety, etc), locality, nation, region, religion, and/or other ideational constructs. Once a substantial number of individuals create, learn, and adopt a given



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identity or set of identities, structural and institutional development begin to take place. The institution lens seeks to capture the political, social, religious, economic, kinship/familial, military, and other structures within a given society. It refers to the socially constructed systems that provide patterns and boundaries to the daily life of the identities in questions. As they develop, grow, stabilize, and in some cases atrophy over time they then influence the identities; locking identity in or forcing it to change depending on the circumstances. An understanding of **resilience** provides strategic thinkers, analysts, and decision makers with information focused on how malleable is any given society to external or internal political, economic, social, diplomatic, informational, and/or military pressure. Moreover, resilience also refers to any given society's institutional ability to cope with these internal and external pressures, as well as other manmade or natural ones. In regards to the socio-cultural study of potential Syrian and Levantine outcomes the most important ACFSP analytical components are institutions and resilience.

The British Cultural Intelligence Model

There are four components to the BCIM: socio-cultural **elements**, socio-cultural **dynamics**, socio-cultural **location**, and socio-cultural **context**. Socio-cultural elements refer to the populations, groups, sub-cultures, kinship groups, organizations, institutions, etc within a given society. Socio-cultural dynamics focuses on who is related to whom and why, who is and is not an elite and/or notable or why, and how the various groups and organizations interact with each other. Socio-cultural location captures where all of the societal elements reside in time and space and why they occupy those spaces. Finally, socio-cultural context deals with what all of this means and why. It also attempts to provide an understanding of the whole, rather than the component parts. This understanding is derived from the British Ministry of Defense's understanding of culture as three overlapping geodesics; context, network dynamic, and location, in relation to the overall socio-cultural elements. The key BCIM analytical components for the purposes of the socio-cultural study of potential Syrian and Levantine outcomes are socio-cultural dynamics and location.

Potential Outcomes

Among the potential outcomes of the Syrian Civil War are those that relate specifically to Syria and those that are of concern for the entire Levant. Both sets of outcomes are inextricably related – the effects within Syria will drive events outside of Syria within the Levant and the greater Middle East Central Asia, and Asia Minor.



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Within Syria

There are three likely outcomes of the Syrian Civil War: stalemate driven insurgency similar to the Moro dispute with the Philippine government over control and autonomy for Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, the fall of the Assads and the establishment of a Sunni majority government, and the withdrawal of the Alawites –with or without the Assads – to their traditional highland strongholds along the coast of Syria in Latakia.

Stalemate Driven Insurgency

The Assad government has managed to survive and maintain power for over two years despite growing regional isolation, calls for Bashar al Assad's ouster, attempts to form a coalition of rebel and opposition groups that could act in concert and organize to build a government in waiting, and significant external funding for a variety of the rebel and opposition groups. While the latter has turned Syria into a proxy war between two of the most powerful regional actors, the Saudis and the Iranians, as well as made it a haven for reactionary, violent jihadis from throughout the region and the Muslim world, it has also led to an increase in societal factions and an inability for the various groups to actually cooperate. Moreover, many of the rebel groups are clearly divided along religious lines – the Islamist jihadis such as the recently self identified with al Qaeda in Iraq Jabhat al Nusra⁵ as opposed to the Free Syrian Army, which while made up of Syrian Sunnis does not espouse a reactionary, violent Islamic identity. Even among the political opposition there is no unity of purpose or action. There are three main political coalitions, as well as a handful of other individuals and groups, but they currently seem unable to work in a coordinated manner. In fact one of the major opposition leaders, Moaz al Khatib recently resigned his leadership position furthering the political oppositions disarray.⁶

At this stage of the Syrian Civil War the Assad government has been very fortunate in its enemies and opposition. Between al Khatib's resignation further exacerbating the dysfunction of the political opposition and one of the primary armed opposition groups formally identifying with the regional al Qaeda affiliate al Qaeda in Iraq, Bashar al Assad, his government, and his surviving

⁵ Tom A. Peter (11 APR 2013), "al Qaeda in Iraq and Jabhat al Nusra Make it Official", *The Christian Science Monitor*, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2013/0411/Al-Qaeda-in-Iraq-and-Syrian-rebel-group-Jabhat-al-Nusra-make-it-official>.

⁶ Martin Chulov (26 MAR 2013), "Moaz al Khatib's Resignation Plunges Syrian Opposition into Chaos", *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/24/moaz-al-khatib-resignation-syrian-opposition>.



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military forces could not be more fortunate. While Assad remains isolated and in a fight for his government's, his sect's, and likely his own life, the opposition's inability to unify and the affiliations of some of its armed members could lead to a prolonged stalemate in Syria rather than a resolution of the dispute. If this happens the rebellion will devolve into a classic insurgency where the government is strong enough to survive, but not strong enough to successfully defeat the armed and political opposition and the armed and political opposition are just strong enough to survive the government's response, but not strong enough to overthrow it and replace it with something else. If this happens then we could see a situation in Syria that mirrors that of the Philippines in regard to the Moro's and the dispute over establishing an autonomous Muslim state in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. While the Moro's have never been strong enough to actually break away, they have been strong enough to survive the government's attempts to defeat them. The result has been decades of instability, social, political, and economic turmoil punctuated by spikes in violence, terrorism, insurgency, and counterinsurgency.

The failure of the Philippine state to successfully defeat the Moros, and the ensuing instability, also spawned a number of offshoot and splinter groups over the years that exploited the situation for their own ends, which had a destabilizing effect on the Philippines and the surrounding region. This is a very real possible outcome for the Syrians and one that would have far ranging consequences throughout the Levant, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Not only would the humanitarian crisis be exacerbated by an increase of Syrian refugees fleeing to safe haven, but an ungovernable space in the middle of the Levant with Islamist jihadi groups in control of some areas, would create the conditions for other regional extremists and terrorists to exploit the situation for their own advantage by using portions of a largely ungovernable Syria to transit through, to traffic both licit and illicit goods, and as potential training and operational sites. This situation would also provide the transnational Kurdish minority with an opportunity to link the Kurdish portions of Syria with Iraqi Kurdistan, which would further enflame tensions and relations with the Turks.

The Fall of the Assads and the Establishment of a Sunni Majority Government

Perhaps the cleanest potential outcome of the Syrian Civil War would be the fall of the Assad government, either peacefully or forcefully. This will, however, not resolve the Syrian Civil War and would likely accelerate the infighting between the various factions of the armed and political opposition. As there is no clear successor to the Assad government among the political opposition and there is violent disagreement among the armed opposition groups over how to bring about the fall of the Syrian government, it is unlikely that the end of the war



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against the government will actually end the Syrian Civil War. Instead the Syrian Civil War will enter into a new phase marked by increased factional fighting, reprisals directed at the Alawite and other minorities that were part of both the Hafez and Bashar al Assad governments, and attempts to actually form a government. Given the significant differences in the approaches of the jihadi and non-jihadi armed opposition in regard to governance of areas currently under their control⁷, it is likely that even if the differences can be initially overcome to form a provisional government, the political, social, economic, and religious grievances that arise out of the different groups identities will prohibit them from successfully developing new Syrian institutions or a post-Assad political culture. As a result it is possible that Syria could see its own version of the Thirty Years War. Should this happen then factions will fight for legitimacy until one achieves enough to form a government co-opting some and attempting to suppress the rest. Failure to consolidate power will invite challenges from the factions that have not been co-opted, which will begin the cycle of delegitimizing successive movements, parties, and governments, factional fighting, fall of the government, and war of succession all over again.

Like the protracted stalemate and insurgency, this possible outcome would also create a huge, ongoing humanitarian crisis and further destabilize the Levant including unilateral action taken by the transnational Kurdish minorities of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey to establish at least greater autonomy, if not the realization of the long hoped for independent Kurdistan. One important caveat needs to be made: unlike the Thirty Years War, a prolonged fight for legitimacy in Syria would not result in the beginning of a Levantine variant of the emergence of a secular state system. The Syrian Sunni majority is conservative, even though it is not Salafist. Expecting the ultimate emergence of an outcome that completely mirrors that of the Thirty Years War would be mistaken. The example is used to demonstrate the nature of a prolonged dispute over the legitimacy in the succession of government and therefore in the actual government itself.

The Withdrawal of the Alawites to Latakia

This possibility is actually a potential sequel to the first two, though one in which the Assad government does not actually hold on or fall cleanly, pulling back to Latakia may be the Assads best chance to survive and make it into exile, as well as the only likely safe haven the Alawites will have left. The Alawites

⁷ Rania Abouzeid (23 MAR 2013), "How Islamist Rebels are Ruling a Fallen Provincial Capital", *Time*, <http://world.time.com/2013/03/23/how-islamist-rebels-in-syria-are-ruling-a-fallen-provincial-capital/>.



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traditional stronghold is the mountainous strip along Syria's Mediterranean coast. It was there that as a boy, Hafez al Assad witnessed Syrian governmental officials brutalize and humiliate his father, which his biographer, Patrick Seale, describes as one of his most formative experiences and a driver of Assad's determination to seize power in order to protect his kinfolk.⁸ A final possible outcome to this phase of the Syrian Civil War would be for the Assads, their Alawite and other minority clients and supporters, and the remnants of the Syrian military to retreat to the traditional Alawite areas. The nature of the terrain would make it fortifiable against the armed opposition groups, especially if the Alawites were able to bring significant military resources with them as they pull out of their current positions. Another advantage to the Alawites in this scenario is that if they are able to hold out successfully they will have both access to the Mediterranean, as well as be able to dispute the successor Syrian's state's claim on the recently discovered offshore Leviathan petroleum and natural gas field.

Within the Levant

The refugee driven humanitarian crisis that has been created by the Syrian Civil War has the potential to completely destabilize the region. There are currently 1,072,843 Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with another 247,652 persons of concern as a result of the Syrian Civil War.⁹ The bulk of the Syrian refugees are almost evenly divided between Jordan with 421,547 and Lebanon with 416,263 persons of concern respectively. The stability of both states political institutions to withstand this inflow of refugees, as well as the accompanying political, social, economic, religious, and demographic stresses are being tested and have many observers concerned for the viability of both Jordan and Lebanon. Should one or both of these states collapse the Levant will likely enter into a period of catastrophic system failure where an actual domino effect could occur with the failure of one state leading to either the failure of others or to the mobilization and military action of neighboring states in order to secure their own positions and interests.

Catastrophic Systems Failure: A Levantine Domino Effect

The stress and pressure that Syria's Civil War is creating within two of its immediate neighbors, Lebanon and Jordan, specifically as a result of the refugee

⁸ Patrick Seale (1990), *Assad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, University of California Press.

⁹ "Regional Overview" (12 APR 2013), *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, UNHCR, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.



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crisis, as well as the greater Levant and Middle East has the potential to lead to a catastrophic systems failure. Should Syria fail or experience a stalemate between the government and the rebels leading to a prolonged, classic insurgency the humanitarian crisis caused by refugee outflows will only exacerbate pressure on both Jordan and Lebanon. Of the two Lebanon has the least political, social, and religiously sectarian resilience. The Lebanese consociational democracy and confessional system is likely not strong enough to withstand the increased pressures from the demographic changes caused by prolonged hosting of Syrian refugees. Should the Lebanese government fail, then the Israelis will mobilize in order to protect their northern border from Hezbollah, as well as to prosecute their ongoing dispute with that group. Turkey would also likely mobilize to Lebanon and Syria's north in order to ensure that its borders are secure, especially in regard to the transnational Kurdish minority in Turkey itself and within both Syria and Iraq.

The pressure of a prolonged Syrian conflict coupled with a Lebanese political failure and the mobilization of Israel and/or Turkey to secure their own territorial interests and regional ambitions has the potential to bring the entire Levant into crisis. Iran is also entering an election cycle and is experiencing challenges to the position and power of the Supreme Religious Authority Ayutalluh Khamenei.¹⁰ While it is unlikely that Khamenei would be overthrown, his perceived weakness combined with increased Levantine instability would be the perfect distraction and cover for the Likud Party led Israel's long threatened preemptive strike on Iran. Finally, ongoing regional instability would also be the perfect cover for the Kurds to finally attempt to break away from Iraq and in conjunction with the Kurds in Syria combine their areas into a united, independent Kurdistan. The potential of such a move by the Kurds will keep the Turks ready to secure their own borders and prevent the formation of an independent Kurdistan.

Jordan

The Hashemite monarchy of Jordan has survived assassinations and assassination attempts, destabilization by Palestinian guerillas and terrorists, the need to balance competing regional realities with their extra-regional alignments during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Iraqi refugee inflows due to the fall of Saddam Hussein during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and a chronic lack of natural resources on which to base a functional modern economy. In each of these instances analysts have predicted that the Hashemite monarchy was facing a

¹⁰ "Iran's Leader Steps Deeper into the Political Fray" (16 APR 2013), *al Arabiya*, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/18/266864.html>.



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crisis of legitimacy that it would not survive. In each case they have been wrong. The current humanitarian crisis and the flood of refugees into Jordan is once again taxing the Kingdom's ability to cope with its lack of natural resources, chronically weak economy, and the unfortunate luck of having really bad neighbors. And once again it is being suggested that this may be the Hashemite monarchy's last days as Jordan's lack of institutional resilience places it at risk for failure.¹¹ The concern is that the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood could exploit the refugee crisis to challenge a weakened Jordanian state.¹² Should the Hashemite monarchy finally encounter a challenge to its legitimacy that it cannot weather and it enters into either a period of instability without a stable government and/or is taken over by an Islamic party, such as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, the calculus in the Levant will change radically. While this reality will be bad for the Jordanians it is in many ways one of Israel's worst nightmares.¹³ If the Hashemite monarchy should fall Israel will be forced to mobilize and intervene to try to prevent another Islamist party from coming to power on its borders. If Israel intervenes it is likely that the Egyptians would take the opportunity, driven by both popular sentiment and the theology that drives the current Morsi government to repudiate the Camp David Accords and reacquire disputed territories. While each of these outcomes will make sense from the perspectives of Israel and Egypt, they will further destabilize an already highly unstable region. Finally, it is not at all clear that Hashemite monarchy is as weak as some fear or that it will not, once again, be able to weather current difficulties and challenges to its legitimacy.¹⁴

Lebanon

Lebanon is the most important domino in the Levant. At the best of times its consociational government/confessional political system is able to provide just

¹¹ "Jordan's Stability Threatened by Islamist Forces and Syria Overflow" (7 DEC 2012), *Quilliam*, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/blog/jordans-stability-challenged-by-islamist-forces-and-syria-overflow/>.

¹² Tamar al Samadi (3 APR 2013), "Jordan: Frustration and Fear Besieging the Street and Brotherhood Awaiting a Decisive Outcome in Syria" *Al-Monitor*, Joelle el Khoury (trans), <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/04/jordan-brotherhood-fears.html>.

¹³ Alon Ben David, "The Most Serious Threat Facing Israel: The Downfall of King of Jordan Abdulla II", *Al Monitor*, Hanni Mannor (trans), <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/02/the-most-serious-threat-facing-israel-the-downfall-of-king.html>.

¹⁴ Suleiman al Khalidi and Alistair Lyon (29 NOV 2012), "Insight: Cash Crisis, Arab Ferment Threaten Jordan's Stability", *Reuters*, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/29/us-jordan-crisis-idUSBRE8AS0BC20121129>.



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enough political and social resilience to balance the competing identity driven demands of its various factions. Under stress, as happened during the early and mid 1970s, the Lebanese system loses what little institutional resilience it has. One of the major stressors that Lebanon has historically been unable to handle are demographic changes that threaten to upset and overturn the population size based claims that Lebanon's various sects make on the state, society, and each other. While it is possible to read too much into historical parallels and analogies, events in Lebanon today appear to be mirroring and repeating those that led up to the Lebanese Civil War of the 1970s and 1980s. Recently Lebanon's Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, resigned due to increased pressure from the Lebanese communities that both support and oppose the Assad government in Syria.¹⁵ As a result Lebanon's government is currently even more unstable as it approaches an election cycle and has to try to balance competing domestic and regional/international pressures.

While Lebanon may be able to withstand a burgeoning constitutional crisis it still has to deal with the pressure on it from the inflow of Syrian refugees and the jockeying for power of domestic factions, such as Hezbollah and the centrist Druze, in the run up to new elections. The stress is of particular concern for Lebanon's Christians as they view the influx of Muslim Syrians as an unfortunate repeat of what happened with the Palestinian refugees of the late 1960s.¹⁶ As the influx of Syrian refugees grows, leading to an ever larger humanitarian crisis, Lebanon's resilience will be taxed to its fullest. Not only will it struggle with providing humanitarian assistance, but it will also be vulnerable to sectarian political challenges within a governance system that is barely functional at the best of times.

Should Lebanon's consociational government/confessional political system once again fail under the weight of a massive inflow of Muslim refugees from Syria it will likely set off a cascade reaction within the region. Should Lebanon not be able to hold, then the Israelis will be forced to mobilize to prevent a repeat of the spillover violence that occurred during the Lebanese Civil War of the 1970s and 1980s, the Turks will have to mobilize as well in order to secure their own

¹⁵ Paul Salem (23 MAR 2013), "Lebanon Imperiled as Prime Minister Resigns Under Duress", *Carnegie Middle East Center*, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2013/03/23/lebanon-imperiled-as-prime-minister-resigns-under-duress/fsq9>.

¹⁶ Jihad al Zein (19 MAR 2013), "The Era of the Northern Border Villages Follows the Era of the Southern Border Villages", *Al Monitor*, Rani Geha (trans), <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/03/lebanese-border-tension-syria.html>.



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positions and interests in the region. If Israel mobilizes, then Jordan will have to do so in order to safeguard its own borders and interests. Moreover, the Egyptians might seize on the crisis as a means to repudiate the Camp David Accords that they view as unfavorable to their interests, with the objective of reclaiming land ceded by the Accord, actions fully consistent with the theological underpinnings of the Morsi regime. Finally, should such a regional cascade failure occur it is likely that the transnational Kurdish minorities in Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan, and possibly Turkey will seek to unite and under the cover of the chaos consolidate their positions into a contiguous and united Kurdistan. The failure of Lebanon and the follow on negative second, third, and fourth order effects of its neighbors mobilizing to protect their own interests would be *the most deadly course of action in regard to the Syrian Civil War*. It could, however, ultimately lead to better outcomes for the Syrians, as well as the other Levantine states just as the resolution of the Thirty Years War led to better outcomes for Europe.



Contributors

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