Brandeis University
Crown Center
for Middle East Studies

Mailstop 010
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5320
781-736-5324 Fax
www.brandeis.edu/crown

Crown Family Director
Professor of Politics
Shai Feldman

Senior Executive Director
Professor of the Practice in Politics
Gary Samore

Associate Director
Kristina Cherniahivsky

Charles (Corky) Goodman Professor
of Middle East History
Associate Director for Research
Naghmeh Sohrabi

Myra and Robert Kraft Professor
of Arab Politics
Eva Bellin

Henry J. Leir Professor of the
Economics of the Middle East
Nader Habibi

Renée and Lester Crown Professor
of Modern Middle East Studies
Pascal Menoret

Senior Fellows
Abdel Monem Said Aly, PhD
Kanan Makiya, Professor Emeritus

Goldman Senior Fellow
Khalil Shikaki, PhD

Research Fellow
David Siddhartha Patel, PhD

Sabbatical Fellows
Hanan Hammad, PhD
Daniel Neep, PhD

Harold Grinspoon Junior Research Fellow
Hind Ahmed Zaki, PhD

Neubauer Junior Research Fellow
Yazan Doughan, PhD

Junior Research Fellows
Hayal Akarsu, PhD
Maryam Alemzadeh, PhD

June 2019
No. 128

Middle East Brief

Why Hasn't the Asad Regime Collapsed? Lessons Learned from Syria's History of Tyranny

Daniel Neep

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, government officials, commentators, and foreign policy pundits were quick to speculate that the Asad regime would soon collapse. Many of their analyses described Syria as an inherently artificial state, its governments as historically unstable, and the current minority-led regime as particularly fragile. And yet, eight years later, the Asad regime has not only maintained a high degree of internal solidarity, but has retained or regained territorial control over much of the country. How did the Syrian regime find a winning formula that would allow it to emerge, transformed yet intact, from years of brutal warfare?

In this Brief, I argue that the Asad regime survived by avoiding mistakes made by previous leaders of Syria and that it has built a regime more networked, more dispersed, and more sprawling—and consequently more resilient—than many experts and policy makers realized. Between independence in 1946 and Hafiz al-Asad's rise to power in 1970, Syria witnessed a bewildering array of coups, putsches, and regime shifts as the rising tide of left-leaning and nationalist forces battled for supremacy, first with the old established families of the cities and then with each another. Time after time during those years, a succession of would-be dictators tried to consolidate a regime to keep themselves in power. Each of them failed, albeit in a unique way. I argue that Syria's overlooked history of tyranny can tell us much about why the regime has survived for so long. Both Hafiz (1970–2000) and Bashar al-Asad (2000–

present) avoided the mistakes of their predecessors: excessive dependence on a narrow base, the perils of personal rule, and the pitfalls of centralized power. The Asads realized that Syria could not be ruled by one man, one sword, or even one sect.

The Puzzle of Survival

From the earliest days of the uprising in Syria, many commentators were convinced that the fragile regime of the Asads would soon crumble. Several arguments were advanced to support this thesis. A common theme was that Syria was doomed to instability by its own history. The Syrian state's having been created by the colonial powers after World War I, its inherent artificiality, some commentators suggested, lent it a fragility such that it would inevitably one day be shattered. Other analysts noted the inherent instability of polities run by minority religious groups that—like Syria's Alawis—constitute only a small proportion of the general population. And a third line of argument predicted that the pressures of civil war would slowly unravel the careful balance of coercion and co-optation that had kept the Asad regime in power, leading to the country's fragmentation into a handful of self-governing ethno-sectarian statelets. The received wisdom of the time was neatly summed up by Obama administration advisor Frederic Hof, who famously commented in 2011 that "this regime is the equivalent of [a] dead man walking."[1]

The surprising survival of the Asad regime is sometimes explained as a consequence of military support from Iran and Russia since 2015. Of course, extra bodies and additional airpower have made all the difference on the front line, where they reinvigorated or replaced the eviscerated forces of the Syrian Arab Army. But this recent boost to the military and coercive capabilities of the regime does not help explain how the regime survived to that point in the first place. Scholars have studied the survival of authoritarian regimes since the 2010-11 Arab uprisings in terms of their adopting counter-revolutionary strategies successfully pioneered in neighboring states.[2] This Brief argues that the Asad regime achieved authoritarian resilience not only from learning from its contemporaries elsewhere in the region, but also by avoiding the mistakes made throughout Syria's earlier history of failed dictatorships.

Importantly, the Asad regime has ensured that the institutions of the Syrian state still provide the services, salaries, and certifications that are essential to civilian life in rebel-held as well as regime-held territories. The continuing functioning of these institutions allows the regime to emphasize its importance as the sole provider of stability for all Syrians, regardless of their background.[3] At the same time, those institutions are riven by informal networks of patronage and corruption that constitute an alternative power-generating circuit for the regime. Rather than closing ranks to hunker down, the regime has proven adaptive and co-opted new members. Little-known crony capitalists have edged out loyalist business leaders of the 2000s (who are now hobbled by international sanctions), and a new class of petty warlords has been entrusted with security checkpoints, which are operated by hybrid militia-mafias.[4] In effect, the Asad regime has simultaneously pursued parallel strategies of both hierarchical political centralization and accommodation with a highly diverse array of local actors. The result is a regime that resembles not a static command-and-control structure, but a fluid, amorphous, and dynamic political ecology.

Daniel Neep is a Sabbatical Fellow at the Crown Center and an Assistant Professor in Arab Politics in the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

The opinions and findings expressed in this Brief belong to the author exclusively and do not reflect those of the Crown Center or Brandeis University.

By constructing this kind of regime, the Asads managed to avoid the mistakes made by the earlier political experiments in Syria carried out by three men: Shukri al-Quwwatli (1946–49), Husni al-Za'im (1949), and Gamal Abdel Nasser (1958–61). As we shall see, each of these episodes respectively illustrates the dangers of excessive dependence on a narrow base, the perils of personal rule, and the pitfalls of centralized power.

Shukri al-Quwwatli (1946–49): The Weakness of Elite Networks

The first president of independent Syria, Shukri al-Quwwatli, came from one of the well-established, high-society families of landowners that had dominated Damascus and Aleppo since the late nineteenth century. These families formed the backbone of the nationalist political elite that had negotiated for independence from France, and that gave rise to the first pioneers of modern industry in Syria. Once independence had been achieved in 1946, however, Quwwatli's presidency quickly revealed the problems of limiting political and economic power to a narrow sector of a population, one that lacked social and geographical diversity.

Syria's first years of independence were characterized by a noticeable tolerance for graft. Ministers gave relatives positions for which they were unqualified; civil servants pilfered from government budgets; state property was used for private ends; and public appointments were decided on political rather than professional grounds.[5] Quwwatli himself was not above this common practice. The respected intellectual Muhammad Kurd Ali accused the president of filling the ministries with incompetent sycophants whose only qualification was their political loyalty. Quwwatli allegedly instructed the Ministry of Public Works to build roads on his family properties at taxpayers' expense, showered public money on poets and authors who praised his name, and corrupted the courts by appointing judges who were biased toward him and his friends. "His violation of the laws was clear to all who could see," wrote Kurd Ali. "Republican government, which was meant to curb tyranny, became capricious rather than legal rule. The form of government was constitutional, but the actual practice was arbitrary."[6]

Quwwatli's indulgence of the misuse of public office was not motivated by personal self-enrichment: He had inherited substantial family wealth, which he had added to with ventures in agriculture, commerce, and industry, earning himself the nickname *Malik al-Mishmish* ("Apricot King"). Rather, Quwwatli used political appointments, sinecures, and easy access to state resources to shore up support for himself and his political coterie. Factionalism and petty bickering were rife among Syria's parliamentarians, a circumstance that Quwwatli skillfully exploited to his advantage. "It was in the nature of the president to sow the seeds of competition and mutual loathing among political figures," observed Khalid al-'Azm, who became Quwwatli's Prime Minister in 1948, "so that they would not join forces against him. This meant he alone would always remain in control of the situation."[7] Quwwatli also successfully extended his time in office by pushing through a constitutional amendment allowing him to serve a second term as president.

Quwwatli's divide-and-rule tactics may have been successful in controlling the old urban elites of Damascus and Aleppo, who dominated urban parliamentary politics, but their reach did not extend into the provinces; Syria's rural elites were simply too autonomous to be recruited into Quwwatli's networks. In the Druze Mountain (*Jabal al-Duruz*, better known today as the governorate of Suwayda), Quwwatli channeled arms and funding to a popular uprising against the leading Druze family, the Atrash, which kept the region in such turmoil that the Atrash had no time to challenge Damascus's claim to authority.[8] In the coastal mountains, the leaders of several fractious Alawi tribes had taken advantage of the departure of French colonial forces to impose their own "taxes" on local farmers and passers-by. Lacking any leverage to apply pressure to the fragmented social fabric of the coastal mountains, Quwwatli bloodily repressed the revolt using the gendarmerie,[9] which he had built up at the expense of the national army—whose recruits came mainly from the lower classes and from rural areas, and whose capacity for political action Quwwatli consequently underestimated. That miscalculation soon came back to haunt him. The lack of investment and military preparation that led to Syria's ignominious performance in the 1948 war with the newly declared State of Israel prompted disgruntled army officers to overthrow Quwwatli and impose military rule the following year. By failing to include non-elite actors in the social networks that would sustain his rule, and by failing to disburse the spoils of office, Quwwatli provoked his own downfall.

The Asad regime was careful not to make the same mistakes as Quwwatli. Although the inner core of power has been carefully controlled by the Asads' fellow Alawis, members from all of Syria's regions, cities, and communal groups were always well represented at the highest echelons of party and state. Tentacles of patronage similarly penetrated every community and institution, but were periodically kept in check by high-profile anti-corruption campaigns (including one that prompted

deposed Prime Minister Mahmoud al-Zu'bi to shoot himself in the head in 2000). These networks are not clustered in one group exclusively, but instead cut across sects and sectors horizontally, connecting army officers and top businessmen, Alawis, Sunnis, and Christians in a gray web of tolerated illegality that binds its members in mutual complicity.[10] Quwwatli's failure taught the regime the importance of never allowing clientelist networks to ossify. Even throughout the recent conflict, the regime has regenerated itself by incorporating the rising stars of the war economy into its networks,[11] which are kept open and fluid, always on the move and looking for new members. Although the Syrian regime is commonly characterized as one ruled by a narrow base, the Asads avoided Quwwatli's fate by spinning a much wider web of political support.

Husni al-Za'im (1949): The Danger of Isolation

The perils of too narrow a support base were demonstrated in a different way by Quwwatli's successor, Husni al-Za'im. Za'im set off to a promising start when he sought to break from the traditions of the urban elite, but he then decided to emulate the modernizing approach pioneered by Ataturk in neighboring Turkey. Although Za'im lasted in power for just four months, his activity was frenetic. He purged the state bureaucracy of Quwwatli's clients, posted military governors to the provinces, and expanded the army from a meager 5,000 soldiers to a force of 27,000. He banned Ottoman-era honorifics such as "Bey" and "Pasha," the lingering usage of which served to reinforce the social status of the landowning notability. He extended voting rights to educated women for the first time and introduced secular civil law to replace religious law (to govern all areas except personal status).

Za'im also entertained bold ideas for future projects. He proposed imposing a ceiling on the ownership of agricultural land and redistributing state land to the impoverished peasantry. He also began to plan major infrastructure programs and even opined that the state should build villages for the Bedouin tribes so that they would abandon their nomadic ways. This was the stuff of classic post–World War II modernization strategies.

Alongside these achievements, however, Za'im acquired a ballooning sense of self-importance and grandeur. He promoted himself to the highest military rank of Field Marshal and began to compare himself favorably to the Emperor Napoleon. He paid great attention to his personal image, sporting a rather theatrical monocle and making dramatic costume changes from day to day, which soon became a source of fascination for the local press. He symbolized his new status with a regal-looking and expensive golden scepter.

But despite Za'im's talent for adorning himself with the accoutrements of power, he could not appeal directly to the Syrian people, out of fear that his voice would break the spell of the spectacle. Educated in Turkish and French, Za'im had such a shaky command of literary Arabic that he refused to deliver his speeches personally and insisted that someone speak them on his behalf. When the Syrian Communist Party referred to him as a "first class clown," Za'im enforced a ban on their activity and publications.[12]

Za'im's isolation from the Syrian public and political class was soon followed by his growing distance from the army itself. He purged large numbers of officers, relied on the support of an ever-decreasing circle of such, and deported a popular political leader to be executed in Lebanon. When Za'im ordered troops to move into the Druze Mountain, whose inhabitants he suspected of colluding with Jordan, army officers deposed him from power.

Although Za'im had initially understood the importance of building effective government institutions, under increasing political pressure he hunkered down into narrow isolationism and a narrow base. Za'im clearly had in mind a more sophisticated architecture for governing Syria than the patrician Quwwatli—along with social and economic policies that would improve the country, rather than further enrich the elite. Yet in the final analysis, Za'im failed sufficiently to build the institutions of the state that would actually implement those policies. Za'im's political instincts led him to propose measures that would materially improve the lives of the Syrian people, but he did so from on high, neglecting the need to cultivate a broader constituency of support among the masses or the military.

Once again, the Asads were careful to avoid Za'im's mistakes. Hafiz al-Asad led a modest, unpretentious life, devoid of ostentation or finery. Bashar al-Asad cultivated a different air of accessibility, casually walking around Damascus and projecting a studied image of informal normality, at least until the outbreak of the revolution. Today, the Instagram feed of the Syrian presidency still posts photos of Bashar's wife, Asma, as she tours schools, consoles the mothers of dead soldiers, and embraces amputees.[13] Rather than retreating into a bunker like Za'im, the Asads know that their survival depends on maintaining a plausible claim that they are not above but rather *part of* the people,[14] as well as on sustaining the state institutions that deliver material and practical benefits to the population as a whole.

Gamal Abdel Nasser (1958-61): One Size Does Not Fit All

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Gamal Abdel Nasser was the great political hero of the Arab world. Nasser's charisma, humor, and daring defiance of the great powers made him adored by publics across the region. Nevertheless, that popular support did not rescue Nasser from the ill-fated episode that established unity between Syria and Egypt from 1958 to 1961. The failure of the United Arab Republic (UAR), as the new polity was known, has widely been interpreted as demonstrating the weakness of the Arab nationalist movement, but it also revealed the difficulty of establishing a highly centralized and uniform model of authoritarian rule in a country as diverse as Syria.

The origins of the UAR can be excavated from the chaos of Syria's political scene in the late 1950s. After a decade of rapid oscillations between civilian government and military rule, the old right-wing bourgeoisie was locked in an existential struggle with the forces of the radical left. With neither camp able to control the country, the leftists turned to an outside power to change the political equation. Gamal Abdel Nasser seemed the natural candidate. In 1958, a delegation of leftists and military officers sought to rescue Syria from political paralysis by asking Nasser to unite their two countries. Boxed in by his own rhetoric, Nasser felt he had no choice but to agree.[15]

The leaders of the Ba'th party had thought they would play an important role in the union of Syria and Egypt. To them, Nasser was a man of action who lacked a systemic political program; the Ba'thists planned to school him in ideology behind the scenes. "Nasser's activity did not follow a philosophical principle," said Michel 'Aflaq, one of the founders of the Ba'th Party, in a surprisingly unguarded newspaper interview. "It has drawn strength from the physical forces which support it. . . . Nasser's activity . . . has responded in short to a movement begun by the Ba'th."[16] The party believed it would exercise influence as if it were some sort of ideological éminence *grise*; but, for his part, Nasser had no patience for the diversity of Syrian politics. He unified the two states under his presidency, banned all political parties (including the Ba'th), and ran Syria as if it were little more than Egypt's northern province. Decision-making shifted from Damascus to Cairo; Syrian ministers were made powerless; and Syrian army officers were redeployed to Egypt.[17]

Nasser went on to announce that political unity would be followed by economic convergence: There would be free trade, freedom of movement, and a single currency in the two regions of the United Arab Republic. Syrian businessmen, however, were extremely worried by these proposals. Some were anxious about immigration: The lower population, higher wages, and higher standard of living in Syria – now referred to as the "northern province" of the UAR – could provoke a wave of poor migrants from Egypt that Syria would find difficult and costly to absorb. Others were concerned that speculators might move capital between the two regions in search of quick profits, thereby compromising Syria's economic stability. And Syrian liberals were wary that what they considered to be their country's innate spirit of entrepreneurialism would be crushed by the burdensome regulation of the Egyptian model.

"Our people are not sufficiently mature for the harsh discipline needed for a nationalized or state-led economy to succeed, especially in pecuniary affairs," noted Dr. Awad Barakat, one of the architects of Syria's post-independence monetary policy. "The strength and dynamism of our people principally lies in their spirit of initiative and freedom of action, two qualities that can neither survive nor prosper in a regime of administrative hassles, economic restrictions, regulations, and red tape."[18] The business elite was similarly cautious about a single currency and doubted whether such a measure should ever be implemented. One advocate of unification argued that Egypt and Syria could successfully adopt a single currency, just as Germany and Austria had—though it was later pointed out to him that this particular instance of monetary unity was the product of military annexation by the Nazis.[19] The comparison did not bode well for Syria's future.

Nasser responded to mounting criticism of the "Egyptianization" of Syria by subcontracting political responsibility for controlling the province to Syrian intelligence chief Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, who was responsible for persecuting Communists and initiating campaigns of torture and intimidation that earned him the title of "Sultan" Abd al-Hamid, in reference to the despotism of the caliph whose use of the iron fist had contributed to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Critics accused Sarraj of turning the country into a police state.

After Nasser undertook unprecedented nationalizations of Egyptian banks and industries, he then applied similar provisions to the "northern province" and seized control of seventy-five Syrian companies. The backlash against all these moves led a coterie of Syrian army officers to take control of Damascus in 1961. They opened negotiations with Nasser, asking him to reverse the nationalizations, moderate his agricultural reforms, remove opportunists

like Sarraj, and replace the full union of Syria and Egypt with a devolved, federal arrangement. In response, Nasser sent the Egyptian navy and parachutists to regain the "northern province"—but he called off his forces when he realized that the conspirators had gained control of the entire army in Syria. In the aftermath of this debacle, the marriage between the two countries was definitively dissolved.

But if Nasser had hit upon a winning formula for authoritarian rule in Egypt, why could it not be successfully transplanted to Syria? The answer lies in the distinct differences between the two societies. Apart from its Coptic Christian minority, Egyptian society lacked the religious and ethnic diversity of the Levant. There were, of course, regional differences between the different densely settled areas strung along the banks of the Nile and its distributaries through the Delta. But the relative ease of transportation afforded by Egypt's great river meant that these communities had not experienced as much isolation as had the settlements scattered across the valleys, mountains, and plains of Syria. Consequently, Egyptian society had not developed the hyperlocalized and highly differentiated expressions of identity, culture, and sect that characterized *Bilad al-Sham*.[20] Egypt was a giant, with some 26 million inhabitants by the late 1950s, compared with just 4 million Syrians; and Cairo was already a megacity, three times the size of Damascus and Aleppo combined. Politically, Cairo dominated its hinterland in a way that cities found impossible to replicate vis-à-vis the rebellious rural lands of the Levant. Egypt and Syria were worlds apart.

At the time of the establishment of the UAR, Shukri al-Quwwatli famously warned Nasser of the difficulty of ruling Syria. "You don't know what you're getting into, Mr. President," Quwwatli told him. "You have taken on a people who all think themselves politicians. Fifty percent of them think they're leaders, twenty-five percent of them think they're prophets, and at least ten percent of them think they're divine. Among this people you've taken on are some who worship God, some who worship fire, some who worship Satan, and some who worship *@?*!*!"[21] Less well known is Nasser's response to Quwwatli: He laughed and asked why Quwwatli had not told him that before he signed the unification treaty. In truth, Nasser had tried to impose direct, centralized rule on Syria without taking into account the social and regional diversity of the country; he expected to force through controversial policies by dint of sheer force of will. But Nasser discovered, to his cost, that Syria could not be governed as a homogeneous unit.

The lesson of the UAR seems to contradict the image of the Asads' Syria as a highly centralized state that jealously guards decision-making power and refuses any meaningful local devolution. That image belies the regime's concern for the country's regions, albeit conveyed on its own terms. One of the first acts of Hafiz al-Asad after coming to power in the Corrective Movement of 1970 was to tour the provinces, including visiting the Druze leader of Syria's revolt against the French, the venerable Sultan al-Atrash. Three new governorates were created—Tartous, Idlib, and rural Damascus—to weaken the cities and establish new strata of loyalist administration. Indeed, it was the cities of the interior—Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama—historically seats of the pre-Ba'th bourgeoisie, that were now sidelined, as the benefits of industrialization and infrastructure building were extended to the periphery.

While the Asad regime certainly promoted the homogeneous political culture of Arab nationalism (and repressed expressions of non-Arab cultural identity), it tolerated a surprising amount of variety in how its rule was implemented in local contexts. Peasants would subvert strict production quotas imposed by the state, while pursuing agricultural side enterprises such as secretly cultivating melons and cucumbers for the private market.[22] The informal housing settlements that sprang up on the edges of major cities were technically illegal, but that did not stop their owners from establishing legal claim to their titles.[23] This local-level ambiguity paralleled the high-end corruption networks among the elite. The flexibility of these gray zones softened the edicts decreed by the center, allowing them to be modified by local norms and practices that differed from region to region, and even from town to town. As the expanded reliance on local militias, crime bosses, and strongmen has demonstrated in the years since 2011, the regime fully understands the critical importance of localism in a way that Nasser never could.

Conclusions

Lessons learned from the history of authoritarianism in Syria seem to contradict the conventional wisdom about authoritarian regimes. Corruption is often thought of as a sign of weakness; tyrants are typically considered distant and uninterested in institution building; and authority is usually considered to be projected outwards from the center of political power. The resilience of the Asad regime derives from the ways in which it does not exclusively rely on these conventions of authoritarian rule, but instead combines them with opposing, even contradictory tendencies.

From the experience of Quwwatli, the Asad regime learned that corruption can be a mechanism for consolidation of power, but only if its net is cast wide enough. From the experience of Za'im, the regime learned that even authoritarian leaders must take pains to convey their accessibility to the people and build state institutions that deliver public goods. From the experience of Nasser, the regime learned that for the center to hold, its anchors in the periphery must be flexible. These lessons reveal the secret to the conundrum of authoritarian resilience in Syria. Rather than weathering the storm by battening down the hatches, or by clinging to its previous trajectory, the Asad regime has charted a new route whose course was devised in the light of its predecessors' history. An awareness of that history can help us avoid prematurely dismissing regimes as "dead men walking" and recognize their ongoing capacity for transformation and survival.

Acknowledgments: This Brief draws on material from my current book project, provisionally titled *The Nation Belongs to All: The Making of Modern Syria*, undertaken while holding a Sabbatical Fellowship from the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University and a Public Scholar Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. I am grateful to both institutions for their support.

Endnotes

1 Frederic Hof, "I Got Syria So Wrong," *Politico*, October 15, 2015. See also Dennis Ross, "Why Syria's Regime Is Doomed," interview by Bernard Gwertzman, *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 21, 2011; Bruce Riedel, "What Comes after Assad in Syria?" *Daily Beast*, July 20, 2012; and Joel Greenberg, "Israeli Officials Say Syria's Assad Is Doomed," *Washington Post*, December 14, 2011.

2 Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, "Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the 'Arab Awakening,'" *Globalizations* 8, 5 (October 2011), pp. 647–53.

3 Kheder Khaddour, "The Assad Regime's Hold on the Syrian State," *Carnegie Middle East Center* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 2015).

4 Samer Abboud, "The Economics of War and Peace in Syria: Stratification and Factionalization in the Business Community" (Century Foundation, January 31, 2017), and Reinoud Leenders and Antonio Giustozzi, "Outsourcing State Violence: The National Defence Force, 'Stateness' and Regime Resilience in the Syrian War," *Mediterranean Politics* 24, 2 (2019), pp. 157–80.

5 *Al-Barada*, June 5–6, 1946.

6 Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Mudhakkirat* [Memoirs],vol. 4 (Damasus: Matba'at al-Taraqqi, 1951), pp. 906–9.

7 Khalid al-'Azm, *Mudhakkirat Khalid al-Azm* [The Memoirs of Khalid al-'Azm], vol. 2 (Beirut: Al-Dar al-Muttahida li'l-Nashr, 1983), p. 185.

8 Nasuh Babil, *Sihafa Wa-Siyasa: Suriya fi'l-Qarn Al-'Ishrin* [Press and Politics: Syria in the 20th Century] (London: Riyad El-Rayyis, 1987), p. 283.

9 *Al-Jundi* 6 (November 5, 1946), p. 8.

10 Bassam Haddad, *Business Networks in Syria: The Political Economy of Authoritarian Resilience* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

11 Abboud, "The Economics of War and Peace in Syria."

12 Nadhir Fansah, *Ayyam Husni Al-Za'im: 137 Yawman Hazzat Suriya* [The Days of Husni al-Za'im: 137 Days That Shook Syria] (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1982), p. 44.

13 See: https://www.instagram.com/syrianpresidency/.

14 In private, of course, other rules may apply, as attested to by the Assads' love for Harrods and for fondue sets.

15 Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, *Ma alladhi Jara fi Suriya* [What Happened in Syria] (Cairo: al-Dar al-Qawmiyya li'l-Tiba'ah wa'l-Nashr, 1962), p. 36.

16 *L'Orient*, February 25, 1958, cited in John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from the Origins to 1966* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), p. 132.

17 Bashir al-'Azma, *Jil al-Hazima min al-Dhakira* [Generation of Defeat: Memoires], 2nd ed. (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiya li'l-Dirasat wa'l-Nashr, 1998), p. 196.

18 Awad Barakat, "Reflexions à Propos de l'union Monétaire Entre Les Deux Régions de La République Arabe Unie," [Reflections on the Monetary Union between the Two Regions of the United Arab Republic' in 'Economic and Monetary Union in the UAR: Perspectives] in *Union Économique et Monétaire Dans La RAU: Opinions* (Damascus: Centre d'Etudes et de Documentations économiques, financières et sociales, 1959).

19 Kamal Ghali, "La Durée de La Phase Transitoire de l'Union Économique Totale: L'Union Monétaire," [Duration of the Transition Phase in Full Economic Unity: Monetary Union] in *Union Économique et Monétaire Dans La RAU: Opinions*; Yassar Bitar, "De l'Union Monétaire Entre La Syrie et l'Egypte," in *Union Économique et Monétaire Dans La RAU: Opinions*.

20 A Syrian minister in the UAR government in Cairo, Bashir al-'Azma, was surprised at how much Egyptians had in common with one another compared with Syrians, whose regional differences were pronounced. "Damascenes," al-'Azma noted, "could recognize people from other parts of the country before they even opened their mouth!" al-'Azma, *Jil al-Hazima*, pp. 192–94.

21 Unfortunately, Nasser's close advisor, Muhammad Hasanayn al-Haykal, did not preserve the precise obscenity for posterity. Haykal, *Ma alladhi Jara fi Suriya*, p. 40.

22 Françoise Métral, "State and Peasants in Syria: A Local View of a Government Irrigation Project," *Peasant Studies* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1984), pp. 69–90.

23 Myriam Ababsa, Baudouin Dupret, and Eric Denis, eds., *Popular Housing and Urban Land Tenure in the Middle East* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012).

Brandeis University Crown Center
for Middle East Studies

Mailstop 010
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5320
781-736-5324 Fax
www.brandeis.edu/crown

Middle East Brief

Why Hasn't the Asad Regime Collapsed? Lessons Learned from Syria's History of Tyranny

Daniel Neep

Recent Middle East Briefs:
Available on the Crown Center website: www.brandeis.edu/crown

Nader Habibi, "Implementing Said Arabia's Vision 2030: An Interim Balance Sheet," No. 127

Shai Feldman and Khalil Shikaki, "Trump's Peace Plan: Engagement or Swift Rejection?" No. 126

Pascal Menoret, "How Saudi Suburbs Shaped Islamic Activism," No. 125

Abdel Monem Said Aly, "The Return of Geo-Economics and the Emergence of Co-Prosperity Zones in the Middle East," No. 124