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**NAVAL
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**SHAPING JIHADISM: HOW SYRIA MOLDED THE
MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**

by

Seth Krummrich

March 2007

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**SHAPING JIHADISM: HOW SYRIA MOLDED THE MUSLIM
BROTHERHOOD**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

In February 1982, Syrian President Assad's military and security forces surrounded, assaulted, and leveled the fourth largest city in Syria, Hama, killing between 5,000-25,000 Syrians in less than three weeks. It was the culmination of an escalating five year revolutionary war between the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and President Hafez Assad's authoritarian rule. Through the use of overwhelming force and a government sponsored moderate Islamification process, the Muslim Brotherhood was transformed from a violent revolutionary opposition movement to a peace oriented social organization calling for a representative democratic government.

Using Social Movement Theory (SMT) and Dr. McCormick's Mystic Diamond, this thesis demonstrates how extreme state violence affects opposition social movements. It analyzes why the Muslim Brotherhood's revolution failed, why the Assad regime succeeded, and how its overwhelming defeat transformed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood from a violent revolutionary organization to a peaceful social movement. The Syrian counter-insurgency model provides a viable strategy that can be applied to existing and future insurgencies throughout the Middle East.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Hafez al-Assad was not the intrinsically evil man that his domestic enemies portrayed him to be; his private life was beyond reproach and his patriotism was real if self-centered. His understanding of the functioning of political power and his knowledge of human weakness was outstanding. He had given Syria its first prolonged period of stability since its independence and he naturally identified himself with this achievement. Any serious opposition to his leadership was thus an act of treachery, a betrayal of the Arab Socialist Baath party, of the Syrian leadership and the Syrian people.¹

A. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, ITS ORIGINS AND ROLE IN SYRIA

To understand how the Assad regime affected the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, it is important to understand how the Brotherhood developed prior to 1977. In this chapter, the origins of the Brotherhood and its deteriorating relationship with the various Syrian governments are briefly outlined. A critical concept is that the Muslim Brotherhood was a social organization determined to create an Islamic society as opposed to a one dimensional bomb-throwing group of terrorists. It wanted to provide all of the social services normally reserved for a government under the banner of the Shari'a. Initially, this campaign was relatively peaceful but became increasingly violent as the Syrian governments grew more authoritarian and less tolerant of opposition groups. The counter-insurgency lessons learned from the Syria example are not applicable to most situations in which a state's use of extreme violence is insufficient to end an insurgency. Assad's ability to exploit the organizational vulnerabilities of the Muslim Brotherhood was the critical element in Syria's ability to mold the Brotherhood. In essence, Syria's victory was as much about the Brotherhood's organizational vulnerabilities as it was Assad's successful counter-insurgency strategy. This chapter "sets the stage", demonstrating how the Brotherhood reluctantly developed into a violent revolutionary group committed to a zero sum war with the authoritarian Assad regime.

¹ Robert Fisk, *Pity the nation*, (Oxford, University press, 2001), 178.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna. One of the core beliefs of the Muslim Brotherhood was “Political Islam”² which is the integration of the tenets of Islam into the government, its laws, and into the daily life of Arabs. This Islamic law is called the Shari’a and is a basic foundation of Islamic fundamentalism. The Muslim Brotherhood espoused that “the Koran was our constitution.”³ While it did not initially conflict with Pan-Arab nationalism (1920s-30s), it later became a counter to regimes that promoted nationalism such as Nasser’s Egypt and Assad’s Syria.⁴ The Islamic nature of the Brotherhood’s beliefs opposed the secular ideologies held by many Middle Eastern nations, specifically those colonized by the European powers. As the decades passed, secular Arab regimes that didn’t embrace Islam as their guiding force eventually ended up at odds with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood first appeared in Syria in the 1930s. Students studying in Egypt returned to Syria “inspired by the ideology of Hassan al-Banna”.⁵ Since a solid majority of Syrian citizens were Sunni Muslims, the Muslim Brotherhood’s message had a significant audience on which to build its organizational foundation. The returning students created a loose network of Muslim Brotherhood organizations throughout Syria; one of the first being in Aleppo as the party headquarters in 1935. In the 1930s, 1940s and most of the 1950s, the Brotherhood was not viewed as a direct threat to the Syrian government, more as an annoyance.

Originally, the Syrian Brotherhood focused on reforming civic and social programs in Syria. However, two changes occurred that radicalized the Brotherhood in Syria during the 1950s. First, the creation of Israel was seen as a direct threat to the principles of the Brotherhood.⁶ How can you have an Islamic Arab region with Israel in

² “Al-Qa’ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria.” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Webpage online. Available from http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq_syria.asp; Internet accessed 15 May 2006.

³ Professor Glen E. Robinson lecture, Low Intensity Conflict in the Middle East course at the Naval Postgraduate School, 26 April 2006.

⁴ Robinson lecture, 26 April 2006.

⁵ “Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline.” *Encyclopedia of the Orient*. Webpage online. Available from http://i-cias.com/e.o/mus_br_syria.htm; Internet; accessed 15 May 2006. 1.

⁶ “Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline.”, 1.

existence? This issue politicized the Brotherhood's beliefs and made the organization more radical. The second was the influx of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members fleeing the Egyptian government and resettling in Syria.⁷ The Egyptians feared that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was becoming a "state within a state".⁸ In the mid-1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Nasser. The assassination attempt and other ongoing insurgent operations lead to a massive crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, forcing many of its members to flee to Syria. This influx of radicalized Brotherhood members into the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood network further radicalized the organization. Because of these issues, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood looked much different in the late 1950s as opposed to the early 1940s. This fact was not lost on the Syrian government which banned the Brotherhood in 1958 forcing the network underground. As in all politics, the winds of change favored the Brotherhood in 1961 when Syria left the United Arab Republic (UAR) and 10 members of the Brotherhood were elected to parliament.⁹ For a fleeting moment, it looked like the Muslim Brotherhood had a legitimate avenue to affect change in the Syrian government. That spark of hope was extinguished two years later in a Baathist coup.

B. THE RISE AND IRON RULE OF PRESIDENT ASSAD

In the 1950s and 1960s, Syria developed its identity as a nation. From a domestic standpoint, the nationalist focus of the Syrian government offended the religious based opposition organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood. This was further exacerbated in the mid-1960s when the secular Baathist party overthrew the existing government in a coup d'état. After their coup, the Baathist government banned the Muslim Brotherhood and all other political opposition parties. The small political foothold that the Muslim Brotherhood had established two years earlier in the parliamentary elections was lost;

⁷ "Al-Qa'ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria.", 6.

⁸ "Al-Qa'ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria", 5.

⁹ "Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline", 1.

their voice in the legitimate political arena was extinguished. This was the first salvo in a small fire fight that would escalate into the “total war” scenario executed in Hama almost two decades later.

1967 was a watershed year for Arab politics. The total Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel signaled the end of Pan-Arab nationalism in the region.¹⁰ Nasser’s dream of an Arab-unified region was dealt a fatal blow. In Syria, the shock waves were felt as the country reeled in its military’s defeat at the hand of the Zionists. Syria had embraced the concept of Arab-nationalism and was forced to re-examine its future identity. During this time, the Muslim brotherhood split into moderates and radicals. The radicals called for a “Jihad on the Baath party leadership”.¹¹ In the radical’s minds, defeat at the hands of the Zionists was blasphemous. The only answer was an Islamic government by any means available.

It was in these chaotic times (there was a reported 50 coup attempts from 1948-70¹²) that Hafez al-Assad came to power in November, 1970. As a career military officer and political leader in the military, he was put in charge of the air force after the Baathist coup and was later appointed as the Defense Minister. Assad became disillusioned with the current Baathist government because he believed that Syria should have intervened in the Black September War between the Palestinians and the Jordanians.¹³ Because of this, Assad executed his bloodless coup and took power in Syria.

Assad was an Alawite, a “sect of Islam that believed in the divinity of Ali with many secret and even Christian-like tenets” that Sunni Muslims felt were “Muslim-heretics or secular radicals.”¹⁴ The fact that an Alawite was in charge of Syria as an authoritarian ruler did not sit well with the Muslim Brotherhood, especially with a majority Sunni population. Assad recognized that he, being an Alawite, strengthened the

¹⁰ Robinson, discussion, 24 April 2006.

¹¹ “Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline.”, 1.

¹² Ibid., 1.

¹³ “Hafez al-Assad.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 2 March 2006. Webpage online. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hama_massacre ; Internet accessed 1 June 2006.

¹⁴ Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989) 78.

cause of the Muslim Brotherhood and created many new enemies. In an extremely shrewd political move, Assad used one of the most influential Shia theologians, Imam Musa al-Sadr's proclamation that Alawites were Shia Muslims. To support this, Assad took a well publicized "umra", or trip to Mecca to show his spirituality.¹⁵ This "greening of the government"¹⁶ calmed the growing Islamist storm for a few years. During this stable time period, Assad continued to strengthen his administration by filling virtually all positions in his government with trusted Alawite personnel. He instituted a strong police-state presence that controlled the population. Unlike his very heavy-handed peer, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Assad used threats and bribes as a way to deal with his political opposition parties, saving the "iron fist" as a last resort.

The time period of uneasy calm exploded in July 1976 when the Syrian government supported the Maronite Christians in the Lebanese Civil war. This was the final straw for the Muslim Brotherhood and a jihad was called for to topple the Assad regime.¹⁷ At this point, the Assad regime had been established and set for over five years. Assad had solid control of the lethal and well oiled Syrian security apparatus consisting of the military, a powerful secret police and overt police force, and the other governmental offices that provided services and security for the people of Syria.

As 1977 broke, Syria stood divided between a committed Assad regime and a Muslim Brotherhood that truly believed they were on the divine path to victory. Assad saw himself as Syria and all opposition parties as treacherous entities that needed to be wiped out. Thomas Friedman quotes Rifaat, Hafez's brother and elite military commander, as saying he "pledged to fight a hundred wars, demolish a million strongholds, and sacrifice a million martyrs."¹⁸ This "zero-sum game" mindset was shared by both Assad brothers. All opposition to their rule had to be obliterated at any cost.

¹⁵ "Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline.", 1.

¹⁶ Professor Vali Nasr's classroom discussion in his Islamic Fundamentalism class at the Naval Postgraduate School, 27 November 2006.

¹⁷ "Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline." 1.

¹⁸ Friedman, 79.

From the 1930s to 1976, Syria had a turbulent relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. That changed drastically as the next five years from 1977-1982 built into a steady crescendo of blood, violence, and death. This gruesome cacophony crested in Hama, shrieking its loudest before being totally silenced by the Assad government. 40 years later, Assad's Alawite government still controls Syria while the Brotherhood operates from exile.

The next chapter utilizes Social Movement Theory (SMT) to create a case study of the Muslim Brotherhood from 1977 to 1982. This case study will be compared to the 1995-present Syrian Muslim brotherhood case study (chapter 4) to analyze the effects of Assad's use of extreme state violence against the Muslim Brotherhood. Using these case studies, the thesis will analysis how this state violence changed the Brotherhood from a violent revolutionary organization to a peace oriented social movement that calls for a representative Syrian government. It will demonstrate that authoritarian state violence is a viable option for contemporary states struggling with Islamic insurgencies.

II. SMT ANALYSIS OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD 1977-1982: EXPOSING THE BROTHERHOOD'S CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES

Their demands appeared in anonymous wall posters; in Aleppo in 1980 for example, the Organizations of Ulemas of Aleppo' demanded a commitment to the Sharia [Islamic law] in all legislation", an end to the state of emergency in Syria, the release of all detainees, the reinstatement of all university teachers who had lost their job because of their political views, an end to misleading "propaganda" and "total freedom".¹⁹

Social movement theory (SMT)²⁰ provides an outstanding mechanism to analyze the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood as a social organization and to understand its revolutionary evolution. Three common variables used by SMT are *political opportunity structures*, *mobilizing structures* and *cultural framing*²¹. The first variable, political opportunity structures²², analyzes any political change, domestic or international, that creates new or ignites existing social activism. The second variable, mobilizing structures²³, analyzes the formal and informal framework of the organization. In this case, the goal of this variable is to explain, in detail, how the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was organized and operated. The third variable, cultural framing²⁴, takes into consideration all of the unique cultural aspects of a society and how it defines the social movement. What are the critical aspects of a culture's identity and particular way of life that drives the ideology of a social movement?

This chapter creates a case study capturing the Brotherhood's organizational existence from 1977-1982. In Chapter V, this case study will be compared to the SMT 1995-present Syrian Muslim brotherhood case study (Chapter IV) to demonstrate the

¹⁹ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation Lebanon at War* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 181.

²⁰ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2004), 4.

²¹ Glenn E. Robinson, " Hamas as a Social Movement" in *Islamic Activism* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2004), 116.

²² Wiktorowicz, 13.

²³ Wiktorowicz, 9.

²⁴ Wiktorowicz, 15.

effects of Syria's authoritarian government on the Brotherhood. The focus of this chapter is the application of the SMT framework to the 1977-1982 Syrian Muslim Brotherhood with a goal of understanding the organization, its strategy, and its beliefs. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was not a "one-trick" bomb throwing terrorist group, nor was it an active government. It was a social organization that mobilized itself as an opposition force to an authoritarian government. The SMT framework offers the appropriate analytical lens to separate the organization into its parts to gain understanding of the Brotherhood as a whole. By analyzing these three SMT variables and how they apply to the Muslim Brotherhood, the fractured nature of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's organization and lack of a unified revolutionary strategy becomes apparent. These vulnerabilities became targets for the application of extreme state violence by the Assad regime and led to the demise of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

A. POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

The variable, political opportunity structures, analyzes the environment in which the social organization exists. It focuses on the particular changes in that environment which create opportunity for the social movement. These small to large changes have the potential to set off a chain of events that can motivate a social movement into action.²⁵

There were four major instances of external political change that created political opportunity which directly affected the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. First, a minority Alawite (sect of Shia) government took control of the Syrian government and ruled with an iron fist. The second variable that changed the political opportunity structure was the absolute defeat of the Syrians / Pan-Arabists by the Israelis in the 1967. The third variable, and most explosive for the Brotherhood, was the Syrian support of the Christians against Yasser Arafat's Palestinian guerillas in the 1976 Lebanese war²⁶. The fourth variable was the revolutionary example set by the Iranians in their 1979 revolution

²⁵ Discussion from Professor Glenn E. Robinson's Jihadi Information Strategies course, the Naval Postgraduate School, 16 October 2006.

²⁶ Sami Moubayed, *The History of Political and Militant Islam in Syria*. Webpage online. Available from <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369768> ; Internet accessed 22 November 2006.

against the Shah's government. These four instances of political opportunity structures ignited the revolutionary spirit of the existing Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

1. Alawite Minority Rule, the Heavy Iron Fist

In Syria, the Alawite minority's secular rule over the Sunni majority was defined by an authoritarian state in which opposition was not tolerated. Ali Sadreddine Bayanouni, a veteran of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's campaign against the Assad regime and current head of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (in exile) described living under Assad.

The brutality of the Syrian regime, and its willingness to use conventional military capabilities against its own civilian population, is unparalleled in modern history. They detained over 60,000 people in that period.²⁷

Under authoritarian regimes, opposition groups rarely get a political platform (elected officials, political parties) to represent their causes and voice their beliefs.²⁸ In Syria's case, the only avenue to affect change left to the Brotherhood was violence and revolution. In a sense, Assad's government set the conditions for violent opposition by not giving the Islamic fundamentalists an avenue to express their issues in a non-violent political manner.

The Assad government declared total war against the Brotherhood after a failed assassination attempt against President Assad in June, 1980. In July 1980, Assad passed law No. 49 which made being a member in the Muslim brotherhood a capital offense punishable by death.²⁹ The next 20 months were defined by each side anteing up their violence until one side collapsed. Overall, the oppressive nature of the Syrian political environment in the late 1970s was a key instance of the political opportunity structure variable.

²⁷ The Battle Within Syria: An Interview with Muslim Brotherhood Leader Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni" Webpage online. http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0604/0604_2.htm; accessed 25 November 2006.

²⁸ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 67.

²⁹ Moubayed, 2.

2. The 1967 Pan-Arab Defeat

The Israeli victory over the Pan-Arab forces, led by Nasser's Egypt, was the death knell of Pan-Arabism. Prior to this defeat, the Pan-Arab countries laid out their Arabist vision for the Arab region in which they sold their "new Arab world" vision based on two promises.³⁰ The first promise was to "free the region of European controls, influence, and economics".³¹ Israel was the ultimate European intrusion and must be dealt with as destroying Israel would liberate Arab lands. In the Pan-Arabist view, the Europeans had no right to carve up the Middle East as they had post-WWI. The second promise stated that "the Arab world would empower the population and provide great social support services to create a great future."³² The new Arab world concept called for a great liberation, empowered Arab populations, and education and wealth for all of the Arab populations. The 1967 defeat demonstrated that the two core promises of the Pan-Arab movement were unattainable visions of grandeur. The reality was secular authoritarian governments that failed to provide many basic social services for its population.³³ The world seemingly progressed while the Arab nations fell behind in all social categories.

While this defeat happened before Assad took power, he inherited a government that completely bought into the ideas of Pan-Arabism. Israel's decisive and stunningly quick victory was a complete embarrassment for all of the Arabs involved. The second promise of strong social services and a utopian Arab empire did not come to pass either. Instead, there was a minority oppressive authoritarian government that empowered a minority at the expense of the majority. The defeat of 1967 became a rallying cry for Jihadi organizations everywhere that the Pan-Arabists and Nasserites were not following God's will. This key defeat proved to be a critical instance of political opportunity for the Brotherhood in Syria.

³⁰ Discussion from Professor Vali Nasr's Islamic Fundamentalism course at the Naval Postgraduate School, 6 November 2006.

³¹ Nasr, 6 November 2006.

³² Ibid.

³³ Class discussion by Glenn E. Robinson's Low Intensity Conflict in the Middle East, at NPS, 19 April 2006.

3. 1976 War in Lebanon

This political opportunity proved to be the pivotal action that spurred the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood into an all out revolutionary struggle with the Assad regime. When the Muslim communities and Christians fought in the 1976 Lebanese civil war, Assad sent in troops supporting the Christians. This provoked absolute outrage from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Unlike the previous decades of various injustices, the Brotherhood felt this was the “final straw” and that there was no other option outside of total regime change through revolution.³⁴ As noted in the last chapter, Assad had assuaged some of his Islamic critics by getting the religious backing of a leading Shiite, Imam Musa al-Sadr and taking a “umra”, or trip to Mecca to seem more Islamic.³⁵ However, the thin green coat of paint was washed away by his support of the Christians over the Palestinians. From this point, the violence between the Brotherhood and the Syrian government increased until the Brotherhood’s destruction in 1982.

This variable ties in well with the 1967 defeat when the Brotherhood made their religious cultural framing messages. The support of the Christians was an easy target for the Jihadi to say “see, they aren’t supporting our Islamic Brothers. In fact, they are actively opposing them, much like they oppose the Syrian Sunnis.” These political events gave the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood the “moral high-ground” to attack the secular government. This righteous indignation would prove to be the rallying cry for the Brotherhood (see *cultural framing* below).

4. The Iranian Revolution

When the Shah’s regime was shattered by the Iranian Shia’s revolution (1979), the reverberations were felt worldwide. Islamic revolution discourse became a common debate both domestically and internationally. The Iranian revolution was one of the great revolutions of modern history. It was on par with the Russian, American, and French revolutions. It served as an example of what could be achieved if the religious majority

³⁴ Moubayed, 1.

³⁵ “Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline.” Encyclopedia of the Orient. Webpage Online. Available from: http://i-cias.com/e.o/mus_br_syria.htm; internet accessed 10 December 2006.

was mobilized. The months following the revolution saw some of Syria's bloodiest fighting. This marked increase of the Brotherhood's violence was highlighted by the brutal attack on the artillery school in Aleppo.³⁶ While the Iranian revolution happened many years into the internal Syrian struggles, it proved that Islamic revolution was possible and that the Muslim Brotherhood could succeed.

These four instances of external political change directly led to opportunities that defined the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. In particular, the oppressive authoritarian characteristics of the minority Alawite regime set the conditions for a violent opposition social movement. The 1967 war, the 1976 Lebanese civil war and the Iranian revolution all acted as accelerants in the raging fire between the Brotherhood and the Assad regime. Though political opportunity structures provide an analysis of the environment in which the social movement grew, the critical details that explain why the Brotherhood was unsuccessful lie in the mobilizing structures variable.

B. MOBILIZING STRUCTURES

From the 1930s to the late 1950s, Syria's Muslim brotherhood was a loose network of hubs, primarily focused in north western Syria around the Aleppo and Hama regions. The initial network was based on family and tribal ties utilizing local mosques and communities as their structures³⁷. From the 1960s to 1982, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood network militarized itself as it developed into the main opposition group opposing Syria's secular rule. Using the mobilizing structure variable as a lens of analysis, the four major aspects of the Brotherhood's network analyzed are the 1. physical layout of the network, 2. the strategy utilized by the network, 3. its leadership, and 4. its information operations concept. From this analysis, a clear picture of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's organization and operational concept is captured. It will answer the key question of what organizational flaws prevented the Brotherhood from achieving success. This analysis also demonstrates how an authoritarian government can exploit the weaknesses of an insurgent network design.

³⁶ Muslim Brotherhood – Syria Timeline, 1.

³⁷ Nasr, 30 October 2006 Classroom Discussion.

1. The Layout of the Network

The physical layout of the Muslim Brotherhood's network was established four decades prior to the incredible violence of the late 1970s. Each region in Syria (i.e. Aleppo, Hama, Damascus, etc.) had their own distinctive organization and leadership. Each adapted to the needs and demands of their particular area. For the most part, the Muslim Brotherhood was moderate in their response to what they perceived as social outrages. However, various violent outbursts against the secular regimes forced the Brotherhood into a networked organization of hubs and cells. This organizational framework provided a decentralized structure that offered protection and anonymity for its members. This protection came at the expense of reliable and timely communications. But during the 1940s to early 1960s, there wasn't a direct threat to the Brotherhood, so the networked approach was never really challenged. However, that all changed when the secular Ba'athists took power in 1963 and subsequently banned political opposition groups, specifically the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood's network, which was primarily based in urban centers, used secrecy to coordinate and rebel against the Syrian government. This network used mosques and social networks (family and tribal ties) to mobilize opposition to the regimes. Each region's hub had a leader that coordinated the actions within his area. However, each region's hubs and cells had different priorities and agendas (i.e. power struggles, political capital, controlling social services, etc.). While these differences seemed a minor inconvenience in the group's agreed upon fight against the Ba'athists in the 1960s, it became the Achilles heel during the fighting in the late 1970s, early 1980s.³⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood used existing organizational structures to build and hide their cells. After their coup, the Ba'athists took in a large influx of Syrians into their party and government apparatus. The Brotherhood took advantage of this mass recruitment and infiltrated numerous members throughout the Ba'ath party, specifically

³⁸ "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities (Study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood against the Assad Regime)" *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Webpage Online. Available from http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq_600080.asp; Internet accessed 26 November 2006.

the education system. Using the education system, the Brotherhood was able to influence the youth and young adult Syrians. This proved to be an effective recruitment and mobilization tool.³⁹

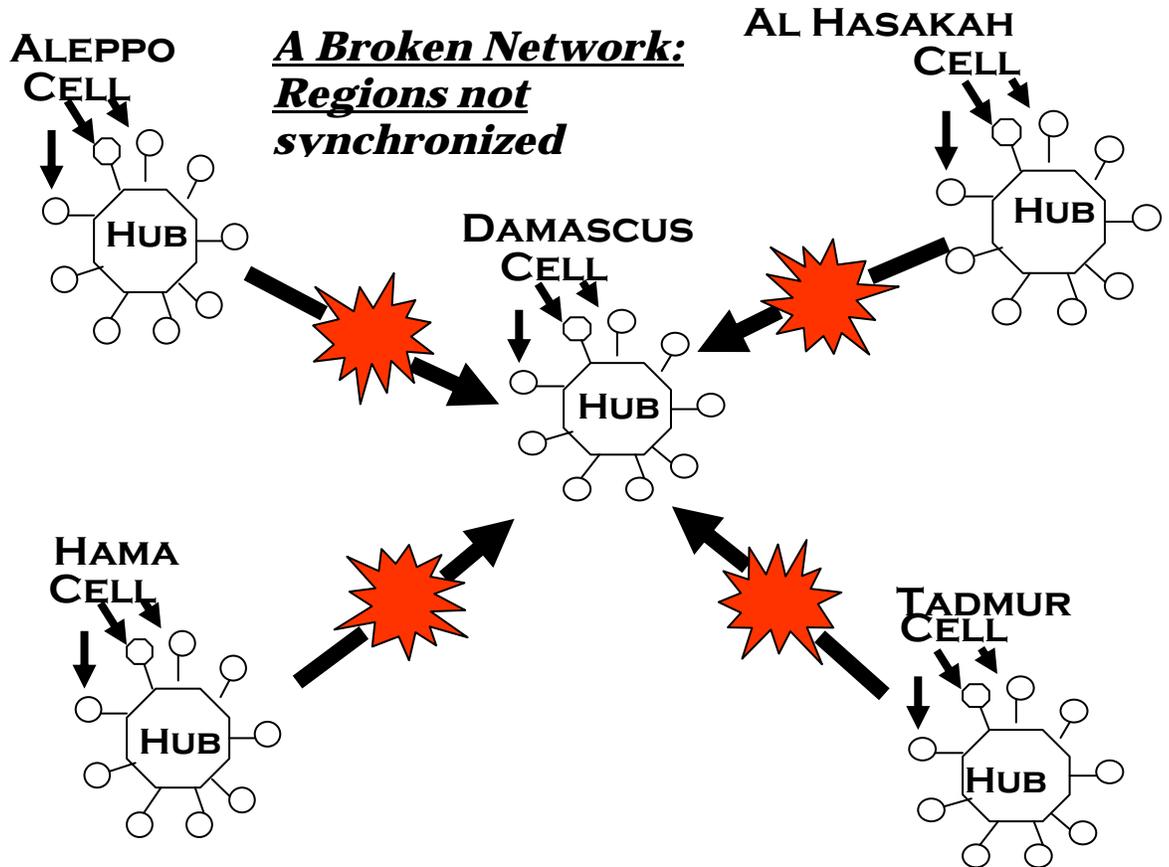


Figure 1. The Muslim Brotherhood Network, 1977-1982

While the Muslim Brotherhood had its network of hubs and cells in Syria, it relied heavily on support from the international Muslim Brotherhood and similar Sunni Islamic groups outside of the country, particularly Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was not building its own weapons or printing its own money, therefore, logistical and military support had to come from these outside sources.⁴⁰

³⁹ Moubayed, 1.

⁴⁰ Harmony, 7.

However, this support came with strings attached. As will become apparent in the leadership and strategy sections, accepting this necessary support meant giving up a certain amount of command and control. By 1977, the Brotherhood was totally dependent on foreign aid to fund and sustain their fight.⁴¹ On a positive note, outside assistance did provide the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood with a sanctuary when things became too dangerous for them inside of Syria. From this sanctuary, future strategy and outside fundraising was accomplished to support the field commanders in Syria.

Key flaws existed in the Brotherhood's physical organizational layout. The fact that each regional hub and their cells were focused on different priorities was never reconciled prior to the 1976 uprising. The reliance on outside support also meant that operations inside Syria would only be as good as their logistical support. Without a stockpile of equipment, weapons, and ammunition pre-positioned before a state-wide uprising, the fight would always be a slave to its external masters. These flaws can be directly attributed to the inability of a network to stockpile large amounts of equipment or a poor strategy and questionable leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood leading up to February, 1982.

2. The Command and Control Structure and Strategy

The decentralized nature of a networked approach to revolution has many inherent structural challenges.⁴² For a network to run efficiently, de-centralized control must be given to the hubs and cells with an overall and well understood strategy. Unfortunately for the Muslim Brotherhood, an overall synchronized strategy didn't exist. All of the Islamic opposition groups agreed the Assad regime needed to go, but no agreed upon plan was ever reached. Their strategy, or lack thereof, must be analyzed by what their objectives were, how they executed their operations, what was the logistical plan, and exactly who was controlling the revolution in Syria.

⁴¹ Harmony, 7.

⁴² Discussion from Professor Erik Jansen's Organizational Design course, the Naval Postgraduate School, 3 April 2006.

There were no clear objectives set forth by the Muslim Brotherhood to mobilize the Syrian masses. Without these clear objectives, a coordinated plan could not be disseminated to the field commanders and the individual fighters on the Syrian streets. In their after action report, the Brotherhood noted:

The Mujahideen failed to define their identity, their intentions and motivations; such an explanation was and still is the main pillar for attracting the masses and mobilizing the base members on an intellectual and ideological level to partake in this dangerous work (i.e. Jihad).⁴³

Without these clearly define objectives (and a charismatic leader to sell them), the Muslim Brotherhood could not effectively mobilize the masses. Without the full support of the Syrian masses focused on core objectives, the Brotherhood could not generate a legitimate revolution. This was a critical flaw that doomed their revolution.

The Muslim Brotherhood's strategy focused its fight on Syria's urban centers, particularly Aleppo, Hama, and Damascus. Unfortunately, they failed to mobilize other key groups in the country under one Islamic banner. Rural groups, especially, the Kurds and Bedouins were not utilized to control the rural areas between the cities and facilitate logistics.⁴⁴ Also, there was a large Muslim Brotherhood nation outside of Syria that could have brought thousands of fighters into Syria as well as tens of millions of dollars of support if properly mobilized.⁴⁵ None of these potential assets were utilized which gave Assad's forces free reign in the rural areas, the ability to surround cities (i.e. Hama), and the capability to strangle the Brotherhood's logistical support flow.

Another fatal flaw in the Muslim Brotherhood's strategy was logistical support to their military operations (see below chart). The strategy failed to anticipate the amount of weapons, and equipment needed to execute a successful revolution. The numerous skirmishes, battles, and losses from 1963 to 1979 drained the existing resources of the organization in Syria. It relied on foreign aid to support its on-going and future operations. The key problem was that logistics began to dictate the flow of battle. Those

⁴³ Harmony, 6.

⁴⁴ Harmony, 7.

⁴⁵ Harmony, 13.

outside of the country that were supplying the logistics, specifically Syrian exiles, began to make strategic decisions. This action took the battlefield command away from the field commanders that were fighting the actual battles in Syria. This crippled decision making in the field as they were beholden to those providing support from afar. Also, it created a centralized leadership system in a decentralized framework which slowed and degraded all critical communications, strategies, and coordination with other elements. Ultimately, this inefficient command and control structure crushed the field commander's initiative and ability to wage substantial revolutionary warfare.

3. Leadership Structure

The Muslim Brotherhood's leadership bears the brunt of its failure in Syria. Its failed strategy, poor command and control structure, and tremendously poor leadership skills, particularly at the highest levels, created an environment in which disaster was assured. During the decades of fighting (1960s-82), many of the Brotherhood's leadership escaped to Jordan or Iraq and attempted to lead from afar in an environment far removed from the realities of the Syrian street. To make matters worse, the Brotherhood in Syria was a "rule by committee" structure which couldn't agree on anything. A scathing Jihadi after action report (AAR) noted:

A war council was created to address the siege of Hama two to three months prior to the all out war; this council consisted of forty members (a weird mixture of religious sheiks, civilian leaders, and youthful cadres); those incompatible members, involved in a power struggle, were unable to agree on a single point, each group pulling in a different direction...⁴⁶

This type of centralized committee "leadership" canceled out the quick and responsive characteristics of the de-centralized network structure. Because of this, the Brotherhood's leadership structure created an unresponsive system that did not react quickly when events occur.

⁴⁶ Harmony, 14.

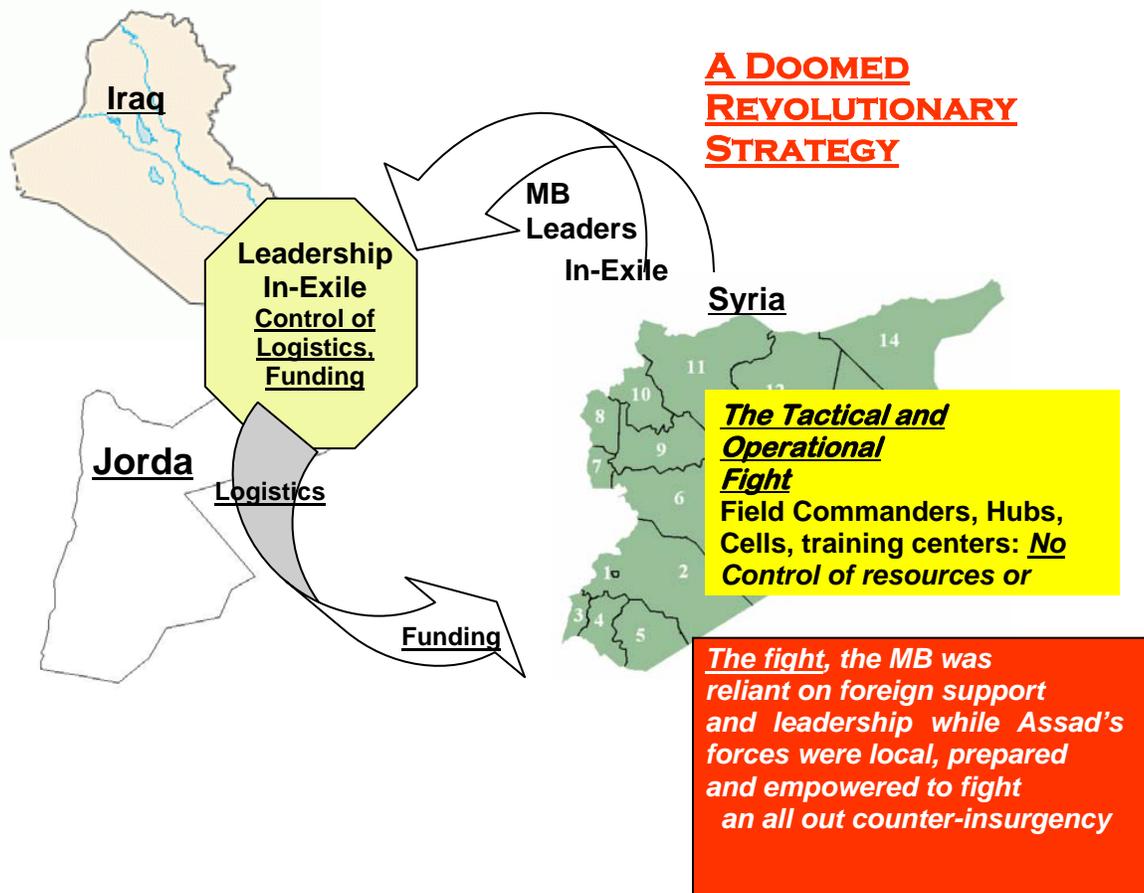


Figure 2. The Muslim Brotherhood's Leadership Paradigm

The personalities of these leaders and their inability to unite the various factions of the Muslim Brotherhood proved a lethal combination. Marwaan Hadeed, an early leader (mid 1960s) in the movement was a charismatic personality that tried to unite the Brotherhood. The Assad regime captured, tortured and killed him in 1975.⁴⁷ While his death served as a call for operational secrecy, the organization did not train follow on leaders that were capable of handling his mantle of leadership.⁴⁸ Instead of focusing power by experience or qualifications in the organization, it was an individual's charisma and power that members gravitated towards. When leaders were killed or removed, a power struggle ensued rather than a position in the organization being filled with a

⁴⁷ Harmony, 3.

⁴⁸ Harmony, 12.

trained qualified replacement. To make matters worse, the open-door recruitment policy of the Brotherhood did a very poor job of vetting recruits. This allowed inadequate candidates to take leadership positions and also allowed Syrian agents to infiltrate some of the Brotherhood's cells. By not putting the right leader in the right position, the Brotherhood was unable to fix the problems of infighting, political agendas and personality conflicts that kept the organization at the gang-land tactical level.⁴⁹

Another key issue was the mass exodus of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's high ranking leadership to Jordan and Iraq to avoid capture and death in Syria. Their original plan was to re-group, re-organize and infiltrate back into Syria. This never happened. They stayed in exile which proved to be a large operational blunder.⁵⁰ These "leaders" were under the assumption that they could lead the battle from exile. From Iraq and Jordan, they attempted to give orders and directives without being anywhere near the tactical situation. They maintained power by controlling the influx of much need supplies and weapons but failed to tap into the large reservoir of money and fighters available from the other Muslim Brotherhoods in the region. These leaders in exile were "talking the talk, but not walking the walk." As was pointed out in the Jihadists AAR:

It is astonishing to see and hear leaders of Muslim organizations preaching jihad and claiming that dying for "Allah" is their ultimate wish, yet they fail for ten years to instruct religiously and train militarily for the fight....⁵¹

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leadership failed time and again to create a strategy for their campaigns against the various Syrian governments. They did not mobilize the readily available resources of the rural population, international Muslim brotherhood fighters and monetary support, or create a unified strategy with the existing opposition groups that shared their same revolutionary vision. Prior to 1977, they had decades to resolve these inter-organizational differences and create a unified strategy.

⁴⁹ Harmony, 16.

⁵⁰ Harmony, 8.

⁵¹ Harmony, 11.

However, they were overcome by their own personal goals and priorities and failed to create unity. The Brotherhood was a group of unsynchronized hubs attempting to topple a coordinated authoritarian government.

4. Muslim Brotherhood's Information Operations Structure

One of the keys to a successful revolution is to mobilize the masses through a succinct message that captures the heart of the revolutions message.⁵² While the message itself will be analyzed in the next section, “cultural framing”, the Brotherhood's communication mechanisms are analyzed for their strengths and weaknesses. In a time period of government controlled newspapers and TV stations, the battle of the message was fought outside the traditional means of the mass media. What means did the opposition groups use to reach its audience to spread its message and mobilize its population?

One of the key strengths enjoyed by the Brotherhood was the fact that the population was over 75% Sunni while the ruling class was a small minority sect of Shia Islam. The Iranian revolution showed that this state wide network of mosques and Islamic schools were the perfect means for communicating and coordinating a revolution. Of course, in an authoritarian state, secrecy and discretion were the difference between freedom or jail (or death).

The education system proved a strong communication mechanism. This was a fantastic means for indoctrination into Islamic fundamentalism. The education system was a critical part of a mobilizing mechanism to rally the Sunni masses when overt revolution was on hand. As a result, the system of schools and mosques were crucial mobilizing mechanisms for spreading the revolutionary message in the Brotherhood's war from 1977-1982.

There was a fundamental flaw in this mobilizing system: *there was no unified Syrian Sunni message*. Reflecting their regional opposition group counterparts, each regional Sunni clergy had their own idea of how things should run. The messages

⁵² Robinson, classroom discussion, 30 October 2006.

generated in Hama would directly contradict the sermons offered in Damascus. With a conflicting information strategy, the population didn't know who to follow or what to do. Their conflicting messages paralyzed their mobilization efforts at the most inopportune times, specifically February 1982.

Another missed opportunity was the Muslim Brotherhood inability to tap into the international Sunni clergy. The opportunity to be “enlightened and instructed by the clergy”⁵³ was lost as the Jihadis failed to seek these religious leaders' guidance. The religious leaders felt marginalized and went into their own “self-imposed seclusion”⁵⁴ ignoring the struggle of the Mujahideen. In both cases of failing to harness the domestic and international support of a unified Sunni clergy, the opportunity to gain “religious legitimacy”⁵⁵ was lost. This moral high-ground was key terrain in the information operation spectrum and a crucial loss.

Reviewing the four main aspects of the mobilizing structures, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's organization had fatal flaws. The regional disunity between the different hubs of the Brotherhood prevented the creation and execution of a unified strategy. The de-centralized strengths of the network structure were not utilized. Instead, an ill-fitting centralized leadership approach by exiled leaders in Jordan and Iraq failed to address what was actually happening on the Syrian street. Without the necessary logistical support and a unified Sunni effort, the Brotherhood was hamstrung from achieving the high level of success critical to defeat an entrenched authoritarian ruler.

C. CULTURAL FRAMING

Though the mechanism to “get the message” out was limited by infighting and a lack of unity, there were clear themes that captured the ideology of the Syrian Sunni population. There were easily identifiable slogans⁵⁶ that played right to the heart of the problems experienced by the majority Sunni population. In most cases, these concepts did

⁵³ Harmony, 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Harmony, 16.

⁵⁶ Robinson, 129

make their way to all corners of the Syrian Sunni world without the benefit of the state-run media. The three main messages were: 1. The Syrian majority is Sunni, not Alawite, “Down with the Colonial puppets!”⁵⁷ 2. Muslim Rule⁵⁸, 3. Revolution is Achievable (the Iranian example)- Pan-Islamic nationalism is right for the Islamic world. These three messages were an easy sell to the non-represented Sunni majority in Syria. These messages, as they are individually analyzed, were quite powerful and described a Syrian society ripe for change.

1. The Syrian Majority is Sunni, Not Alawite

Before Syrian independence, the Alawites were favored by the French colonists during their reign in the region. Under colonization, the Sunnis were treated like second class citizens. When the French left, the Alawites inherited powerful positions in the Syrian government and military. The Assad regime replaced almost all key Sunni governmental workers with minority Alawites. It became clear that Assad did not trust the Sunni population. By the late 1970’s, Assad’s security forces regularly jailed, tortured, and killed those Sunni Syrians involved in opposing his rule. This obvious attack on the Sunni majority demonstrated that the Sunni majority were second class citizens in Syria despite their clear population advantage.

For the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, this was an easy slogan to capitalize on. The Brotherhood painted the picture that these Alawites were nothing but corrupt tyrants, much like their previous Western occupiers. This was another example of a minority using the majority for its own gain.⁵⁹ Much like the colonial times, someone else had all of the riches while the Syrian Sunni majority suffered.

The expansive economic growth of the early 1970s transformed Syria’s economy and created a “new rich” class of Syrian citizen. Since the Alawites were controlling the country, they made up a majority of these new millionaires, many of which grew up poor

⁵⁷ Harmony, 11.

⁵⁸ Harmony, 6.

⁵⁹ Nasr, classroom discussion, 1 November 2006.

in shanty apartments with no cars.⁶⁰ This drastically changed the social dynamics of many social circles. “Men whose self-esteem was rooted in the old quarters of the cities where life had not changed for generations found themselves devalued and uprooted...all seethed with resentment.”⁶¹ It was easy for the Brotherhood to capitalize on the idea that the Assad regime and its Alawite members were all corrupt. The Alawites were rich at the expense of the Sunni majority who endured poverty and all of its trappings. This perceived injustice proved to be a “cultural framing” rallying cry for the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Pan-Arabist’s promises had failed. As was mentioned in the political opportunity structures, the two main promises did not improve the living conditions of the majority of Syrians. As people were forced to live “hand to mouth” from the government, it became an easy theme for the Brotherhood to highlight and show the moral bankruptcy of the inept and corrupt secular Assad regime. “Down with the Colonial Puppets” was an easy slogan to voice, especially when the proof surrounded the target audience’s daily life.

2. Muslim Rule

Much like other Islamist movement’s slogan, “Islam is the solution”⁶², the secular vs. Islamic rule argument is upfront in the Brotherhoods Information Operations (IO) campaign. Sunni Islam is a readily available network that connects a majority of the population. It is commonly understood that if Allah’s will is achieved, Allah bestows worldly success upon his Muslim people.⁶³ This idea goes back to Ali’s Caliph and its amazing success dominating most of the known world.⁶⁴ (It would be the modern day equivalent of the Congo beating all of the world’s current superpowers.) The reverse is

⁶⁰ Patrick Seale, *Assad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995), 320.

⁶¹ Seale, 321.

⁶² Robinson, 131.

⁶³ Nasr, Classroom discussion, 4 October 2006.

⁶⁴ Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival, How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2006), 36.

true as well. If the Muslims fail to meet Allah's expectations, then they will suffer worldly defeat. The Muslim Brotherhood highlighted that while under colonization and secular rule, the Syrians suffered. This was due to the failure to live a good Islamic lifestyle and meet Allah's will. To get back worldly success, Shari'a law was the solution. Therefore, "Muslim Rule" was an appropriate slogan to sell to the population.

The inherent problem in this message was creating a unified idea for all of the Islamic opposition groups to rally around. Different interpretations of "Muslim Rule" confused the Syrian population with numerous, sometimes contradictory, messages. In many instances, the "Muslim Rule" message was massaged to fit the regional priorities of the opposition group and / or clergy's particular priorities. When these specific messages were exported to other regions with opposite ideas, the message became confused and lost. For example, some regional hubs that relied on support from Saddam Hussein claimed Saddam and his Ba'athist regime were "True Muslims". Other groups saw Saddam as a secular infidel and felt that no support should be received from his apostate regime.⁶⁵ These issues were practically impossible to resolve as the argument revolved around an individual's particular faith and beliefs. Therefore, these crevasses were not bridged and unity on the "Muslim Rule" concept wasn't achieved. This is another explanation why the Syrian masses were not properly mobilized.

3. The Revolution is Achievable (Iranian Model)

By late January 1979, the Muslim Brotherhood's fight against the Assad Regime was steadily increasing as the Iranian Shia overthrew the Shah's government. The 20 month period following the Iranian revolution was the equivalent, in poker terms, of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood going "all in". The example set by the Iranian revolution showed all other Islamic fundamentalist movements that success was achievable.⁶⁶ With the region in a perceived state of disarray, the Islamic fundamentalist capitalized on this momentum. In the months following the Iranian revolution, the Brotherhood attacked the artillery school in Aleppo killing 83 cadets, attempted to assassinate

⁶⁵ Harmony, 16.

⁶⁶ Nasr, Classroom discussion, 13 November 2006.

President Assad in an audacious ambush, and attempted to execute a coup de' tat within the Syrian Military which was thwarted before it started. The Brotherhood felt the time to strike was at hand and made their revolutionary move. Unfortunately for the Brotherhood, the Assad regime saw what was at stake and proved that their willingness to stay in power had few limitations.

These three messages were strengths for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. They had a “moral high ground” to mobilize their masses for a higher cause. How these messages failed to reach their target audience was not due to cultural framing, but in the mobilizing structure of the Brotherhood. The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological disunity and poor strategy neutralized the power of the messages found in the cultural framing. These messages are still valid today as the Assad regime (albeit his son, Bashar) is still an authoritarian oppressive minority government and a majority of Syrians are still Sunnis. While Pan-Arabism has failed the region, Pan-Islamism still has yet to be tested.

D. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, SMT offers an excellent tool to create a case study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood from 1977 to 1982. It is clear that the Assad regime’s absolute intolerance of the Muslim Brotherhood forced the Brotherhood to transform itself from a loose social network into a violent revolutionary movement. In the Brotherhood’s mind, there was no left alternative left except revolution.

Through SMT, the 1977-1982 Brotherhood is revealed as a series of regional networks that were not bound together by a coordinate strategy or charismatic leader. These regional hubs were defined by internal power struggles and individual priorities preventing them from assimilating into a greater network with the other hubs. The top leadership was an exiled group of elites attempting to control the tactical fight from Jordan and Iraq while the field commanders were beholden to their international logistical flow. The political opportunities and the cultural framing variables supported the idea of Syrian revolution, but the Brotherhood could not convert those variables into success.

The numerous vulnerabilities exposed in this chapter are crucial to note as the next chapter explores how Assad applied extreme state violence to defeat the Muslim Brotherhood. In Chapter 5, the 1977-1982 SMT case study will be compared to Chapter 4, a SMT case study of the 1995-present Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. It is clear from this analysis that the cause of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood transformation from a violent revolutionary social movement to a peace oriented social movement was due to the harsh authoritarian tactics employed by the Assad regime. Using this model, there are significant counter-insurgency possibilities for contemporary States in their relationship with violent Islamic revolutionary groups throughout the Middle East.

III. SYRIA'S APPLICATION OF EXTREME STATE VIOLENCE

The question of how Assad applied extreme state violence is analyzed in this chapter. It demonstrates how Assad defeated the Brotherhood and completely annihilated the social movement outlined in chapter 2, leading to the pacification of the Muslim Brotherhood during its re-emergence beginning in the late 1990s. What was the role of this extreme state violence in the evolution of the Brotherhood?

In February 1982, Assad's Syria crushed the Muslim Brotherhood. The two fundamental questions are: "Why did the Assad Government succeed?" and "Why did the Brotherhood fail?" A useful counter-insurgency (COIN) model to analyze these questions is the Mystic Diamond framework⁶⁷ which looks at the various relationships between the population, the insurgency, the government and the international community. The answer to success and failure can be found in how these numerous entities interacted with each other. In this case, the Syrian population is the indigenous population, the insurgency is the Muslim Brotherhood, the Government is Assad's regime, and the international community is all of the other countries outside of Syria. It is important to note the space between the entities in Exhibit 1 (The Mystic Diamond) as that represents the "political space" which must be controlled to achieve success in insurgency and counter-insurgency operations. For the insurgency, the following strategies must be addressed to achieve success:

The 5 Counter-State strategies are:

1. Counter-state affecting the population
2. Counter-state affecting the political space
3. Counter-state affecting the State
4. Counter-state affecting the state's relationship with the international community
5. Counter-state affecting the international community⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Dr. Gordon McCormick's course, "Guerilla Warfare" at the Naval Postgraduate School 14 February 2006.

⁶⁸ McCormick, 14 February 2006.

For the State to be successful, the following strategies must be accomplished to defeat the insurgency:

The 5 State strategies are:

- 1.State affecting the population
- 2.State affecting the political space between the Counter-state and the population
- 3.State affecting the counter-State
- 4.State affecting the counter-state's relationship with the international community
- 5.State affecting the international community

The McCormick Mystic Diamond Model:

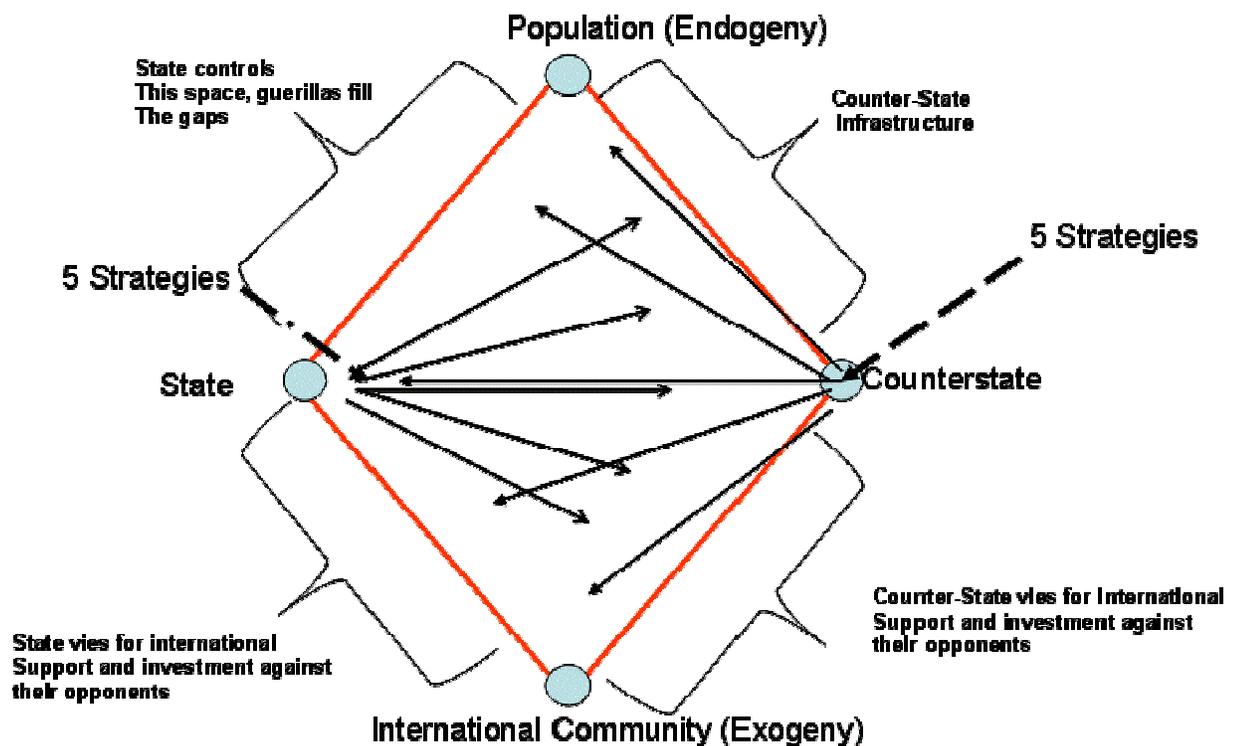


Figure 3. Dr. McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model

An important factor in the Mystic Diamond is that all of the entities and the political space between them are related and interdependent. To be successful, the state or counter-state needs to control all of the entities and their various relationships (political space) with other entities. For example, if the counter-state can break the

relationship between the state and the population, then the counter-state can control the population. While the counter-state undermines this relationship, the counter-state is building their relationship with the population. Using the Mystic Diamond model to analyze the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood insurgency, the answers to the Assad government's success and the Brotherhood's failure are understood.

A. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE MYSTIC DIAMOND

Using the Mystic Diamond framework, the Muslim Brotherhood's insurgency is analyzed to determine where it failed in its strategy to overthrow the Assad regime.

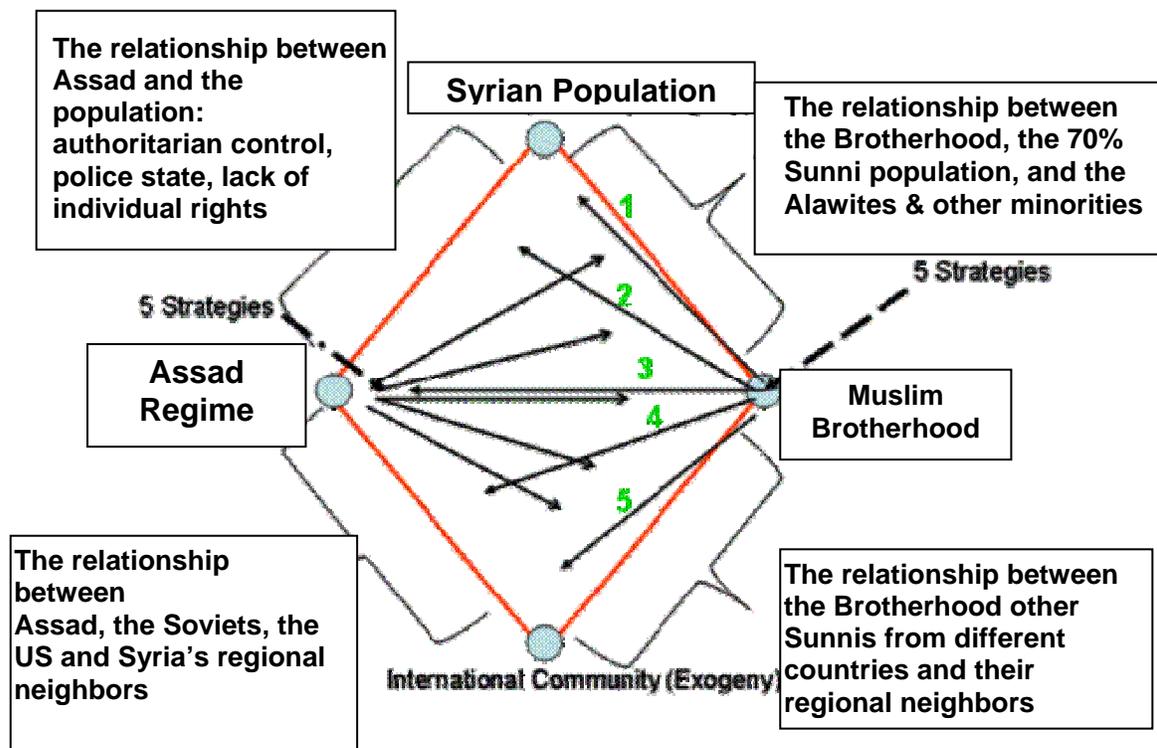


Figure 4. The Muslim Brotherhood's Mystic Diamond

The Five strategies that the model analyzes are:

1. The Muslim Brotherhood affecting the Syrian population
2. The Muslim Brotherhood affecting the Syrian political space
3. The Muslim Brotherhood affecting the Assad Regime

4. The Muslim Brotherhood affecting the Regime's relationship with the international community
5. The Muslim Brotherhood affecting the international community

1. The Muslim Brotherhood Affecting the Syrian Population

If the state provides the basic needs for the population, the Islamic groups need to be in a position to assume those responsibilities immediately. Failure to accomplish this would create a serious backlash and cripple the opposition groups. For example, in one hard-learned lesson around 1943 in Damascus, the Syrian government grew tired of the Brotherhood's antics and shut down milk suppliers, stating "let them go the Sheiks for milk", fully knowing the Brotherhood did not have the social services to support the people. When the Sheiks couldn't deliver, the population revolted against the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood's relationship with the population seemed strong due to a largely sympathetic audience that was over 70% Sunni Muslim. The regime was loaded with minority Alawites leaving the Sunni majority largely under-represented. Unfortunately, the Brotherhood's lack of unity failed to mobilize the Sunni population to rise up and join their insurgency when they claimed Hama as an independent Islamic state from Syria. The Syrian government took advantage of the organizational flaws outlined in chapter 2. At the outset of the siege of Hama, the Syrian government cut all telephone and telegraph lines from Hama to the outside population leaving Hama isolated. Once isolated, the Brotherhood had no mechanism to mobilize the Syrian Sunni population to save the city⁷⁰. The Brotherhood's exiled leadership command and control mechanism was not responsive enough to coordinate a Syrian Sunni uprising across the country. Therefore, the Brotherhood lacked the ability to control a country-wide insurgency in 1982. The Sunni population was not mobilized and the Brotherhood in Hama was forced to fight the entire Syrian security apparatus alone. This flawed

⁶⁹ Moubayed, 1.

⁷⁰ "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities (Study of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood against the Assad Regime)" *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Webpage Online. Available from http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq_600080.asp; Internet accessed 26 November 2006, 6.

organizational structure proved to be the critical vulnerability that led to their defeat. Assad's forces capitalized on this structural failure and exploited the weakness, isolating the Brotherhood and destroying it piece by piece.

2. The Muslim Brotherhood Affecting the Syrian Political Space

For the Muslim Brotherhood to be successful, it needed to break the regime's control over the Syrian population while exerting their control over the population. While they were able to accomplish this in the historical Sunni strongholds of Hama and Aleppo, they could not accomplish this in Damascus and the rest of the country. This was partly due to the tight control exerted by an authoritarian government and the aforementioned inability of the Brotherhood to organize as one united revolutionary organization. The government had free reign to repress, bribe, and threaten anyone to maintain control. To convince others to stand up to such repression meant putting individual's lives and the lives of their family in great jeopardy. Many Syrians were not ready to make such a sacrifice in an unclear political environment defined by fear, violence, and repression.

The Brotherhood failed to develop a rural infrastructure. There existed an entire untapped resource of rural Sunni Muslims that could have transported logistics, exploited rural areas for combat sites, and acted as effective communicators.⁷¹ The Brotherhood let itself get surrounded by only developing the urban areas. In a sense, they became virtual "urban islands" that were easily controlled by the military and police. This highlights the aforementioned poor or non-existent mobilization and command and control strategy.

3. The Muslim Brotherhood Affecting the Assad Regime

The tactics used by the various opposition groups were gang-land style hit and run tactics that did not adapt to the changing pace and scope of operations in Syria. Though they were initially effective, they were not able to evolve as the fight grew larger than the basic urban street battle. This is due to the limited time and resources spent in training

⁷¹ "Al-Qa'ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria.", 7.

the individual insurgent. To compound the problem, the hubs that controlled these cells were ruled by committee which failed to reach a unified consensus on how to fight the government. Ultimately, this type of “tit for tat” warfare became a war of attrition. The well oiled Syrian military and effective secret police network was much better prepared for this type of fight. The Syrian government adapted their tactics overtime to optimize their results while the Brotherhood failed to evolve. In the end, this tactical advantage rested solely with the Syrian government.

The Muslim Brotherhood was no match militarily for the Syrian armed forces. Before they moved to conventional combat operations in Hama, the Brotherhood used their insurgent strengths (stealth, bombings, assassinations, and other covert operations) to fight the larger enemy. As noted earlier, they attempted to assassinate President Assad but failed. This decapitation attempt was their best chance to defeat the Assad regime. In retrospect, it was a terrible miscalculation to try to fight the Syrian military in a conventional fight in Hama. It highlighted the Brotherhood’s lack of understanding of their enemy, specifically Assad’s will to stay in power and willingness to use the military in a “total war” manner. It also shows the Brotherhood’s lack of self-awareness by going to the conventional fight when it was not prepared to win a war. The Brotherhood lost everything due to these strategic mistakes.

4. The Muslim Brotherhood Affecting the Regime's Relationship with the International Community

As previously mentioned, Syria enjoyed the support of the Soviet Union while the Soviet’s enemy, the US, was mired in other international issues. The Muslim Brotherhood was not equipped to attack Syria’s international ties with their allies. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union had written the book on repression as a tool for domestic policy. Though some Soviet advisors were assassinated by the Brotherhood, it had no impact on the Soviets’ support of Syria. The Syrians continued to buy weapons, tanks and airplanes from the Russians and used those items to repress the Brotherhood and other opposition parties. The increased lethality of these arms enabled Assad’s forces to slaughter thousands of Syrians in Hama in February.

5. The Muslim Brotherhood Affecting the International Community

Unfortunately for the Brotherhood, there was not a “Moscow Center”⁷² for Islamists. No one unified international power-base existed for the Brotherhood to tap into for total support. The Brotherhood relied heavily on like-organizations in the region for support. Organizations like Yasir Arafat’s Fatah provided weapons, training, money and other types of support to the Brotherhood⁷³. Many other Muslim Brotherhood organizations provided material and economic support though these outside sources tended to be erratic.⁷⁴ Also, the sources were not tied into the operational and strategic plan for the Brotherhood. Therefore, when the Brotherhood evolved into a conventional force in Hama, it failed to forecast the great increase of funds needed to support a larger conventional force. This increase created a larger operational signature. Operational security was reduced as funds and logistics were increased to try to support the growing insurgency. This failure highlights the poor strategy adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood and their inability to adequately forecast for future needs and operations.

Overall, the Mystic Diamond model’s five strategy points highlight serious deficiencies in the Brotherhood’s strategy. The inability of the Muslim Brotherhood to maximize its available resources (no unified message, no synchronized organizational structure, poor recruitment, poor mobilization, a lack of training, inconsistent funding, and failing to use rural operations) prevented the Brotherhood from reaching its potential military power. That said, insurgencies are extremely complicated and rarely successful. The onus is on the insurgent group to take away the existing political space from the government. The Muslim Brotherhood failed to accomplish this task.

B. THE ASSAD REGIME AND THE MYSTIC DIAMOND

Using the Mystic Diamond framework, the Assad regime’s success is analyzed to identify what the regime did correctly to defeat the insurgency. As in the Muslim

⁷² Robinson, discussion, 24 April 2006.

⁷³ Robert Baer, “*See No Evil The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA’s War on Terrorism*”, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 129.

⁷⁴ “Al-Qa’ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria.”, 5.

Brotherhood example, the five Mystic Diamond strategies are applied to the Assad regime's COIN strategy.

The Five strategies that the model analyzes are:

1. The Assad regime affecting the Syrian population
2. The Assad regime affecting the Syrian political space
- 3 The Assad regime affecting the Muslim Brotherhood
4. The Assad regime affecting the Muslim Brotherhood's relationship with the international community
5. The Assad regime affecting the international community

1. The Assad Regime Affecting the Syrian Population

When Assad took power in 1970, he took the existing control mechanisms (secret police, military) and made them stronger. From 1970-1982, he met the challenges of his political opponents and retaliated with equal or greater force. While the regime's reactions to Brotherhood attacks were brutal and managed to alienate numerous Syrians, the government maintained positive control of the political space throughout most of the country. (The exceptions were the northwestern section of the country, specifically Aleppo and Hama.) Unlike his Ba'athist counterpart in Iraq, Assad used bribes and favors before turning to violent measures. In this way, he was able to control the mid level Sunni merchants and businessmen that were quick to take a favor or a bribe in support of the Assad regime.⁷⁵ However, when Assad felt an opposition group was becoming too powerful, he immediately closed it down. In implementing his domestic policies, Assad offered some carrots, but definitely knew how to utilize the stick.

2. The Assad Regime Affecting the Syrian Political Space

On the political front, the government took away the Brotherhood's legitimate representation in government and made any allegiance to the Brotherhood punishable by death. This made the average Syrian pick between supporting the government and supporting an organization that could lead to their death. For the average Syrian with a

⁷⁵ Professor Robinson class discussion, Jihadi Information Operations II, 29 January 2007.

family, joining the Brotherhood in the late 1970s- early 1980s was not a very attractive option. The Assad regime made a point of leaving visual reminders of their control in the form of executed suspected Brotherhood members on the street. While the gruesome spectacle alienated some of the population, it was a visceral reminder that there was a cost to opposing the government. These hard tactics coupled with a police state “paranoid mentality” kept a firm grip on the political space for most of the country.

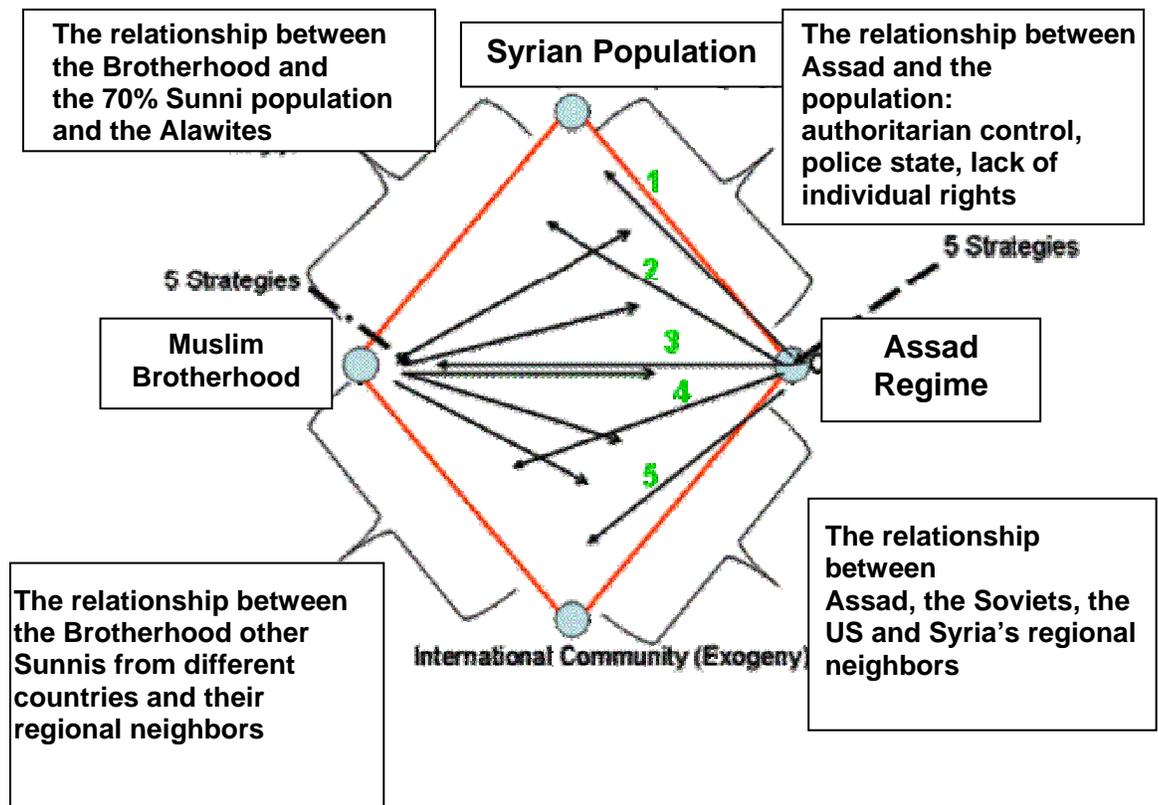


Figure 5. The Assad regime's Mystic Diamond

3. The Assad Regime Affecting the Muslim Brotherhood

The Syrian government did an excellent job of containing the Muslim Brotherhood to urban centers throughout the country. (This was facilitated by the Brotherhood's organizational structure outlined in the last chapter.) The brotherhood's inability to mobilize the rural Muslims allowed Assad's forces to execute a divide and

conquer strategy that ruthlessly eradicated the Brotherhood. This “strategy of concentration”⁷⁶ allowed the Syrian forces to focus all of their combat and police power on one area at a time. The Brotherhood’s complete annihilation in Hama was a direct result of this strategy.

The Assad regime showed a very strong will in its dealings with its opponents, specifically the Muslim Brotherhood. Time and again, the Brotherhood underestimated the sacrifices that the Assad regime was willing to absorb to impose its political will. It routinely raided homes, razed mosques, and executed suspected Muslim Brotherhood members in Aleppo and Hama. From the research, it seemed that there was little that Assad wouldn’t do to maintain his regime. Recognizing this in retrospect, the task of the insurgents to overthrow the government became even more challenging. The Muslim Brotherhood wasn’t fighting a “paper tiger” government; they faced a committed authoritarian government willing to do whatever was necessary to maintain power.

4. The Assad Regime Affecting the Muslim Brotherhood's Relationship with the International Community

The Muslim Brotherhood received some aid from sovereign countries that opposed the Assad regime, specifically Iraq. As previously mentioned, they relied heavily on foreign based organizations like Fatah and other Muslim Brotherhood factions outside of Syria for weapons, training, and money to support their insurgency. However, as the Brotherhood grew and began to move towards conventionalizing its forces in Hama, it required more donations to support the growing operations.⁷⁷ When money, guns and equipment came into the country, it brought with it the risk of compromise. This risk was a critical factor in the late 1970s-early 1980s as the pressure from the government became overwhelming. Assad’s forces intercepted shipments, thoroughly interrogated their prisoners, and used the information to unravel the Brotherhood’s revolutionary network.

⁷⁶ Abu Bakr Naji, “*The Management of Savagery – The Most Critical Stage Through which the Umma Will Pass Combating Terrorism* Center at West Point. Webpage Online. Available from <http://www.ctc.usma.edu> ; Internet accessed 26 November 2006.

⁷⁷ “Al-Qa’ida: Back to the Future The Vanguard and Muslim Brotherhood Operations in Syria.”, 5.

5. The Assad Regime Affecting the International Community

As previously discussed, the Syrian government enjoyed the military support of a world superpower, the Soviet Union. There was little resistance to Syria's internal domestic policies by the international community. For the most part, the world was watching Iran, the Soviet military in Afghanistan, and the Israel-Palestine -Arab situations. Internal domestic strife was commonplace in other Arab countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq to name a few. Syria was not a unique international issue. Because of this, the Assad regime was left to deal with its domestic struggles with little resistance from the West.

C. CONCLUSION

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was crushed for two reasons: 1. a weak insurgent strategy and organizational structure that failed to anticipate both their evolution to conventional operations and the forceful government response to insurgent actions, and 2. the absolute command of Assad over his government, military, and his will to do whatever was necessary to preserve his reign. In the volatile environment that was the Middle East in the late 1970's-early 1980's, President Assad understood the threat posed by the Muslim Brotherhood. Assad knew he was locked in a zero sum game with the Muslim Brotherhood. Assad's clear security vision and counter-insurgency strategy were understood by his forces. The Muslim Brotherhood had a daunting task of overthrowing an entrenched authoritarian government. The Brotherhood was unable to develop a clear strategy that mobilized the Sunni Muslim population majority, provide immediate military goals to mobilized forces, and long range plans for a future Islamic government. Without a defined insurgent strategy, the insurgency was doomed to fail. The result was thousands slaughtered, an insurgent Muslim Brotherhood crushed and exiled, and an Assad regime (Hafez's son, Bashar, is the current President) that continues to rule Syria.

The goal of this chapter was to analyze how Assad applied overwhelming violence against the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The question that will be answered in the next two chapters is how this application of overwhelming force changed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

The results of that analysis will demonstrate how the application of extreme state violence by the Assad regime transformed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood from a violent revolutionary social movement to a peace oriented social movement. The Assad regime's successful counter-insurgency strategy will have implications on other Middle Eastern states in their relationships with Islamist revolutionary groups. This analysis also demonstrates a possible use of this counter-insurgency strategy by the US in Iraq.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF EXTREME VIOLENCE: THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, 1995 TO THE PRESENT

In the aftermath of Hama, expressions of Islamist opposition to the regime virtually disappeared. Many men even stopped growing beards for fear of inviting suspicions of the intelligence services. Thousands of Islamist radicals fled overseas. The brotherhood's exiled leadership adapted to a life of communiqués and coffee shops, while those who still felt that the sword was more powerful than the fax machine went to Afghanistan and joined the global jihadist movement. The prevalence of Syrians in both the leadership and ranks of Al-Qaeda is second only to the Saudis, and the influence of their *takfiri* outlook is today felt in Iraq, where the entire Shiite population has been designated fair game for mass murder.⁷⁸

Before, religion for the regime was like a ball of fire. Now they deal with it like it could be a ball of light," as one Syrian Islamic scholar told the New York Times.⁷⁹

A. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the effects of the Syrian state's violent repression are demonstrated. It is clear that the Muslim Brotherhood was thoroughly dismantled in the post-1982 era. Its leaders were exiled or killed, its network within Syria was neutralized, and the Syrian population became very aware of the heavy bloody price to be paid when opposing the authoritarian Assad regime. While most other countries were experiencing an Islamic revival, the Syrian Sunni Muslims were trying to pick up the pieces of a crushed Islamic dream.

Following its victory in Hama, the Assad regime executed a shrewd policy of Islamification. The policy of "True Islam" was a strategy that provided and controlled a moderate Islamic movement for the Syrian population. The Assad regime (Both Hafez and Bashar) understood that Islamic faith was the fuel of the Islamic opposition groups. By taking that fuel away, they could prevent another Hama massacre and maintain

⁷⁸ Sami Moubayed, *The Islamic Revival in Syria*, the Middle East Monitor, Webpage online. Available from http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0609/0609_4.htm, accessed 17 January 2007.

⁷⁹ Moubayed, 3.

control indefinitely. This also allowed them to control the Islamic information strategy in the Syrian Sunni community. The proof of this strategy's effectiveness is demonstrated in the near complete drop off in insurgent attacks against the Assad regime.

This chapter will explore the effects of Syria's use of extreme state violence post-1982. It will also introduce the relationship of extreme state violence and Islamification. The relationship between state's extreme state violence followed by state sponsored moderate Islamification proved to be an effective counter-insurgency strategy. The results of this strategy will be explored in this chapter.

B. SMT: THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD FROM 1995 TO THE PRESENT

To understand the effects of extreme state violence on the Muslim Brotherhood, a comparison between the 1975-1982 Brotherhood and the 1995 to present day Brotherhood needs to be established. Laying these two SMT case studies "side by side" will demonstrate how effective Assad's application of extreme state violence was in countering the revolutionary goals of the Muslim Brotherhood. It will also demonstrate how the Assad regime maintains control by "painting the government green" through its Islamification strategy. The three variables of SMT (political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and cultural framing) are the right tools to analyze the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The results will demonstrate the effects of extreme state violence suffered by the Brotherhood, an analysis of current Syrian domestic policy strategies, and put the existing Syrian entities in a larger regional context. It becomes clear that state policy can dramatically impact Jihadist responses, and that in some circumstances, extreme state violence can effectively pacify Jihadist reactions.

C. POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

In the last ten years, three key political opportunity structures developed that provided the Muslim Brotherhood with an avenue to re-emerge as an alternative to the existing Assad regime. The first is the death of Hafez Assad and the subsequent presidency of his son, Bashar. The second is the involvement of Western powers in

Syria's neighboring states, specifically the US in Iraq and the UN's involvement with Lebanon. The third is the Muslim Brotherhood's evolution to a peace-oriented democratic strategy. These three developments provide opportunities for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood to re-emerge as the primary political opposition group to the Assad regime.

1. The Death of Hafez and the Rise of the Bashar Regime

When Hafez Assad died in June 2000, his son Bashar became the president of Syria. Bashar inherited a Syria that had endured a secret police state highlighted by tens of thousands of imprisoned suspected Muslim Brotherhood members. Bashar promised political reform for Syria. As a token gesture, thousands of opposition party prisoners, (many of whom were Muslim Brotherhood members), were released and some exiled Syrian opposition members were allowed to return to the country. Unfortunately for the Brotherhood, Assad's promise of reform failed and democratic reforms did not happen. Bashar would not give blanket amnesty to the Brotherhood and membership is still punishable by death (law No. 49)⁸⁰. It is very clear that the Brotherhood will not be welcomed back into Syria under the current Assad regime. While the secret police security apparatus has loosened its grip, it continues to maintain control of the country.

Bashar continued his father's strategy of Islamification. After the Hama massacre, Syria spent large amounts of money building and upgrading numerous mosques and Islamic schools.⁸¹ The Assad regime created and encouraged a moderate Islamic environment that was "pro-government". This "greening" of the government has two possibilities for the Muslim Brotherhood, it can either allow them an avenue into Syrian politics or it will take away the Brotherhood's constituents weakening an already fragile organization. Currently, the Assad regime sees no benefit in letting the

⁸⁰ Moubayed, 2.

⁸¹ Gary C. Gambill, *The State of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood*, Mid East Monitor, Webpage online. Available from http://www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0604/0604_2.htm, accessed 10 January 2007.

Brotherhood participate in Syrian politics. However, Bashar is not Hafez, so there is hope that negotiations might yield a representative government that could resemble Egypt or Jordan.

2. The New Face of the Muslim Brotherhood

Worldwide, the Muslim Brotherhood today is not the same violent revolutionary organization it was 50 years ago. Much to the chagrin of many Jihadis, the Muslim Brotherhood now participates in most political systems and has gone “main stream”.⁸² The Jihadis lament the fact that the Brotherhood is participating in many countries’ political processes, processes that the Jihadis feel is “takfir”. In countries like Jordan and Egypt, the Brotherhood is a quantifiable political presence representing Islamic values with a goal of an Islamic society. From a Jihadi’s perspective, this non-violent participation legitimizes these “apostate” regimes while the true path of the Jihad is lost.⁸³

In the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s case, this strategic change has come in the form of the National Salvation Front (NSF). Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni, the leader of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and former Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam created the NSF in early 2006. Though strange bedfellows (as Khaddam held a key role for almost 40 years in the Assad regimes and Bayanouni was a Brotherhood Hama veteran), the NSF is Syria’s consolidated opposition group that encompasses the Muslim Brotherhood as well as many other opposition Syrian groups. While this new face of the Brotherhood has yet to take a foothold in Syria, some experts believe that, if the Assad regime was to collapse, the NSF, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, would be the next organization to take control of Syria.⁸⁴

⁸² Glenn E. Robinson, class discussion, Jihadi Information Strategy II, Naval Postgraduate School 7 February 2007.

⁸³ Robinson, class discussion on Abu Bakr Naki’s “the management of Savagery, 7 February 2007.

⁸⁴ Joshua Landis *Syria Comment* Webpage online. Available from <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/>, accessed 10 January 2007.

What sets the NSF apart from the 1976-1982 Muslim Brotherhood is its ideological goal. The NSF calls for a peaceful “liberal democracy”⁸⁵ as opposed to the revolutionary Islamic republic strategy of 40 years ago. (Also important to note: Since Bashar Assad’s call for political reform in 2001, the Muslim Brotherhood has made liberal democratic overtures in an futile attempt to become re-integrated into legitimate Syrian society.⁸⁶) This new strategy recognizes that a majority of the country is Sunni. If established, the democratic system could be utilized to establish an Islamic state via the Sunni majority. This fact is not lost among the Alawites and other minorities in Syria. The Assad regime continues to keep membership to the Brotherhood a capital offense and there is no discussion of lifting the ban on the Brotherhood. All of this said, the new evolution of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood exists in the NSF which opposes the current regime and has embraced a democratic strategy as its key to success.

3. Turbulent Times: the US in Iraq, the Hezbollah Tightrope, and Syria’s Troubles in Lebanon

Since 2003, three events have changed the landscape of Syria’s borders, the first is the US war in Iraq, the second is Syria’s withdrawal of troops from Lebanon and the Assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, and the third is Syria’s support of Hezbollah against the Israelis in 2006. These events have put considerable amounts of pressure on the Syrian regime. The US’s war in Iraq has emboldened Jihadi fighters to take action in Iraq via Syria forcing the Assad government to answer to the conflicting agendas of the Sunni majority and international pressure led by the US. The assassination of Hariri has placed the UN’s crosshairs squarely on the current Assad regime as a full investigation is underway. The Assad government’s support of Hezbollah against the Israelis in 2006 further alienated the Syrians from the US and the west though it bolstered its image with Islamic hardliners.

These events have offered some strategic opportunities for the Brotherhood to embolden their cause. Each of these events is extremely complicated and presents

⁸⁵ Gambill, 2.

⁸⁶ Glenn E. Robinson discussion on the Muslim Brotherhood at the Naval Postgraduate School, 1 March 2007.

numerous political opportunities for the Brotherhood to exploit to their advantage. Conversely, there are opportunities for the Assad regime to capture and strengthen their control of Syria and leverage with international affairs.

For example, the current Iraq war provides an interesting case study. When the US invaded Iraq, a deep sectarian divide surfaced between the Iraqi Shia and Sunni populations. The Sunni minority found itself out of power and under attack from the Shia majority. This presented a good opportunity for Sunni Jihadis to re-develop an infrastructure in Syria to both support operations in Iraq and possible future operations against the Assad regime. There was a window of time when Jihadis were moving back and forth across the Syrian-Iraq border and the US was beating the war drum that Assad's regime could be next.⁸⁷ As time went on, the Assad regime closed down many insurgent routes into Iraq and the US found itself completely immersed in solving the Iraq enigma. Only after Assad closed the border did the Brotherhood call for regime change. By that point, the US war drums stopped and the Assad regime began to realize that the US was in no position to move into Syria. In effect, Assad called the US's bluff and the US backed down. The Brotherhood missed an opportunity to establish a foothold and the window of opportunity was closed. However, numerous Jihadis from the Iraq campaign are back in Syria. They could form the core of a new Syrian Jihadi nucleus if coordinated correctly.⁸⁸ The Iraq example shows missed opportunities but provides future opportunities as well.

The other events also provided certain exploitable angles for the brotherhood to take advantage of to re-establish their network in Syria. So far, the Assad regime seems to stay steps ahead of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the Brotherhood called for regime change claiming the Assad regime didn't care about Islam, Syria supported Hezbollah and appeared strong and pro-Muslim. This took away any righteous momentum from the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood needs to find a way to re-connect with its Syrian Sunni base and push its righteous Islamic path.

⁸⁷ Robinson class discussion, 17 January 2007.

⁸⁸ Sami Moubayed, *The History of Political and Militant Islam in Syria*, Webpage online. Available from <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369768>, accessed 22 December 2007.

The good news is these are volatile times in Syria. More exploitable opportunities will come and the Brotherhood and the NSF need to be in a position to make the best of them. If done correctly, they can find a way to inject themselves back into Syrian politics and regain their representation. Many other countries have incorporated the Muslim brotherhood in their political system (Egypt, Jordan, etc.).⁸⁹ If Egypt, with its bloody history of fighting with the Muslim Brotherhood can accept the Brotherhood into politics, then there is a real hope for Syria. This will allow them to push their new liberal democratic message. The opportunities are there for the Brotherhood to exploit.

D. MOBILIZING STRUCTURES

The 1995-present Syrian Muslim Brotherhood looks nothing like its pre-Hama organization. For the most part, all of the current existing Muslim Brotherhood and NSF leadership structures are exiled in Europe. Determining what infrastructure and support networks exist in Syria is very difficult. However, the new age of the Arab media has proven to be an effective tool to reach out to the Syrian street. In this section, the Brotherhood's international network will be examined as well as the role of the new Arab media. From this, the current framework can be understood and the mechanisms for reaching their target Syrian Sunni audience understood. This snapshot will also demonstrate the effects of a ruthless authoritarian government's tactics on a revolutionary opposition group. When compared to the 1977-1982 Brotherhood, the contrast in the current Brotherhood's mobilizing structures, location, and strategy is quite apparent. These are the results of extreme state violence thoroughly executed against an opposition group.

1. The Brotherhood's Organization: the Physical Layout, the Leadership, and Their Strategy

After the fall of Hama in 1982, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood crumbled. Those that weren't captured or killed fled into exile in Britain, Jordan, and Germany. The

⁸⁹ Gary M. Sebold, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Radical Islam*, Webpage online. Available from http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/cpc-pubs/know_thy_enemy/servold.pdf, accessed 10 January 2007, 55.

current Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s network consists of hubs in London, Germany, Egypt, and a new lobbyist cell in Washington DC. These hubs represent the top leadership in the current organization and represent the overt face of Syrian opposition forces to the world. There are no known hubs inside of Syria though evidence suggests many deported frustrated Iraqi fighters, unable to strike against US or Israeli forces are now focusing their Jihadi violent tactics against the Assad regime.⁹⁰

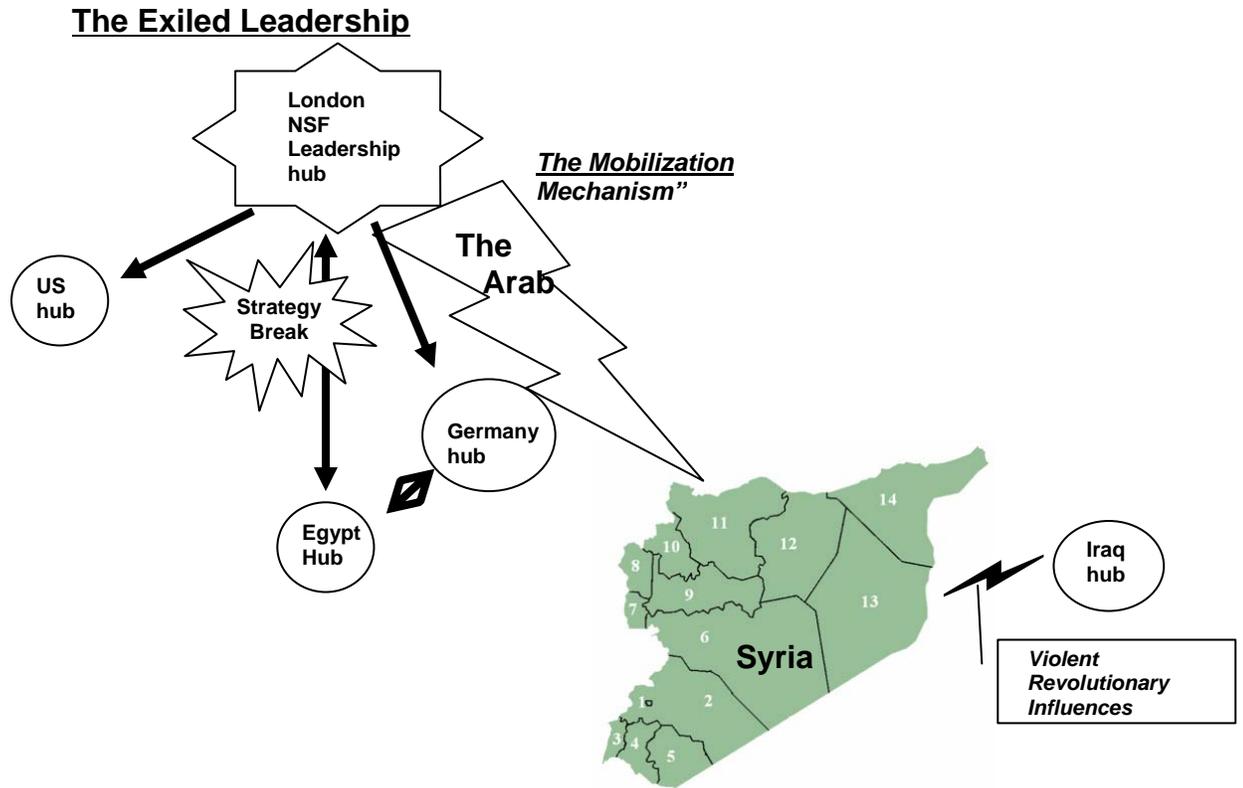


Figure 6. The 1995-Present Muslim Brotherhood Organization

Since 1996, Ali Sadr al-Din al-Bayanouni has been the leader for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and, as of 2006, the NSF.⁹¹ Many of the previous leaders from the late 1970s-1982 left the organization. Some followed their Jihadi calling and are members of Al Qaeda and other militant Jihadi groups. Others lost interest in attempting to change an unmovable regime. The new strategy of the NSF is to combine all existing

⁹⁰ Moubayed, 2.

⁹¹ Gambill, 4.

Syrian opposition groups under one umbrella of a liberal democracy and present the international community with an alternative to the Assad regime. The NSF wants to pressure the Assad regime into letting them participate in the government like many other Middle Eastern countries.

This unified front of opposition groups has faced some serious challenges. While the London hub, under Bayanouni, has advocated negotiating with the current Bashar Assad regime, the Egyptian hub disagrees believing that Assad's growing international and domestic isolation will force him to make concessions to the opposition groups.⁹² The addition of Khaddam to the London NSF headquarters further alienated the Egyptian Brotherhood as they don't accept Khaddam due to his past role in the Assad regimes. The few opposition groups that exist in Syria immediately distanced themselves from Khaddam. In April 2006, the discord inside the organization went public as Deputy General-Supervisor Farouq Tayfur announcing his withdrawal from the NSF⁹³. This internal strife and disagreement seems reminiscent of the Brotherhood's inability to coordinate their organization prior to the Hama massacre. Until an agreed upon strategy can be reached, the NSF will struggle to develop a strong organizational mobilizing structure.

Still, those who continue to operate under the NSF umbrella have seen some goals achieved. Bayanouni has held on and off negotiations with the Assad regime.⁹⁴ Some progress had been made in the form of prisoner releases and the return of certain exiles. However, Bayanouni has three core demands that have not been met. They are a general amnesty that would free thousands of Brotherhood members still in detention, permission for all exiles to return home, and a lifting of the government's ban on the Brotherhood.⁹⁵ The current Assad regime, which has become arguably stronger in the last two years, has shown no signs of agreeing to these demands.⁹⁶

⁹² Gambill, 2.

⁹³ Gambill, 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁹⁶ Moubayed, 4.

2. The Mobilizing Mechanism: Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, and the Internet

...the Syrian authoritarian regime is still seeking its own benefits and sticking to the totalitarian and wicked policies while our people are still suffering from all kinds of tyranny and suppression...The regime also is the real reason behind unemployment, ignorance, and downfall in all the fields: education, health, food, and medicine, because this authoritarian regime usurps the public money and control the power...⁹⁷

The statement detailed above is found on the Muslim Brotherhood's well produced and easy to navigate web-page full of the latest Brotherhood news, press release statements, and a vast archive of historical documents. The Muslim Brotherhood's web page categorizes their organization by country and topic. Unlike the 1976-1982 Muslim Brotherhood that relied on poorly coordinated "word of mouth" coordination, the modern day Brotherhood has utilized information age technology available to the most basic computer user. The struggle to get a unified message out to everyone now exists; it is the new Arab media.

In the last five years, the information age has dominated the Arab world. The idea that the individual Arab can call in to a live TV show and challenge state-run policies, existing social barriers, or vent their general frustration has a far reaching impact on all that participate in the Middle Eastern region.⁹⁸ Case and point, the Arab news channels, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya have made Bayanouni more than a household name; he is the face of the Syrian opposition. The mechanism of an opposition lead to charismatically call for immediate change now exists. This puts the Assad regime in a difficult position as their policies are being questioned and attacked openly by opposition groups outside of their own country. If they can ever decide on one unified information strategy, the mechanism exists for the Syrian opposition groups to pressure the Assad regime. For the Brotherhood and the NSF to be successful, they need to master the Arab media.

⁹⁷ Ali Sadr al-Din Bayanouni, *Syrian MB Shura's final communiqué*, Muslim Brotherhood webpage, Webpage online. Available from <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5196>.

⁹⁸ Robinson class discussion, 29 November 2006.

One of the challenges to measuring the effect of the Arab media is the lack of polling data available measuring the average Syrian's feelings towards the NSF. To quote one reporter living in Damascus,

There are no public opinion polls in Baathist Syria and the movement (Brotherhood) has not tested its popularity by calling for demonstrations or strikes in two decades. Although Syrian Sunnis are more outwardly religious today than they were then (veiling, for example, is much more common), the movement no longer has a deep social support base or control over religious institutions.⁹⁹

The Assad regime has countered some of the Brotherhood's media attacks by promoting moderate Islam and reaching out to the merchant middle-class. There has been a strong push by the Assad regime to shore up support with the merchants by giving them economic incentives to support government policies. Though there has been a small increase in violent attacks in the last three years, the Assad regime is much stronger now in 2007 than it was in 2004.

3. The Difference a Few Decades Makes...

When looking for the effects of extreme state violence against the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, look no further than the present organizational and mobilizing structure of the Brotherhood. Assad's counter-insurgency strategy scattered the Brotherhood throughout the world. The Hafez Assad regime effectively ran the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood out of the country by using overwhelming violent authoritarian tactics followed by the establishment and control of moderate Islam. The Assad regime's strategy of becoming "meaner and greener"¹⁰⁰ proved quite effective against the Muslim Brotherhood. The proof is the vast difference between the mobilizing structures of the two case studies.

⁹⁹ Gambill, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Vali Nasr, Classroom discussion, Islamic Fundamentalism, Naval Postgraduate School, 13 November 2006.

E. CULTURAL FRAMING

The last decade has been tumultuous for Syria. The death of Hafez Assad and the rise of his son Bashar, the emergence of the new Arab media, the US war in Iraq, the Syrian issues with Lebanon and Hezbollah are only some of the dynamic events that have affected Syria. From these events, key ideas and slogans present themselves for the Brotherhood to use to in their effort to gain the support of the Syrian population. The three main themes that the Brotherhood and NSF promote are the failures of an ineffective and corrupt secular Bashar Assad regime, Islam is the solution, and the way ahead is liberal democracy and peace. By hammering away at these three central messages, the Brotherhood hopes to set the stage for their eventual return to Syrian politics.

As mentioned in the previous section, gauging the level Syrian receptiveness to these cultural framing messages is quite difficult as there is no independent polling apparatus available to measure public response. Though the paranoid atmosphere of a secret police state has lessened under the Bashar regime, it still exists and maintains firm control of the population.

1. Bashar's Corrupt Regime; Like Father, Like Son "Remember June 27th"

When Bashar took power in Damascus, he promised democratic political reforms and the loosening of the totalitarian tactics that griped Syria. The period from 2000-to early 2001 became known as "Damascus Spring"¹⁰¹ as many Syrians thought that real change could take place. Outspoken critics of the regime began to come out against Assad which led to a swift government crackdown. According to the Syrian Human rights watch,

When he was sworn in as president, he introduced himself as a reform advocate, and many felt optimistic about this, but after months we found

¹⁰¹ Moubayed, 2.

ourselves back to square one, with the campaign of repressions and imprisonments being on the rise.¹⁰²

The Brotherhood points to this and says “see, he is not different than his corrupt takfir father.” In a human rights report published in June 2006, it is estimated that 17000 prisoners are still unaccounted for since the implementation of law 49 in 1980¹⁰³. Assad, in a desire to relieve some of this pressure, has released some token prisoners and allowed some exiled Syrians to return home. Much like the government’s Islamification strategy, it takes momentum away from the opposition parties.

A key slogan to take form this is “Remember 27 June”. On 27 June 1980, Rifaat Assad stormed Tadmor prison and murdered 1000 Muslim brotherhood prisoners in response to the failed assassination attempt on Hafez Assad. “Remember 27 June” carries the ideas of martyrdom and the toils of imprisonment under an authoritarian ruler. It is easy to rally around; much like “Remember the Alamo” or “Remember the Maine” was to the US.

2. Islam is the Solution

O, brave Syrian people... Since its establishment, our Group (MB) pledged to survive the Islamic religion Da'wa, because it is the Da'wa of truth, freedom, equality, security, and monotheism. MB pledged to adhere to the Islamic revivalist trend to rectify the creeds and stances, as well as resist heresy and fake traditions. MB strengthened the cultural situation of both life and science and to try to be strong as possible. MB backed the oppressed and the woman, and helped eliminate ignorance of the people under the umbrella of Islam... Now is the time for the nation, which believes in one God, one Holy Book, and follow one Prophet, to get out of Seffeen's sedition and Karbla's revenges...¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Walid Safour, *17000 Syrian Prisoners Disappeared, Human Rights say*, Webpage online. Available from <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=4676>, accessed 15 November 2007.

¹⁰³ Safour, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Bayanouni, 2.

This is an excerpt from Bayanouni's January 2006 address to the Syrian people and those that support the Muslim Brotherhood. Though the Muslim Brotherhood encompasses all Syrian opposition groups, Bayanouni's message is quite clear, Islam is the answer. This message hasn't changed but the methods have changed. In 1977, the Muslim Brotherhood took a violent revolutionary approach to establishing a Syrian Islamic state and failed miserably. The new method is through a multi-party democracy strategy which would work through the government versus working against it. Examples of this exist throughout the Middle East and central Asia.

As mentioned throughout this chapter, the trouble faced by the Muslim Brotherhood on this critical issue is the Assad government's Islamification program. The Assad government named its moderate Islamification strategy "True Islam"¹⁰⁵. This creates confusion for the average Syrian who has to figure out which Islamic teachings are correct. The state has numerous "state-sponsored" clergy members with large congregations that support the government's policies. Unless the Brotherhood can present a case that shows how Assad's Islamification program is false, the Brotherhood will have a hard time convincing its target audience, the Syrian Sunnis, that the Brotherhood and the larger NSF organization are the way ahead. The Brotherhood must accomplish this to mobilize the Syrian masses.

3. The Multi-Party Liberal Democracy Approach

The real opposition cannot be based on tyranny, despotism, suppression of the people, killings, or detentions; the real one should be based on the national unity, freedom of the people, the participation of the people in self-determination, and giving up tyranny and injustice. We are looking forward to a free world that is full of love, dialogue, and acquaintance and keeping away from all kinds sources of war; the most dangerous source is the terrorism of the powerful with their weapons which kill the children, women, and the aged under the ruins of their houses, a world in which no one monopolize the wealth and capacities.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Moubayed, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Bayanouni, 5.

This issue demonstrates the effect of the Assad regime's ability to dominate Brotherhood on the battlefield then keep them out of the game for the following decades. The 1977-1982 Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's goal was to violently overthrow the Assad regime and set up an Islamic republic. The current multi-party democratic message of the new Brotherhood represents both the effects of their defeat and the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood as an international organization. Much to the Jihadi's chagrin, the Muslim Brotherhood has changed its strategy over the last decade to a peace oriented political approach as a means for Islamic change. The Syrian Muslim brotherhood, now the NSF, is no different.

Most minority groups in Syria are very wary of this idea. Since a majority of the country is Sunni, having a democratic form of government will leave the other minorities out of the political running. This is especially true with the Alawites as they have ruled Syria with a heavy hand for many decades. The Alawites have nothing to gain from a multi-party democracy and everything to lose. Therefore, Assad has no reason to change his form of government to support a Sunni heavy democracy and every reason to keep his authoritarian regime in power.

F. CONCLUSION

The comparison between the two SMT case studies demonstrates the thorough effectiveness of Hafez Assad's application of extreme state violence against an opposition group. While the differences between the two versions of the Brotherhood will be explored more in the next chapter, the stark contrast in organizational concept and strategic goals are a testament to the power of a well executed military counter-insurgency strategy by an authoritarian government. Analyzing the Syrian example, there is validity to the state's application of state violence against its own people and opposition groups as a viable counter insurgency strategy. Of course, there is a considerable moral and ethical argument against these violent tactics. That said, the proof of extreme state violence as an effective counter-insurgency strategy is proven by the Assad regime's ability to maintain power for 40 years while the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is in disorganized exile.

The final chapter explores the relationship between the state's use of extreme violence and the role of Islamification. The "meaner and greener" counter-insurgency strategy was validated in Syria's war with the Muslim Brotherhood. This counter-insurgency strategy has not had the same effects in other countries such as Egypt. What will be determined is why this happened in Syria and how this model can be applied to future conflicts.

V. ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The use of extreme state violence by the Assad regime effectively defeated the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's insurgency. This was a direct result of Syria's ability to violently exploit the organizational weaknesses of the Brotherhood. This answers the thesis questions of "Does the state matter?" and "How does the state's use of extreme violence affect opposition groups?" Extreme state violence was only one phase of Assad's strategy. After analyzing the present day Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, it becomes clear that the Islamification phase played a critical role in controlling the Syrian people. It took the religious moral argument away from the religious opposition groups while placating the Sunni majority with a moderate, albeit state-controlled, Islamic environment. This "meaner and greener" strategy¹⁰⁷, the combination of the state's application of extreme state violence and Islamification, is not unique to the Syrian experience, as other countries have used variations of this strategy. That said, this strategy was the most effective in the Syrian example. It is important to note that this strategy is not applicable in most counter-insurgency situations in which the State's use of extreme violence is insufficient to end an insurgency. The reason for the success of this strategy is found in the conditions that determine Syria's identity and the critical organizational flaws of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

A. SYRIA'S IDENTITY: WHY "MEANER AND GREENER" WORKED

The success of the Assad regime is as much about Syria's identity as its counter-insurgency strategy. Syria's history reflects a country consistently ruled by outside empires (Mongols, Ottomans, and French to name a few). Syria's opportunity for its own independent identity finally came in 1946. Between 1946 and Assad's rise to power in 1970, Syria's history has been a series of schizophrenic tribal clashes and power struggles with no unifying historical bond for the individual Syrian to rally around in times of

¹⁰⁷ Nasr, Vali, Classroom discussion, Islamic Fundamentalism, Naval Postgraduate School, 13 November 2006.

struggle. No “Jeffersonian Society”¹⁰⁸ has existed to bring the Syrian people together for a common cause. Assad’s authoritarian rule was the powerful force that forged the current Syrian identity.

Prior to the Assad regime, the question of Syrian identity varied from region to region. In Aleppo and Hama, the Syrian’s identified with strong independent Sunni characteristics. In the seats of power in Damascus, there is a strong Alawite identity. In the northeastern Al Hasakah Governorate, it was primarily Kurdish with a strong Kurdish identity. The Assad regime succeeded in unifying these various tribes and unique cultures under one authoritarian government. By providing one powerful force, order was established and maintained among the various diverse regions. The “meaner” phase demonstrated to every tribe and culture the heavy price to be paid for opposing the Assad regime. The “greener” phase pulled the fractious pieces back together under a moderate Islamic umbrella. By demonstrating its power and applying a unifying solution, the Assad regimes sold the Syrian population a successful strategy that has ensured four decades of unbroken rule.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s flawed insurgent organization was critical to the success of the “meaner and greener” strategy. The uncoordinated strategy of the Brotherhood pre-1982 was a key element to Assad’s success. The Brotherhood’s inability to mobilize a unified revolutionary organization allowed Assad’s experienced security apparatus to exploit the Brotherhood’s organizational vulnerabilities. Once the organization was shattered and its survivor’s exiled in the “meaner” phase, the Assad regime was able to mold the Syrian Islamic environment through the “greener” phase. After Hama, insurgent attacks against the government dropped off to practically nothing which demonstrated the effectiveness of this strategy. Since then, the government has maintained a tight control over the Syrian political space which continues today.

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, Glenn E., Classroom discussion, Jihadi Information Strategy II, Naval Postgraduate School, 17 January 2007.

B. WHEN TO APPLY ASSAD'S COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY

The “meaner and greener” strategy has specific application criteria. Many Middle Eastern countries would not meet the criteria due to their varied histories and identities. Using the Jordanian and Egyptian examples, neighboring Jordan has been ruled by a constitutional monarchy since 1952 while Egypt was a monarchy then, after a coup in 1952, became a republic. Each country’s history has forged a separate and unique identity. After their 1967 defeat at the hands of Israel, Egypt unsuccessfully tried a version of the “meaner and greener” strategy to eradicate the Muslim Brotherhood. In many cases, it seemed to embolden the movement. After some tumultuous decades, the Muslim Brotherhood is a full participant in Egyptian politics winning 88 seats in the 2005 parliamentary elections.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Egypt and Syria, Jordan has always had an open relationship with the Brotherhood, incorporating it in its politics as a political party. Therefore, the “meaner and greener” strategy does not apply as the conditions there are not the same as in neighboring Syria. As stated earlier, this strategy is not applicable in most counter-insurgency situations, especially those in which extreme state violence cannot defeat an existing insurgency. Syria’s victory was as much about exploiting the Brotherhood’s organizational vulnerabilities as it was the application of the “meaner and greener” strategy.

For the “meaner and greener” strategy to be successful, the conditions must be similar to Syria’s situation in the 1970s. Some of these conditions are divided tribes and cultural groups, a lack of a unified state history, a strong state security apparatus, and an authoritarian government determined to maintain power at any cost. It is important to note that this is a state fighting against its population, not an occupying power in a foreign country. (For example, Israel has not been able to defeat the Palestinians by using force.) This allows the authoritarian government to exert extreme state violence, and then determine the conditions of order without a historical counter argument against its actions. A key condition is the state’s ability to exploit an insurgency’s organizational

¹⁰⁹ *History of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt*” Wikipedia, Webpage online. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Muslim_Brotherhood_in_Egypt, accessed 10 February 2007.

weaknesses. This proved a pivotal point in Assad's ability to defeat and mold the Muslim Brotherhood. The application of the "meaner and greener" strategy is dependent on these specific conditions. Without them, this strategy will end in failure and unnecessary bloodshed.

C. FUTURE APPLICATIONS, CAN THIS WORK IN IRAQ AND BEYOND?

The final thesis question asks "does the Syrian model have application in contemporary state struggles throughout the region?" The current Iraq situation provides an interesting example. Prior to the US invasion in 2003, Saddam Hussein ruled through a variation of this strategy. It is possible that the "meaner and greener" strategy could be implemented with a degree of success. Some of the necessary conditions exist. There are divided tribes and cultures and a history of order under previous authoritarian rulers. The missing conditions are a strong authoritarian ruler and an effective state security apparatus. Also, this needs to be a strong Iraqi authoritarian government exploiting the fractured nature of the Iraqi insurgent groups spread throughout the country, not a US / foreign led effort. The current fractured organizational structures of the various insurgent groups would lend well to the "meaner and greener" strategy. Currently, the US backed policy focuses on a democratic power sharing government. If this fails in the long term, the critical question is "would the Iraqis prefer an authoritarian ruler or continue to fight the fitna (discord-disharmony)¹¹⁰ of life in a struggling democracy?" Most Iraqis don't want another psychopathic tyrant like Saddam Hussein. But what about a "Hafez Assad-like" leader who lead with the carrot before he employed the stick? To paraphrase the Arab saying, "Better 100 years of authoritarian order versus one day of fitna."¹¹¹ It might be a worthwhile exercise for the US to explore the Arab mindset and incorporate it into their future Middle East policy. Though "meaner and greener" may not be the ideal solution, a variation of it would be worth considering, especially if conditions in Iraq deteriorate and threaten the future stability of the Middle East.

¹¹⁰ Robinson, Classroom discussion, Jihadi Information Strategy I, Naval Postgraduate School, 27 September 2007.

D. THE BUTCHER'S BILL: MORAL AND ETHICAL CONSEQUENCES

The “meaner and greener” strategy has significant negative moral and ethical consequences. In Syria’s case, tens of thousands of Syrians died to defeat the escalating fitna and ensure order. Additional tens of thousands are still imprisoned or missing due to this brutal strategy.¹¹² In Iraq’s case, the toll is even higher. Waging war against a state’s own citizens comes with an unimaginably heavy price. This strategy should be held as a last resort. The need for order would have to outweigh the slaughter of thousands of a state’s population. The situation to utilize this strategy would be extremely chaotic and grave.

In Assad’s case, the war with the Muslim brotherhood escalated over the better part of a decade and evolved into the zero sum game that ended at Hama. In 1970, Assad could not have predicted or imagined that he would surround Syria’s fourth largest city and level it. By 1982, Assad felt he had no other choice. In his mind, Syria’s identity was at stake and an all out war against the Muslim Brotherhood was the only option left. It was very effective and the Brotherhood was crushed. Was the cost too high? There is no clear answer. The philosophers John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche would have supported Assad’s decision while Aristotle and Immanuel Kant would have been horrified.¹¹³ In the end, the Syrian population decided what the right course of action is for their country. If the population thought the leader went too far or failed the people, then they would have made changes. In Syria’s case, the Assad family has ruled for four decades.

¹¹¹ Robinson, 27 September 2007.

¹¹² Walid Safour, *17000 Syrian Prisoners Disappeared, Human Rights say*, Webpage online. Available from <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=4676>, accessed 15 November 2007.

¹¹³ George Lober, Classroom discussion, Critical Thinking and Ethical Decision Making, Naval Postgraduate School, 5 February 2007.

E. CONCLUSION

Syria's use of extreme state violence crushed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Assad's ability to violently exploit the Brotherhood's organizational vulnerabilities shattered the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. The defeat forced the Muslim Brotherhood to reshape its organizational strategy and embrace a peace oriented democratic political platform. After this war, Assad's Islamification strategy used moderate state-controlled Islam to influence and control the Syrian population. This effective use of force and Islamification, the "meaner and greener" strategy, proved to be a very successful counter-insurgency plan. The Syrian model relies on numerous specific existing conditions to be effective in defeating a popular revolutionary opposition movement. This strategy is not the solution to most Middle Eastern revolutionary situations and can completely backfire if improperly employed. With the "meaner and greener" strategy comes a heavy moral and ethical burden which involves war against a state's own citizens. This strategy should be employed in future circumstances as a last resort. That said, it was an effective strategy for the Assad regime which continues to rule Syria.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's case is tragic for both its own organization and the Assad regime. The loss of tens of thousands of Syrian lives is a devastating cost for any country to bear for the sake of order. The hubris of both sides of the conflict is to blame. The Assad regime's continued persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood is a testament to its inability to "forgive and forget". Until this wound heals, Syria's identity will not be whole. Without this shared unifying identity, the country is vulnerable to another revolutionary catastrophe.

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