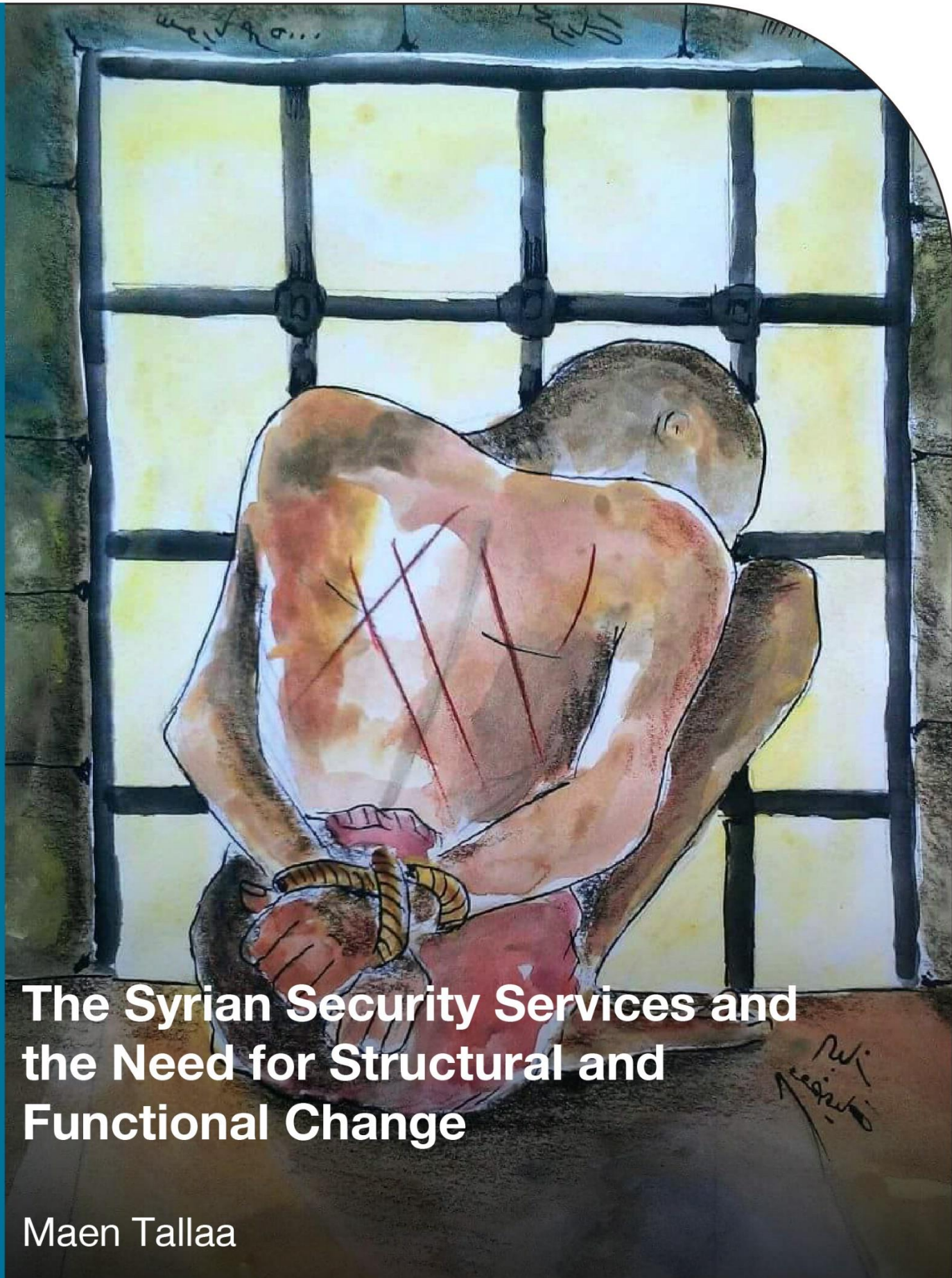Politics and International Relations

The Syrian Security Services and the Need for Structural and Functional Change

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Omran for Strategic Studies

An independent think tank and policy center focusing on presenting an objective understanding of Syria and the region to become a reference for public policies impacting the region.

Omran began in November 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. It publishes studies and policy briefs regarding Syrian and regional affairs in the areas of politics, economic development, and local administration. Omran also conducts round-table discussions, seminars, and workshops that promote a more systematic and methodical culture of decision making among future leaders of Syria.

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Executive Summary

Systemic, functional, and structural change in the security services is a crucial issue that awaits objective solutions that take into account the rapidly shifting circumstances and variables throughout Syria. Because security reform is a complex process, it will be remedied – in light of Syria's particular situation – by neither pre-packaged reform theories nor theses that ignore the nature and importance of national security while overlooking the necessity of cohesion and preventing collapse. Rather, theories are needed that entail a professional nation-wide effort consistent with local, regional, and international security requirements as well as the nation's overarching goal: the construction of a coherent security sector.

This study finds that the Syrian state does not possess a "security sector" from a technical definition perspective sufficient enough to deserve reform. As it stands, security work in Syria falls into two categories: The first concerns forces of control and repression. Among these are the Air Force and Military Intelligence Directorates, which are divisions of the Syrian Army and the Armed Forces; the General Intelligence Directorate, which is a division of both the National Security Bureau and the ruling party (the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party), while political security forms a division of the Ministry of Interior. The second category is military-security networks (such as the Republican Guard, the 4th Armored Division, and the Tiger Forces) that bear the responsibility of engineering the security process, determining its relationships and foundations, ensuring the regime's security, and carrying out all measures and operations within society whenever there is sign of a security threat. Accordingly, two flaws and aberrations can be identified: The first relates to the security structure's fragmentation, which in the past has helped curtail community activity, while also limiting its progress and development. The second issue relates to the function of these services, which is characterized by fluidity and boundlessness, with the exception of its permanent role consolidating and bolstering the regime's stability. Indeed, any reform process of these services must target their function and structure at the same time.

Security is necessary and important in the context of any transition process, but this is particularly the case in a place like Syria, which operates as one of the sensitive regional and international counterbalances. To be sure, it is the most important of the state's functions, whether in terms of maintaining social stability, protecting the country, or preserving its identity and culture from any encroachments. This need for security underscores that it is out of the question to dismantle security services, end their work, and not rebuild a national alternative with a cohesive structure and functions, as some are proposing. This is particularly true for the next phase of the new Syria, which has seen an increase in schemes that seek to cut across its national borders. Thus it seems that the requirement most consistent with the dualism of both rejecting the existing approach and confirming the necessity of security is the restructuring of the security services in the next phase so that they keep pace with those of developed countries that serve both the citizens and the nation.

This study shows that restructuring measures should be based on principles of change, smooth transition, and cohesion – for fear that a sudden change could have repercussions for the cohesion of the country. This will ensure that the security services resume working within the national framework and complement state institutions. Certainly, these measures are a

reflection of a series of political arrangements that signal the real desire for change and political transition. Consequently, they are void of any competitive, acquisitive or authoritarian calculations. To this end, the study proposes three phases for carrying out the reform and development process: The first phase relates to the legal system, which will ensure the principles of integration, rebalance, change of function, and strengthened oversight. The second phase is linked to the development of the human, administrative, and technical structures. As for the third stage, it will comprise a set of measures that aim to complete the construction of a cohesive and functional security sector.

Introduction

Ever since the Ba'ath Party came to power in Syria in 1963, its Military Committee has relied entirely on the intelligence services as a tool for strengthening its governance and entrenching its base. During the reign of Salah Jadid towards the end of the 1960s, Abd al-Karim al-Jundi (President of the Security Services and the National Security Bureau at the time) followed the policy of kidnapping and torturing the party's opposition. After coming to power in March 1971 following his coup November 1970, Hafez al-Assad used the security services to control security, politics, culture, the economy, and even religion, turning them into powerful appendages of his authority that pervaded the nation, society, and public life. His son, Bashar al-Assad, did not deviate from this path, as these apparatuses continue to follow all of the same policies that endeavored to limit citizens' activities by using security restrictions and surveillance. These institutions, in addition to the military establishment, were the regime's first and last lines of defense by virtue of their firm discipline and operational engineering, which enabled them to create the Syrian Army's sectarian structure. This has enabled the army to control leadership and power centers populated by Alawites and those who owe their absolute loyalty to the regime. This type of engineering became clear following the disagreement between Hafez al-Assad and his brother Rifaat, who almost overthrew him in the 1980s. Following the event, Assad restructured the army and security services, adjusting security operations so as to consolidate his rule and undermine both political movements as well as the overt and covert ways for people to reject his regime.

In 2011, the Syrian uprising broke out having been caused largely by a hidden, yet growing, popular discontent directed towards the security services' destructive and authoritarian practices that denied even of the most basic human rights. The security services followed these developments – seeing the gatherings of demonstrators as no more than "riff-raff, rebels, and terrorists" – and served as the main force to carry out policies of repression and systematic violence against the revolutionary movement. With the spread of the movement and the sharp spike in the level of the conflict, the international community has desperately attempted to put established rules in place to initiate a "political process" along a negotiated path. However, this process is still stalled as of the time that this study was prepared. All signs indicate that the necessary political solution, according to the international community, includes "preserving state apparatuses, chief among them the institutions of security and defense."

As mentioned above, the study of Syria's security situation, as well as discussion about the need for functional and organizational change in the security services, represent a compound problem that must be unpacked. Indeed, any political path that anticipates solutions to the Syrian crisis without taking into account the security component – along with its excesses and questions about its role in the Syria's transition and future – will not work. Therefore, this study attempts to provide an accurate description of the security services' current functions and program so as to touch upon the most significant levels of discernable deficiencies, as well as the conclusions that can be derived from this that will help create an objective picture of the security issue for the future.

Assumptions: The study proceeds from a number of assumptions, namely:

1. Any transition process that is not accompanied by a systemic change in its security services so as to render it capable of protecting the political transition will only represent superficial change that will not strengthen social and political stability and only consolidate the pillars of the ruling regime.

2. The reform process's connection to engineering a Geneva-brokered political solution is a key structural link. Thus, the more that the solution is set up for a true process of change, the more it will clearly influence the reform process and transformation.

3. The reform process does not work without positive engagement from both international and regional actors, particularly after the Syrian "crisis" became the international issue par excellence. This requires vigorous national efforts, which include enlisting regional and international actors to support and fund the political and transition processes as well as their accompanying reform policies.

4. The study adopts the principle that the nation's monopoly on central functions related to sovereignty (such as security, defense, and international affairs) is essential. That said, the study is applicable to scenarios where Syria's territorial unity is preserved whether through the principle of administrative decentralization or some forms of federalism where the central state maintains the operation of central security services.

5. The reform process runs into severe opposition from both the security services themselves as well as the networks of the ruling regime on account of the "objectivity" of defending their interests, which the reform process will reconfigure on all levels, particularly with regards to organization and institutionalization. This reform will transfer the security services' interests to authorities tasked with overseeing and monitoring both mechanisms of funding and all other planning processes.

Study Approach: This study follows both descriptive and behavioral approaches to show the philosophy and reality of the security services, their current organizational and functional nature, as well as the desired outcome. In identifying flaws and structural setbacks, the study relies on interviews with officers, individuals, and dissident security experts. Their insights constitute an essential documentation for finding out information about security operations and their methods, which the study considers to be a key foundation for the cohesion of the security services and their complete loyalty to the regime. Moreover, the study uses a comparative method in presenting its examination of the most important security reform experiences in Arab Spring countries in order to measure them against Syria, explore their most important lessons and conclusions, and carry them over as necessities that should be recognized and taken into consideration during Syria's own security reform process.

Previous Studies: The most important studies published concerning security reform issues in Syria can be summarized as follows: The first is entitled **Syria Transition Roadmap, published by Syrian Expert House and the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies** in 2013, the ninth chapter of which details the restructuring of Syria's security services by surveying the following:

1. The most important security services have revealed their role through policies of systematically repressing the Syrian uprising and have been documented carrying out its worst massacres.

2. The general goals, initiatives, and mechanisms of reform.

3. A proposal for a new Syrian security system based upon dissolving all security services with the exception of the police forces, which had a detailed explanation devoted to them that recommends restructuring the internal security forces.

That said, this study was completed in the context of the ongoing conflict in 2013, which has subsequently become more complex in light of certain types of crimes, the sheer volume of accumulating security issues, and the number of security threats from either religious or ethnic sources that have begun to overlap. Moreover, these complications are further compounded by the appearance of specific challenges, some of which relate to the continuing effects of security reform in Arab Spring countries, not to mention the multiple actors and stakeholders in areas of Syria that experience relatively stable forms of governance and local administration.

Similarly, the "Day After Project" designed to support democratic transition in Syria in 2013 published an important chapter on "Reforming the Security Sector," which proposed dissolving the current security services and establishing new intelligence agencies (both for military and foreign affairs). The project proposes a 14-month timetable for initiating reforms based on the theory of jettisoning the security structure and establishing new security formations assigned local security functions, such as that of civilian police forces. The study subjected the security landscape to deconstruction and restructuring theories while at the same time pointed to the absence of a so-called "security sector." The study further indicates that all security services are divisions of control belonging to different institutions, the most important being the army, Ministry of Interior, and the Ba'ath Party. Based on this view, the main actors in control of security and its institutions are networks engineered by the regime so as to ensure that these institutions serve to strengthen its authority. In this way, the regime relies on specific Alawite families that compete amongst themselves to show their loyalty and maximize their private interests. This structure makes it a strategic matter to break up these security networks while simultaneously creating a cohesive security sector based on the necessity of functional and structural change to the security services.

Yezid Sayigh's Carnegie Center studies, which monitor and analyze the dynamics of security reform in Arab Spring nations, constitute an essential perspective that this study relies on to extract the most significant obstacles and issues that resist reform processes. His most important studies include: *Crumbling States: Security Sector Reform in Libya and Yemen* and *Dilemmas of Reform: Policing in Arab Transitions.* In these studies, Sayigh deconstructed the security reform processes in these countries, which he saw as faltering for several reasons. Perhaps the most prominent factors he identified were the legacies of dictatorial and factional regimes and the politicization of transition processes. Moreover, he recognized the significance of these governments' focus on terrorism and their unwillingness to take on any other serious security agenda or consider the political economy dilemmas of this process, particularly with regards to costs.

I. The Security Reality During Assad's Rule

The Emergency Law enacted in 1962 and the declaration of a State of Emergency on 8 March 1963, along with subsequent constitutional amendments introduced under Hafez al-Assad in 1973 allowed the security services to exceed the powers granted to them by the laws and decrees under which they were created. They thus became a means to impose repression, commit acts of torture, restrict freedoms, and suppress public opinion, and moreover inflict heavy setbacks on Syrian society. As a concept, "security" means constant research and investigation for the sake of stability and civil cohesion. Under Hafez al-Assad, however, this principle was completely ignored and replaced by a conception of the security services as the private security of the ruling authority, whereby security agencies and other military and civilian sectors were either subjected to its control or created from scratch in order to control domestic interactions on all levels and forcibly exclude them from effective participation in the public sphere.

Philosophy of Security Work:

A survey of security work and conduct during the rule of Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad reveals that the philosophy of security activity involved a binary of: loyalty to the regime and private interests, which constituted the real guarantee that they would remain the principal actor in all domestic interactions and an absolute bulwark of the ruling regime.

The main features of this philosophy are as follows:[1]

1. Absolute Powers and the Link Between Community Activity and Security Trends:

The security services have received complete independence and wide-ranging powers in all aspects of political, economic, service, and social life as well as have adopted several methods of intervention. Perhaps the most important method is devotion to the principle of so-called "Approvals and Security Studies." The essence of this principle is that it gives the security services the right to "object" to all community practices and demands, which results in intrusion into the simplest aspects of everyday life, from obtaining a street vendor's license, to registering real-estate and inheritance information, to holding membership to parliament, to

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[1] The philosophy has been summarized through several different readings and video clips. The most important include
1. Radwan Ziyada, "How the Assad Family Built Syria's Intelligence State," News Center. Link: https://goo.gl/lljloj
2. Rayan Mohammed, "Intelligence Services of the Syrian Regime: Security Service Mafias as Security Services," The New Arab. Link: https://goo.gl/smMdIq
3. Omar al-Hindi, "The Security Services Monitor One Another," Al-Arabiya.Net. Link: http://goo.gl/AZsrtZ
4. "Syrian Apparatuses of Terror: Smooth Disintegration," Al-Sharq Al-Awsat. Link: http://goo.gl/P5pGH6
5. Hasaan Al-Qalish, "Security Study of Syria," Free Syria Site. Link: http://goo.gl/2xmjCP
6. Adil Redha, "Internal Study of Syria," Amad Media Site. Link: http://goo.gl/76DmNk
7. Yasser Nadim al-Said, "Old and New Questions About the Syrian Intelligence Services," al-Jumhuriya Site. Link: http://aljumhuriya.net/169
8. Group of video clips of human rights violations committed by Syrian security. Link: https://goo.gl/NIyYKB
9. Group of testimonies posted on YouTube covering a group of investigations and testimonies carried out by Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya.Net, Akhbar Al Aan, and Orient News. Links: https://goo.gl/vzHzZB, https://goo.gl/ES24Mm, https://goo.gl/cXIR87, https://goo.gl/1H5w2Y

promoting army officers, forming cabinets, or even appointing judges. Just getting a public sector job, no matter how small or large, is contingent upon security research results that are determined to be positive towards the regime's political position.

2. Competing for Loyalty and Inter-Agency Hostility

In asserting his control over the security services, Hafez al-Assad relied on the strategy of generating hostility and creating an atmosphere of competitiveness between the different security agencies and their senior officials. Performance indicators were linked to standards of absolute loyalty and obedience. In order to create a special interest sphere for security officials, they were given access to all levers of the state, which provided them with obscene wealth. At the same time, an entire file was prepared for each and every "corrupt individual and transgressor," which facilitated the process of seamlessly terminating them if their ambitions grew too large. As for the era of Bashar al-Assad, he went about sowing conflict and mutual competition within his areas of influence and control. Control over border passages was distributed so that each one was subordinate to a specific security agency that rules and controls it and its revenue. Accordingly, boarder passages with Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey are each respectively subordinate to the General Intelligence Directorate, Air Force Intelligence Directorate, Military Security, and Political Security.

3. Compounded Fear of the Security Forces:

Over time, the condition of fearing security, embodied by the culture of fear propagated by the security services themselves, grew by leaps and bounds, as did weariness about surveillance within institutions. This transpired as a contradictory sectarian structure was enshrined within the decision-making centers of each government branch. Moreover, this pervasive fear spread as the culture of "reporting" deepened in society[2] – and within the security establishment itself – as making mistakes, whatever they may be, was constantly feared. Within the community, restrictions proliferated that hampered people's activities, keeping them bound and fearful of taking any collective or individual action. As for internal fear, it comes from signs of negligent performance of either security tasks or any action in which loyalty and belonging to the ideology and doctrine of the "nation's leader" is minimized.

4. Duties Related to the Ruling Regime's Security

Totalitarian and autocratic states impose major duties and burdens on the security services, which bring them into alliance with the ruling regime. These duties connect their fates with the survival of the regime, putting the regime's security ahead of its internal security issues on different social, political, safety, and economic levels. This has increased the number of abuses committed by security services, inflated their roles in carrying out repression, and deepened their connection to systematic legal and human rights violations. Over the past few decades, a certain security doctrine has been propagated that justifies the transformation of the state's

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[2] The term "reporting" in Syrian society has become a common security concept that denotes an intelligence agent or representatives telling the leadership about a person or group of people's conduct that "violates public security." The political report of someone targeted by Bashar al-Assad would spread fear and panic and would signal the possibility of the person getting subjected to a series of violent reprisals.

security functions into a goal in and of itself that is separate from the rest of the roles and functions of the state. The allocations for essential state functions, such as education and health services, have in many cases been reduced so as to provide greater resources for security, which maintains its survival at the helm. In this way, it ignores the foundations for building security services, which should be preserving the security, peace, and the stability of the nation and its citizens.

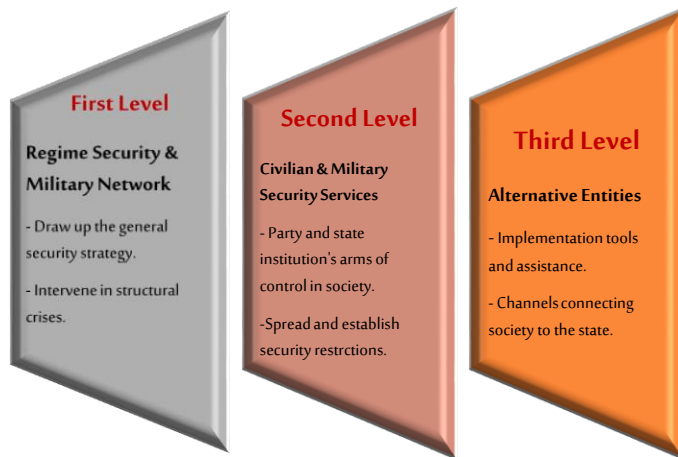## 5. Restricting Political Activity

Throughout Assad's rule, the security strategy has aimed to promulgate the philosophy of separating society from politics, both in word and deed, rendering it the exclusive domain of the ruling family and its supporters while denying and marginalizing the middle class and subjecting its intellectuals and innovators to strict surveillance. This approach has effectively linked the middle class to several organizational structures that fall under the umbrella of the Ba'ath Party, thus making it interact with, and become influenced by, only a small partisan circle. Those who fall outside of this circle, are numerous and unsuccessful because of their lack of access to state tools and mechanisms, not to mention their direct targeting at the behest of security institutions.

The security services strove to reduce politics to the figure of Hafez al-Assad in theory, practice, and approach, while also working on disseminating "his values and achievements" among all society's classes and institutions. This focus bordered on deification, which resulted in an absence of true political representation, instead replacing it with another deceptive and rigid politics based on authoritarian and self-interested balancing acts and calculations.

6. Exhausting and Overwhelming Bureaucratic Structures

The regime has relied on a policy of controlling the capital city and the rest of Syria's provinces according to the principle of overwhelming their administrative, service, and social structures with a massive number of branches, each with different overlapping and contradictory authorities and multiple functions. This has generally left citizens to come up with their own living solutions within the margins opened up by "red lines," "national security," and "national unity" cultures that have left them susceptible to exhaustion if they stray outside of them. It may reach the point that citizens continue to turn to the security services over a long period of time without ever getting their problems attended to, simply because mutual coordination between these services has been eliminated without any legislative or legal action. Furthermore, most branches dispatch several agents to follow and monitor the work of other official security services. This lays the foundation for contradictory policies, favoritism, and deepens the culture of reporting, which aims to either let a certain agent carry out other agents' work or to coordinate with them to ignore "offenses committed" for their own collective benefit.
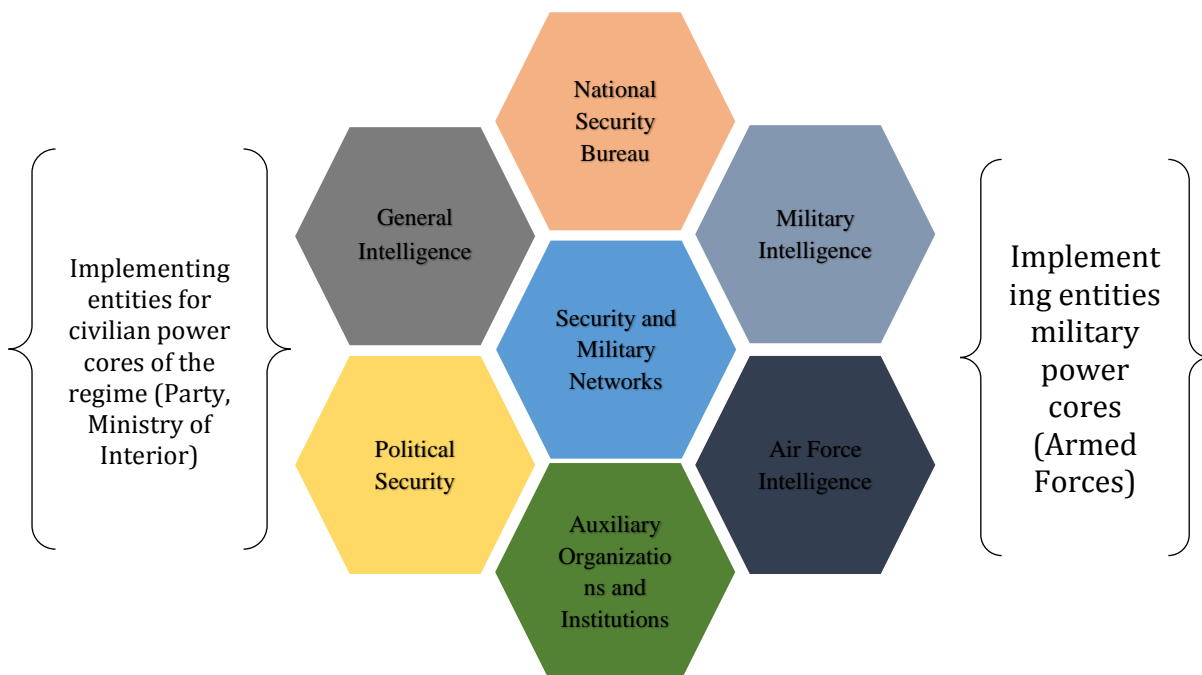
As a general outcome, the philosophy of security work in Syria is based on enshrining a group of security rules, customs, and standards that completely bind Syrian society,

First Level

Regime Security & Military Network

- Draw up the general security strategy.

- Intervene in structural crises.

Second Level

Civilian & Military Security Services

- Party and state institution's arms of control in society.

-Spread and establish security restrctions.

Third Level

Alternative Entities

- Implementation tools and assistance.

- Channels connecting society to the state.

render it immobile, and push it to deduce the limits of what is permissible and forbidden when it is not exposed to regime security. This process has always involved intervention from security and defense institutions to manage political and government affairs until they literally become the source for laws that govern society. This hampers the developmental or reformative action that restructures the authoritative system of action and links its functions to serving citizens and their advancement. The figure on the left clarifies the levels of security work and shows the role each plays within this philosophy.

Security and Intelligence Services: Tasks and Structure

The security and intelligence services are comprised of four general directorates that are supervised by the National Security Bureau (NSB). The main headquarters for all of the services is located in the capital and includes four central branches. Falling under this directorate are branches located in every province that contain offices with specializations corresponding to those of the central branches. In other words, the branch is a microcosm of the general administration. The figure below clarifies the security services' general structure.

Implementing entities for civilian power cores of the regime (Party, Ministry of Interior)

National Security Bureau

General Intelligence

Military Intelligence

Security and Military Networks

Political Security

Air Force Intelligence

Auxiliary Organizations and Institutions

Implementing entities military power cores (Armed Forces)

1. National Security Bureau (NSB)

This is the office that took the place of its former counterpart by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 36 in 2012 shortly after the bombing of "the Crisis Cell operation room in the National Security building"[3] in 2012 which was responsible for the security agency's plan to counter the uprising and protest movement. The NSB was assigned the task of "drafting security policies in Syria" and presided over by the former director of the Directorate of Intelligence Major General Ali Mamlouk.

The Regional Command of the NSB was previously presided over by Mohammed Saeed Bakheitan, who is considered one of the members of the old guard that kept their leadership seats in the Ba'ath Party's 10th Regional Congress alongside Farouk al-Sharaa, General Hasan Turkumani, and Major General Hisham Ikhtiyar. The former NSB had been subordinate to the regional command of the Ba'ath Party, convened weekly, and decided on a number of important issues pertaining to the country's security. After the 2012 Presidential Decree, the NSB was made directly subordinate to the President's Office and, under Mamlouk's leadership, it shifted from being responsible for coordinating the security services and submitting general periodic reports and summaries to being more focused on leadership and guidance.

2. General Intelligence Directorate (GIC)

The General Intelligence Directorate (GIC) was previously named "State Security" and established by Decree no. 14 in 1969 after Hafez al-Assad assumed power. The directorate is directly subordinate to the president under the name "Unit 1114" without going through any state body or ministry except when coordinating with the NSB.[4] The GIC encompasses 12 central branches in addition to active sub-branches in each province. Furthermore, the directorate includes the Higher Institute for Security Sciences, which was established in 2007 so that state representatives and diplomatic missions undergo intensive security trainings. The GIC is notable by its large number of civilian contractors and its officers, who are assigned by the Ministries of Defense and Interior.[5]

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[3] In a report by Al-Arabiya featuring the defected Crisis Cell secretary Abdul Majid Barakat, it was reported that President Bashar al-Assad chairs the Crisis Cell as a "high official" and that Maher al-Assad is his "direct advisor." The assistant regional secretary of the Ba'ath Party is Mohammed Said Bekheitan, was replaced four months later by Hasan Turkmani. Meanwhile, there are eight members of the Cell and all together they were the leaders of the Ministry of Interior's most prominent security apparatus at that time. They included: Deputy Chief of Staff Assef Shawkat, Minister of Defense Dawoud Rajiha, Minister of Interior Mohammed al-Shaar, President of the National Security Bureau Hisham Ikhtiyar, President of Air Force Intelligence Jamil Hassan, President of the Military Intelligence Abdel Fatah Qudsiyeh, President of the Political Security Directorate Dib Zaitoun, and President of General Intelligence Ali Mamlouk.
Regarding the Crisis Cell's mechanism of action, Barakat said that the reports from all branches involved with the crisis arrived at the central headquarters at seven o'clock in the evening. Additionally, reports from the Military Intelligence, Ministry of Interior, the so-called Political Security Directorate, the Ba'ath Party branches, Chiefs of Staff, National Security Bureau, province crisis cells also arrived at this time, but by noon the next day the Crisis Cell secretary would have summarized all of the reports and reorganized the statistics information. Additionally, recommendations and notes may have been added to the reports. Later, the reports would be sent to President Assad, where he would use the them and their notes, sign them, and bring a copy of them to the Crisis Cell again. According to the main members of the Crisis Cell, they meet every day at seven o'clock in the evening and discuss the report returned by Assad along with his notes. Their discussion would focus on the security angle and, sometimes, Syria's economic and social dimensions. Discussion about political or military repercussions from neighboring countries would also take place. After reviewing the issues of the day, the committee secretary would supervise the writing of a meeting report that includes any decisions made that day. This was then sent to the president no later than midnight. Quickly, the president's office would resend the signed report with the president's notes, turning what had been agreed upon by Crisis Cell members into approved Presidential resolutions. To look at this report, go to the following link: http://goo.gl/YnbTjF
[4] A Law that Created the General Intelligence Directorate, Syria Network, Syrian Human Rights Council. For more information, review the following link: http://www.shrc.org/?p=7451
[5] Syria Transition Plan, Syrian Experts House, Link: http://goo.gl/OdL8Gp

According to the law that established the GIC, it is a civilian department even though all active military personnel are commissioned by the Ministries of Defense and Interior and hence report to them financially and organizationally. As for other civilian members of GIC, they are subject to the State's uniform workers code. Accordingly, military officers overwhelmingly dominate positions of power, leadership, and agenda-setting posts, while civilians carry out administrative work in branches under the authority of military personnel. The percentage of Alawites among managers and heads of departments is approximately 70%, whereas the remainder belong to other sects. Recruits in the Syrian Army are selected to go to the directorate and tasked with guarding and protecting administrative workers.[6]

Structure of the General Intelligence Directorate

1. **Director of the GIC**: Appointed by Presidential Decree, the current director is Major General Mohammed Dib Zaitoun, who was appointed by Presidential Decree in 2012 following the tenure of Major General Ali Mamlouk, who was then appointed president of the NSB.

2. **Deputies to the GIC Director**: There are multiple deputies working under the GIC Director, each of which is appointed by decree and his or her powers, specializations, and rights, and duties are determined by a resolution issued by the director. Current deputies include Major Generals Mohammed Khalouf and Zuhair al-Hamad.

3. **Information Branch 255**: This branch is tasked with obtaining all political, economic, and social information and to monitor the religious, partisan, and media sectors. Information is collected to this branch from the other central branches, provincial branches, and other sources. This information is then archived and utilized by GIC. Thereafter, resolutions are issued such as travel bans and ordering the "arrest" of citizens whom the directorate's branches have incriminated.

4. **Investigative Branch 285**: This is a central branch that specializes in investigating transmitted information from branches, sources, and agents. Most detainees arrested by provincial branches are referred to Branch 285 after they have been questioned by investigation departments. It has become customary that the president of this branch, as well as most of the investigators in it, are Alawite.

5. **Counter-Terrorism Branch 295**: Otherwise known as the Najha Branch, this branch specializes in dispatching consignments of volunteers to work on behalf of the GIC. Additionally, the branch trains individuals within the GIC (namely military personnel) in military and security sciences, works on increasing their levels of fitness and physical capabilities, and trains them to carry out their main missions of raiding, kidnapping, assassinating, and counterterrorism. This branch was among the first that the GIC relied upon to suppress the protest movement in Daraa and Baniyas.

6. **Counter-Espionage Branch 300**: This branch specializes in keeping tabs on foreigners and those suspected of working with foreign actors. This branch also surveils government and private institutions that work abroad and observes the work and relationships of

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[6] Detailing the Security Services in Syria and Their History, Press Net. For more, review the following link: http://www.akhbarboom.com/archives/26823

political parties and politicians. This branch has a working relationship with the Technical Branch as well as the telecom company SyriaTel, which is owned by Rami Makhlouf.

7. **External Branch 279**: This branch is tasked with managing the external intelligence stations in embassies and consulates around the world. It investigates incoming information that pertains to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and any other ministries that carry out foreign missions and deployments. Moreover, the branch closely monitors and surveils Syrian expatriate citizens and all of their political and social activities.

8. **Technical Branch 280**: This branch is authorized to conduct eavesdropping, communications jamming, and technical surveillance missions. It also helps other branches with all of their technical support needs and carries out engineering, electrical, and mechanical works in the GIC and its branches. Its most important departments include wired and wireless communication equipment, computers, intelligence gathering, mail monitoring, encryption, internet, the Ghadir Project, and the satellite jamming project.

9. **Internal Branch 251**: This is the name of the GIC branch in the capital Damascus, and is responsible for counter-intelligence work within Syria, particularly in Damascus and its suburb. The branch has an essential role in appointing government officials, presidents of unions and chambers of commerce, general managers of public corporations, university staff and heads, party trustees, as well as the appointment of key government positions in all divisions and ministries. Furthermore, it has become customary for the president of this branch to be exclusively Alawite. Former presidents include Bahjat Sulaiman, Mohammed Nasif, and Tawfik Younis and, currently, Ahmed Dib serves as the branch's president. The branch houses a department known as Department 40, which is, based on its powers and engagements, considered to be a total directorate, the management of which has long been run by Hafez Mahklouf.

10. **Training (or Ghouta 290) Branch**: It is authorized to run all training programs that aim to improve the GIC's staff knowledge and skills relating to either theoretical security sciences, management, technology, or technical training.

11. **Economic Branch 260**: This branch monitors and investigates all economic and administrative activities by citizens, private companies, institutions, commissions, or publicly-owned corporations.

12. **Branch 111**: Reports to the GIC director's office, and organizes all affairs directly supervised by the director and is involved in all other branches' matters. Most of those employed in this branch are Alawite.

13. **GIC Provincial Branches**: These branches are located in the different provinces and given a three-digit number, each of which contains departments analogous to those of the central branches in Damascus. These branches have the same competencies as their central counterparts and perform the same work, however within the confines of their province. Every branch operates and oversees divisions, departments and sub-units scattered throughout their province, as each town or village has a security officer who is responsible for it, conducts security studies, and is tasked with calling on other security

branches. In this way, the GIC oversees every region and comprises thousands of agents, informants, and delegates in every city, village, as well as public and private institutions.[7]

3. Military Intelligence Directorate (MID)

The Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense administratively, financially, and in terms of obtaining armaments. However, the Minister does not have any authority over it. Conversely, the MID is involved with appointing the Minister of Defense, his deputies, chiefs of staff, and dictates the transfer of army officers and personnel. Meanwhile, the MID's chief is appointed by the president. Upon its establishment, the MID was made responsible for military units, borders, as well as the security of officers, personnel, and military installations. The Chief of the MID is currently Mohammad Mahla, who was appointed in 2015 following his predecessor Rafiq Shahadah's tenure.

The MID, which is considered to be the Syrian Army and Armed Forces' security division in society, goes by the motto "safeguarding the principles and values of the establishment," which it uses as a pretext to instill an ethos that "Assad's army is sacred." At the same time, this approach is used to justify its role as an overseer and partner of other security services in their efforts to police local activity via determinants that bolster the regime's authority. The directorate's officers – the majority of which herald from a variety of different military units – are tasked with monitoring the behaviors of military personnel based on standards of loyalty and adherence to the regime's command. The MID also constantly investigates any potential reform initiatives that may be carried out by commissioned or non-commissioned officer ranks, volunteers, and conscripts.

Structure of the Military Intelligence Directorate

First: Central Branches operating in Damascus:[8]

1. **Branch 291**: This is the administrative affairs branch, also known as the Personnel or Headquarters Branch. Several functions are assigned to the branch relating to the MID's activities, central archive, human resources files and reports, as well as monitoring the performance of MID itself to prevent any breaches from within. The self-assessment of MID by this branch plays a significant yet supplementary role in the promotion, demotion, expulsion, or transfer of employees within MID.

2. **Branch 293**: This branch is responsible for Officers' affairs and security. From a practical perspective, it functions and acts as a security network/bureau on its own and not necessarily as a branch of MID. The branch handles evaluation and surveillance issues and monitors all army officers. Moreover, the branch plays an essential role in promoting, removing, and transferring army officers and appointing them to their

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[7] The Syrian Security Services: General Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and Political Security, Unpublished Essay by Omran Center, December 2013; Summary of a group of meetings carried out by the researcher with a group of deserters from the security services in April 2016.
[8] Ibid.

departments. The branch chief has the ability to directly contact the President of the republic and submit reports directly to him.

3. **Branch 294** (Security Forces Branch): Tasked with surveilling the operation and movement of armed divisions as well as all armed forces (with the exception of the Air Force and Air Defense). This branch handles records of military bases and units, as well as artillery divisions and their levels of combat readiness and loyalty. Security officers in charge of military units are more loyal to this branch than their military units's leadership. It is should be mentioned that all moves by army units must be approved, and coordinated by this branch. Finally, it assumes a supervisory power over military police and its divisions that are attached to military units and divisions.

4. **Branch 235** (Palestine Branch): This is one of the oldest and most important branches in the MID. Branch 235 is tasked with (both domestic and foreign) responsibilities equal in size to those of an entire intelligence directorate. While the branch is supposed to concentrate on countering threats by Israel and specializing in matters related to Palestinian organizations both domestically and abroad, its responsibilities have expanded significantly to include pursuing and infiltrating Islamic organizations, as well as trying to steer and control them through its own counter-terrorism department. This branch is also specialized in surveilling Palestinian refugees located in Syria. In fact, a sub-unit of the branch called the Commando Officers Unit specializes specifically in Palestinian Liberation Army affairs as well as those of armed Palestinian movements that are officially stationed in Syria (these include the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) founded by Ahmed Jibril).

5. **Information Branch**: This branch focuses on data gathering and evaluation of all affairs relating to MID's work and prepares different studies and reports related to this effort. The branch comprises many different departments, including a department for religions and political parties. It surveils local and international audio, visual, written, and internet media activity, and also works directly and indirectly with media outlets on matters of interest to the MID.

6. **Branch 211**: This is named the "Signals Branch", and is responsible for monitoring the army and security services' wireless signals and encrypting them. The branch is also tasked with conducting technical surveys and wiretapping.

7. **The Computer Branch**: This branch specializes in computer- and internet-related services. Its tasks include surveilling the internet, monitoring all virtual activity, intervening in hacker activity, and blocking or unblocking websites.

8. **Branch 225** (Communications Branch): This branch surveils all wired and wireless communication lines in the army and armed forces. It also supervises and follows up on the implementation of all communications projects in the country.

9. **Branch 248** (Military Investigations Branch): This branch is like the MID's primary investigations commission for military security and considered to be the second worst branch in the MID – after the Palestine Branch – with regards to violations.

10. **Branch 215**: This branch is also known as the raids and forced entry commandos. It differs from all other branches in that it comprises about 4,000 personnel trained in all varieties of skills utilized by Special Forces, including raiding, assassinating, kidnapping, and arresting wanted individuals.

11. **Patrols Branch**: This branch conducts all central and peripheral leadership orders and directives regarding field security duties.

12. **Quneitra Intelligence Branch**: Also known as Sa'sa' Branc: It specializes in intelligence affairs in the occupied Golan Heights and PFLP forces. The branch also monitors the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) active in this area.

Second: Provincial Branches: These branches are spread throughout each province and, depending on the need, may have sub-departments, divisions and units in each administrative district of the province. Each branch is assigned a number.

A noteworthy and important observation in the MID is that approximately 80% of commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers, and personnel are Alawites, and the majority of them are commissioned by army units to MID with the exception of some conscripts who are assigned duties such as guards, gatekeepers, and raiding targeted sites[9]. The MID is also in charge of the military intelligence school, which trains MID volunteers and personnel[10].

4. Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFID)

The Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFID) was established during the early days when Hafez al-Assad took office and remains the regime's most loyal state body. It is famous for possessing the strongest manpower and best technical skills of all of the security directorates. AFID contains the lowest percentage of non-Alawite officers compared to other directorates. While AFID is theoretically subordinate to the Ministry of Defense in terms of its administration, finances, and armaments acquisition, the Minister of Defense does not have any authority over it. On the contrary, AFID, along with the MID, oversees the Minister's work and has an important role in his appointment. Major General Mohammed al-Khuli has remained AFID's head for a long period of time after Hafez al-Assad relied on him during security operations against his opponents after seizing power. This directorate's main responsibility is to protect the Syrian Air Force, the president's airplane, and to provide security when he is outside of the country.[11]

Structure of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate

AFID contains six subordinate branches in Damascus, its own investigations branch, and six branches in the provinces **[12]**:

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[9] Report on the Syrian intelligence services published by *The Syrian Encyclopedia: A Deep-Rooted Past and an Honorable Future*. Link: http://goo.gl/nmKayu

[10] It must be noted that there are no precise statistics. This number was adopted based on estimates from deserters met with by the researcher in April 2016.

[11] Syrian Security Services, Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

1. **Administrative Branch**: This branch is tasked with safeguarding all of AFID employee records. It also surveils its staff to prevent any security breach within it. It also has a role in the promotion, removal or transfer of employees within the directorate.

2. **Information Branch**: Specializing in the directorate's general information gathering and conducting various studies. This branch houses many departments, including the departments of religion and political parties. It surveils local and international audio, video, written, and internet media activity, and works directly and indirectly with media outlets concerning matters of interest to AFID.

3. **Investigation Branch**: This operates in the capacity of the AFID's primary investigation commission, and is infamous for being the worst branch in committing torture and other atrocious violations.

4. **Airport Branch**: Located at the Mezzeh Airport, and is responsible for Presidential Airport security as well as the President's airplane. Inside sources indicate that this branch is also responsible for intelligence missions related to the personal security of the president during his travels abroad.

5. **Operations Branch**: Responsible for AFID's domestic and international operations, including those related to the Air Force weaponry that require extensive foreign intelligence efforts. This branch coordinates with the Airport Branch when performing foreign intelligence operations related to the president's security while he is in transit. Its agents are usually stationed at Syrian Airlines offices abroad.

6. **Special Operations Branch**: This branch has a significant, widespread presence in all of Syria's provinces in the form of departments. It performs combat operations with the help of requested units from the Air Defense, Air Force, military airbases, and even civilian airports, including the deployment of necessary weapons, munitions, and aircrafts.

7. **Provincial Branches**: There are six branches in the different provinces covering all of Syria. They include:

    a) Regional Branch: Covers Damascus and its suburbs with headquarters in Damascus.

    b) Southern Region Branch: Covers Daraa, al-Quneitra, and al-Suwayda with headquarters in Damascus.

    c) Central Region Branch: Covers Homs and Hama with headquarters in Homs.

    d) Northern Region Branch: Covers Aleppo and Idlib with headquarters in Aleppo city.

    e) Eastern Region Branch: Covers Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa, and Hassakeh with headquarters in Deir ez-Zor.

    f) Coastal Region Branch: Covers Latakia and Tartus with headquarters in Latakia.

These branches each have corresponding departments spreading throughout provinces that do not house a main headquarters. They also have other departments and sub-units in other regions and administrative districts and villages according to the need.

5. Political Security Directorate (PSD)

While the Political Security Directorate (PSD) financially and administratively falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, but it does not report to it in terms of its professional performance. Furthermore, PSD has a supervisory authority over the Minister of Interior, his officers and staff including all police units. In other words, it is practically independent in that it can communicate directly with the President. Indeed, this directorate is the most pervasive in society, interacts the most with civilians, is most widespread among citizens, and spans the entire country and all segments of society. Moreover, the directorate carries out copious exchanges with civilians, demanding work and construction permits approved by PSD, which has a vast reservoir of the regime's information about citizens. This drives PSD officers and personnel to exploit their influence, accept bribes, and impose "tribute" on citizens on a massive scale. PSD officers and personnel are chosen by the Ministry of Interior, with the exception of the PSD head, who is appointed by a Presidential Decree. Major Generals Adnan Badr Hassan, Ghazi Kanaan, and Mohammed Dib Zaitoun are among the most prominent of PSD's former chiefs. Currently, the Druze Major General Nazih Hassoun, who was appointed following the tenure of his predecessor Rustum Ghazali, serves as PSD president.

It has become customary for the PSD president to come from the security or military services' leadership. Unlike its counterparts, the directorate is more of an administrative apparatus than a fieldwork civilian one in that it, to a large extent, serves an administrative intelligence role. Its responsibilities are entirely domestic in that it does not carry out any activities abroad like other directorates (with the exception of the Arab and Foreign Affairs Branch, which monitors Arabs and foreigners within the country). The directorate's provincial branches are named after the provinces themselves (for example, the Political Security Branch of the Damascus Suburbs) instead of being assigned a three-digit number.[13]

Structure of the Political Security Directorate

The directorate is made up of a number of branches in Damascus as well as the following branches located in the rest of the provinces: [14]

1. **Police Security Branch**: This branch handles all records pertaining to the directorate's workers and conducts surveillance on them to prevent any internal breaches. It also plays a role in promoting, removing, and transferring PSD personnel. Of note, this branch also has files on all personnel of all ranks and functions working in the Ministry of Interior.

2. **Information Branch**: This branch serves as a collection hub for all information and studies from other central and provincial branches. It consists of a number of different departments, including an espionage department and a department for students that concentrates on attendees and managements of universities, institutes, schools, and kindergartens. It surveils local and international audio, visual, written, and internet media activity. It also works directly and indirectly with media outlets concerning matters of interest to the PSD.

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

3. **Investigations Branch**: This branch functions much like the PSD's primary investigations authority. Central branches and those from other provinces hand detainees over to it who have committed crimes deemed serious by the regime.

4. **Patrols and Surveillance Branch**: Employing a large number of personnel, this branch is tasked with carrying out patrols in Damascus and its suburbs. The branch conducts raids, makes arrests, and supports provincial branches when assigned.

5. **Parties and Entities Branch**: This branch monitors the activities of political parties deemed "friendly," which include the Ba'ath Party and even some opposition and hostile parties. Additionally, the branch monitors all political opposition activity and so-called terrorist groups, surveils mosques, churches, and all religious activities and functions, and grants permits to imams, preachers, mosque servants, and religious teachers. Moreover, it issues licenses to charitable and civic organizations and surveils both pro- and anti-regime meetings, conferences, and celebrations.

6. **Economic Security Branch**: All information relating to public, private, and joint public-private economic ventures and activities collected by provincial branches is funneled to this branch, which also monitors all government departments. Additionally, it submits periodic presentations to the President of the Republic on economic activities and indicators. It archives information on employees who have been arrested for work-related reasons, and surveils employees' religious lives.

7. **Correspondence Records Branch**: This branch receives correspondence from all branches, departments, and other bodies and redirects them to intended recipients after PSD president's review.

8. **Arab and Foreign Affairs Branch**: All information related to foreigners and Arabs in Syria is handled by this branch. It receives and processes reports from outside of the country. It specializes in granting approvals for residence permits of foreigners as well as approving and monitoring their economic and social activity in Syria.

9. **Information Systems Branch**: It houses the physical and digital personal records on all Syrian citizens, Arabs, and foreigners gathered by the central and provincial branches.

10. **Administrative Affairs Branch**: Coordinating with the Ministry of Interior, this branch is tasked with fulfilling the central and provincial branches' needs of weapons, munitions, equipment, furniture, facilities, and purchases.

11. **Signals Branch**: This branch is tasked with the fulfillment of requests for the procurement of different types of wired and wireless communication devices for all branches, while also surveilling communications within the PSD and Ministry of Interior.

12. **Vehicles Branch**: This branch is tasked with fulfilling the requests of all other branches for vehicles and its attachments.

13. **Provincial Branches**: The PSD has a branch in each of the 13 provinces, except for al-Quneitra Province, which is covered by the Damascus Suburbs Branch that has a department called the "Quneitra Department." Each of these branches also has sub-departments and divisions located throughout Syria in every administrative district. This

enables it to provide security for the entire country and monitor all citizens. The branch's departments and divisions recruit citizen informants from the general population who operate in their respective areas of residence. Informants submit their reports to their respective department or division that in turn archives and organizes it then forwards to the specialized branch in the province.

It is worth mentioning that most of those who belong to the PSD are graduates of police academies and colleges and interact directly with citizens to conduct special reports and studies. The percentage of Alawites in the PSD and its branches is less than their percentage in other directorates according to estimates by PSD defectors.

The Regime's Military-Security Networks

The ruling regime has assigned the task of security strategies oversight to certain military units that profess absolute loyalty to the regime primarily as a result of special arrangements followed in the recruitment of its human resources by relying mostly on Alawites, as well as the nature of tasks assigned to them including inter-agency and intra-agency oversight. The regime also grants these units unrestricted powers to firmly put in check aspects relating to criminal and societal security that are not within the jurisdiction of the traditional official police force. One can assess the regime's security policy by closely analyzing these networks that were mastered and attached directly to the regime. The most important units include:[15]

First: Republican Guard

The Syrian Republican Guard Forces (RG) are considered the most prominent of the Syrian Army's elite divisions as well as its most heavily armed. Their main task is to protect the capital from any internal or external threats. Thus, they are the only military unit allowed to enter Damascus.

Confirmed information on the RG is scarce, however some reports indicate that they are distinguished by their strong armaments. Furthermore, they are composed of nearly 10,000 soldiers spread throughout several different brigades and its officers are given a portion of Syrian oil revenues to maintain their loyalty. The establishment of the RG dates back to the end of the 1970s after armed clashes broke out in Hama and Aleppo between Hafez al-Assad's regime and his Muslim Brotherhood opponents.[16]

The RG maintain a high degree of Bashar al-Assad's confidence, as he has pursued the same approach as his father in terms of appointing leadership positions of its brigades and regiments to members of specific Alawite families in Syria. For instance, at present, Major General Bassam al-Hassan heads the RG, which are tasked primarily with protecting Damascus City and preventing any local or foreign forces opposed to the regime from evolving within the city. The RG also dictates security rules and relationship schemes that govern inter-branch engagements as well as the relationship between citizens and the regime on the other hand. It

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[15] Interview conducted by the author with Kheder Khaddour, a non-resident researcher from the Carnegie Center on the topic of the security services in Syria and the requisite reform process, 30 April 2016.
[16] Syrian Republican Guard, Report published on Al Jazeera Net. Link: http://goo.gl/QPFtYE

is also considered to be the official state body responsible for the coordination of military and militia activities in Syria after the outbreak of the uprising, including the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Shiite Iraqi militias.[17]

As the RG's leadership is considered among the most prominent leaders nationally, its forces has intervened and thwarted serious threats and societal security risks including the Kurdish Uprising in 2004, the Alawite-Ismaili clashes in 2005, as well as Druze-Bedouin conflict in 2001. The RG forces are organized with several regiments and brigades operating independently but report administratively to the leadership of the RG. Its units and divisions are known with names and numbers ranging from 101-106. The most prominent include the following:[18]

- ➢ Security Bureau, led by Brigadier General Bassam Merhej.
- ➢ 101 Security Regiment: Most of its leadership is from the Khair Baik family.
- ➢ 104 Airborne Regiment: Directed towards the Presidential Palace in Damascus.
- ➢ 105 Regiment: Known as the president's lounge, as it was led first by Bassel al-Assad, then Bashar al-Assad, and then Manaf Tlas led it until his withdrawal from the army.

Perhaps the most important reasons behind the strength and cohesive nature of the RG that binds its forces together (which some security experts see as capable of carrying out a bloodless coup) are the following:

1. The Alawite connection, which serves as the only guarantor of the RG and the regime's continuity.
2. Internal competitiveness.
3. Departments tasked with surveilling one another.
4. Direct lines of communication to the President.
5. Maintaining the processes of appointing of dismissing RG's leadership exclusively within the mandate of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces (Bashar al-Assad).

Second: The 4th Armored Division

This a division of the Syrian Army subordinate to the First Corps. It receives special training and support to make it the regime's strategic safeguard. It was founded during the rule of Hafez al-Assad when his brother Rifaat, who led the "Defense Companies" responsible for the Hama massacres in 1982, established it. The Defense Companies were later integrated and merged into the Division after Rifaat was "exiled" in 1984.

According to French media sources, the 4th Armored Division consists of 15,000 fighters, the vast majority of which are Alawite. Moreover, the division is considered to be among the top

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Interview with researcher Kheder Khaddour, op. cit.

units of the Syrian Army in terms of training and artillery, possessing the most up-to-date heavy weaponry, such as Russian T-72 Tanks.

The Division is made up of several brigades and regiments with headquarters at the main gateways of Damascus. The 555th Paratrooper Regiment led by Brigadier General Jamal Yunes, the 154th Regiment led by Brigadier General Jawdat Ibrahim Safi, the 40th Armored Brigade, and the 138th Infantry Brigade are all stationed in Muadamiyat. Zabadani, on the other hand, is home to the following battalions: military police, chemistry, engineering, monitoring, and training camp. Meanwhile, the 41st Armored Brigade is stationed in Yaafour and the 42nd Brigade is located in al-Sabboura.[19] It should be noted here that all leaders of these brigades and regiments are Alawite.[20] The 4th Armored Division's forces' most important responsibilities and security functions include:

- Nominating officers to be commissioned at security directorates according the criteria of possessing absolute loyalty to the regime and sectarian identity.

- Providing the Military and Air Force Colleges with a special list of names of people to be admitted. For the most part, this list primarily favors members of the 4th Armored Division and secondly serving members of other security agencies. This process is carried out in coordination with Branch 293 (Officers Affairs).

- The 4th Armored Division's Security Office, which is headed by Brigadier General Ghassan Bilal (Maher al-Assad's chief of staff), regularly coordinates with all other security directorates and directly examines any security incidents in the country's provinces. The bureau also sends reports from its sources and officers to the main security agencies for them to take necessary action and notify the bureau as to what measures are being taken.

- The Security Office carries out investigations in all sensitive cases that directly threaten the cohesion of the security network or pose a risk to top regime officials.

- The division has a major role in the appointment of security branch chiefs, particularly those in Damascus.

To complete this summary, it should be noted that the 4th Armored Division is the only power whose responsibilities are limited to areas outside of Damascus. Its headquarters is located in as-Sabboura and it is not permitted to enter the capital, which stems from the concept of military sectors organizational structure with assigned responsibilities. Currently, Brigadier General Maher al-Assad leads the division and most of its officers are connected in some way to the RG, Ministry of Defense, Officers' Affairs Bureau, and the Officers Branch.

Third: Tiger Forces (cross-military and security unit forces):

The "Tiger Forces" is a cross-agency special unit that intersects through military and security agencies. It is structured with three main elements: security and military core, volunteer and recruited Alawite manpower, and a customized administrative framework (Ministry of

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Overview of the Essence of the 4th Armored Division in Syria, Visual Report on Al-Arabiya.Net. Link: http://goo.gl/zvNEVg

Defense) with an unrestricted authority to freely operate. This force has a wide margin of action and was formed to carry out a number of military and security duties, which include:

1. Quickly intervening and responding to security changes and developments. The nature of these forces allows it to make decisions without the military establishment bureaucracy. Its forces are flexible, capable and have broad powers to act.

2. Eliminating any risks or security threats against the Alawites and their spheres of influence in collaboration with military units and militias stationed nearby.

3. Providing assurances to Alawites with the active presence of Alawite Tiger Forces, thus blocking any attempt or intention to mobilize any opposition within the sect.

The Tiger Forces were formed as an alliance between AFID, the army, and the 4th Armored Division in 2013. They receive clear social support from most Alawites, funding from Rami Makhlouf's Bustan Association, and coverage from state media outlets. Led by Brigadier General Suheil Al Hassan, the Tiger Forces enjoy a wide range of authorities and powers, including the ability to mobilize all state institutions – including civilian and military airports – to carry out their duties. Tiger forces have intervened in most areas of military conflict, including the Damascus Suburbs, Hama, Idlib, Homs, or the Latakia suburbs.[21]

Auxiliary Agencies

These are a group of official state agencies already existing or recently formed for the purpose of blocking and curtailing the revolutionary movement's work and supporting central agencies with updated and accurate information. The presence of these agencies is indicative of the transformation and deployment of executive branch institutions to serve the interests of the regime and its security agencies of infiltrating and weakening revolutionary forces and push it to change coarse away from its intended objectives. Some of these agencies and bodies include:[22]

1. Communications Directorate (CD)

This directorate was formed in early 2011 after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising. It is closer to being a special task force comprised of: Landline and Cellular Communications Surveillance Branch (known as Branch 225 of the MID), Signals Branch 211, Technical Branch from the GID, and other technical branches in other directorates, in addition to al-Ghadeer Project that is under Iranian Management. All wiretapping and jamming projects stationed in different directorates were also merged into this directorate.

Its primary mission is to surveil all landline and cellular communications, internet, and television programs concerning topics on the revolutionary movement. The directorate also furnishes other security agencies with information collected from monitored communications, grants licenses for importing communication devices, and resolves conflicts between different

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[21] For more official media coverage, review the following like, which is made up of posts for all news on its military movements:
http://goo.gl/wf8hrh
[22] Syrian Security Apparatuses, Ibid.

directorates. It is also clearly noted that most recruits to this newly formed directorate are Alawite.

2. Security Units in the Ministry of Interior

Since the start of the uprising, all personnel and employees in the Ministry of Interior have been enlisted as informants for the PID.[23] Furthermore, the ministry was tasked with the responsibility of helping and aiding some security branches by making arrests, conducting raids, and breaking up sit-ins by force of arms.

3. Political Party Services (Ba'ath Party)

These are divisions, sections, and branches of the Ba'ath Party spread throughout Syria and tasked with collecting security-related information and reports and providing it to the security directorates and the NSB. The regulated deployment of Ba'ath Party leaders and members in society helps the regime control all social activities and trends, particularly by granting the party complete powers of oversight, coordination, and surveillance over its auxiliary grassroots organizations, such as the Revolutionary Youth Union, the Students Union, the Workers' Unions, and the like.

4. Security Officers Stationed with Military Units

In every military unit, from the corps, directorates, and divisions, to the smallest military unit, there is a security services officer who is stationed there to secretly surveil everything that occurs within his unit among his officer colleagues, his superiors, subordinates, and even their families and civilian acquaintances. The deployed officers submits reports pertaining to the simplest matters of everyday affairs to the MID or the AFID so that they, in turn, can investigate the issue further. Most of the time, the MID and AFID carry out their measures without verifying the credibility of the information in such reports.

5. National Defense Forces and People's Committees

After the spark of the Syrian uprising, the Syrian regime, with direction from Iran and coordination with the RG, resorted to forming so-called National Defense Forces or People's Committees, which transformed during the crisis from military bodies to auxiliary security institutions with their own special prisons and investigation commissions. These groups are essentially an army of mercenaries, crime lords, and unemployed citizens who have been hired to fight alongside the army and the security services. These individuals enrolled in the National Defense / People's Committees not out of belief or faith, but to earn an illegal livelihood by carrying out theft, looting, blackmailing, and kidnapping. In addition to their work as informants for the army and security services, most of the time the information they provide is

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[23] As of 2011, number of personnel in the internal security forces is approximately 78,000; 66,207 personnel and 11,995 officers and noncommissioned officers. The number commissioned officers was about 2,000. This number does not take into account the number of recruits in the Syrian Army, who were then distributed by the Ministry of Interior to be used in brigades, battalions, and units that protected security, the regime, and carried out special missions. The number also does not factor in doctors and nurses working in the Ministry of Interior's health facilities, as well as personnel of the Ministry itself spread out among 15 directorates, 14 police leaderships, 64 regions, and 280 districts. These statistics were obtained through the researcher's meetings with administrative defectors from the Ministry in April 2016.

frivolous and sectarian, the goal of which is to prove their loyalty to Assad. These reports cannot be contested by other agencies and are rather taken as is and used as bases for random arrests and even murders.

Based on what has been previously mentioned, it is noticed that all of the Syrian state's facilities and institutions during Assad's rule are essentially at the disposal and control of the security services directorates that serve the President's interests, other individual interests, or both at the same time.

Evaluation of Security Performance in Syria

The abuses and violations committed by Syrian security agencies have mounted on all levels: socially, economically and politically to the extent it has become a systematic and a well-known culture and practice expected by all security officers and agencies. These abuses can be categorized on five levels, all of which create a climate of suppression and corruption in society. These levels are listed below:

1. Working without a Plan

Security work has been bound by the objective of tracking "direct violations" and monitoring social and economic functions according to fluid standards not regulated by any specific legal foundation. Furthermore, upon examining duties and performance outcomes of security agencies it becomes clear there is no indication of any strategic plan on all levels:

- **Planning**: Upon observing the dynamics of security agencies' work, there isn't any linear course of action that it follows, except for the further empowerment of the regime. There is no official assessment of the real power possessed by directorates, but in fact there is an exaggeration of the tasks and responsibilities of those institutions. There is no objective needs assessment study that every directorate conducts according to industry standards relating to objectives and capacities. Security work is rather closely linked with militarizing the civilian population to turn them into security agents and informants, which in turn made these agencies a locus of concealed unemployment.

- **Strategic Goals**: Security services and networks are generally limited to fulfil two goals: The first is connected with the regime's expectations and objectives mentioned above, while the second involves violent intervention in matters of societal security in order to control its parameters and not solve its problems. Several great strategic objectives are absent from current security practice, such as:

  1. Maintaining citizens' identity and civic work.

  2. Promoting dialogue among civilian sectors.

  3. Economic security.

  4. Developing security work.

  5. Constructing a cohesive security sector.

- **Human Resources**: Training and development programs are limited to improving physical capabilities of personnel, criminology and technology education, as well as the indoctrination with the ideology of the Ba'ath Party (One leader and leading party). What the programs lack, however, are sessions that help boost the competency of security personnel either in the field of security sciences and its modern instruments and methods, or increase the level of education and familiarity with the legal system, or help build balanced relationships with the security sector.

- **Budgets**: Because of the absence of any clear supervisory or oversight authority, nowhere can anyone find the basis for the budget's preparation and its sections and components as well as its calculation methods, and its consistency with the overall national economic conditions. This further reinforces assessment theories regarding these agencies on the lack of transparency, monitoring or evaluation mechanisms.

2. Legalizing Violations and Repression

Several "laws" have been coached into society's public awareness that have been derived from the security services' collective practice and culture, from its detainment procedures, to its investigations and accompanying inhumane methods used to extract confessions, and to its abuses of detainees. These practices were legalized and normalized, particularly after the power structure was consolidated during the events of the 1980s through practices that were engaged in by individuals and adopted by the security establishment as a whole. The most significant elements of this culture include:

- Giving security agencies open-ended authority to apprehend, search, investigate, interrogate, detain, wiretap, and arrest under martial law any citizen without receiving an approval by the judicial authority. In other words, the agencies' power is not restricted when carrying out these operations and no branch or department has to abide by the set legal time limit when holding or detaining citizens. Accordingly, a detainee can be imprisoned for several months or years without ever appearing before a judge.

- Depriving citizens their right to request a ruling from the judiciary on the legitimacy of an arrest, blocking the right to defend detainees or appoint a lawyer during their detainment by the security services, barring detainees from knowing their fate, the charges against them, and not allowing them visitations or even knowing why they were arrested.

- Security agencies regularly exceed the legal authorities and jurisdiction stipulated by existing laws that established those agencies, and interfere in areas out of its authority of jurisdiction. An example is there interference of Military Security Directorate in the lives of civilians in matters not related to military affairs, as well as with regards to opposition movements and parties. Security agencies pressure all pro-regime political parties as well as neutral parties, and target members of opposition parties.

- Security agencies often submit requests to wiretap communications of any person or entity without abiding by legal boundaries. Any agency or directorate can wiretap any person, even if the reason is personal. Secret surveillance operations of suspects, and the

video and sound clips resulting from such action, could be leaked or accessed by dishonest individuals within the security services.

- The absence of effective oversight of security officials' work leads to major abuses being committed often resulting in the death of detainees, rape incidents, and the killing of detainees without any inquiry as to the reasons for such incidents.

- Security agencies arrest thousands of Syrians for unknown reasons, the majority of which are never handed over to the judiciary for many months. Instead they are handed over to military and counter-terrorism courts. Furthermore, there are thousands of detainees who died under torture in regime prisons.

3. Instituting Sectarianism within the Security Structures

Security agencies' heads and commissioned officers are appointed on a sectarian and confessional basis so as to preserve power within those groups. For example, the majority of personnel and officers in AFID are Alawite, and the majority of officers and key personnel in critical departments and divisions of other security directorates are Alawites. On a secondary level, other minorities are also disproportionately appointed to key influential positions. Loyalty, rather than competence, remains the main basis for appointments. There are nonetheless sensitive positions within the security services that must remain dominated by Alawites, such as Branch 251, which is the internal branch in the GID. This also goes for the MID's Branch 293 and the SID's Investigation Branch. In fact, it has been impossible for any non-Alawite to head any of these branches.[24]

4. Intentional Lack of Coordination across Agencies

The institutionalized practices of non-coordination across agencies resulted in officers and agents abusing their powers by exploiting private and public state institutions, facilities and resources. This lead to the incapacity of societal oversight, the restriction of any public engagement, and the forced nonparticipation of citizens. On the other hand, the decentralized nature of security related decision making processes such as investigating and detaining, makes citizens liable for questioning on the same matter at multiple security branches, effectively crippling any societal movement with a prevailing security culture.

5. Exploiting Authority and Spreading Corruption

The constant interference of security agencies in the work of the police force, anti-drug units, and all other institutions including civilian and service providing bureaus as well as the judiciary has contributed to the wide spread phenomenon of "blatant encroachment" by these agencies on the power and authority of both governmental and private institutions for personal interests not related to intelligence work. This has also contributed to the propagation of practices that result in personal gains and material benefits while turning a blind eye to administrative, professional, and even penal crimes. At the same time, this conduct has

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[24] See the supplement published by Hicham Bou Nassif in his study: "The Oppression of Sunni Officers in the Syrian Armed Forces: Second-Class Officers," May 2016, *Al Jumhuriya* website. Link: http://aljumhuriya.net/34927

deepened the culture of favoritism, malicious informant reporting, and led security personnel to exploit their authority that is sanctioned by the regime, namely to blackmail businessmen, manufacturers, and investors. All of these actions stem from a lack of an oversight authority over security personnel and restricting any disciplinary actions to internal procedures dependent on the discretion of their superior officers. It should also be noted that procurement contracts for the purchase of technical equipment needed by security agencies is done secretly without government supervision through deals between officers and security agents with domestic or foreign entities. This makes corruption and embezzlement ever present and unavoidable, while cases of security information leaks for the purpose of blackmail and direct material benefit have increased due to lack of respect for confidentiality within security service departments.

II. The Need for Structural and Functional Change

Causes and Results of Deficiency

Over the past few decades, the Syrian security services have been the "big stick" in the hand of the regime and have been used, from the beginning, to deepen its authority, dominate the country, and eliminate its opponents. They have earned the terrifying reputation as **the first guarantors of government stability**. As a result of the role they have played in strengthening and protecting the President rule, they have gone on to significantly expand their powers by interfering in all aspects of social, economic, political, and religious life. This also has spread corruption, favoritism, and illegitimate wealth accumulation throughout the security services' different detachments, turning them into a distinguished social class apart from the rest of society. Consequently, what makes the security services deficient is **their prevailing work philosophy** and **security doctrine**, which serves the needs of the ruler more than those of the ruled.

There are two main sources of the security service's failings and aberrations that can be identified. The first source lies in their complex and deeply invasive structure, which has helped curb the societal activities and limited its ability to advance and develop. The second source pertains to their fluid and unrestricted functioning mechanisms, except when it pertains to the duty of protecting and preserving the regime stability.

Other reasons behind the deviation of the security agencies in Syria from fulfilling their objectives, includes the following:

- The security agencies corrupt doctrine, which stems from absolute loyalty to the head of the regime and the resulting poor professional performance.

- The serious overlap in the security agencies responsibilities and mandate often leads to conflicting practices and decisions in spite of there being a foundation for determining the competencies and powers of each apparatus and the tasks assigned to them.

- When facing other security services, the power and influence of a given security body is linked to the power and influence of its chief leader.

- The high level of competitiveness between security agencies and branches, the antipathy between them, and the race on surveilling one another in the service of the President.

- Rampant corruption in security agencies, particularly after they were tasked with countering smuggling operations in border areas, and its interferences in municipal affairs so as to block construction on farmland. This has led many to be directly involved in smuggling operations and dominating the public sector with regards to employment and appointments.

- The massive build-up of security agencies' assets in Syria, particularly by the MID, in a way that does not correspond to the scope and volume of responsibilities assigned.

These continual failures and defects have swelled discontent and intensified popular resentment among Syrians towards security agencies and their overarching unrestricted authority over civilian life in the past few decades. This has rendered the continuation of the security services' past structure and function impossible in the aftermath of the Syrian uprising and the policies of repression and corruption that have followed along with it. This is particularly the case ever since the security services began enlisting the Shabiha, ex-criminals, and Alawite youth to confront popular protests. In the face of this level of corruption combined with the transformations witnessed in Syria's decaying infrastructure, the collective conviction that there is no need for security services in the future has deepened.
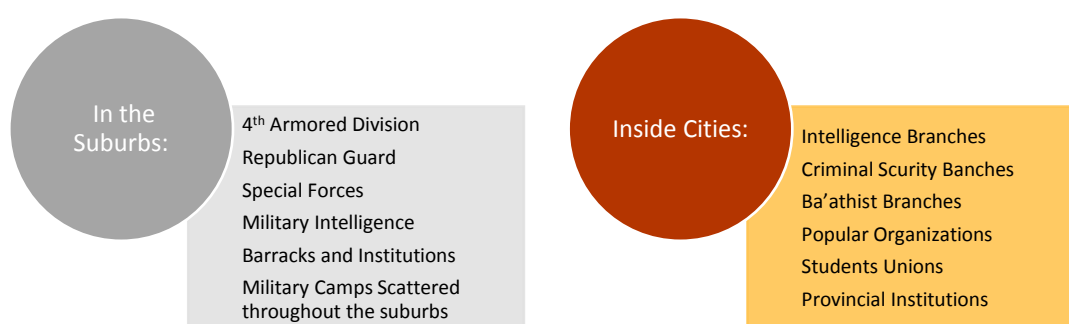
Security Agencies' Competence Check

In spite of the horizontal deployment of the military and security services on the local structural levels, as well as their violent modes of operation, the Syrian uprising has revealed a number of facts that indicate signs of failure in the agencies' professional conduct according to its own said functions. These indicators can be itemized in the following points:

1. Failure to predict the early signs of the uprising: The official narrative concerning the causes of the unrest – some of the non-political aspects of which were based on security reports that were prepared to study the causes – indicates that the security agencies were merely fulfilling service orders. The narrative held that imaginary "indicators" of unrest had been put out, which, to the security services, reinforced the theory that infiltrators were attempting to threaten public security. This reveals the depth of professional incompetence of the security services and the weakness of the tools they use to evaluate society's conditions.

2. Institutional over-expansion and the technical incompetency of its human resources: This resulted in the inability of security agencies to develop any non-violent mechanism to confront security threats and changes. From the first day of the uprising, security agencies faced groups of peaceful protesters and used excessive violence by shooting, detaining, killing, and torturing them.

3. According to "Goebbels's Theory," the process of "making an enemy" demonstrates from the very beginning the absence of any ability to engage in public affairs. In the case of Syria, it shows that the security agencies were merely fulfilling the regime's political goals at the expense of local structural unity as indicated by the claims of sectarianism and terrorism by protestors. The agencies spread fear among minority groups by propagating an Islamic narrative for the uprising where minorities will be eliminated by radical groups that were infiltrated by the regime.

4. Security agencies follow the strategy of spreading misinformation by adopting technical or detail-oriented flaws in how events are being seen by the public, or by fabricating stories and orchestrating responses to the aftermath while ignoring the real reasons behind the uprising. They even have put in place new criteria for their general security approach based on conformity with the security agencies' narrative.

5. The "I am violent, therefrom I exist" strategy: The regime realized that any flaw in its security or military calculations would move the protest movement from a controlled variable to chaos and thus defeat the government. Therefore, the military advantage is essential to control the political process. Using this strategy, security agencies pushed societal forces towards militarization of its struggle by the excessive use of force and violent repressive practices.

The "general strategy" adhered to by security networks and agencies in dealing with the uprising relied on pushing society towards their sphere of "control and influence." From this, several systematic policies have emerged to achieve this end without regard to losses of human life, tradition, economic power, and state institutions. The figure below illustrates the security agencies' geographical spread at the start of the uprising.[25]

In the Suburbs:
4th Armored Division
Republican Guard
Special Forces
Military Intelligence
Barracks and Institutions
Military Camps Scattered throughout the suburbs

Inside Cities:
Intelligence Branches
Criminal Scurity Banches
Ba'athist Branches
Popular Organizations
Students Unions
Provincial Institutions

Security agencies have also exaggerated their ability to "achieve success" by draining and exploiting other state institutions to achieve their own ends. This has thrown other state agencies into the heat of conflict with the uprising. Military and security options have only prevailed from the perspective of the political, media, and administrative agencies that justify and legitimize their actions.[26]

Media Propaganda
Political Coverage
Military and Security Action
Social Justification
Government Support

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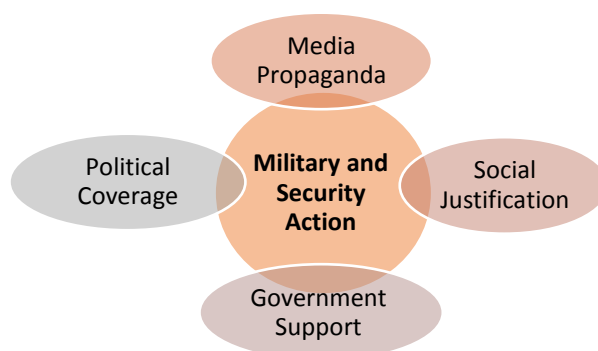
[25] Maan Talaa, *The Syrian Uprising: Beginning of the Story*, study published by the Omran Center for Strategic Studies, 22 July 2014. Link: https://goo.gl/HtXRkA
[26] Ibid.

Description Requirements

No serious study only develops visions and strategies for improving the performance of security agencies without first clearly providing answers to the primary question at hand with regards to the subject of reform and development. Does the Syrian state possess a security sector or does it merely have a group of agencies and networks that work in the regime's favor?

The notion of a security sector/system refers to a system that encompasses all of the state's institutions and other relevant bodies, and that undertake the role of ensuring the security of the state and its citizens. The most important of these bodies include:[27]

- Political security actors, such as the Armed Forces, police, gendarmerie, paramilitary forces, Republican Guard, military and security agencies, coast guard, border patrol, customs authorities, reserve forces, the internal security units.

- The security sector administration and oversight bodies, such as the parliament/legislature and its legislative committees, the executive branch, Ministry of Defense (and its national security advisory bodies), traditional and recognized authorities, financial management institutions, civil society organizations (including the media and academia), and non-government organizations.

- The judicial branch and law enforcement institutions, such as the Ministry of Justice, bureau of prisons, criminal investigations, the public prosecution, the judiciary, judicial ruling enforcement bodies, traditional and customary judicial structures, human rights committees, and complaints investigators.

- Unofficial civil society institutions, such as media institutions, research centers, influential public policy organizations, religious institutions, and the like.

Based on this definition, the Syrian state **does not possess a security sector** to be reformed. The requirement of a viable, effective, and beneficial security sector is a **key demand** during any transition process to a safe and stable state. If scrutinized closely, we will discover that security work in Syria falls into two categories:

First: Control and policing divisions: The MID and AFID are divisions of the Syrian Army and the Armed Forces, the GID is a division administered jointly by the NSB and the Ba'ath Party, whereas the PSD is a division of the Ministry of Interior.

Second: Regime Military-Security Networks: This particularly relates to the RG and 4th Armored Division, which shoulder the burden of engineering security operations, regulating their foundations and relationships, ensuring the regime's security, and carrying out all procedures and operations within society when any security threats arise.

Accordingly, the official security agencies, as well as the legal system regulating their operation– whether in terms of legitimizing or legalizing certain societal security responsibilities – are the target of the reform (or deconstruction) process. This will occur in line with clear social considerations and standards and on the basis of building a truly cohesive security sector.

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[27] Kristin Valasek, *Security Sector Reform and Gender*, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2008. Link: http://goo.gl/aeE2Oy

Learning from the Experiences of Arab Spring Countries

Despite the particularity of every country undergoing transition, the localized characteristics shared between Arab countries that have experienced widespread social unrest are numerous. At the top of this list is the concept of security and its associated institutions and formations. Demands for reforming and building a new security sector consistent with a dynamic community is a fundamental instigator behind the spread of demonstrations. In this context, the outcomes of these countries' reform processes can be derived as an objective dimension, the details and observations of which should function as lessons in reforming Syria's own security services. The process of reforming the security sector in Arab countries still faces a number of complex issues, which Yezid Sayigh, in his study on the dilemmas of reform and policing in Arab transitions, encapsulates in several topics, the most important of which are as follows:[28]

- Authoritarian regimes evolved systems of governing in the decades preceding the Arab Spring that drew most political, social, and economic actors and networks into their orbit, prompting them to adapt and accommodate.
- The dysfunction of public institutions and the worthlessness of security reform without reforming state institutions.
- The extreme fluidity of post-uprising and post-conflict transitions makes the task of reforming the security sector exceptionally difficult.
- The neglect of local and international actors, who endeavor to politicize the transition process, which serves to further undermine the state and eliminate community accord.
- The political economy dilemma with regards to vocational training, social welfare, reform costs in the security sector, and the expected outcomes of reforming job security, and the effects arising from mass-layoffs.
- The expectations about rebuilding or reforming the security sector (and the associated criminal justice system) vary based on social sectors and values, which must be taken into consideration.
- The general absence of acceptable platforms and spaces to wage peaceful politics, whether officially or unofficially.
- The focus of local governments and their regional and international counterparts on countering terrorism, which rules out any serious agenda to reform the security sector. Instead, it strengthens the tendency to use coercion in security dealings on all political and social levels.

As a review of the faltering, halfhearted attempts at security sector reform in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen after 2011 shows, their interim governments neither leaned instinctively toward openness nor methodically pursued wide-ranging dialogue with the security sector, political partners and rivals, or civil society. This presents a negative reality in the face of promoters of change and reconstruction of an appropriate security sector capable of dealing

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[28] Yezid Sayigh, *Dilemmas of Reform: Policing in Arab Transitions*, Carnegie Center for the Middle East, 30 March 2016. Link: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CEIP_CMEC61_Sayigh_Final.pdf

with all urgent and unexpected variables, particularly outcomes posed by the binary of extremism and confrontational policy choices.

The most important lessons gleaned from the experiences of Arab Spring countries that should not be neglected during Syria's own reform and what comes before it can be condensed, in spite of the density of the information on them, into the ten following lessons:[29]

1. A transitional process that creates hope and high aspirations for citizens who were politically, administratively, socially, and economically marginalized to be mobilized without developing, implementing and empowering them with practical and systematic reform programs on all levels, including in the security sector in fear of a presumed overall collapse, will create a conducive environment best exploited by counter-revolutionary groups similar to what was witnessed in Egypt and Tunis.

2. It is essential during any transitional period to promote dialogue between the civilian and security sectors. This process has two prongs:

   a. Establishing procedures for accountability and oversight of the security sector and at the same time supporting professional and vocational capacity building programs for its staff and a review of salaries, working conditions, and policies regarding hiring and promotion.

   b. Building popular support and solidarity around public safety and security principles as well as establishing institutions that focus on evaluating and monitoring the security sector situation, its requirements, and working mechanisms.

3. The deep correlation between security sector reform and executing legal and constitutional amendments should be realized. In this regard, international agencies operating in Tunisia, such as the United Nations Development Program and the Geneva Center for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (which partners with the Tunisian government), are of the opinion that security service reform requires changes all legislative, constitutional, institutional, and cultural levels. This needs to occur along with a focus on the imperative of establishing programs in the Supreme Judicial Institute designed to counter corruption, respect human rights, and guarantee the principles outlined in related international treaties.

4. The importance of clarity and transparency in the overarching governing principles and procedures adopted by security agencies: In Egypt, for example, even though the transformation of the State Security Agency into the National Security Agency, and the revocation of many of its authorities and responsibilities that do not conform to their

[29] **To examine these experiences, see the following links:**
1. Yezid Sayigh, *Crumbling States: Security Sector Reform in Libya and Yemen*, Carnegie Center for the Middle East, 18 June 2015. Link: http://goo.gl/3M0JoF
2. Dr. Ezz ed-Deen Abdul Mawli, *Spotlight on the Tunisian Experience in Democratic Transition*, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 14 February 2013. Link: http://goo.gl/VPkaBC
3. Heykel Ibn Mahfouth, *Security in the Transition Stages: A Look at Reforming the Security Sector in Tunisia Three Years into the Democratic Transition*, Arab Reform Initiatives, 14 July 2014. Link: http://goo.gl/NjUMGS
4. Mohammed Mujahid Zeyat, Restructuring the Security Services in Countries of the Arab Revolutions, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 14 February 2013. Link: http://goo.gl/lFGk4F
5. Hussein Hamouda, "Security Dilemma: Internal Security Institutions Between Restructuring and Rebuilding in Egypt," 9 May 2016, Al-Ahram, International Politics. Link: http://goo.gl/5qsKkR

intended function and issuance of a "code of conduct and ethics" by the Ministry of Interior were all important steps, however, there still remains a necessity to forge a new social contract between the people and the security agencies. In the absence of clear mechanisms of transparency and oversight, security agencies will continue to promote itself as the safeguard of security and stability On the other hand, the transition process in Egypt neglected the need to restructure the security agencies and kept in place departments and units whose role is to curtail any opposition to the regime.

5. Seizing the historical moment of political change by creating political consensus among relevant actors on the overall framework of reforms and on developing the necessary supporting institutional mechanisms for the process. The Libyan experience demonstrates that the absence of such communal understandings, as well as the presence of rigid institutional restraints, contributed to reducing security sector reforms to the dismissal of thousands of ranking officers and agents. This was also coupled with the enactment of a "political isolation law" that was expanded to include both political and administrative positions. Similar dynamics in Yemen resulted in intensive mobilization of anti-revolutionary forces that encouraged competing elite forces to build political support for itself within the security agencies and outside of it in order to solidify its position within the new governing scene.

6. Giving the appropriate legal framing, reporting mechanisms, and appointment process for the chief of the public security agency. A number of security experts who monitored reforms enacted by Egypt's security sector suggest that the chief of the agency should be selected by the President from outside of the agency's workforce then ratified by the parliament after a special hearing that includes a discussion of overall policies and procedures for the security agency, an agreement on term limits for the chief, his deputies and top aids to be tied with presidential term limits.

7. The overall objective of reform processes or restructuring schemes of the security agencies is to ensure the cohesion and stability of societal foundations without any intentions for revenge among political and religious actors. **It is imperative not to fall in the trap of copying the negative applications and distortions of "community policing" prevalent in some countries** by forming and legalizing paramilitary and armed groups for the purpose of "maintaining peace and stability".

8. It is necessary to consider and take into account in transitional programs the unique societal dynamics and avoid any conflict with its collective identities. For example, framing certain reforms as being in "defense of secularism" in the face of "authoritarian Islamists" or the other way around for the purpose of appeasing western states will be perceived as ignoring societal dynamics. In Tunisia, the major failure during the transition process was the fact that initial efforts to launch security sector reforms were not supported by society and was introduced within a very polarized "secular-versus-Islamic" context when it required creating political alliances and societal consensus in addition to cohesive reform policies.[30]

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[30] Ali Laareayedh, from the "Renaissance" Party, rejected a "White Book" presented by a minister plenipotentiary that was specially appointed for the reforms in October 2011 shortly after he became Minister of Interior. Meanwhile, his party's attempts to appoint new senior security

9. It is essential in the reform process to build a unified security body responsible for national security affairs. It can be said that in Libya, security agencies that were formed after the revolution merged groups that belong to militias with conflicting goals and interests, those creating an ever deteriorating security reality that is difficult to reform.[31] When the Libyan government launched a campaign against militias that did not join the official state security agency, the militias opted to withdraw to preserve their military power rather than join the agency and confront the clashing interests within the agency. This rendered the matter of arms control in Libya an issue of utmost difficulty.

10. Changing the top leaders of security agencies is merely a superficial procedure and not real reform. A national consensus over reforming the security sector is an essential condition for a transitional process with fewer challenges and obstacles. In Yemen, for instance, the removal of senior security officials loyal to Ali Abdullah Saleh did not reflect a noteworthy change in the security agency practices.[32] The reform of Yemen's security sector should put an end to the phenomenon of multiple competing security agencies, put in place effective legislative, judicial, and civilian oversight mechanisms that monitor the security services. Likewise, the interference by security agencies in the political sphere must be banned, and mechanisms for transparency and accountability should be mandated.

Deep-Rooted Challenges in Syria

Deep-rooted challenges that hinder security sector reforms on multiple levels stem from a deteriorating state of affairs of a "failed state," caused by two factors:

The first is the hijacking of security agencies by the regime forcing it to adapt and implement its security and military policies as dictated by the security/military networks detailed above. Additionally, the regime intentionally left a vacuum in the societal functions of the state as a result of prioritizing military and political dimensions by most relevant actors that did not take any action to prevent societal divisions and polarization, and the politicization of public services for the benefit of the regime even in the basic affairs of daily life.

The second factor relates to the monopolization of power by religious, social, and economic groups that are most loyal to the regime and their domination in key decision-making posts within state institutions while completely eliminating and crushing other opponents and depriving them of government services. This naturally reinforces pragmatist perspectives that effective reform policies should be comprehensive and not enacted individually since the process of rebuilding the state and a constructing a democratic governance system are essential

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officials amidst accusations that he was trying to assert his party's control over the security sector. On the other hand, the tendency of the Renaissance Party and Nidaa Tounis to placate the security sector probably by increasing salaries, dissolving legal measures against it, and furnishing it with new equipment. This enabled him to entrench himself and resist efforts to make him more transparent and accountable.

[31] For example, the High Security Council – analogous to the Libyan police forces – is made up of several militias that pledge their loyalty to the Council. Meanwhile, the Libya Shield Forces oppose the militia alliance with the state in Misrata and Zintan and work as a counterweight to the Libyan National Army.

[32] Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi made modifications that encompassed certain ministers and security officials in a step that aimed to reduce the power of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Moreover, the Prime Minister removed the director of the Military Intelligence Directorate and the head of the National Security Bureau because they were close to Saleh, appointing Ahmed Mohsen al-Yafei, who was a major former official, to the Ministry of Defense, and Ali Hassan al-Ahmedi, former governor of Shabwah Province in Southern Yemen, to the new National Security Bureau.

requisites for the rehabilitation of security sectors and subjecting them to objective government oversight.

There is no doubt that all of these challenges that continue to impose itself on the scene during the years of conflict will become an exhausting factor in any reform procedures and processes. This demands unity of national perspectives and positions with regards to the new national security strategy. Of these challenges we can highlight the following:

1. Rebuilding prevailing social and institutional alliances relied upon by former authoritarian regimes by replacing them with new and stable alliances makes the process of building a new security sector during the transition process more coherent and cohesive. This requires setting aside all sectarian, ethnic, and partisan basis of operation by security agencies and basing the rebuilding process on principles of professionalism and patriotism in a cross-party and cross-sectarian manner. [33]

2. Aligning reforms with the concept of decentralization (with its different types) since the trend displays a fragmented and eroded central authority, thus requiring an ability to carefully draft the reform process according to the requirements of local empowerment and overall national needs.

3. Taking into consideration the realism-idealism binary, since the nature of security related work in Syria both locally and regionally cannot be addressed by extremely wishful theoretical proposals for future security sector. This will put such idealistic proposals for a future security sector in the face of many obstacles at very early stages.

4. It will be difficult to control for all forms and dimensions of security agencies' violations as a result of several reasons relating to the attempts by the regime's deeply-rooted networks that are empowered with necessary tools, expertise and mechanisms to spread and manage chaos to serve their political objectives.

5. National authorities are absent from the scene, particularly the judiciary and military that are considered to be the two main pillars in safeguarding national security. Additionally, it is difficult to form strong political and administrative institutions that have the true will to change, enjoy popular support, able to improve oversight and legal and social evaluation mechanisms, and construct a coherent security sector that is non-sectarian and relies on societal consensus over the features of a social pact and principles of fair economic principles.

6. Local actors have conflicting security visions and goals; the regime and its loyalists will not accept any form of reform or upgrade in the work of security agencies because that would undermine their hegemony and ability to govern, in addition to considering all of the opposition as terrorists and legitimate targets for security agencies. On the other hand, most opposition political bodies adopt a demand to completely dismantle and break apart security agencies and dismiss all of its members, and then forming new agencies with no connection to the former security system. The opposition insists on completely breaking away from all current state security institutions.

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[33] Yezid Sayigh, *Dilemmas of Reform*, Ibid.

7. The Syrian crisis has been internationalized and very few cards remain in the hands of Syrians. This requires a systematic approach to take back control of Syria through ending sources of political polarization regionally and internationally that increases the more the conflict is prolonged. Work should focus on crafting security arrangements that address local security threats without opposing regional and international security arrangements.

8. Several transnational projects have spread into Syria whether linked with ethnic or religious aspirations, particularly with the abundance of local conditions that facilitate and encourage such projects possessing an ability to obstruct reform processes. This requires the prioritization of confronting such agendas and projects.

9. The unique nature and characteristics of the Syrian uprising in comparison to the rest of the Arab Spring nations due to the conflict's escalation and the fact that it encompasses multiple social, confessional, and national dimensions. The conflict has risen to the level of an evolving global war on Syrian land, as the nature of the conflict has evolved during its different phases to new dimensions with different outcomes, such as the hijacking of state institutions and its full resources and facilities in the service of the regime's allies and militias. This makes the process of rebuilding or reform very challenging, therefore, building national consensus and a unified political vision will help guarantee the success of this transformation.

10. There is a strong correlation between restructuring the security sector and the political will for change through a political transition based on the values of justice, democracy, and effective community participation in building state and society.

11. Security, stability, and the reform of state institutions cannot be imposed in an environment of military and security chaos in terms of the lack of any arms control and the high degree of fluidity in security conditions that is conducive to using violence to impose political projects.

12. The collapse of the Syrian economy and level of massive infrastructure destruction poses a real challenge to the reform process of any agency or state institution.[34]

13. There is an alarming level of tension and polarization based on ethnic, ideological, and sectarian backgrounds. This was a result of changes and shifts in the nature of the political conflict as well as local and international policies of managing the conflict.

14. The absence of transitional justice as an essential component to be agreed upon in political negotiations among international and regional actors increases the chances of retribution and acts of revenge and intensifying societal tensions, thus becoming an obstacle to the restructuring process.

It is worth reaffirming the assumptions of this study here, as it is not possible to discuss the restructuring of security agencies in Syria without first discussing the form that the Syrian state will take after the war. There is more than one scenario concerning this question: a centralized state, an administrative decentralization, or a federal or confederate system. What has been outlined is consistent with both scenarios: administrative decentralization or a central state.

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[34] Reforming the Security Sector, Report from the Day After Project. Link: http://goo.gl/EWQLqK

Reform Theories: Deconstruction vs. Reconstruction

Based on what has been mentioned above with regards to the security agencies' serious flaws and deviances both structurally and functionally, calls to fully dissolve and do away with the security services entirely have become more frequent. This is because of a growing conviction among some segments of society that there is no need for these apparatuses any more. This position may seem reasonable as an immediate reaction by many to the grossly abusive practices and attitudes of security agencies witnessed by Syrians, as well as its systematic chronic failures to protect citizens and preserve humanitarian values. The agencies have proven to only work on bolstering its absolute loyalty to the regime and protecting its authority tirelessly by repressing all activities that undermine the regime's continued rule. This can be viewed from the perspective of the close link and mutual interest shared by the regime and security agencies, such that the absence of either one leads to a loss of interests that are deemed by security agencies as "legitimate and ongoing".

In spite of the objective justifications for these calls, security is an absolute necessity and of utmost importance in the context of any transition process, particularly in Syria and its position as a sensitive regional and international counterbalance. Generally speaking, the most significant function of the state is that of providing security in order to attain social stability, shielding the country from security breaches that threaten its social cohesion, and protecting the sovereignty of the state. Safety and security in any country is the foundation of sustainable development and without it the country will face tremendous challenges especially in post-conflict phases when society is exhausted and distracted while simultaneously undergoing reconstruction and rebuilding processes. The absence of real and sustainable development puts a stop to reform processes and thus an absence of social, economic, and political stability.

The proposal to dismantle security agencies and networks and cease all its operations without rebuilding a national alternative with a coherent structure and functions that are closely related to its nature must be ruled out, particularly during the next phase of new Syria that has witnessed many cross-border projects that attempted to deeply root itself within Syrian society. Therefore, the theory of dismantling the existing security agencies will lead to the complete collapse of the state. Hence, the demand most consistent with the "rejection of its practices and approach / necessity of security" binary appears to be the imperative of restructuring security institutions in the next phase so that they maintain a reasonable matching standard of operation to that of other advanced countries based on solid foundations of serving the nation and its citizenry.

The term "restructuring" is defined as making the necessary correction to the administrative, technical, economic, and financial structures and systems of a given agency in such a manner that allows it to remain in operation achieve its appropriate benefits. The main goal of restructuring an institution is to increase its efficiency and benefits that correspond with its new objectives and the requirements of the next phase. In this context, the process of restructuring security agencies involves rebuilding them in a manner consistent with the public's interest to be protected from threats to their security and stability, and safeguarding the free operation and

growth of civic activities and institutions. Thus, the restructuring process must include the following:

- Rebuilding organizational structures of security agencies: This also includes the need to either eliminate or merge certain agencies and branches or establish new ones. This process also includes defining and upgrading overall goals and objectives and specific outcomes that the security sector seeks to achieve in the long term.

- Determining effective governing systems and standards most suitable for the conditions and operational peculiarities of security agencies, such that upgrading or reforming those systems takes into consideration the practicality of its implementation. Additionally, it will ensure clarity in operational procedures and oversight mechanisms through a set of binding laws that correspond with judicial standards and procedures.

Any country's national security derives its theoretical and practical frameworks from two main principles that represent the core of the state's existence. The first is **sovereignty**, which is defined as the country's control of full jurisdiction over its territory independent of any other authority, as long as this jurisdiction is not restricted by international laws. National security functional domain is considered a direct outcome of its sovereignty in that it is an idea based on the state's legal authority to defend itself and protect its security by taking all necessary measures. The second principle relates to **the state's essential and vital interests**, which refers to a very fluid concept that at its core grants the state higher privileges and inherent authorities to fulfill its interests over all other individuals and groups, therefore, state security represents the prime domain of its interests. National security may at times become an obsession that is then constructed within the core political doctrine of the state, thus influencing its approach and practice by dealing with security as a mean and end goal at the same time. This is especially observed when the state adopts a terminology of conspiracy theories or obsession with threats and enemies in its domestic and foreign strategies, which is the justification used by police states. The orientation of a police state is reflected in many practices and norms, the most prominent of which is its suspicion and lack of confidence in the intentions of others and violent conduct domestically and abroad. In the context of preserving national security, the state further justifies actions on many fronts and often creates situations that distract from internal chronic crises or deficiencies within itself thus justifying intrusions into private spheres, purchasing new arms and weaponry and attempting to militarize society. The most dangerous and predominant goal of these types of regimes is that of violently curbing freedoms and reducing authority to an individual to justify totalitarianism.

III. Transitioning Towards a Cohesive Security Sector

Fundamentals of the National Pact between the Security Sector and Society

Establishing the national pact, that determines the dimensions and scope of the mutual relationship between the security agency and society and clarifies its mandate, rights, and responsibilities, is a necessary prerequisite for initiating the reform process. To this end, this study recommends a number of fundamentals that this social pact should incorporate:

1. The rebuilding process should be based on a new security doctrine that centers on securing the nation and citizens instead of the previous corrupt doctrine that was based on the service of the President and his loyalists.

2. There should be a complete isolation of security agencies away from political polarizations in such a way that prevents partisan practices within the security sector. Furthermore, the security sector should be primarily concerned with serving the interests of the people and providing safety and tranquility to all Syrian citizens so they may be empowered to assume full political, economic, social, cultural and religious freedoms in accordance with the constitution and laws, while maintaining public order, respecting human rights, and defending the sovereignty of the state and its territorial integrity.

3. Approaches and procedures for offering security and judicial services to Syrian citizens should be improved by providing professional training and mandating staff development programs to include specialized training on human rights, citizenship rights and responsibilities, and technical skills. Moreover, a clear legal framework should be put in place to determine the competencies and scope of mandate for security agencies in accordance with international human rights standards and agreements.

4. It is necessary to institute effective systems of management, monitoring and accountability in such a way that oversight monitors are empowered with the mandate to examine documents and records that reveal professional and patriotic practices of security agencies according to professional industry standards and indicators.

5. Reinforcing a culture that awards the security sector an important value and position within the structures of a new democratic system formed for the purpose of serving society and its citizens, protecting the values of citizenship and social justice, and is founded on the principles of transitional justice, the rule of law, and strengthening the concept of citizenship. This culture represents a true break between democratic and authoritarian regimes. Oversight and both legal and societal accountability mechanisms should be upgraded at the initial stages of the reform process.

6. Establishing a competent information agency responsible for domestic security on the condition that the agency complies with the requirements of the democratic transition and

is subjected different oversight bodies (legislative, judicial, civil society as well as internal committees).

The **goal of restructuring the Syrian security agencies in the future** can be summed up in the protection of the state and citizens or "national security", rather than exclusively protecting certain individuals and groups at the expense of national security. Accordingly, the specific objectives of restructuring security agencies can be outlined as follows:

- Protecting Syria's national unity.

- Protecting Syria's borders and maintaining its territorial unity and cohesion.

- Integrating professional and active participants in the Syrian uprising within state institutions and security agencies

- Putting an end to arming and seizing weapons from non-government factions.

- Working to safeguard public and private sector infrastructures and preserving state institutions.

- Protecting national programs to counter terrorism and extremism.

- Securing plans that reinforce civil peace and ease sectarian tensions, as well as preventing acts of revenge and retribution against minorities

Strategic Objectives for the Future Security Sector

First: Ensuring the safety and security of the country and its citizens through a series of measures and policies that reinforce objective conditions for achieving stability. Among these measures are the following:

1. Reinforcing public order and the rule of law: This can be achieved by putting in place a national strategy for addressing security threats, whether at the level of countering attempts by former regime networks to take control of key power centers within the state or at the level of confronting cross-border transnational projects. Additionally, the society's role and position should be reinforced during the rebuilding process to assist in establishing order and the rule of law and develop community partnerships with the security sector. Recapturing Syria's sovereignty and controlling all border crossings, consolidating security sector authority, containing arms chaos, supporting civil peace program, and strengthening the related legal frameworks at the same time along with conducting coherent media plans and programs are all necessary steps to take back control of local and societal security.

2. Putting an end to the abusive claims against citizens and groups to have committed "state security crimes such as espionage and treason" that arises from overlapping jurisdictions and scope of duties among different security agencies, and the lack of appropriate up-to-date legislation and laws, as well as weaknesses in the financial, logistical, and armament capacities to counter real crimes that threaten national security. This matter necessitates the separation of powers between branches of government, supporting and protecting a security information bank, reinforcing the position and role of oversight and complaint

processing divisions, conducting capacity building and rehabilitation programs, and the decisive confrontation of all crimes against public properties and funds.

3. Putting an end to all phenomena that may legitimize forms of favoritism and cronyism by promoting a sense of national pride and loyalty and countering other forms of loyalty to tribe, geographical region or province, confessional identities, or to party affiliation where it goes against loyalty to the nation. Furthermore, it is important to clarify procedures and systems that govern internal relations within the security agency, while taking into consideration the need to develop integration mechanisms for socially diverse groups in policies, plans and budgets. Additionally, systems of evaluation, assessment and analysis, early warning systems, and complaint processing mechanisms should be adopted.

4. Reinforcing the principles and concepts of international humanitarian law and human rights law in security sector agencies through educational and training programs and the adoption of a guide for security sector operation illustrating expected best-practices that conform to laws passed during the reform process. Work should also be done to develop a code of conduct with regards to human rights standards within the security agencies in partnership with relevant actors, and improving relations between security sector institutions and civil society organizations, and building the capacity of public relations and media professionals.

5. Strengthening public policies relating to the core values for the security sector, that should consider several standards that make security operations more methodical and closer to achieving its general goals, especially being consistent with the values and aspirations of Syrian society, preserving a new national identity, protecting the constitution, and ensuring the right and freedom of practicing one's convictions and beliefs.

Second: Building and developing the professional capacities for security sector personnel to elevate the standards of operation of the security sector consistent with the requirements posed by the transitional period through the following steps:

1. Supporting the institutionalization of the security sector according good governance standards, and ensuring the provision of services professionally, effectively and fairly.

2. Consolidating legal and legislative frameworks governing the security-related work and eliminating cross-departmental commissioning loopholes (whereby security officers are commission to other department and branches of government while reporting officially to a different ministry). Furthermore, enacting laws governing conscription and employment procedures according to clear and transparent criteria and pre-conditions related to proficiency and physical competency.

3. Revising and reforming all existing personnel-related policies and regulations, by completely repealing articles with undefined criteria and immeasurable standards, and/or by developing new performance evaluation systems as well as procedures for hiring and promotion.

4. Adopting a unified and methodical strategy for personnel training and ensuring appropriate supervision by qualified trainers in security affairs.

5. Establishing unified procedures for internal communications between security agencies and providing necessary logistical support.

6. Assessing existing infrastructures and abandoning what is deemed non-functional, and establishing commissions tasked with improving standards of security services performance while considering its needs and required resources.

7. Creating financial management systems and constantly working to overcome challenges resulting from limited resources through a work plan that determines overall priorities, strengthens planning and coordination mechanisms, reallocates available resources, and streamlines support channels.

8. Building financial capacities of the security sector in accordance with the financial policies adopted by the Ministry of Interior.

Third: Ensuring the synchronization and collaboration between the justice and security sectors: This is one of the most important factors for the success and advancement of the security sector that will curb its unlawful and disenfranchising powers, and limit its intrusive and authoritarian aggression over societal policies, provided that justice sector institutions also undergo rigorous reform processes that isolate it from the regime and its networks. The most important measures in this regard are as follows:

1. Institutionalizing the relationship between the security and justice sectors and clarify their mutual roles and mandate.

2. Establishing a protocol that formalizes the relationship between the military and civil public prosecution.

3. Mandating oversight powers to judicial bodies on detention and rehabilitation centers.

4. Issuing a special procedural guide that manages that coordination with the civil public prosecution with regards to its representation of the security agencies before the judiciary.

5. Conducting a full review of all existing memoranda of understanding between the Ministries of Justice and Interior with regards to judicial police work.

6. Enacting a special law for the military judiciary by the legislative authority, creating a legal framework that regulates forensic laboratories, and amending laws and internal charters pertaining to the police force and other domestic security forces.

Fourth: Confronting all potential security risks and threats in Syria by adopting a series of counter-measures and policies, the most important of which include:
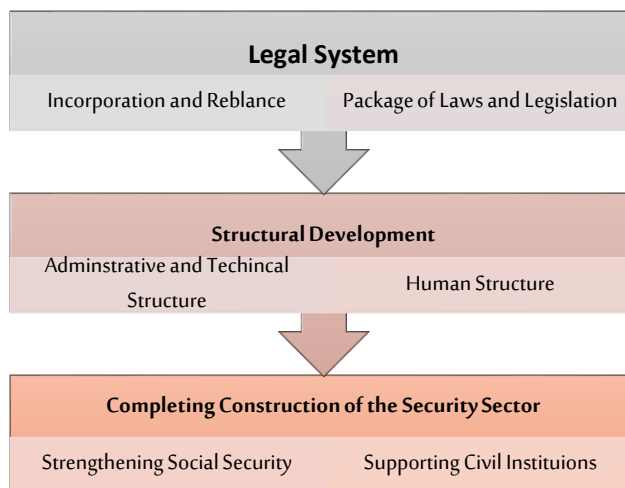
1. Forming committees that focus on investigations and seeking accountability for human rights violations, identifying those responsible, and taking them to court.

2. Reforming the approaches and working mechanisms observed by the leadership of the National Armed Forces, and launching re-integration programs for Free Syrian Army

(FSA) members by building their capacity and competency to be able to carry out police work and control local security, while reporting to relevant central agencies. This should be carried out by first restructuring the National Armed Forces which requires supplementing them with additional military units/divisions and members

3. Pursuing confidence-building measures between the political leadership of the opposition and the FSA through regular communication. Additionally, an initiative should be promoted to develop leadership and management skills among armed opposition groups and ensure their full compliance with the international principles of human rights.

4. Establishing an oversight committee that prepares the ground for launching and managing security sector reforms during the transitional period. This committee can be formed by civilian opposition members, the FSA, and defected security officers, then may expand to include trustworthy members from the police and armed forces. This committee shall closely examine the practice and conduct of members of armed opposition groups and determine those who committed any violations and hold them accountable.

5. Controlling and securing arms by securing warehouses that store traditional weaponry, and collecting all other medium and heavy weaponry. Additionally, weapons stores located in buildings controlled by the Ba'ath Party or other allied political parties in addition to popular organization shall also be secured.

The Restructuring Process

The diagram to the right illustrates the stages and necessary measures for the restructuring process that are based on principles of change and a seamless coherent transition, in fear of unexpected results of sudden changes on the integrity of the country. It also ensures that security agencies are restructured within the national framework and complementing other state institutions. These processes shall reflect a series of political agreements representing the true will for change and political transition without any controlling or authoritarian ambitions.

Legal System	
Incorporation and Reblance	Package of Laws and Legislation

Structural Development	
Adminstrative and Techincal Structure	Human Structure

Completing Construction of the Security Sector	
Strengthening Social Security	Supporting Civil Instituions

Phase I: Issuing a set of legislation and decrees that are necessary for the restructuring process to address the following points:

1. Maintaining the centralization of the NSB and holding it as the head and leader of the security agencies. The NSB, which may change its name, issues general security policies, and is responsible for implementing them, and taking all legal measures that reinforce security and civil peace.

2. Reconfiguring the roles and functions carried out by security and military networks and reorienting them within the military establishment new plans and approaches. Additionally, ending and dissolving secondary and auxiliary security institutions.

3. Merging the AFID and the MID, and regarding it as part of the military intelligence institution, since AFID is part of the military and armed forces. The merged agency reports directly to the Chief of Staff of the Military and has a clear mandate for exclusively military affairs, such as collecting and assessing intelligence information on military and special operations, and protecting the military from any espionage or foreign security breaches. It is sternly cautioned from interfering in civilian affairs, and whenever collected intelligence and security information relates to civilian affairs it is forwarded to the domestic intelligence agency or to the police or judiciary depending on the case. A division or branch of this agency shall be responsible for securing military and civilian airports and reports to the head of MID.

4. Merging the PSD with the GID (State Security Agency) and positioning them under the administration and management of the NSB with its new name as the National Public Security Agency (NPSA), the head of which is appointed by a decision of the Prime Minister. NPSA operates as an intelligence agency, collecting and analyzing security data both domestically and abroad. It is also assigned the responsibility of protecting and securing the state both domestically and abroad. This agency shall have two main divisions: the Domestic Intelligence Agency and the Foreign Intelligence Agency.

5. Outlawing extraordinary courts, limiting the mandate of the judiciary to civilian affairs including security-related crimes. Furthermore, the military judiciary, the restrictions on its mandate, and its practical operational mechanisms should be reconsidered and revised.

6. Ending all emergency laws (or similar temporary or exceptional laws) as well as other unpublished laws regarding arrests, detentions and trials.

7. Upgrading the legislations that define crimes against domestic and foreign security that fall within the mandate of the security agencies.

8. Subjecting the security agencies to parliamentary oversight that monitors their powers, mechanisms, and scope of work.

Phase II: Launching systematic reforms to internal structure to include the following steps:

1. Referring all personnel involved in war crimes, torture, and human rights violations to the judiciary and launching behavioral and professional rehabilitation programs.

2. Rebalancing the professional and membership structure of the security services, issuing general work and employment laws in accordance with health, psychology, and educational requisites without taking sect into account, and repealing delegation laws.

3. Re-integrating personnel that were not involved in war crimes and human rights violations into the new security agencies after ensuring their ability to integrate and continue to work, and their capacity to participate in the political transition process.

4. Developing the administrative and technical infrastructure for the security agencies, taking into consideration structural adjustments that will be implemented such that it will be able to quickly resume its work and perform their mandated duties.

5. Maintaining documents and records belonging to security agencies and granting access to its data archives (including data relating to public or private entities) in such a way that does not pose any risks to the state or society. It has been proven that denying the people access to information leads to widespread corruption and the abuse of power by political authorities.

6. Dismissing corrupt members from security agencies, even if the judiciary is unable to indict them for committing violent crimes or human rights violation

7. Rebuilding trust between security agencies and citizens, so as to establish a cooperative relationship between them and change the stereotype held by Syrian citizens that the security agencies are tools of suppression and oppression used by the regime to dominate.

8. Integrating rebel forces into the military and security institutions, particularly those of influence and good reputation in their communities. This will directly impact the success level of the democratic transitional process.

9. Making the best use of security agencies' buildings and facilities including all of its contents and data, as well as the full archives, and preserving it to support security work or uncovering documents that help prove war crimes committed by the regime before international courts.

10. Benefitting from material resources not damaged by the war, such as technological and, communication devices and intelligence equipment, and working to upgrade it and use it within its intended purpose.

11. Recruiting and making the best use of human resources and skills developed by many opposition members who gained experience in security or intelligence work during the uprising. Those skilled individuals should be employed by the new security agency according to professional standards, and be given special trainings to improve their security and intelligence capacities.

Phase III: Constructing the remaining components of the security sector and establishing complementing working conditions between the security and civil sectors:

1. Designating special parliamentary sessions to deliberate, consider and adopt the security plan and its budget.

2. Forming a parliamentary committee with follow-up and oversight authority over security agencies.

3. Empowering the public security agency with a media strategy that enshrines the standards and value of security.

4. Holding organized public dialogues between civilians and the security agencies to address ways to strengthen societal security.

5. Encouraging the establishment of specialized security research centers that publish research to reinforce the complementing consolidation of different agencies within the security sector

6. Regulating the concept of rapid intervention operations by instituting a clear definition of national security threats and rules of civil peace.

7. Establishing specialized security academies to offer professional training and educational diplomas to new officers, noncommissioned officers, and other personnel.

## An Overall Vision for the "National Public Security Agency"

From what was mentioned above, after the restructuring of the security agencies, two new security apparatuses will be created:

1. **The Military Intelligence Agency** which is fully subordinate to the Ministry of Defense, and focuses on securing the national army, with its various names, structures, and divisions. This agency has no mandate or jurisdiction over civilians.
2. **National Public Security Agency** (NPSA)**:** This agency is subordinate to Prime Ministry, and is concerned with ensuring domestic security and stability, maintaining national identity, and preserving civil peace.

The limits of cooperation between these two agencies is based on the principle of "information sharing" according to the mandate for each agency while collaborating to protect the state domestically and abroad, and protecting its sovereignty.

National Public Security Agency

This agency is concerned with safeguarding the country's domestic security, protecting state institutions, preventing security breaches and information leaks, uncovering espionage, coordinating with the state institutions such as education, media, and economic institutions in service of the national interest, and preserving the unity and integrity of the nation and society. It comprises two agencies. The first is the Domestic Intelligence Agency, and the second is the Foreign Intelligence Agency. This is clarified in the figure below:
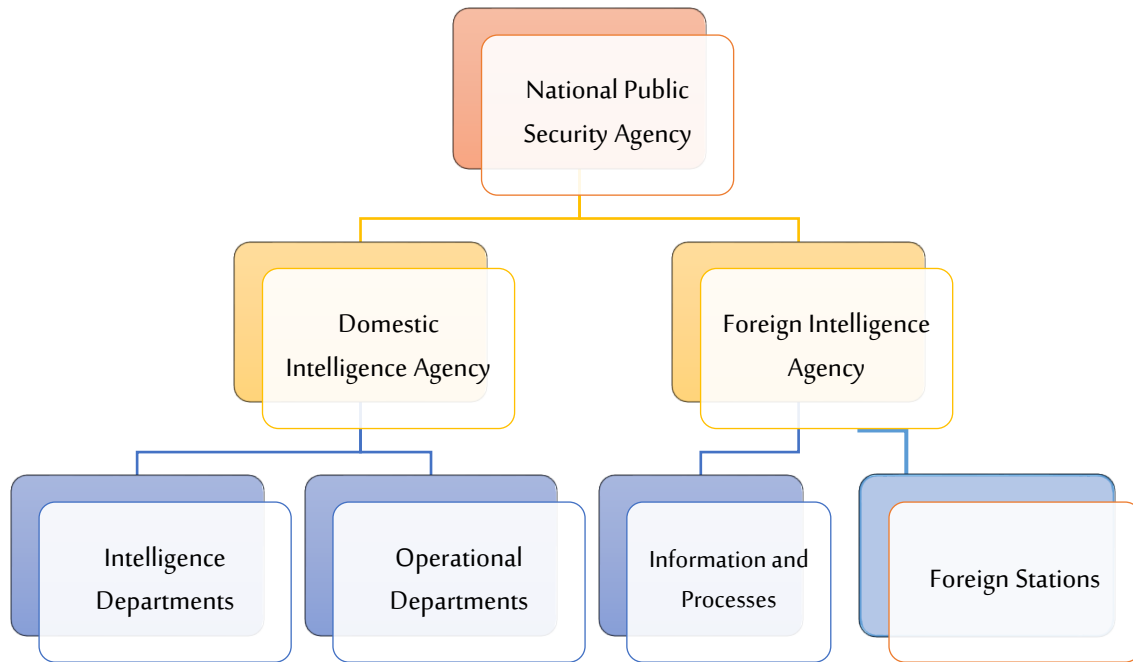
First: Domestic Intelligence Agency (DIA)

The Domestic Intelligence Agency (DIA) encompasses intelligence and operational functions. Its intelligence activity centers around the following measures:

- Administrative measures: Following up on the execution of orders and measures related to security planning, protection of secrets, and preventing breaches and information leaks.

- Legal measures: These are measures and procedures that ensure legal protections for security personnel operations, often submitting proposals for laws and decrees to be enacted to assist in facilitating and improving security work.

- Military measures: If the counter-intelligence services discover either acts of sabotage in a certain region or operations that threaten the country's security, it will deploy military forces to confront these incidents and blockade or raid a certain area with special units.

The DIA's operational activities focus on information gathering and source management. One of its most important objectives is preserving the security and secrets of the state, and the political, economic, and security resulting ramifications. Additionally, it provides border control services to monitor inward and outward movements, safeguards all national political activities whether of the authority or other local political entities, uncovers and prevents sabotage activity, and provides security for important national sites (such as ministries, electricity plants, factories, etc.) and critical military and civilian targets.

Operational activities are assigned according to the following departments:

1. Management of agents and sources: Tasks include recruitment, coaching, and training of agent and sources, and monitoring their activities.

2. Technical Department: Manages technical and electronic sources, gathers data and offers technical support for counter intelligence and electronic archiving operations.

3. Information Analysis Department: Analyzes and evaluates information, then acts upon the analysis and provides recommendations on how to maximize benefits from such information

4. Field Operations Department: Carries out surveillance, protection, and communications operations, as well as executes special operations, such as raiding facilities, and arresting suspects in accordance to an arrest or search warrants.

5. Counter-Terrorism Department: Specializes in gathering information about terrorist and sabotage activities and movements and proposing how best to respond to such threats.

6. Counter-Espionage Department: Prevents information leaks and breaches from state institutions and works to protect national security.

7. Administrative Affairs and Supply Chain Department: This department has individual sub-offices tasked with administrative roles such performance evaluations, personnel skills development and rehabilitation programs and procurement.

Second: Foreign Intelligence Agency (FIA)

The Foreign Intelligence Agency (FIA) is tasked with protecting and maintaining state interests abroad, and managing external intelligence stations. It includes the following departments:

1. Information Department: Collects and analyzes information requested by the political leadership, instructs agents, puts in place plans and missions according to the requirements and visions of the general security strategy.

2. Foreign Stations Department: Tasks include instructing stations as to what the plans and commands are, following up on its implementation, and monitoring it.

3. Foreign Operations Department: Surveils terrorist groups and destructive cross-border movements whose activities may spread into the country or harm state interests abroad.

4. Operational Intelligence Department: Tasks include gathering and using information, and training intelligence officers.

5. Technical Department: Provides technical support for foreign operations and protects stations and state institutions abroad from breaches, wiretapping, and cyber threats.

6. Supplies and Logistical Support Department.

Conclusion

Political consensus over the importance of security sector reform both structurally and functionally is a primary basis for the success of the transitional process towards a state with real institutions under the rule of law. Therefore, national dialogue about the paths, mechanisms, and forms of transition away from political polarizations while focusing more on security threats facing the state and its citizens is an essential step. A truly national dialogue works to recognize unique and local conditions that may lead to a total collapse of the state, and explores strategies and mechanisms to avoid becoming a failed state while being fully conscious of the requirements and requisites of regional security, by means of highlighting the goal and priority of solidifying local and regional stability, and reinforcing mutual collaboration and coordination with civilian components or with relevant agencies in neighboring countries.

In order to transition away from a state of "cancerous swelling" by existing security agencies towards a **coherent national security sector** through a relatively smooth process, it is necessary to take several steps and measures on civilian, military, and security levels that stem from a necessity of interconnectedness and synchronization between the overall reform and transition processes and national trends and constructive societal and political interactions. This realization further facilitates reaching a true political solution, and in this sense the current negotiations track in Geneva -that continues to debate non-essential issues because of the US-Russian talks - does not indicate a commitment to establish a transitional period that ensures real change on political, constitutional and social levels. This is stalling the progress of reform**. Serious work by the international community to discuss the core issues at hand -and not avoid or sideline them- will help create a conducive environment with necessary factors for regaining societal and national stability**.

There is no doubt that questions regarding security reform (systematically, functionally, and structurally) are among the most important questions awaiting objective responses that take into account the emerging conditions and escalating variables that shook Syria. This process, in and of itself, is complex and will not be fixed – based on Syria's unique situation – using or borrowing prepackaged reform theories, or models and schemes that ignore and undervalue the nature and importance of national security, on one hand, or theories that overlook the necessities of maintaining cohesion and preventing full collapse and chaos on the other. This requires a professional, national effort that both recognizes the demands and requirements set forth by local, regional, and international security structures and seeks to build a cohesive security sector.

Politics and International Relations