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IMPACT OF NEOPATRIMONIALISM ON THE TRAJECTORY OF THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA

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ABSTRACT

IMPACT OF NEOPATRIMONIALISM
ON THE TRAJECTORY OF THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA

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This thesis attempts to understand the impact of the nature of the Assad regime on the trajectory of the conflict which took place in Syria following the 2011 uprising. It argues that the Assad regime which has been ruling Syria since 1970 represents a case of neopatrimonial regime. The thesis elaborates the neopatrimonial conceptualization tracing the concept back to its Weberian roots. It follows the evolution of the concept from the 'traditional' patrimonialism to the modern 'neo' patrimonialism. The thesis claims that the neopatrimonial regime consolidates its power through personalization of the regime, patronage and clientelism networks. The claim puts forth is that through neopatrimonialism, the Assad regime was able to consolidate its patrimonial domination and penetrate the bureaucratic realm as well as the society through the patronage and clientelism networks. The thesis argues that the neopatrimonialism had fostered the durability of the regime, and limited the outcomes of the conflict to a rocking between a re-stabilization of the regime and an uncertain revolution, and has influenced the trajectory of the conflict which dragged the country into a state of civil war.

Keywords: Assad Regime, Syrian Conflict, Neopatrimonialism, Patronage, Clientelism.

ÖZ

NEOPATRIMONYALIZMIN SURIYE'DEKI ÇATIŞMANIN GIDIŞATI ÜZERINDEKI ETKISI

Salaymeh, Belal
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Bu tez, Esad yönetiminin doğasının Suriye'de 2011 ayaklanmasının ardından gerçekleşen çatışmanın gidişatı üzerindeki etkisini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Tezde, Suriye'de 1970'den bu yana devam etmekte olan Esad yönetiminin neopatrimonyal bir yönetim örneği olduğu savunulmaktadır. Tez, neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırmasını, kavramın Weberyan kökenine doğru izini sürerek ayrıntılandırmaktadır. Kavramın evrimini, 'gelenksel' patrimonyalizmden modern 'neo' patrimonyalizme kadar izlemektedir. Tez, neopatrimonyal yönetimin, iktidarını, yönetimin kişiselleştirilmesi, patronaj ve klientalizm ağları ile sağlamlaştırdığını savunmaktadır. İleri sürülen iddia, Esad yönetiminin, neopatrimonyalizm aracılığıyla, patrimonyal tahakkümünü sağlamlaştırdığı ve patronaj ve klientalism ağlarıyla topluma olduğu kadar bürokratik alana da nüfuz ettiğidir. Tez, neopatrimonyalizmin yönetimin dayanıklılığını beslediğini, çatışmanın sonuçlarını yönetimin yeniden dengelenmesi ve belirsiz bir devrim arasında gelip giden bir durumla sınırladığını ve ülkeyi bir iç savaş durumuna sürükleyen gidişatı etkilediğini iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Esed Rejimi, Suriye Çatışması, Neopatrimonyalizm, Patronaj, Klientalism

To My Parents Abdulhafiz & Nehad Salaymeh

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	Authoritarianism Upgrading
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IDPS	Internal Displaced People
ISIS	*Ad-Dawla Al-Islamiyya Fi Al-'Iraq Wa'sh-Sham* the Islamic State Of Iraq And (Sham) Levant
PA	Populist-Authoritarianism
PPA	Post-Populism Authoritarianism
PYD	*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* Democratic Union Party
SAA	Saa Syrian Arab Army
SDG	Syrian Democratic Forces
UN	United Nations
YPG	*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* the People's Protection Units

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to answer the question of how the nature of the Syrian regime has affected the trajectory of the conflict which has been taking place in Syria following the 2011 uprising. It tries to conceptualize the nature and the structure of the Assad regime and asses its robustness and durability. The thesis attempts also to understand how the nature of the regime and its features have been functioning throughout the conflict, and thus impacting its trajectory and shaping its outcomes.

The thesis attempts to find satisfying answers to the various questions that have occupied my mind and has continued since the early beginning of the Syrian crisis. Questions such as; what went wrong in the Syrian uprising? Why the Syrian post-uprising trajectory differs from the trajectories exhibited in other countries? How did the Assad regime manage to remain on its feet? Such questions pushed me further even to doubt whether a transition was a possible outcome in any case.

This thesis tries to present an integral conceptualization that would explain the various features of the conflict and that would challenge many of the existing narratives about the Assad regime and the Syrian conflict. In addition, the conceptualization that this thesis offers would be applied to other similar cases either to analyze the nature of authoritarian regimes or to predict the possible outcomes of any attempt to realize a forced transition.

The focus point of the thesis is the Assad regime as an agency, which the thesis accepts as the main actor on the ground that has been ruling Syria since 1970, and has been influencing the conflict since its eruption. To understand the Assad regime's nature the thesis examines the historical evolution process of the regime since 1970, and assesses the Assad regime and its structure within the existing literature on authoritarian regimes in general. Taking into consideration the

shortages of the existing conceptualization and the nature of the regime, the thesis thereby puts forward four hypotheses built on each other.

Hypothesis one: the Assad regime represents a case of neopatrimonial regime.

Hypothesis two: the neopatrimonial nature of the regime fosters its robustness and durability.

Hypothesis three: the neopatrimonial nature of the regime jeopardizes any possibility of political transition.

Hypothesis four: The neopatrimonial nature of the regime and its features have impacted the trajectory of the conflict and inflamed the state of civil war.

This thesis elaborates the neopatrimonial conceptualization tracing the concept back to its Weberian roots. It follows the evolution of the concept from 'traditional' patrimonialism to the modern 'neo' patrimonialism. Herein, the thesis develops and characterizes neopatrimonialism as a conceptual framework and ruling model that would be useful studying and analyzing personalistic authoritarian regimes.

The Assad regime is assessed within the neopatrimonial model of ruling which the thesis develops, to examine the hypothesis that the Assad regime represents a case of neopatrimonial regime. In this assessment, the thesis observes the control and power consolidation measures used in the Assad regime's case. Hence, the neopatrimonial ruling model is developed and characterized within the case of the Assad regime.

Another hypothesis put forward in this thesis is that the nature of the regime, and in particular, its neopatrimonial nature, has fostered its durability. To assess this hypothesis, the thesis tries to weigh the various factors that would affect the durability of neopatrimonial regimes as has been discussed in the literature. Thus, it shows that the robustness of any similar regime would be weighed and hence the possible outcomes of a forced transition would be predicted by analyzing the regime within the neopatrimonial model. Thus, the neopatrimonial model would be useful to answer the question of the possibility of any transition from the neopatrimonial regime to take place.

Building on the Assad regime's high robustness and its neopatrimonial features such as the personalistic character of the regime and the presence of regime-hardliners, the thesis argues that any possibility of political transition has been jeopardized.

To assess the impact of the regime's nature on the trajectory of the conflict, the thesis tries to offer a deep and conceptualized analysis of the conflict and its various features. The thesis relies on relevant sources and tries to understand how the Assad regime's neopatrimonial features have been functioning throughout the conflict and thus impacting its trajectory.

In additional to the existing literature, books, articles, and internet sources, the thesis has utilized primary sources like videos and blogs posted online that document the uprising's events, not to mention the personal experiences of the author himself. The content analysis method as well as discourse analysis have been used throughout the thesis to benefit from these primary and secondary sources.

Following the Syrian wave of the Arab Spring that hit the country in March 2011, what started as popular protests has descended gradually into an insurgency and a civil war, which in its turn has since intensified into a regional and international conflict. Since then, alongside the regional and international actors, Syria has operated as a breeding ground for various non-state actors and terrorist organizations. Among these various state and non-state actors, the Assad regime has shown a distinct durability and undeniable influence on the trajectory of the conflict.

Without doubt the Syrian conflict, has been profoundly shaped by overlapping and competitive internal and external drivers. Proxy wars, foreign fighters, terrorism, regional and international interventions are just among the various dynamics that have shaped the ongoing conflict. Yet, the Assad regime is the most influential actor in shaping the conflict and its trajectory, first and foremost because of its preexisting rule of Syria, which has been ruled for more than four decades under Hafez and Bashar al-Assad.

The impact of the Assad regime on the ongoing conflict does not occur only after the erupting of the uprising in March 2011. Rather, the Assad regime and its relations and interactions with Syrian society had framed the preexisting condition

and thereby influenced the regime's durability and shaped the possible outcomes of any uprising or any attempt to realize a political transition. This impact of the Assad regime on the trajectory of the conflict in Syria would be best understood by analyzing the pre-existing regime typology, its relations with the state and the society and how they have influenced the regime's attitude throughout conflict determining its possible outcome.

The first chapter of this thesis, presents the concept of neopatrimonialism. This is defined as a hybrid type of domination in which the Weberian 'traditional' patrimonial domination integrates with the 'neo' bureaucratic domination. The first chapter traces the neopatrimonialism back to its Weberian roots, and tries to lay down the neopatrimonial domination mechanisms and networks byexamining the related literature, and then moves to discuss the durability of neopatrimonial regimes and the possible transition and non-transition scenarios under these regimes. The first chapter ends by reviewing the presence of the neopatrimonialism and its sub-elements in the Middle Eastern context.

Weber had mentioned patrimonialism as one of three pure types of domination, emphasizing the role of personal rule in this type of domination[1]. Later Eisenstadt [2] modifies the concept to include both Weberian traditional patrimonialism and 'neo' rational-bureaucratic domination. Peter Pawelka[3], argues that there would be two bases of legitimization of neopatrimonial regimes. In additional to the traditional loyalty (like heritage), Pawelka argued for the martial reward (allocation of jobs and grants …etc.) are bases for legitimization of neopatrimonial regimes. This argument has paved the way for other scholars like Medard[4], Bratton & Van de Walle[5], Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel[6], and Bach[7], to

[1] Max Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology.* Edited by G. & Wittich, C. Roth. (Berkeley, Calfornia, USA: University of California Press,1978).
[2] Samuel N. Eisenstadt. *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrominialism.* (London: Sage Publication,1973)
[3] Peter Pawelka. *Herrschaft und Entwicklung im Nahen Osten: Ägypten.* (Heidelberg: C.F.Müller: 1985).
[4] Jean Francois Medard. "Patrimonialism, Neo-patrimonialism and the Study of the Post-colonial State in Subsaharian Africa." *International Development Studies* 17 (1996): 76-97.
[5]Michael Bratton & Nicholas Van de Walle. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

address the role of clientelism and patronage relations in constructing neopatrimonial regimes. Thus, in addition to the personal patrimonial power, clientelism and patronage started to be seen as a *sine qua non* for the neopatrimonial regimes through which patrimonial power is able to penetrate the state and the society and thereby maintain its personal control.

Other scholars like Snyder and Brownlee, focu on the possibility of transition from this type of regime. Snyder, pioneers in his study[8], arguing that besides the revolutionary transition, 'military coup, non-revolution transition to civil war, ongoing stability' are also possible outcomes of transition from neopatrimonial regimes. Building on Snyder's work, Brownlee adds the non-transition as another possible outcome, in which the regime 'threatened to breakdown, but is not been forced from power'[9]. Both Snyder and Brownlee have emphasized the role of hard-liners as a variable in fostering the neopatrimonial regimes' durability.

Although the vast majority of the regimes in the Middle East share obvious personalization and patrimonial features with established clientelism and patronage relations, the neopatrimonial conceptualization remains limited in the literature. Pawelka's study of the role of the martial-rewarding in the Egyptian case of neopatrimonialism is one of the rare studies in this regard. Other academics like Hinnebusch have mentioned the concept of neopatrimonialism as a "combination between modern and traditional power technique and domination", yet they do not apply it as an integral conceptual framework to analyze Middle Eastern regimes. Thus, it seems that the neopatrimonial framework could help fill a gap in Middle Eastern Studies and particularly in the study of the Arab states' regimes.

The second chapter starts by examining and discussing the literature on the authoritarian Assad regime and the various conceptualizations used to describe it. The chapter then moves on to analyze the Assad regime and its structure within the

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[6] Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept". *GIGA Working Paper* no. 16 (2006),

[7] Daniel C. Bach. "Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism: Comparative Trajectories and Readings." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics,* 49, no. 3 (2011): 275–294.

[8] Richard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships." *Comparative Politics.* 24, no. 4 (1992): 379-399.

[9] Jason Brownlee.. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes". *Studies in Comparative International Development.* 37, no. 3 (2002): 53-63.

neopatrimonialism framework. The chapter argues that the neopatrimoniality of the Syrian regime is based on three millstones; the personalization of the regime, the patronage networks and the clientelism.

While some scholars like Van Dam[10] overemphasize the role of Alawism in constructing and maintaining the Assad regime, others like Hinnebusch have used the populist-authoritarianism, upgrading-authoritarianism and post-populist authoritarianism conceptual frameworks to analyze and explore the Assad regime, and thus have focused more on the mechanisms of ruling, neglecting the personal motivation of the patron which represents the core as the main driver for the political and economic transformations and upgrading of the authoritarian regimes. Hereby, neopatrimonialism seems to present a more integral and explanatory framework for the Assad regime and similar regimes.

Under the subtitle of personalization of the Syrian regime, the chapter tries to lay down the historical process and mechanisms used to personalize the regime under Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, by using the personal clique and the imposed cult of personality. In the core of Assad's consolidation strategy, his personal power functions the role of the loyal clique, whose members are responsible for maintaining tight control of the state's apparatuses, and in particular the security apparatuses and the army. Personalizing the security branches and the army has transformed them to what Weber had named 'the patrimonial troops'. In parallel to maintaining personal control over the state, Assad's cult of personality has been constructed in the public domain and the ideational realm, transforming Syria to Suriyet'ul Assad - Assad's Syria.

Following this argument, the chapter examines the dual patronage relations that the Assad regime has utilized in order to penetrate the bureaucratic realm and society; Alawite patronage and Baath Party patronage. The patronage networks among Alawites and the Baath Party, which were arranged in a hierarchical manner with the patron on top, have enabled the patron to penetrate the state and the society. In the same context, the chapter evaluates clientelism as another mechanism which

[10] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

functions in the patrimonial penetration processes, through which the patrimonial power was able to reach out the economic domain. However, this chapter also points to the change that occurs after Bashar's rising to power, and argues that Bashar's era witnessed a trend of patrimonialization of the economic domain by the patrimonial power and associated loyal businessmen. Thus the patrimonial power under Bashar has taken a step forward to widen its penetration by patrimonializing the economic domain which was under Hafez Al-Assad through clientelism. The thesis claims that the expansion of the penetration process is inevitable in these kinds of the regimes.

The second chapter ends by assessing the robustness of the Assad regime, taking into consideration the neopatrimoniality of the regime and its characteristics which affect the regime's durability. Applying Snyder's and Brownlee's variables to assess the durability of the Assad regime, the thesis concludes that the pre-existing characteristics of the Assad regime and the high level of patrimonial penetration of the state and society imply that any attempt to realize a forced political transition in Syria would lead to one of these outcomes; stability, re-stability and uncertain revolution. Taking into account the distinct role of the hard-liners in both the regime and the opposition's camps, the thesis argues that any possibility of political transition would be jeopardized and thus the outcome in Syria would be a swinging situation between re-stability of the regime and unrealized revolution.

In the third chapter, following a synopsis of the Syrian conflict, the role of neopatrimonialism and its networks in shaping the Syrian conflict is assessed. The chapter claims that the personalization of the Syrian regime has also impacted the personalization of the Syrian conflict. The personal clique which was instrumentalized in order to maintain the tight control of the state, has continued to guarantee the patron's personal control over the patrimonial troops and has played the role of hard-liners, which strengthened the durability of the regime. However, it has pushed for a more militarized trajectory of the conflict, and has jeopardized any possibility of negotiated transition. On the other hand, the cult was radicalized on the both sides, and hereby affected the radicalization of the conflict altogether. The

pre-existing cultish politics arguably fostered the polarization of the conflict to its extremes.

The chapter argues that the patronage networks, which had been used to penetrate the bureaucracy and society started to be used and mobilized by the patrimonial power following the uprising in order to counter it and the insurgency. It is argued that the mobilization of the patronage networks play a role in pushing for a higher degree of polarization and militarization in the conflict, and has a vital role in dragging Syria into the tunnel of civil war. However, the chapter refers to the limited mobilization capacity of the patronage networks, which makes the regime dependent on foreign proxy militias like Hizbollah. The limitation of the mobilization ability of the Baath Party's patronage networks caused partly by the retreat of the importance of the party under Bashar's rule, raises serious questions about the future of the party following the uprising and about the ability of the Assad regime to generate more patronage networks replacing the aging party, and balancing Alawite patronage influence.

The chapter also tries to evaluate the functioning of clientelism and its relations throughout the conflict, and discusses the impact of these relations on the trajectory of the conflict. The thesis claims that clients have invested in the longevity of the Assad regime, and thus have fed regime hard-liners and thereby jeopardized the possibility of political transition. This chapter concludes that if the patronage and clientelism relations had been less established in Syria, the possible outcomes of the conflict would have been more diversified.

This thesis tries to understand the Syrian conflict and its dynamics focusing on the Assad regime as the main actor on the ground that influenced the trajectory of the conflict. The neopatrimonial conceptualization has been used as a framework in this regard to explore the anatomy of the regime and its relations with the state and the society. The thesis shows that the neopatrimonialism as a framework would be useful to explore the authoritarian regime in the Middle East and the Arab states, and also to analyze the aftermath and possible outcomes of any attempt of forced transformation.

Applying the neopatrimonialism framework on authoritarian regimes by assessing the level of patrimonial power consolidation and penetration of the state and the society would be useful in studying the possible outcomes of an authoritarian regime. It helps in predicting the possible attitude of a regime and thus the possible trajectory and the outcomes of the conflict which would take place.

The thesis affirms that the pre-existing typology and features of a regime will have a vital role in influencing and shaping the outcome of any possible forced transition and conflict. This relation between the regime typology and the outcomes of the conflict should be examined also in other cases including in the Arab states which witnessed the so called Arab Spring. Without neglecting the other factors of external interventions, the thesis shows also that the regime typology itself determines the regime's vulnerability to external intervention, and that this pre-existing typology and features would even influence the opposition forces by shaping the pre-existing opposition domain.

CHAPTER 2

NEOPATRIMONIALISM

2.1. Patrimonialism

The literature on the conceptualization of patrimonialism and other related concepts like the neopatrimonialism, can be traced to the German sociologist Max Weber, particularly, to his famous book 'Economy and Society, an Outline of Interpretive Sociology'. In his book, while discussing 'The Types of Legitimate Domination', Weber speaks about three pure types of legitimate domination which may be based on rational, traditional and charismatic foundations.[11]

Under the concept of traditional domination, Weber states that "Patrimonialism, and in the extreme case, Sultanism… tend to arise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master … the primary external support of patrimonial power is provided by slaves (who are often branded), coloni and conscripted subjects, but also by mercenary bodyguards and armies (patrimonial troops)." Weber here claims that the practice of the armies in a patrimonial order is "designed to maximize the solidarity of interest between master and staff"[12]. He also identifies personalization as the criterion for patrimonial domination.

The importance of the army's role in the formation of the patrimonial regime[13], was discussed by Weber in another part of the book. Weber reaffirms the

[11] Max Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology.* Edited by G. & Wittich, C. Roth. (Berkeley, Calfornia, USA: University of California Press,1978), 215.

[12] Ibid, 331-332.

[13] In this study, we accept the definition of the regime adopted by Chehabi and Linz; *Regime is the patterns of allocation, use, and abuse of power in polity*. Which encompass more than the political

personalized character of the patrimonial army and he argues that the 'patrimonial army' is a purely personal army of the prince and hence at his disposal against his own political subjects.[14] Herein, Weber stresses the crucial role that the military force plays in the patrimonial regime and its functionality against political subjects.

Max Weber under another chapter from the same book, 'Patriarchalism and Patrimonialism',, discusses patrimonialism and the patrimonial state in more detail and addresses the administrative dimension of this domination. Weber argues under the subtitle of The Patrimonial State that "Originally patrimonial administration was adopted to the satisfaction of purely personal, primarily private households' needs of master"[15]. Weber claims that 'The two powers which we consider specifically political: military and judicial authority, are exercised without any restraint by the master as components of his patrimonial power.[16]

Regarding the officialdom and bureaucratic structure under patrimonialism, Weber states that 'the position of the patrimonial official derives from his purely personal submission to the ruler' and "his position vis-a-vis the subjects is merely the external aspect of this relation". He adds that "even when the political official is not a personal household dependent, the ruler demands unconditional administrative compliance. For the patrimonial official's loyalty to his office (Amtstreue) is not an impersonal commitment (Diensttreue) to impersonal tasks which define its extent and its content, it is rather a servant's loyalty based on strictly, personal relationship to the ruler and on an obligation of fealty which in principle permits no

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institutions in democracy and less than the comprehensive structure of domination in totalitarian systems. (Chehabi & Linz, 1998)

[14] Alfred Stepan & Juan Linz, J. "Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring"". *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15-31.

[15] Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology,* 1013.

[16] Ibid.

limitation".[17] Hereby, we can see that the personalization of the regime and its branches; judiciary, administrative and in particular its army, distinguish patrimonialism. Weber also stresses the importance of the loyalty of officials in this regard.On the other hand, the discussion on the role of patrimonialism in the legislative branch is lacking. However, this is understandable when one takes into consideration the fact that democracy and legislative bodies had not been developed at the time when Weber was writing his book, and that personalization in its extreme, understandably exemplifies itself in the case of the legislation through the elimination of the legislative bodies as a whole.

One of the earliest attempts to bring back the Weberian concept of patrimonialism to the literature was made in 1968 by Roth, who tried to adopt this concept in the study of third world countries. Roth mentions two types of patrimonialism (mainly in Africa): traditional patrimonialism and personal rulership patrimonialism, which he claimed to be based on loyalties that do not require any belief in the ruler's unique personal qualification, but are inextricably linked to material incentives and rewards[18]. Hence, it could be argued that the contribution of Roth was his representation of material-based personal rulership patrimonialism in contrast to the Weberian traditional patrimonialism. This material-based patrimonialism seems to prevail over traditional patrimonialism in contemporary times, considering the retreat of traditional households and the increased number of personalized authoritarian regimes.

Although Weber had coined the concept of 'patrimonialism', the definition and features of this typology, as he presents it, is generally unable to formulate a framework to analyze contemporary regimes. This is because it fails to take into consideration the collapse of traditional kinship based ruling, the development and expansion of the state apparatus and the increasing popular demand for participation in rule. These have led to the expansion of the bureaucratic domain since Weber's

[17] ibid, 1030-31.
[18] Guenther Roth. "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States." *World Politics*, 20, no. 2 (1968): 194-206.

time. Hence, given the differences between modern states in which the patrimonial logic prevails, and the traditional patrimonial systems Weber had in mind, the term 'neopatrimonialism' has come to be widely used.[19]

2.2. Neopatrimonialism

Neopatrimonialism as is a relatively new conceptualization regarding the categorization of regimes. It represents a continuation and modification of Weber's patrimonialism. The term can be considered a creative mix of two Weberian types of domination: patrimonial domination and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Indeed, neopatrimonialism infers a "dualistic situation, in which the state is characterized by patrimonialisation, as well as by bureaucratization"[20]

The concept of neopatrimonialism was coined by sociologist Eisenstadt in his book 'The Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism', published in 1973. Eisenstadt's neopatrimonialism is a modified conception of Weber's patrimonial form of ruling, it is a mixed system, in which elements of patrimonial and rational-bureaucratic rule co-exist and are sometimes interwoven.[21]

Despite being a relatively newly coined concept, neopatrimonialism became commonly used in political science. A survey of the International Political Science Abstracts indicates a wide range of articles and monographs that refer in one way or another to the concept in a whole variety of different contexts.[22] Although the concept seems to receive more circulation in the area of African Studies, it has also

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[19] H. E. Chehabi & Juan J. Linz. "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Role." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, by Juan J. Linz & H. E. Chehabi, 3-25. (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 4.

[20] Daniel C. Bach. "Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism: Comparative Trajectories and Readings." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics,* 49, no. 3 (2011): 275–294, 277.

[21] Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept". *GIGA Working Paper* no. 16 (2006).

[22] Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept". *GIGA Working Paper* no. 16 (2006), 5.

been used in studies of Latin America, South East Asia, Central Asia and Russia.[23] But, it is important to state here that the neopatrimonialism has less attraction among academics and scholars of Middle Eastern Studies.

Eisenstadt, in his book, argues that many modern political systems have characteristics that differ from the modern 'nation state', and thus need to be classified under a new conceptualization. He identifies three specific themes on the subject of neopatrimonialism, or what he also calls 'modern patrimonialism'; distinctiveness of the center and its relation to the periphery; definition of boundaries; the pattern of political organization.[24]

The distinctiveness of the center and its relation to the periphery, can be understood when taking into consideration pre-modern patrimonial rule, in which the patrimonial dynasties were faced with critical problems concerning the bureaucracy as well as with land-owning families. This pre-modern patrimonial structure produced a political see-saw between the political center represented by the royal family and the bureaucracy on one hand, and notable families and dissident tribes on the other.[25] However, this see-saw relation seems to end in favor of the center in neopatrimonialist regimes. In other words, the patron in modern neopatrimonial regimes has the upper hand over other power centers (either land-owning families or notables), while in traditional patrimonialism the patron may need to take into consideration players other than himself/herself. Interestingly, landowners and notables lost their power to the bureaucratic establishment, which expanded in the modern states, paving the way for a new power distribution, in which the patron either preserves his position (in monarchies) or even tries to

[23] Daniel C. Bach. "Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism: Comparative Trajectories and Readings." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics,* 49, no. 3 (2011): 275–294.

[24] Samuel N. Eisenstadt. *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrominialism.* (London: Sage Publication,1973)

[25] Bryan S. Turner & Kamaluldeen Mohamed Nasir, eds. *The Sociology of Islam: Collected Essays of Bryan S. Turner.* (Fernham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 66.

penetrate the bureaucratic domain, thereby paving the way for the emergence of neopatrimonial regimes.

Interesting to notice here is that although the modernization of states and political domination has decreased the absolute power of the patron, it also widened and rooted his/her authority at the expense of other shareholders through the centralization process. The gap that had been left by the demolition of landowners and notables was arguably filled by the bureaucratic domination, however, patrons were able to penetrate this domain and personalize the bureaucracy. Arguably, some patrons in modern neopatrimonial republics enjoy far more domination and authority than had the pre-modern kings in their patrimonial kingdoms.

On the other hand, although Eisenstadt's characteristic "pattern of political organization, struggle and change within them" translates into nothing more than a "trend" in authoritarian rule, in the modern conceptualization it seems that Eisenstadt's attempt to re-conceptualize the patrimonial typology of these regimes and make adjustments for modern regimes has remained incomplete,as Erdmann and Engel tried to argue,[26]. For example he does not adequately address the place which the modern bureaucracy occupied in contrast with the formation of neopatrimonial regimes. While Eisenstadt makes it very clear that the term patrimonialism is very useful for the analysis of modern societies, albeit appended with the prefix "neo-" or the adjective "modern", he skipped the crucial relationship between patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination[27]. This gap would be filled by other scholars, who would evaluate the neopatrimonial regime as a mix of Weber's ideas of traditional patrimonial and bureaucratic domination, and thus address the role of the modern bureaucracy and state-society relationship within the neopatrimonial context.

Another conceptualization and usage of the idea of neopatrimonialism was utilized by Peter Pawelka in 1985. Pawelka argues that 'the two bases of

[26] Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept". *GIGA Working Paper* no. 16 (2006),12.

[27] Ibid.

legitimation in neopatrimonial regimes are traditional loyalty (aspects of family heritage and religion) and material rewards (allocation of jobs, grants, licenses etc.).[28] This dual-type in neopatrimonialism seems to be a step forward from Roth's two types of 'traditional patrimonialism and the personal rulership patrimonialism' [29] . However, the latter 'material rewards neopatrimonialism' connects studies of neopatrimonialism to political-economic rentier approaches.[30] Hereby, Pawelka has introduced a new dimension to the study of neopatrimonialism. The material rewards of jobs and grants could be addressed in the modern state's relations by analyzing the role of the clientelism and its operation in modern states, the concept which later has used by many scholars to talk about what they saw as an inseparable part of neopatrimonialism; the relationship between thepatronand his clients.

Bratton and van de Walle[31] suggested another substantive approach to the conceptualization of neopatrimonial regimes, with particular emphasis on material rewards based neopatrimonial regimes. They identified three "variables", which are said to be the three informal political institutions typical of neopatrimonial regimes: Firstly, "presidentialism" which here means the "systematic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual, who resists delegating all but the most trivial decision-making tasks". Secondly, "systematic clientelism" which implies that the president or "strongman" relies on award of personal favors, e.g. the distribution of public sector jobs and public resources through licenses, contracts

[28] Peter Pawelka. *Herrschaft und Entwicklung im Nahen Osten: Ägypten.* (Heidelberg: C.F.Müller: 1985), 24.

[29] Guenther Roth. "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States." *World Politics*, 20, no. 2 (1968): 194-206.

[30] Andre Bank & Thomas Richter. "Neopatrimonialism in the Middle East and North Africa, Overview, Critique and Alternative Conceptualization." *Neopatrimonialism in Various World Regions".* (Hamburg: GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2010) 1-10.

[31] Michael Bratton & Nicholas Van de Walle. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

and projects. Thirdly, the "use of state resources for political legitimation"[32] which is closely associated with clientelism and patronage relations.

2.2.1. Neopatrimonialism's Working Mechanisms: Penetration Through Patronage and Clientelism Relations

The clearest definition of neopatrimonialism was made by Erdmann and Engel, who defined it as "a mixture of two, partly interwoven, types of domination that co-exist: namely, patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination."[33] Erdmann and Engel argue that, in contrast to patrimonialism, under which the relation between the ruled and the ruler is fully personalized, under neopatrimonialism the distinction between the private and the public exists and is accepted, at least formally. In this regard Erdmann and Engel see patrimonialism as a hybrid type of domination in which the 'two systems exist next to each other, the patrimonial of the personal relations, and the legal rational of the bureaucracy. Naturally these spheres are not isolated from each other; quite to the contrary, they permeate each other; or more precisely, the patrimonial penetrates the legal-rational system and twists its logic, functions, and effects'.[34]

By accepting this definition of neopatrimonialism, we can say that this mixed type of domination allows for the patrimonial domination to penetrate into the bureaucratic realm, but at the same time the distinction between the private and the public domain will remain, at least formally. Thus, two role systems or logics coexist, the patrimonial of personal relations and the bureaucratic or impersonal legal-rational relations.[35] This penetration of the patrimonial domination into the

[32] ibid, 63.

[33] Erdmann & Engel . "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept", 18.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990)

bureaucratic realm will lead to the establishment of a systematic clientelism, which will be a distinguished characteristic of neopatrimonialism regimes.

The penetration of the patrimonial relations, that are linked and controlled by the patron, which is a president, to the bureaucratic realm of the modern bureaucracy also represents the ability of the 'modern patrons' to preserve their patrimonial control over the state regardless of the increasing demand of the people for participation and expansion of the bureaucracy. The modus operandi of domination and the relations between the patron and the society in neopatrimonial regimes, though differing in its nuances from one regime to another, in general centralizes around the patronage mechanisms and clientelism, which both are both overseen by and linked to the patron. Thus, 'clientelism and patronage are at the heart of patrimonialism' as Medard argues.[36]

Bank & Richter illustrated the penetration of patronage relations into the bureaucratic realm, the manner in which systematic clientelism is established, and the way it works in neopatrimonial regimes as such: "Personalism points to the fact that neopatrimonial rulers recruit members of their political elite primarily on the criteria of personal (political) loyalty. A ruler appoints elite members as personal advisors or to certain key positions within the bureaucracy and the state economy. These (newly) appointed elite members then themselves appoint their own personal clients to major positions within the political or economic unites they have been entrusted with. The latter also try to bring into the system as much as they can of their own personal clients."[37]

Another aspect to be found in neopatrimonial regimes and could be considered one of the consequences of this personalism and patrimonial penetration to the bureaucratic realm is the elite pluralism or competition, which means that all elite members, even those on different levels of the model, compete among each

[36] Jean Francois Medard. "Patrimonialism, Neo-patrimonialism and the Study of the Post-colonial State in Subsaharian Africa." *International Development Studies* 17 (1996): 76-97, 88.

[37] Andre Bank & Thomas Richter. "Neopatrimonialism in the Middle East and North Africa, Overview, Critique and Alternative Conceptualization." *Neopatrimonialism in Various World Regions".* (Hamburg: GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2010) 1-10, 4.

other for the ruler's personal favor. Thereafter, this elite competition will produce a certain degree of power balance.[38] The elite competition and its resultant balance of power play a crucial role in the consolidation, and thus the survival, of the ruler by enhancing client dependence on the patron. Thus, in one way or another, the neopatrimonial regime upholds these interrelated patron-client relations.

In his article 'Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties' Alex Weingrod evaluates the role and the emergence of patrimonialism in certain political contexts, and applies the concept to the political parties.[39] Weingord argues that patronage is founded on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients, in which each needs the other. However, he adds that in patronage, the patron has the power to provide some benefits (such as influence, political allegiance, benefits) which the client desires. Thus he stresses the inequality in power between patrons and clients.[40] Weingord also introduces how patronage relations work in the collective context, as in the case of political parties , in which he argues that patronage refers to ways in which "party politicians distribute public jobs or special favors in exchange for electoral support", thus, "political party leaders seek to turn public institutions and public resources to their own ends"[41]. He also argues that party-directed patronage is associated with the expanding scope and general proliferation of state activities, and also with the growing integration of the village, city and state[42]. he explains this by referring to the idea that patron-client ties serve in such systems as 'a kind of mediation mechanism'. The role of party patronage in consolidating neopatrimonial

[38] Ibid.

[39] Alex Weingord. "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties." *Comparative Studies in Soceity and History*. 10, no. 4 (1968) 337-400.

[40] Ibid, 377-378.

[41] Ibid, 380.

[42] Ibid, 381.

points to the notion that most neopatrimonial regimes are either single-party or dominant-party regimes headed by the patron.

On the other hand, Erdmann and Engel, who treat clientelism as well as patronage as an integral part of neopatrimonialism, argue that clientelism is an exchange or brokerage of specific services and resources for political support in the form of votes. It involves, as they argue, a relationship between unequals, in which the major benefits accrue to the patron; redistributive effects are considered to be very limited.[43]They also distinguish between clientelism and patronage, and see the latter as politically motivated distribution of 'favors' not to individuals but essentially to groups.

Patronage, as Erdmann and Engel argue, is "part of high-level politics and an important instrument in creating and maintaining political cohesion, i.e. a coalition of ethnic elites which is needed to form and support a government or a political party. In contrast, clientelism concerns individuals and, thus, based on personal relations. It involves the personal network of a politician, but it also occurs within and around the bureaucracy on all levels"[44]. Herein, Erdmann and Engel's approach to the issue of patronage relations as high-level politics targeting social groups more than individuals, seems to resemble Alex Weingrod's conceptualization of the patronage of political parties[45].

In other words, while clientelism would be open to the all individuals within society, patronage would be specified in favor for one group, which will be advantaged in this case. In this situation, patrimonial domination will be occurring through two channels, one open to the individuals regardless their background or belonging through clientelism, while the other is already given and confined within one social political group through patronage.

[43] Erdmann & Engel . "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept", 20.

[44] Ibid, 21.

[45] Alex Weingord. "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties."

Thus, as it is illustrated in Figure 1, Weberian patrimonialism is based on traditional domination and is centralized around the personalization of the army and the state altogether. On the other hand, modern neopatrimonial domination combines patrimonial domination (either traditional or martial-rewarding based) and bureaucratic domination through penetration of the bureaucratic realm by way of both patronage relations and systematic clientelism, resulting in more complex and interrelated characteristics in which the state apparatus is personalized through patrimonial penetration, though the distinction of the public and private domains continues to formally exist.

Although neopatrimonialism provides a coherent conceptualization to address and analyze one type of contemporary personalized authoritarian regime, it is important to state here that neopatrimonialism has also received some critiques, mainly because of its neglect of the potential impact of, for instance, external influences or the role of identity, political discourse and ideology on regime stability.[46] Neopatrimonial as well as Weber's concept of patrimonialism seems to focus more on the social and political structure of the state and political domination, more than its ideological and ideational realm. Thus, neopatrimonialism does not give importance to the role of ethnicity, sectarianism, and ideology although these factors would play a distinctive role in the consolidation of patrimonial power, as well as in mechanisms useful in facilitating patronage-clientelism relations.

[46] Andre Bank. "Rents Cooptation and Economized Discourse: three Dimensions of Political Rule in Jordan, Morocco and Syria." *Journal of Mediterraneam Studies* 14, no. 1 (2004) 155-180.

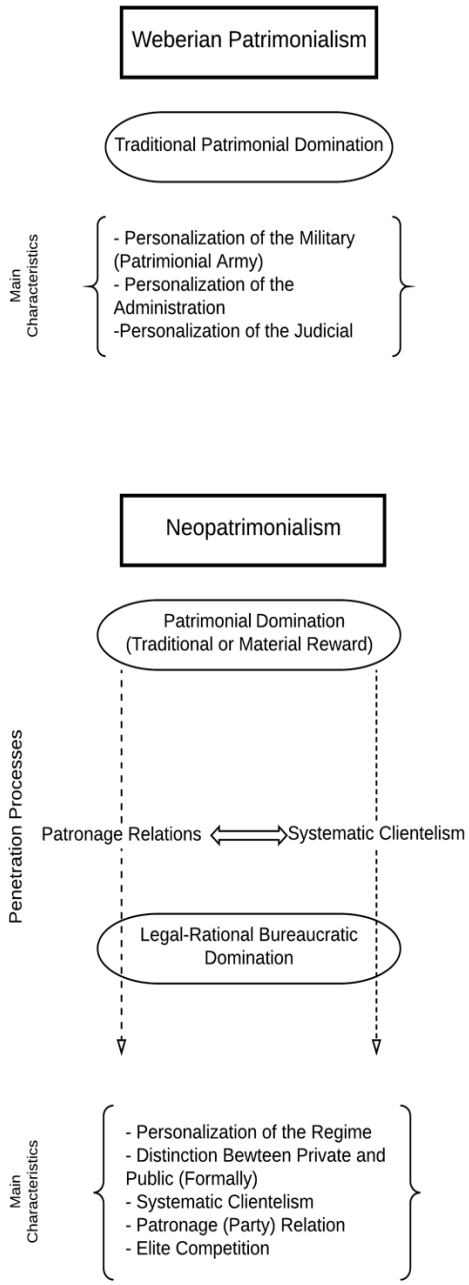

Figure 1: Comparing Weberian Patrimonialism with the Modern Neopatrimonialism

2.2.2. Neopatrimonial Regimes: Transition versus Non-Transition

The literature on neopatrimonialism also provides many explanations on the breakdown, re-stabilization, survival and the transition of neopatrimonial regimes. One of the early studies addressing this issue was Richard Snyder's 'Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships'[47]. In his article, Snyder refutes earlier claims that "neopatrimonial dictatorships are especially vulnerable to overthrow by revolutionary movements". In contrast, Snyder claims that "a military coup, a non-revolutionary transition to civil rule, and ongoing stability are also possibilities". He introduced "three variables, which play a central role in accounting for alternative transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships: the institutional autonomy of the military, the strategies and relative organizational strengths of moderate groups opposed to the dictator, and the strategies and relative organizational strengths of revolutionary groups opposed to the dictator", he adds that "Three critical relationships shape these variables: the relationship of the ruler to the military, the relationship of the ruler to domestic elites, and the relationship of domestic actors (ruler, military, and opposition groups) to foreign powers"[48]. The importance of the military and its autonomy in the transition from such regimes would explain why many scholars who have approached the topic of authoritarianism in the Arab World have primarily done so through the study of the military in politics.[49]

[47] Richard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships." *Comparative Politics*. 24, no. 4 (1992): 379-399.
[48] Ibid, 380.
[49] Jill Crystal. "Authoritarianism and its Adversaries in the Arab World." *World Politics*. 46, no. 2 (1994): 262-289, 266.

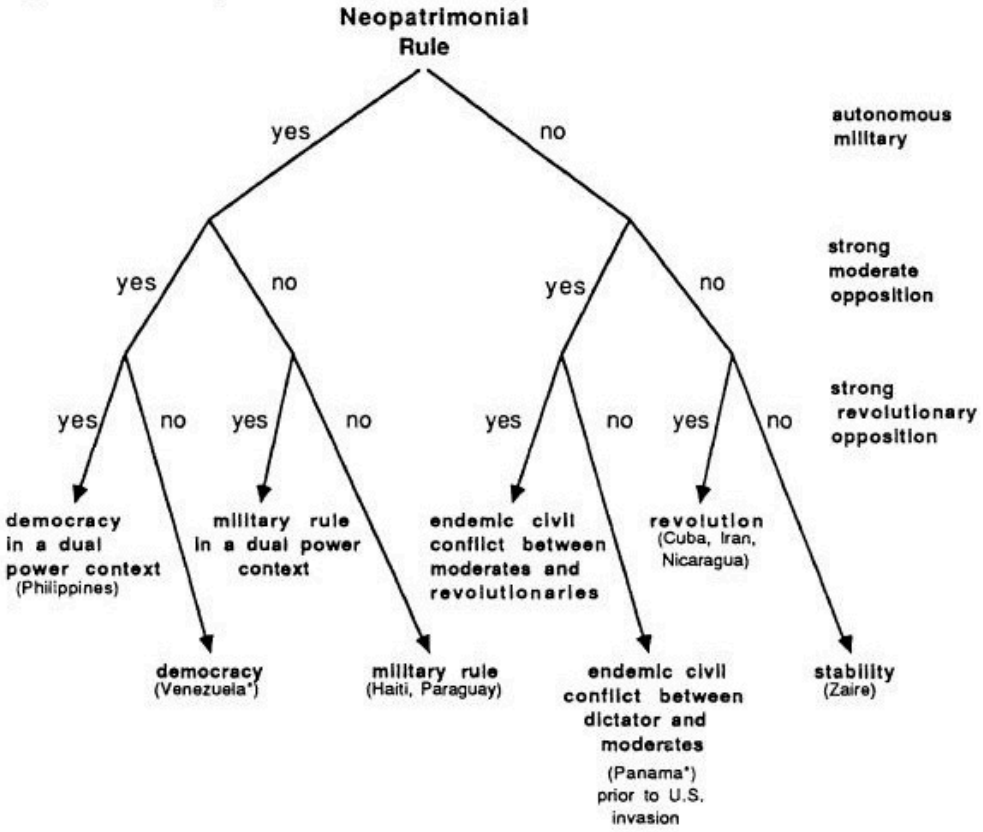

Figure 2: Snyder's Illustration of the Possible Political Trajectories of the Neopatrimonial Regimes.

Regarding the 'relationship of the ruler to domestic elites and domestic actors', it is best analyzed by determining the level of patrimonial penetration into the state apparatuses (including army), and into society as a whole. The relationship of the ruler to the military is also closely associated with the level of patrimonial penetration of the state. About the third variable 'the relationship of domestic actors (ruler, military and opposition groups) to foreign powers', Snyder argues that the more the ruler is dependent on foreign powers, the more he will be vulnerable to being overthrown. He interestingly claims that "When the dictator is heavily dependent on a superpower patron which can identify and support an acceptable

(and cooperative) alternative, that patron may be able to use its leverage to remove the dictator from office in times of crisis and to ease the acceptable opposition into power". [50] Hereby, when the patrimonial dictator is less dependent on foreign powers, the leverage that those foreign powers enjoy over the regime becomes more limited, and thus their ability to intervene will be restricted to supporting the opposition or to intervene directly to bring down the regime, as USA did in its invasion of Panama of 1989-1990 to remove General Manuel Noriega, as well as the Iraq invasion in 2003 to remove Saddam Hussein.

Building upon Richard Snyder's study of the transition from neopatrimonialism, Jason Brownlee in his article 'And Yet They Persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes' explores the role of the 'hard-liner' in the regime. He argues that "the extensive patrimonialism can sustain a regime so long as superpower patrons do not inhibit the use of repression". [51] Emphasizing the role of hard-liners in regime change and stability, Brownlee claims that there is another case that Snyder did not address, neither in his early article[52], nor in his later book chapter 'Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes, Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives', in which he reasserts his prior possible scenarios regarding the transition from patrimonial regimes; political stability, revolution, military dictatorship, and civil rule[53]. Brownlee argues that the case of 'non-transition' for neopatrimonial regimes, which "threatened breakdown, but did not force the regime from power" is another possible scenario [54]. Brownlee herein

[50] Richard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships", 385.

[51] Brownlee, Jason. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes". *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 37, no. 3 (2002): 53-63.

[52] Richard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships".

[53] Richard Snyder. "Paths Out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Stuctural and Voluntarist Perspective." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, by H.E. Chehabi & J. Linz, 49-81. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1998)

[54] Brownlee, Jason. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes", 40.

differentiates between crisis prevention (deterrence), which guarantees political stability, and crisis management (re-stabilization), which ends with non-transition, and hereby emphasizes the latter. Brownlee following Snyder, calculates the hard-liner variable by weighing the extent of patrimonial penetration of state and society and dependence on external powers, concluding that 'hard-liner capacity is 'high' to the extent that the leader penetrates either state or society extensively and depends little upon a foreign power'.[55]Hence, Brownlee claims that the 'higher' the hard-liner potency variable is, the more stable the neopatrimonial regime will be.

In neopatrimonial regimes, stability competes change, thus determined by the level of patrimonial penetration of bureaucratic realm, which in turn effects the independence of the patron from the foreign powers, as Brownlee claims. Penetration of the state's institutions, which are especially vital in the study of regime change and continuity[56] is helping the patron not only in consolidation of his power, but also in preventing the state apparatus from acting outside his will, which is highly possible in the case of crisis particularly, if the regime is vulnerable to foreign intervention. With full control of the state institutions, and independence from foreign power influence, the patron will be free to suppress domestic opposition and counter any insurgency.

To sum up, the neopatrimonial typology is a modern adaptation of Weberian patrimonial rule, which belongs to the realm of authoritarian regimes. It represents a mixture of two types of domination that co-exist: namely, patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Neopatrimonialism develops when patrimonial relations penetrate the bureaucratic domain, through the mechanism of patronage and clientelism with the aim of controlling it in the interest of the patron, who is a president in most contemporary cases. Thus, clientelism and patronage relations are sine qua non for realizing neopatrimonialism. On the other hand, the neopatrimonial

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[55] Ibid, 41.

[56] Jason Brownlee. *Authoritarianism in the Age of Democratization* . (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

typology represents a useful framework in analyzing the stability of and possible transitions from authoritarian regimes. This type of regime seems to be less vulnerable to political transition. However, its resistance does not last forever. The result of such a transition varies from re-stabilization to the toppling of the regime. However, the framework of neopatrimonialism needs to be more clearly evaluated and developed in order to address other factors, mainly in the ideational realm, such as the role of ideology and political discourse.

2.3.Neopatrimonialism in the Middle East

It could be argued that almost all the regimes in the Middle East share an obvious authoritarian characteristic, although this authoritarianism differs in its types and the extent to which it is rooted, as well as in the way it shapes the state-society relations. The most shared feature in Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes is the degree of 'personalism', which illustrates itself in the personalization of the state and its apparatuses in favor of the patron, who would either be a king or an authoritarian president. This 'personalization' could be understood in the Kingdoms and Sheikhdoms where rule has evolved traditionally around a single household, hence it represents a kind of traditional neopatrimonial ruling type. The analysis and conceptualization of the other case of personalization of the state in the other non-kingdom or 'republican' regimes in the Middle East may be more challenging.Herein, martial-rewarding patrimonial domination may come into play.

Following WWII, modern Middle Eastern states which had been formulated, at least in geographical sense, and ruled by mandate powers after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following WWI, had entered a process of independence and state building. However, the newly formulated entities were not fully developed states as understood in Weberian terms, particularly in the interwar period. As Saouli argues, they rather represented "social fields on which states form or de-form"[57]. These

[57] Adham Saouli. *The Arab State, Dilemmas of Late Formation.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 8.

social fields ultimately turned into states, but remained inefficient in fulfilling the functions of a modern nation state.

Thereafter, while some new 'states' were preserved, or in some cases established, as traditional kingdom-ship ruling as in the case of Saudi Arabia or the Hashemite Kingdom in Jordan, others experienced 'revolutions' which brought new 'military' elites to power, as in the case of Iraq, Libya and Syria. Nevertheless, Middle Eastern states continued to present a case of 'exceptionalism' against the 'democratization waves'. This includes the third wave of democratization unfolding in 1970s and 1980s, which could be argued to have continued until the so-called Arab Spring, which itself opened a new phase, its aftershocks yet to end. This exceptionalism is not exemplified not only by the survival of the traditional monarchies in the Middle East, but also by the resistance of the republican authoritarian regimes, and the robustness they have shown in the face of demands for political transition, to which the degree of patrimonialism in these regimes have contributed.

Excepting the fact that the clear majority of the regimes in the Middle East are authoritarian, scholars have differed over how to define this authoritarianism. Hence, they have offered different narratives and typologies for Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes. Among the typologies utilized to describe these regimes; sultanistic, populist authoritarian, bureaucratic authoritarian, [58] authoritarian-democratic hybrid[59] have been prominent in addition to traditional monarchies in scholarly studies.

Before the conception of neopatrimonialism, patrimonialism as a framework had attracted Middle East scholars and studies of politics and states in the Middle East in general. Interesting to note here is that Max Weber himself, who coined the origin concept of 'patrimonialism', had argued that Islamic institutions (which

[58] Russell E. Lucas. "Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middel Eastern Regime Type." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 36, no. 1 (2004): 103-119.

[59] Alfred Stepan & Juan Linz. "Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring"." *Journal of Democracy.* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15-31.

historically had been established in the Middle East region) had been dominated by a long history of patrimonialism, thus they were, he argues, incompatible with capitalism. [60] Weber's arguments on the patrimonial aspects of the Islamic social structure in his book[61], were central to his analysis of the contrast between feudal Europe and the patrimonial societies of the Middle East and Asia.[62] Weber's views of the Islamic institutions and empires were shared by Raymond Hinnebusch who argues that 'the Ottoman system was the antithesis of the European nation-state system. It was a patrimonial empire headed by a Sultan-Caliph'[63]. However, these arguments of the patrimonial nature of Middle Eastern institutions and politics address the pre-WWI structure.

More contemporary attempts to analyze the role of patrimonialism in the society and politics of the region was done by Nazih Ayubi in his famous book 'Over-Stating the Arab State, Politics and Society in the Middle East', in which he repeats that the patrimonial nature of the Middle Eastern state 'has been attributed to widespread agreement in the literature about the failure of the Arab state'[64]. Ayubi argues that "The patrimonial state is fairly advanced in terms of its staff and administrative unity, but it still … tied to the person of the absolute ruler and to the realm of prerogative and favoritism surrounding him"[65].

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[60] Bryan S. Turner & Kamaluldeen Mohamed Nasir, eds. *The Sociology of Islam: Collected Essays of Bryan S. Turner.* (Fernham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 24.

[61] Max Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology.*

[62] Bryan S. Turner & Kamaluldeen Mohamed Nasir, eds. *The Sociology of Islam: Collected Essays of Bryan S. Turner.* (Fernham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013),110.

[63] Raymond Hinnebucsh. *The International Politics of the Middle East.* (Manchester: Manschester University Press, 2003), 15.

[64] Ayubi, Nazih N.. *Over-stating the Arab State, Politics abd Soceity in the Middle East.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1995), 164.
[65] Ibid.

On the other hand, the application of the concept of neopatrimonialism in the academic study of Middle Eastern regimes, seems to be lacking in currentness and limited to few studies, compared, for example, to the use of this concept in African Studies. It is also interesting to note here, that the few studies which utilize the neopatrimonial typology for analyzing Middle Eastern regimes, come from German Academia.

One of the rare applications of neopatrimonialism in the Middle East, and in particular, its second material-rewarding typology was done by Peter Pawelka using Egypt as prime example[66]. Pawelka in his study of the Egyptian case illustrates the structure of the neopatrimonial regime in Egypt, which according to him, consists of at least six different social sectors (the military, the palace, the economy, societal organizations, the religious sector, and the bureaucracy) orbitting around the ruler (which is a president in this case) and defined by its distance to the himself.[67] From his perspective, Hinnebusch, in his assessment of the state formation process in the Middle East mentions that 'neopatrimonial strategies', which he argues 'is combining modern and traditional power techniques, were used to 'over-develop' state control structures at the expense of political participation'[68]. Hinnebusch's argument of the combining of modern and traditional power techniques goes in parallel with the combination of traditional and modern bureaucratic domination, and could be argued to be generated to achieve this domination.

However, despite the lack of academic studies using the neopatrimonial typology in the Middle Eastern political context, we can see that the two bases of the legitimation in neopatrimonialism (traditional loyalty and material based neopatrimonialism of Pawelka) exist in the region. On the one hand, there are the

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[66] Peter Pawelka. *Herrschaft und Entwicklung im Nahen Osten: Ägypten.* (Heidelberg: C.F.Müller: 1985),

[67] Andre Bank & Thomas Richter. "Neopatrimonialism in the Middle East and North Africa, Overview, Critique and Alternative Conceptualization." *Neopatrimonialism in Various World Regions".* (Hamburg: GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2010) 1-10, 3.

[68] Raymond Hinnebucsh. *The International Politics of the Middle East.* (Manchester: Manschester University Press, 2003), 75.

traditional monarchies in which rule and its legitimation is based on traditional loyalties to the household, as is in the case of the house of Saud in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the house of the Hashemites in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well as other Gulf Sheikdoms. Overall, in eight countries (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), monarchs are in power, not only in reign but also in rule[69]. On the other hand, the non-kingdom regimes in the region in general exhibit material reward-based neopatrimonial characteristics. In this regard, Jason Brownlee names four non-kingdom regimes; Syria (Assad's Syria), Iraq (Saddam Hussein's Iraq), Libya (Ghaddafi's Libya) and Tunisia (Bourguiba's Tunisia), which he describes as 'neopatrimonial regimes that maintained authoritarian control for decades despite formidable domestic insurgencies'.[70]

Neopatrimonialism, as mentioned earlier, has been closely associated with personalism and the personalization of the state and its branches. Personalism is 'the character' which distinguishes patrimonialism, and subsequently neopatrimonialism from other types of regimes and dominations, and obviously, it is deeply rooted in Middle Eastern politics. On the one hand, it is exemplified in the monarchies and sheikhdoms, in the persona of the monarch or the emir, who inherit this legitimacy thanks to membership in the respective households. Interestingly, the Middle East and in particular the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region may occupy the first rank, in comparison with other regions, in terms of number of traditional kingdoms , wherein the KSA, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE represent fully traditional patrimonial kingdoms or sheikhdoms. However, on the other hand, the personalism in the non-kingdom states seems to be more complexly established phenomena. In this regard, it is important to note, that the emergence of patrimonialism is a protracted process to achieve what Snyder describes as 'the extensive network of

[69] Russell E. Lucas. "Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization in a Middel Eastern Regime Type." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 36, no. 1 (2004): 103-119, 104.

[70] Brownlee, Jason. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes".

personal patronage' [71]. Important dimensions of personalism arethe tendency towards dynasticism, as well as the prominent role of family members, which are very common among the Middle Eastern regimes; not only among monarchies, but also among other authoritarian non-kingdom regimes. Dynasticism in its extreme case is exemplified itself by the inheritance of rule from father to son. This phenomenon was the case in Assad's regime in Syria and failed to be realized in Mubarak's Egypt, due to 2011 revolution.

Moreover, although neopatrimonialism as a conceptualization rarely exists in Middle Eastern Studies, its essential elements like patronage and clientelism have been widely used. Ayubi echoes that "patronage and clientelism have a long history and are elaborated vocabularies in the Middle East", although he did not agree that they are "inevitable outcomes of certain essential and permanent cultural ties".[72] Here, Ayubi seems to refute the claim of Hisham Sharabi in his theory of neo-patriarchy, which is associated to some extent with the patrimonialism. Sharabi in his book 'Neopatriarchy a Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society' traces the origin of the authoritarianism and deficiency in nation-building in Arab states to the old tribal formations and primordial loyalties.[73] Sharabi argues that what we have in the Arab Societies is what he calls neo-patriarchy, which is a distorted form of modernization, that has its roots in the link between patriarchy and colonial influence.[74] [75]. Like Sharabi, other Arab scholars use similar conceptions in dealing

[71] Richard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships", 379.

[72] Ayubi, Nazih N.. *Over-stating the Arab State, Politics abd Soceity in the Middle East.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1995), 168.

[73] Hisham Sharabi. *Neopatriarchy a Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[74] Mehran Tamadonfar,.. "Review of Neopatriarchy: A Thoery of Distorated Change in Arab Society." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 26, no.1 (1994): 170-171.

[75] Ayubi's disagreement with Sharabi, exemplified the competition of two broad approaches, in the literature on the state and the regimes in the Middle East, which both aim to examine the origins of

with the question of authoritarianism in the Arab World. Such examples include 'the Modern Despotism' of Yasin al-Hafiz, and 'the Modern Sultanistic State' of Azmi Bishara, Ghassan Salame and Halim Barakat.[76]

As mentioned earlier, Ayubi admitted that clientelism has a long history in the Middle East, however, he stresses that the political factor is important in making clientelism significant and even quasi-structural.[77] Interestingly, Ayubi repeats in the same book that clientelism and patronage are not necessarily an alternative to the bureaucratic domination in state-building. Rather, he argues that patronage and bureaucratic domination can go hand in hand[78]. He discusses the concept of corporatism, which he considers to be more advanced than patronage and clientelism, arguing that individuals and classes do not interact with the state directly, but through intermediaries.[79]

On the other hand, Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou while analyzing the roles of incumbent Arab elites, provides an explanation of the emergence of clientelism through ongoing political change in the Arab world. They argue that 'in the recent history of the Arab world, independence and coups provided access to resources for those elites connected to the groups responsible for political change. Subsequently, as the elites established themselves and continue to grow, nepotism and clientelism

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political dynamics in the region: political cultural and political economy. While the political cultural focuses on the region's religion and cultural values, it emphasizes 'what is missing in Arab culture, which would otherwise have made the region more compatible to modern nations of the state, democracy or nationalism'. The political economy approach 'shifts the cause towards socio-economic factors, such as class and/or oil rent'. (Saouli 2012, 2-3).

[76] Jad al-Kareem al-Jeba'i. "al-Bunya al-Tasalutiyya lil-Nizam al-Suri, al-Nash'a wal-Tatawwur wal-Maal." In *Halfiyat al-Thawra, Dirasat Suriyye*, 189-242. (Bairut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013), 162.

[77] Ayubi, Nazih N.. *Over-stating the Arab State, Politics abd Soceity in the Middle East.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1995), 169.

[78] Ayubi, Nazih N.. *Over-stating the Arab State, Politics abd Soceity in the Middle East.* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1995), 183.

[79] Ibid, 184.

became the most common mechanism'. Here Brichs and Lampridi-Kemou present the emergence and working of clientelism as a subsequence of the ongoing political change.[80]

Ellen Lust evaluates clientelism in Middle Eastern politics in her article 'Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East', and associates it in a fascinating way with legislative election. Lust claims that legislative elections in most Middle Eastern countries are just a 'competitive clientelism'. Refuting the idea that legislative elections are a process in which key decision-makers are chosen, policy-making is influences, or the rules of the game are called into question by the opposition. Rather, Lust suggests that legislative elections in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), represent a process of 'competitive clientelism by 'providing elites and their supporters an with the opportunity to compete over special access to a limited set of state resources that they can then distribute to their clients'[81]. Within the process of 'competitive clientelism', Lust argues that the parliamentarians, as in the case of Syria will work as mediators (or wasta), between the citizen and the state.[82]

In the presence of a well-established ruling party, and an obvious personalistic character, and in the absence of real elections that would bring the opposition to power, as is the case with most Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes, 'competitive clientelism' would turn into a mechanism that facilitates the emergence of 'systematic clientelism' by establishing a chain of clients as illustrated by Brichs

[80] Ferran Izquierdo Brichs & Athina Lampridi-Kemou. "Sociology of Power in Today's Arab World." In *Political Regimes in the Arab World*, by Ferran Izquierdo Brichs, 6-38. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 12.

[81] Ellen Lust. "Competitive Clientalism in the Middle East." *Journal of Democracy*. 20, no. 3, (2009): 122-135, 122.

[82] Ellen Lust. "Competitive Clientalism in the Middle East." *Journal of Democracy*. 20, no. 3, (2009): 122-135, 124.

and Lampridi-Kemou[83]. In such a case, ruling partys' politicians, who work as mediators, distribute public jobs or special favors in exchange for electoral support, establishing what Weingord defines as patronage relations in a political party[84]. Hence, this clientelism-associated patronage visible in the case of neopatrimonial regimes turns into the mechanism between citizens on the one side and the state which dominates through patrimonial power on the other.

Other scholars have applied neopatrimonialism and its outcomes in the Middle Eastern context to analyze the durability of authoritarian regimes in the region. Eva Bellin in her article 'The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective' claims that "prevalence of patrimonialism in state structures in the region plays a vital role in reinforcing the coercive apparatus capacity, by forming a strong personal linkage and building a loyal base through selective favoritism and discretionary patronage, and establishing a patrimonially organized security force. In this way, political and democratic reforms are prevented and longevity of authoritarian regimes are supported".[85] However, she argues that "the prevalence of patrimonialism is by no means exceptional to the region [Middle East]"[86].

After the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, Bellin revisited her claim in her earlier article, which had been published in 2004. In her newer article 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from Arab Spring' she reasserts the vital role of the 'coercive apparatus' (patrimonially organized security forces). Bellin, arguing that military capacity, or

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[83] Ferran Izquierdo Brichs & Athina Lampridi-Kemou. "Sociology of Power in Today's Arab World." In *Political Regimes in the Arab World*, by Ferran Izquierdo Brichs, 6-38. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

[84] Alex Weingord. "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties." *Comparative Studies in Soceity and History*. 10, no. 4 (1968) 337-400.

[85] Eva Bellin.. " The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics*. 36, no. 2 (2004): 127-149.

[86] Ibid, 150.

lack of it, was not the pivotal factor in determining the probability of regime survival during the Arab Spring, asserts the importance of patrimonial linkage within the military establishment saying that "By contrast, where the military is organized along patrimonial lines, where military leaders are linked to regime elites through bonds of blood or sect or ethnicity, where career advancement is governed by cronyism and political loyalty rather than merit, where the distinction between public and private is blurred… then the fate and interests of the military' s leadership become intrinsically linked to the longevity of the regime."[87]

Although we need to admit here that the study of neopatrimonialism underestimates the importance of ideology and political discourse and this would be the reason behind the concept's limited circulation in Middle Eastern scholarly studies. It is essential to take into consideration the importance of the role of ideology in Middle East politics, especially throughout the Cold War. Yet, the neopatrimonial conceptualization and its modus operandi through collective patronage and systematic clientelism which are overseen by the patron represent a useful framework in analyzing the highly personalistic authoritarian regimes of the Middle East and their durability. Hence, a new assessment of neopatrimonialism in the Middle Eastern context would contribute to the conceptual analysis of the regimes in the region as well as to the neopatrimonialism typology.

[87] Eva Bellin.. "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Lessons form the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics.* 44, no. 2 (2012): 127-149, 133.

CHAPTER 3

SURIYET'UL ASSAD, A CASE OF NEOPATRIMONIAL REGIME

The Syrian regime has been going through a process of transformation since the Baath Party seized power through the coup d'état of March 1963. Since then, many scholars have attempted to conceptualize the post-1963 regime. Some saw it as praetorian military rule, or as authoritarian-populism, while others went further to describe it as a presidential monarchy or even a sultanistic regime. Agreeing upon the authoritarian and personalization characteristics of the regime, the scholars and academics differ in evaluating the role of the regime's components, such as the Baath Party and the Alawite community.

The current Syrian regime represents to some extent a continuation of the 1963 regime, which emerged after a coup staged by a clique of officers, who were associated with the Baath Party and its ideology. Yet, the founder of the current regime is without doubt Hafez al-Assad[88] who grabbed power after a series of intra junta purges ending with the 1970 coup, that the regime would later call 'the Corrective Movement'. The regime whose milestones and domination mechanism was laid down by al-Assad the father, was smoothly handed to his son, Bashar who succeeded to power following his father's death.

Hafez died on the 10th of June 2000, and on the day after, the 11th of June 2000, Bashar, his son, was promoted to Lieutenant General and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He also was chosen on the same day by the Baath Party's Central Committee as nominee for the presidency. The constitutional obstacle was removed in 27 June, through the amendment of article 83 redefining the minimum age of the president from forty to thirty-four, which was exactly the

[88] In this thesis, *al-Assad* will be used, as it is pronounced in the Arabic origin, to refer to the name of the family, hence, Hafez al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad, al-Assad Family, will be written as such. However, in consistent with the general usage in the academia and media, *The Assad regime* will be used to refer to the regime of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad.

age of Bashar. One month later, on the 10th of July, he was elected through a national referendum. The rise of the young President to power generated a hope of possible change in the attitude of the police state, hopes which were boosted by Bashar's rhetoric of 'Development and Modernization'. Yet, the detente did not last long, and the so-called Rabi' Dimeshq Damascus Spring, which launched a period of intense social and political activism and tentative political liberalization (The Damascus Spring 2012) appeared to be no more than a mirage to be terminated by the iron fist of the security apparatuses. Bashar al-Assad has faced many crises; the Iraq invasion in 2003; Qamishli riots and the Syrian Kurds' uprising in 2004; the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005, yet the regime managed to survive. However, the popular uprising starting in 2011, which transformed to a civil war and an international crisis launched an irreversible phase in the history of Assad's regime and Syrian history as a whole.

This chapter, after refuting the comprehensiveness of other conceptualizations, argues that the neopatrimonial conceptualization is quite useful in describing and analyzing the Syrian regime under the al-Assad family (Hafez and Bashar) rule. The chapter claims that the neopatrimonialism of the Syrian regime stands on three foundations which characterize the regime under Hafez and Bashar Assad; the personalism of the regime through the role of Assad's clique and Assad's cult, the role of patronage relations through Alawite and Baath Party patronage, and the role of clientelist relations.

3.1. The Shortages of Other Conceptualizations

Plenty of conceptualizations and theoretical frameworks have been applied to the Assad regime. Agreeing on the role of Assad's personalism and the authoritarian aspect of the regime, scholars have offered various approaches either prioritizing or undermining the role of one of the regime's components. Some have focused on the role of the Baath Party and the populist aspect of the regime, others

have shed light on the role of the Alawite community and sectarian politics in the consolidation of Assad's regime.

One of the scholars known to study the Syrian regime is Nikolas Van Dam. Van Dam, who prioritized the role of the Alawite community, argues in his famous book The Struggle for Power in Syria that the Assad regime is under 'Alawite dominated Baath Rule'[89]. A nearly identical viewpoint is endorsed by Eyal Zisser, who claims that Assad's regime has a clear sectarian nature and depends on the support of the Alawite community,[90] the nature which Zisser argues to be the reason behinds the regimes success and survival. Yet, Zisser himself said later that one of the main factors of Assad's success in ruling Syria is the composition of the ruling coalition, under which he even argues that the Assad regime [Hafez al-Assad] "successfully reflected a coalition of social and political forces that represented most of Syrian society"[91], although he states that this coalition was led by Alawites, who constituted its hard core. Even Van Dam seems to revise this claim regarding the Alawite domination in his later book,[92] by arguing that there was an overlapping between the sectarian and social background which might affect the perception that the Assad regime was prioritizing and recruiting intensively from the Alawite's community.

However, the counter argument came from Hinnebusch who argued that the power base has expanded beyond the Alawite community to include more of the Syrian public, and that the Assad regime had followed pragmatic policies contributing to its survival[93]. Interestingly, Zisser himself admits that the roots of

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[89] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

[90] Eyal Zisser. *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* .(London: C. Hurst & Co, 2001)

[91] Eyal Zisser. *Companding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power.* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 9.

[92] Nikolas Van Dam. *Destroying a Nation, The Civil War in Syria.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017).

[93] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press., 1990)

the Syrian regime under Assad spread beyond the Alawite community, and argues that the regime was a result of the social revolution under the Baath Party.[94] Hence, the majority of scholars have accepted the idea that the Assad regime has expanded beyond the Alawite community, yet differ on the assessment of the Alawite community's role in upholding and ruling the regime.

Raymond Hinnebusch, a well-known scholar in Syrian Studies, argues that the key concept which gives the most adequate insight into the rise, durability and nature of the Ba'th's role is authoritarian-populism.[95] As Hinnebusch describes it, authoritarian-populism is a 'distinctive subset of authoritarian regimes, which has been a characteristic feature of the post-colonial world, which aim to establish the authority of a strong state autonomous of the dominant classes and external powers, and to launch national economic development'.[96] However, the labelling of the Syrian regime as 'authoritarian-populist' seems to undermine other factors like the over-representation of the Alawite community in the security apparatuses under the Syrian regime. It seems that the rule of the minority, in consolidating the Assad regime (Alawite community in Syria) was neglected by Hinnebusch. His argument does not address the point that the dominant class with which the post-1963 regime in Syria aimed to establish an authority autonomous from is the previously dominant Sunni class, which constitutes the majority of the Syrian population, is the Alawite denomination. In other words, this means that the Baath regime, either willingly or not, launched a silent confrontation against the Sunni dominant political elite, who existed mainly in the major Syrian urban cities. As Ziyadeh argues, '[after 1966], this was chapter in which the countryside predominated over the city, the minority

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[94] Eyal Zisser. *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* .(London: C. Hurst & Co, 2001), 21.

[95] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press., 1990), 1-2.

[96] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press., 1990), 2.

over a fragile mix between the majority and the minorities'[97]. This shifting in the ruling elite in Syria resulted in social dynamics that came with a sectarian flavor, which started to arise in the Syrian society in the form of more fragmentation and social clashing. These dynamics seem to have be sidelined when analyzing the Syrian regime as just a populist-authoritarian regime. Moreover, the populist-authoritarian typology supposes that the aim of the regime is to establish a strong autonomous state, yet it does not address the personal motivation behind the consolidation of the state and its apparatus. In many cases, the attempts to strengthen the state could not be separated from the patron or authoritarian president's attempt to consolidate his authority against both internal and external threats. Furthermore, these populist policies retreated after Bashar seized power in 2000, whereby Bashar has launched a campaign to liberalize the economy and to adopt a more open market economy.[98] While under Hafez al-Assad, it could be argued that the Syrian regime had a common element with the populist regime typology, taking into consideration the important role of the Baath ideology in the consolidation of the regime both internally and externally. The regime needed this ideology to legitimize itself within the country, or to counter the propaganda from neighboring countries, mainly from another Baathist regime in Iraq. However, following the inheriting of the regime by Bashar al-Assad in 2000, the role of populist ideology started to be undermined in favor of more liberal politics in the economic domain, while the official rhetoric of the Arab socialism retreated.

The complexity of the Syrian regime was admitted by Hinnebusch himself, who argued, in the same book, that 'In the Syrian case, the outcome is, in fact, typically ambiguous' adding that "Despite attaining a certain ideological legitimacy, the failure to establish a cohesive center led to resort to patrimonial techniques resulting in Presidential Monarchy which shares power with military and

[97] Radwan Ziadeh. *Power and Policy in Syria.* (New York: I.B. Tauris 2011), 12.

[98] Muhammed Jamal Barout. *al-Aked al-Akhir fi Tarih Suriye, Jadalyet al-Jumoud w'al-Islah* . (Beirut: Arab Center for Reseacrh & Policy Studies, 2012), 58-59.

bureaucratic elites and party institution. But patrimonialism continually threatens the legitimation of authority and institutional dimension of rule".[99]

The patrimonialism of the regime continues to be evaluated. Hinnebusch while discussing 'the evolution of the Authoritarian-Populist State' mentions patrimonial strategies as one of four major variations (or combinations of them) that may appear in this process. He argues that the populist-authoritarian regime may seek consolidation through patrimonial strategies, a notion that he mentions in another book[100]. Hinnebusch says that "A Neo-Patrimonial regime concentrate power but cannot much expand it and lacks modernizing and reformist capabilities. Alternatively, a regime may begin in the loss of ideological energy, elite corruption, re-traditionalizing of political structure, and mass de-mobilization. Because pure patrimonial and institution-building strategies each have liabilities, regimes often mix them. The outcome is frequently a mixed Bonapartist/Leninist regime headed by a personalistic leader who presides over a collegial party and military leadership linked to him by clientelist ties".[101] It is true that the Syrian regime has started to lose the ideological energy, which manifests in the decreasing role of the Baath Party Yet what was missed in this assessment is the role of systematic clientelism which expanded the power base. Furthermore, Hinnebusch's linkage of the Syrian regime to a 'Bonapartist' regime was unfortunate. As Wedeen argues "Hinnebusch fails to mention what Marx, from whom he borrows the term "Bonapartist," takes to be crucial, namely, the ways in which symbols and images publicly represent the leader's power. For Marx, Bonaparte's rule meant that the state could avoid a divisive declaration of its class interests by manipulating symbols, thereby diverting attention from the leader's material aims."[102].

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[99] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press., 1990), 12.

[100] Raymond Hinnebucsh. *The International Politics of the Middle East.* (Manchester: Manschester University Press, 2003).

[101] Raymond A. Hinnebusch. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria.* (Boulder: Westview Press., 1990), 17.

[102] Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 4.

However, the patrimonial characteristic of the Syrian regime forced Hinnebusch himself to later label the regime as partly bureaucratic, partly patrimonial: a virtual "Presidential Monarchy."[103] This is almost the same definition with that of the neopatrimonial regimes in which the two domination types of traditional and bureaucratic are combined together. In his book Syria, A Revolution From Above, Hinnebusch used the term 'revolution from above' which was coined by Trimberger[104] to describe the social and structural change which initiated from above by a 'reform coup'. The term of revolution from above is closely associated with the populist-authoritarianismpatrimonialism, in which the regime, according to Hinnebusch 'ostensibly aims to carry out a revolution from above and establish a strong state to hold its own in international arena'. Yet, Hinnebusch himself says that when the state [Syrian state] is patrimonialized, the power of the regime to drive social change from above melts away. All these tendencies were particularly apparent in the late Hafez period'.[105]

Another related discussion in the literature regarding patrimonialismand the Syrian regime is the case of 'authoritarianism upgrading' (AU). in his paper Upgrading Authoritarianismin the Arab World, Steven Heydemann defines AU in the Arab World as such: 'authoritarian upgrading involves reconfiguring authoritarian governance to accommodate and manage changing political, economic, and social conditions' in which 'regimes have also adapted selectively to

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[103] Raymon A. Hinnebusch. *Syria Revolution from Above.* 1st. (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), 5.

[104] Ellen Kay Trimberger. *Revolution from Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt, and Peru.* (Transaction Books, 1978)

[105] Raymond Hinnebusch. "Syria Under the Bath: The political Economy of Populist Auhtoritarianism." In *The State and the political Economy of Reform in Syria*, 5-24. (Fife, Scotland: the Univerity of St Andrews Center for Syrian Studies., 2009), 9.

demands for economic liberalization and the integration of Arab economies into global markets, and expanded opportunities for social and economic élites'.[106]

Hinnebusch, referring to Heydemann's conceptualization, has elaborated this change in the authoritarian regime by arguing that 'the underlying deep change was a movement from an originally populist form of authoritarianism to "post-populist" (neo-liberal versions)', Hinnebusch defines 'post-populism' as a "strategic shift in the political economy of regimes towards including new crony capitalists and excluding regimes' former populist constituencies".[107] Hinnebusch applies the idea of AU in Syria during Bashar's era through what he calls post-populism authoritarianism (PPA), which proceeds, according to Hinnebusch, on three parallel planes; economic reform in which the regime preserves revenue for itself while attempting to minimize the damage to the social base and its own nationalist legitimacy; presidential struggle to concentrate power against the resistance of the party/old guard; control over the political arena as the social base changes.[108]

Although these arguments of AU and PPA address the changes in the Assad regime and other similar cases, they focus on the political and external factors behind these changes as Heydemann states "Arab regimes have adapted to pressures for political change by developing strategies to contain and manage demands to democratize"[109] or on the economic dimension as Hinnebusch states "the PA states could not sustain capital accumulation, they all face the need to revitalize the private sector and encourage foreign investment".[110] Although both arguments correctly

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[106] Steven Heydemann. "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World." *Analysis Paper, the Saban Forum for Middle East Policy*, The Brooking Institution, 39 (2007).

[107] Raymond Hinnebusch. "Authoritarian Resilience and the Arab Uprising: Syria in Comparative Perspective." *Middle Eastern Studies* (ORSAM). 7, no. 1, (2015): 16-38, 19.

[108] Raymond Hinnebusch. "Authoritarian Resilience and the Arab Uprising: Syria in Comparative Perspective." *Middle Eastern Studies* (ORSAM). 7, no. 1, (2015): 16-38, 26.

[109] Steven Heydemann.. "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World." *Analysis Paper, the Saban Forum for Middle East Policy*. (The Brooking Institution, 2007), 39.
[110] Ibid, 18.

reference some aspects of this process, they undermine the self-driven demission of the neo-patrimonial domination. Following its patrimonialization of the political and social domains, neo-patrimonial domination continues to expand by deepening its patrimonial power vertically and spreading its control horizontally via its clients. Thereby, it should not be expected that neo-patrimonial domination should stop its expansion and refrain from penetrating the economic society. Patrimonializing the economic society would also be demanded by the patron's clients as well, who would search for new sources of revenue through liberalization of the economy and the economic public sector. Thus, it is true that AU and PPA explain some aspects of the changes that take place within authoritarian regimes. However, they limit their explanations to economic and political factors, as if AU and PPA are just strategies for regimes' survival. Although these arguments are partially correct, it must be noted that neopatrimonial regimes expand their power, and extend their penetration in any case.

The mixed regime which Hinnebusch argues to be the case in Syria, is almost the same that Erdmann and Engel argued to exist in the neopatrimonial regime, in which patrimonial domination coexists with bureaucratic domination[111]. Hence, we can argue that the patrimonialistic characteristic of the Syrian regime has existed from the early beginning. Yet it was not a pure case of patrimonialism, rather a case of neopatrimonialism.

Volker Perthes in his book 'The Political Economy of Syria under Assad', defines the Syrian regime to be 'a comparatively stable authoritarian, or authoritarian-bureaucratic regime' [112], he emphasizes Assad's personal role over the state system and the authoritarian structure of the Syrian regime. Perthes argues that the "personal role of Assad has been secured by the deliberate employment of patrimonial instruments such as, personal loyalty and patronage". He also emphasizes the role of clientelistic networks[113]. Perthes in the fourth chapter of his

[111] Erdmann & Engel . "Neopatrimonialism Revisited: Beyond a Catch-All Concept",

[112] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 4.
[113] Ibid, 180.

book describes the Assad regime "as an authoritarian presidential system with distinct neo-patrimonial traits"[114].

On the other hand, some academics argue that the Syrian regime, mainly under Hafiz al-Assad, has represented an example of a sultanistic regime[115], examining the characteristics of the Syrian regime reveals that despite its sultanistic features, like personalism, it has failed to represent a fully sultanistic regime. This is because, for example, the Syrian regime has enjoyed a well-organized leading party, whereas this is not the case in sultanistic regimes. On the other hand, the private sector has enjoyed its own domain, albeit a limited one. This feature also does not exist in totalitarian regimes that would have a well-organized single party.

Similar to this argument could be seen in Stepan and Lenz's work[116], they argued that Syria under Bashar al-Assad clearly has strong sultanistic features, such as the "dynastic" element. Since Bashar al-Assad "inherited" the presidency from his father. Yet, they themselves, admitted the limitation of the sultanistic characteristics in the Syrian regime, they added that 'Syria was not quite as sultanistic as Qadhafi's Libya. Parts of the business community and state apparatus enjoyed at least some internal autonomy'.[117]

Saying that, it is obvious that the Assad regime needs to be re-conceptualized. There is no doubt that the Assad regime represents a case of authoritarian regime, however, this authoritarianism needs to be but under one typology that describes the regime and distinguishes it from other authoritarian regimes. The Assad regime fails to represent a case of totalitarian (and thereby post-totalitarian) or sultanistic regime. On the other hand, it seems that the arguments of

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[114] Ibid, 133

[115] Alan Siaroff. *Comparing Political Regimes, a thematic introduction to comperative politics.* (Canada: Broadview Press, 2005), 215.

[116] Alfred Stepan & Juan Linz.. "Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring"." *Journal of Democracy.* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15-31.

[117] İbid, 28.

populist-authoritarianism (PA), authoritarianism upgrading (AU), post-populist authoritarianism (PPA), and its associated conceptualizations, like the debate of revolution from above, have their shortages. They tend to analyze and discuss authoritarianism in the framework, and sometimes as a result, of political and economic transformations. Thereby they neglect personal motivation, which should be the departure point to analyze authoritarianism and the evolution of authoritarian regimes. They also fail to elaborate on the role of the Alawite community in consolidating the authoritarianism of the Assad regime. In contrast, the neopatrimonial conceptualization puts personal domination in the center and accepts it as the driving force behind political and economic transformation, taking into consideration the role of patronage, which includes Alawite patronage, as well as clientelist relations.

3.2.The Neopatrimonialism of the Assad Regime

The current Syrian regime, which consolidated itself through a long process since the Baath's coup d'état in 1963, and under al-Assad family since 1970, enjoys several features which make it best to be described as a neopatrimonial regime. Patrimonial domination, which disappeared in the early days of the regime, through the personalization of power in Hafez al-Assad's persona, coexists with bureaucratic domination, hence some scholars say that the Syrian regime could be described as an authoritarian-bureaucratic regime[118]. However, it is important to emphasize here that patrimonial domination has not only coexist with bureaucratic domination, it has also penetrated the bureaucratic domination, in particular the army and security apparatuses. This penetration led to a patrimonial domination over the bureaucratic realm, which had started in Hafez's era and has continued under Bashar's. However, Bashar's era witnessed a tendency to penetrate the economic realm and thereby patrimonialize the economy as well.

[118] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,* 4.

Yet, the Assad regime has not transformed into a fully patrimonial/sultanistic regime. The bureaucratic apparatuses as well as the private sectors have continued to function, although in a narrow domain overseen by the patron himself. On the other hand, the neopatrimonial regime has established itself and built its relations with the society, in additional to its personal patrimonialism, through two methods; patronage relations and clientelism, which constitute integrated parts of neopatrimonial regimes as Erdmann and Engel argue.

In the core of Assad's neopatrimonial power exists the role of the patrimonialism, which implies the personalization of the regime and the state's apparatus altogether. This patrimonialism was constructed and consolidated through the personal control of the security apparatus by appealing to the inner circle of security elites and officials, who formed a loyal clique around al-Assad. And with the constructing of Assad's personal cult, through cultish rituals, which have been regarded as a proof of loyalty to the patron.

The second milestone of Assad's neopatrimonial regime was the role of patronage relations and networks. The patronage relations although associated closely with clientelism, differs in its operating methods and structure. The patronage relation is a vertical one, in which the patron sits on the top of the chain. It applies to high-politics targeting a social group, which will be advantaged under the patrimonial power. These patronage relations and networks have been realized in the neopatrimonial Assad regime through Alawite patronage and Baath Party Patronage.

On the other hand, clientelism, which represents the third milestone of the neopatrimonial Assad regime, implies a dyadic relationship between the individual, who in this situation is the client, and the patron who is the ruler. Thus, the relation is horizontal when comparing to the vertical structure of the patronage relations. It is also an open and transitive relation applying to everyone from the society, so being a client is a potentiality for every citizen, who in his turn could be a patron for other citizens. In contrast, patronage relations seem to be narrower and enjoyed by one social or political group. The clientelism in the Syrian case has existed side by side

with patronage relations. However, it was manifested more in the economic domain, which was not organized through clientelism, at least in Hafez al-Assad's time.

The neopatrimonial typology of the Syrian regime and its affiliated features; patrimonial power; patronage relations; and clientelism, have enabled the Assad regime to resist the public demand for change and reform, and to survive through several crises; the Muslim Brotherhood's uprising of 1979-1982, the Damascus Spring of 2000-2001, the Kurdish uprising in 2004, Lastly the Syrian regime was able to resist and survive the uprising in 2011, the trajectory of which has been shaped to a large extent by the neopatrimonial characteristics of the regime[119].

3.2.1. The Personalization of the Syrian Regime: *Suriyet'ul Assad*

Personalism of the regime and the state apparatuses lays in the center of patrimonial and neopatrimonial regimes, around which other controlling mechanisms that the patron uses to penetrate the state bureaucracy through patronage and clientelism relations are centralized. Through personalism, domination develops 'an administration and a military force which are purely personal instrument of the master' as Weber argues.[120]

This kind of personal domination is more likely to occur in newly formed states as in the case of Syria, which had, in addition, faced a long period of instability and political chaos from its independence until Hafez Assad's reign. To put this in perspective, 21 coups or attempted coups occured between 1946 and

[119] This thesis doesn't claim that the survival of the Assad's regime is due to its neopatrimonial typology. The survival of the regime couldn't be realized without the external support, and within the international and regional rivalry. Yet, this thesis emphasizes the role of the neopatrimonial typology of the regime in fostering its durability, and thus allows it to resist the early uprising and which has also affected the regime's response and hereby the trajectory of the conflict and its possible outcomes.

[120] Max Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology.*

1970[121]. This instability prevented the developing of a steady bureaucracy and state apparatuses. The sequential coups from 1949 to 1970 were accompanied by purges, not only within the ruling elites, but also in the relatively newly formed Syrian army, which was in the center of political life.

However, with Hafez Assad dominating the authority in 1970 after a series of purges within 1963 coup's junta, a new phase had started in Syrian contemporary history. Hafez, who was an unexceptional Baathist officer in the Syrian Air Force in his early years, was one of the founders of the Secret Military Committee during the unification with Egypt, and masterminded the coup of 1963 that brought Baath Party to power. He was one of the young Baathists to sideline the old guard of the party in 1966, was subsequently rewarded by Salah Jadid (the de facto leader of the military committee after sidelining Muhammed Umran) for his crucial support, who appointed him as Defense Minister, at the age of 35[122]. However, the young officer whose loyalty was never questioned by any of his companions, unpredictably ended up sidelining his fellows and grabbing power in 1970. In November 1970, Syrian president Colonel Nur al-Din al-Atasi was replaced by an acting president, Ahmed al-Khatib, who stayed in power until February 1971, when the Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Hafez al-Assad assumed authority and exercised absolute power for the next thirty years.[123]

The relative stabilization of Syrian regimes under Hafez's authority had gone hand in hand with the consolidation of the power of his persona. Al-Assad arrogated to himself all important decisions regarding foreign policy, national

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[121] CIA . *Syria Without Assad: Succession Politics.* (CIA, Middle East Division, Office of Regional Political Analysis, 1978). CIA: Approved For Release 2006/05/25.

[122] Charles Patterson. *Hafiz Al-Asad of Syria.* (iUniverse.com, Inc, 1991).

[123] Raed Safadi & Simon Neaime. "Syria: The Painful Transition Towrads Democracy." In *Democratic Transitions in the Arab World*, by Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi, 184-208. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 185.

security, internal politics and the economy.[124] This personalization process of the Syrian regime, which started with the early following his seizing power, has accelerated in the late 1980s and through the 1990s. An important dimension to mention here, is that the personalizing of the regime was not limited to the persona of Hafez Assad alone, but also extended to includes his family members, making what was to be called the House of Assad.[125]

This constructive process of personalized patrimonial power has been in going since Hafez seized power, and continued in his son Bashar's era. It is a complex process in which many social and political factors play a role, yet we can identify two main mechanisms that had been used in the consolidation and embodiment of power in the persona of Assad, the patron; Assad's clique and Assad's cult.

Hafez Assad was able to control the security apparatuses and thus the state altogether and linked it to his own persona through his clique of loyalists. The tight control of the state was assured by close censorship, absolute supervision and the atmosphere of fear secured by the iron fist of the clique controlling the security apparatus. This tightly personalized control of the state went in parallel with the constructing of Assad's cult. Using political symbolism under the sphere of fear, the political cult aimed to construct an emotional connection between the patron and his followers.

The personalized patrimonial power in Syria, which has been constructed through personalized tight control of the state apparatus spreading fear and building a political cult, resulted in making Syria to be called as, Suriyet'ul Assad - Assad's Syria.[126]

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[124] Ibid. 188.

[125] David W. Lesch. *Syria, the Fall of the House of Assad.* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012)

[126] *Suriyet'ul Assad* Assad's Syria, is an idiom widely used by al-Assad's loyalists and adopted by the loyal media. The idiom attaches Syria to al-Assad family manifesting the patrimonial and even arguably the sultanistic nature Syria under the Assad regime.

3.2.1.1. Assad's Clique

In the core of Hafez Assad's effort to consolidate his patrimonial personalized power, lays the role of the clique. This cliques was a closed group of officials whose loyality and blind obedience to the patron, Assad, was unquestionable. The clique members, who submitted directly to Assad himself, were responsible of maintaining tight control of the state apparatus and in particular the security apparatuses and the army. Thereby they maintained Assad's personal control.

The clique's role is not a new phenomenon in Syrian politics. Hafez al-Assad himself was a member of a clique, the so called the Secret Military Committee, which played a profound role in shaping the politics of Syria in the 1960s. The Baath Party was only part of the coalition that came to power in 1963 but was able, partly because of the strength of the Military Committee, to eventually dominate.[127]

Arguably, as seen in the case of the Secret Military Committee, the clique would have a homogenous membership. For example, the Secret Military Committee's founding members were all from minorities (non-Sunnis) and three of the five founders were Alawite[128]; Hafez al-Assad, Muhammed Umran; Salah Jadid (the other two were Ismailis,[129]). However, the committee later purported to have fourteen officers[130] including Sunnis members[131].

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[127] Martha Neff Kessler. *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power.* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 32.

[128] John F Devlin. "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis." *The American Historicak Review*. 96, no. 5 (1991): 1396-1407, 1404.

[129] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria,* 31.

[130] Martha Neff Kessler. *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power.* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 29.

Hafez al-Assad, who climbed to power by eliminating other committee member, should be well aware of the importance of loyalty and full submission of the people surrounding him as the *sine qua non* criteria for entrance into his inner circle. Nonetheless, homogeneity among the clique's membership would be a preferred criterion as well. These two criterions (loyalty to the patron and homogeneity of clique membership) have shaped Assad's clique in a way that Alawites became overrepresented, although other non-Alawite loyalists (Sunnis) secured some seats.

Although Assad was not merciful at all with non-loyal Alawites, as in the case of Secret Military Committee companion Salah Jadid who was arrested in infamous Mazzeh from 1970 until his death in 1993, his dependence on family members like his brother Rifat and other Alawite officials has given way to a perception that the Alawites ruled Syria, forcing some to accuse the regime of espousing Alawite minority rule, by arguing that the "secret inner security core that Assad depends on to protect his life and maintain his power is solidly Alawite".[132] Yet, the over-representation of Alawite members was realized due not primarily to sectarian background, but because of their loyalty. However, arguably, the role of Alawism in politics and the security apparatus has increased in a way that could not be neglected even if the patron changed.

One of the early sources to refer to regarding the rule of this inner circle or clique was a CIA report written on 7 November, 1978, by the Middle East Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis (which was later released in 2006). The report argues that the future stability of a post-Assad Syria (in case of assassination or a serious illness) will depend primarily on the ability of Assad's inner circle of Alawite supporters to maintain cohesion and pick a successor.[133] Interestingly the

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[131] For details about the formation and members of the Secret Military Committee, see (Dam, 2011, p31 & p189)

[132] Charles Patterson. *Hafiz Al-Asad of Syria.* (iUniverse.com, Inc, 1991), 61.

[133] CIA . *Syria Without Assad: Succession Politics.* (CIA, Middle East Division, Office of Regional Political Analysis, 1978). CIA: Approved For Release 2006/05/25, 5.

report named this clique as Jamaa, and claims that it is constituted of Alawite members, yet does not offer details about the functionality of this clique.

However, Yahya Sadowski refutes this claim by arguing that 'many members of the president's inner circle, his Jamaa or 'gang', are actually Sunnis, including; Abd al-Halim Khaddam, previous foreign minister and vice-president; Mustafa Talas, Hafez's minister of defense; Abdullah al-Ahmar, Hafez's assistant secretary general of the Baath; and Hikmet Shihabi, army Chief of Staff.[134]. Nevertheless, prioritizing loyalty, Hafez al-Assad appealed to his relatives and other Alawites As Sadowski himself argues "Hafez had placed Alawites in command of the military but has never permitted them -or any sect- to threaten his personal rule".[135]

In general, it could be argued that this clique, which constitutes the inner circle of ruling elite, had comprised mainly of three categories; al-Assad's family members and relatives, who share kinship with al-Assad; loyal security and army elites, many of whom were co-sects or old friends of al-Assad; loyal bureaucrats and statesmen, who were members of the Baath Party, and generally Sunnis. These three categories could be considered as constitutive of hierarchical layers as well.

The first category of clique membership is the family members, whose linkage to the patron is based on kinship relations. One of the early signs of the increasing role of kinship relations in the Syrian regime is exemplified by the remarkable role played by Hafez's al-Assad younger brother Rifaat Assad in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rifaat was the commander of the Defense Companies (Saraya al-Difaa'), the praetorian guard which played a substantial role during suppressing of the Islamic Insurgency 1979-1982. However, the role of Rifaat was put at an end following his failure in the loyalty test, after he unsuccessfully attempted a coup in 1984. Interestingly, he nominally retained the position of vice-president, although without any effectiveness on the ground, until 1998. Another

[134] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 9, no.4. (1987): 442-461, 446

[135] İbid.

example was that of Adnan al-Assad, who controlled the 'Struggle Companies'. Another important figure is Gen. Adnan Makhlouf, a cousin of Bashar's mother (Anisah Makhlouf), who commanded the 30,000-strong, well-equipped Republican Guard. As Gambill claims "two cousins of the late Syrian president, Adnan and Muhammad Assad, commanded the "Struggle Companies," a 5,000 strong security force in Damascus".[136]

This kinship relation-based prioritizing intersects with the policy of inheritance, in which patrimonial power is transmitted from the father to the son. In the 1990s, with Hafez al-Assad's illness becoming more severe, the way had been paved for his elderly son Basel. Yet Basel passed away in a car accident in 1994, which paved the way to his younger brother Bashar. Not only Basel and Bashar, but also Hafez's third son, Maher, has been playing an important role in the army, particularly in commanding the Syrian Army's elite 5th Brigade. The only son of Hafez who does not play any considerable public role in Majd, who is said to have faced mental problems.

This role of the first category the clique members continued under Bashar's era. Moreover, arguably the role of the family and kinship relations in forming this clique has increased under Bashar. Many relatives of Bashar outside of his immediate family occupy important positions in the regime. In addition to his brother Maher, who is said to play an important role in the army and particularly as the commander of the Republican Guard and the army's elite Fourth Armored Division, Bashar's brother in law, Assef Shawkat, his sister Bushra's husband, had occupied important positions like the Head of Military Intelligence, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Deputy Minister of Defense until his mysterious death. Another outstanding example was Atef Najib, Bashar's cousin, who was the head of the Political Security Directorate in Daraa, the cradle of the Syrian uprising, and the person who is said to be responsible of the inflammation of the uprising, by his reckless handling of the crisis in its early stages. Furthermore, the role of relatives in

[136] Gary C. Gambill. Middle East Intelligence Bulletin "The Assad Family and the Succession in Syria.". https://www.meforum.org/meib/articles/0007_s2.htm. (accessed May, 1 2018)

Bashar's rule has not been limited to the bureaucratic and security domain, it also extended to the economic domain, as exemplified by the significant role of his cousin Rami Makhlouf.

The second category of the clique membership is the loyal security and army elites. Even though Alawite members were overrepresented in this group, many Sunnis has found their seats in the clique as well. Among this category, we can name Muhammed al-Khuli, the Chief of Air Force Intelligence 1970-1987 and the Chief of Air Force 1994-1999, and Ali Duba, the Chief of the Military Intelligence 1974-2000, who were both Alawites. Non-Alawite members also existed like; Mustapha Talas, Assad's only Defense Minister; Naji Jamil, a Sunni from Dayr al-Zur who commanded the Syrian Air Force from November 1970 until March 1978; and Hikmet al-Shihabi, Assad's Chief of Staff. However, it is important to state here that "officer such as Talas, Jamil [Naji Jamil] and Shakkur [Major General Yusuf Shukkur, a Greek Orthodox Christian, succeeded Mustapha Talas as chief of staff in 1972] were able to exercise considerable power so long as they followed the president's policies"[137].

The third category of the clique was comprised of the bureaucrats, or the face of the regime. Here, Sunni officials were represented more. Names like, Abd al-Halim Khaddam, former vice-president, and Faruk ash-Shar, former foreign minister and vice president, Abdullah al-Ahmar, Hafez al-Assad's Assistant Secretary General of the National Command of the Baath Party are among the members of this category. We can add to this category all the Syrian Prime Ministers under Hafez and Bashar who were all Sunnis. However, the power of this category and their weight in the clique is relatively low, simply because their power depends only on the consent of the patron and lack any power base, in contrast to the members of the second category, who are in turn inferior to the members of the first category who are prioritized due to their kinship relations with the patron and their direct access to power.

[137] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria),* 69

Another important dimension to mention here, is the elite competition and its role in preserving patrimonial power. Hafez al-Assad remained in power, in part, because of his ability to play his intelligence services off against one another[138]. Assad was successful in balancing the several intelligence and security organs off against one another and thereby succeeded in maintaining his own personal power. The head of the four key security organs in Syria (Political Security Directorate, General Intelligence or sometimes named as State Security Directorate, Air Force Security and Military Security) are said to be responsible directly to the presidential office. And in many cases the state of competition between these organs showing their loyalty and effectiveness to the patron, has forced them to keep an eye on the others' activities, generating a situation of chaos, mainly with the absence of the state of law. For example, an opponent political activist could be released form one of these organs after the end of an investigation to be arrested by the other. However, this competition and chaos most certainly worked to the benefit of the patron. This aspect of elite competition which can be expected of in neopatrimonial regimes as a consequence of personalized power, could be seen in the case of Rifaat al-Assad's attempt to conduct a coup in 1984. When he tried to grab power after his brother Hafez was stricken by a heart attack, he faced a challenge from other military elites. Troops from Sahfiq Fayyad's Third Armored Division, Ali Haydar's Special Forces, and Adnan Makhluf's Presidential Guard challenged his coup attempt[139] which failed in the end.

The clique has shown continuity, as the power structure of the regime (especially during the thirty years of Hafez's role) did not change to a large extent. This continuity means that this clique has also stayed loyal to the patron. In Hafez's time, appart from the instance of Rifat's coup attempt, the clique seems to have maintained its structure. It also continued to function during Bashar's first years, as

[138] Carl Anthony Wage. "Assad's Legions: The Syrian Intelligence Services." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence* (1990), 91-100, 97.

[139] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 9, no.4. (1987): 442-461, 445

Zisser argues 'the elite of Assad's era [Hafez al-Assad's era] essentially remained in place during the first years of Bashar's rule[140] and the clique was claimed to have an important role in guaranteeing the smooth transition of power, in forcing the regime to crack down on the short-lasted Damascus Spring. As Lawson claims 'Following Bashar's succeeding to the power, the former heads of several key security agencies came out of retirement and began to act as his political advisors. Among these were 'Ali Duba, the former commander of Military Intelligence; Muhammed al-Khuli, the past chair of the Presidential Intelligence Committee, and Muhammad Nasif, the former chief of the internal branch of the General Security'[141] However, during Bashar's later years fluctuation seemed to have emerged. Accidents like the mysterious suicide/killing of Gazi Kenan, the mysterious explosion and death of Asef Shawkat are just indications of such fluctuations.

Through the role of the loyal clique both Hafez and Bashar were able to tightly control and supervision the state apparatus. As Stepan and Linz argued 'the security apparatus has remained tightly controlled. Assad has no important security official in whom he does not have full personal trust, which means that nearly all must come from his own Alawite religious minority' [142]. Thus, the over-representation of the Alawites in the clique could be understood within Hafez and Bashar's search for the loyalty, in other words the driving force behind the recruitment of the Alawites was loyalty, not sectarian attachment. However, this does not mean that the sectarian motivation and group solidarity did not play a role at all, if not by Hafez and Bashar himself, at least by their sub-officers who would prefer to depend on their co-sect officers. Loyalty was the criterion around which mutual dependency relations were built. As Perthes describes it, 'the relationship

[140] Eyal Zisser. *Companding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power.* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 63.

[141] Fred H Lawson. *Why Syria Goes to War, Thirty Years of Confrontation.* (New York: Cronell University Press, 1996), 39.

[142] Alfred Stepan & Juan Linz.. "Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring"." *Journal of Democracy.* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15-31, 28.

between the security apparatus and the president is one of mutual dependence. Each individual military [or security] leader owes his position to the president and is dependent on his patronage. Who fall from grace, or appears to become disloyal, will also lose office'[143]. Yet the relationship was not equal, at the end of the day it goes in favor of the patron.

The Assad regime was able to guarantee the blind obedience and total submission of the state apparatuses to the patrimonial power through the clique which tightly controlled the security apparatuses. For example, the army and military officers were tamed, firstly by the purges that took place in the regime's early years, and later through close monitoring of the officers through the Military and Air Force Intelligence Directorates which were controlled by clique members who linked directly to the patron. Thus, the army, as well as security apparatus, were fully personalized ending with what Weber had called 'patrimonial troops'. Thereby, they show no hesitation in cracking down on any uprising facing the patrimonial regime, either in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood or in the recent uprising.

3.2.1.2.**Assad's Cult of Personality**

> In official Syrian political discourse, President Hafiz Assad is regularly depicted as omnipresent and omniscient… he appears as the "father," the "combatant," the "first teacher," the "savior of Lebanon," the "leader forever," or the "gallant knight,…"[144] (Wedeen 1999)

[143] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,* 152.

[144] Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination.*

The second main mechanism in securing the personalization of the Syrian regime in the persona of Assad, is the constructing of Assad's political cult. While the role of the clique is limited to guarantee the personalized tight control and supervision of the state apparatus in an iron fist that spread the atmosphere of fear, the political cult was instrumentalized to construct the persona of Assad as the patron of the state in the public domain and ideational realm.

In this process of constructing the image of Assad as the patron of the state, various social and political tools have been used. The controlled media and public domain have been bombed witht official and semi-official rhetoric, political symbols, public messages in a state-sponsored ongoing campaign aiming to incarnate the patron, Assad, in the public image.

The politics of symbolism is one of the three dimensions of the ruler's strategies of legitimation in neopatrimonial regimes according to Bank and Richter. In their paper, they define the politics of symbolism as looking at the "immaterial aspects of culture, identity and discourse", adding that "in this way adding new aspects to the classic 'Weberian' categories of charisma and tradition that were already – at least partially – included in the earlier, traditional understanding of neopatrimonialism"[145]. One of the best and rare academicians who address the role of cult and political symbolism in the consolidation of Assad's authority in Syria was Lisa Wedeen, who argues in her book Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria that "Assad's cult is a strategy of domination based in compliance rather than legitimacy"[146].

The construction of the Assad cult was a long and accumulative process that started from the early years of Hafez Assad's position. Patrick Seale, Assad's biographer, claims that the inventor of Assad's cult was Ahmad Iskandar Ahmad,

[145] Andre Bank & Thomas Richter. "Neopatrimonialism in the Middle East and North Africa, Overview, Critique and Alternative Conceptualization." *Neopatrimonialism in Various World Regions",* 8.

[146] Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination,* 6.

Assad's Minister of Information 1974-1983.[147] However, Wedeen cited that Yahya Sadowski arguing that the "exaggerated homage of Hafez Assad began within the confines of the popular organizations as part of the party's overall glorification of Baathist achievement, and became part of a strategy to rally mass appeal beginning in 1982"[148]. By the 1990s, Assad's cult was clearly manifest in the fact that tens of works have been published in Damascus on the Syrian president, all of them eulogies.[149]

It seems that the beginning of the construction of the political cult in Syria had started soon after Assad rose to power. The war of 1973 and the 'achieved victory' was used to inflame the cult construction process. However, the construction of Assad's cult symbols in the public arena was accelerated following the demolishing of the Muslim Brotherhood threat in 1982. For instance, the first statue of Assad in Damascus was erected at the Assad library in 1984. In the following years, the statues of Hafez al-Assad was to be erected in the entrance of almost every Syrian city and in the middle of public parks, while his portrait was to be hanged in every classroom and public office, and on every street corner, Hafez Assad was to become omnipresent. By the mid-1980s, Hafez al-Assad started to be referred to using extreme patrimonial phrases like; al-Ab al-Kae'd The Commanding Father[150], and Sayyed al-Watan The Lord of the Homeland. Among the other titles that were given to Hafez al-Assad; al-Rafiq al-Kae'd The Comrade Commander, al-Kae'd al-Ramz The Commanding Symbol, Batel al-Harb wal-Salam The Hero of the War and the Peace. This omnipresence interestingly has continued

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147 Patrick Seale. *Asad of Syria, the Struggle for the Middle East.* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995), 339.

148 Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination,* 33.

149 Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, 144.

150 Yasin Haj Saleh. *Al-Thawra Al-Mustahila.* (Bairut: Al Mu'assase Al-Arabiya Lildirasat Wal-Nasher, 2017), 75.

even after his death in 2000, following his death the state media started to call Hafez al-Assad, al-Ka'ed al-Halid The Immortal Leader.

The role mentioned by Sadowski of the popular organizations and the Baath Party in constructing the cult was vital[151]. These organizations were used as channels to impose the patrimonial image on the public, mainly the students, and were instrumentalized to fulfill the rituals of Assad's political cult in the public domain. The fulfillment of Assad's political cult in the public domain was to be realized under the iron fist of the clique-controlled security apparatuses. This iron fist has forced the people either into believing in Assad's cult or not practicing it. This situation was described by Wedeen by saying that people were acting 'as if'. For instance, state employees were taken by public buses to the polls to give the bay'ah[152] to al-Ab al-Ka'ed, and whoever hesitates or opposes would be put under investigation by the security apparatuses. A noteworthy point is that since the mid-1980s, the political motto that dominated the reelection campaigns of Hafez Assad was 'Ila al-Abad Ila al-Abad Ya Hafez al-Assad' - Forever, Forever, Oh Hafez al-Assad. Hafez Assad during his thirty year rule had succeeded in imposing fearful submission on the Syrian people to his cult of personality, which extended to include his family as well. Thus, it argued that 'The palpable fear that this regime inspired among most Syrians was so closely linked to Assad's cult of personality that there is a fairly strong consensus among these elites that the presidency should be passed on to another member of the Assad family in order to preserve an aura of continuity'[153].

An important notion to highlight in the process of constructing Assad's cult is that this cult was not limited to his own persona, yet it extended to include other family members. Wedeen has also shed light on this notion. She states that "Assad

[151] This role which will be discussed in details in the Baath Patronage part.

[152] *Bay'ah* originally an Islamic terminology, means to give the oath of allegiance to a leader. Yet it was used in Syria since mid 1980s to describe the reelection of Assad to presidency.

[153] Gary C. Gambill. Middle East Intelligence Bulletin "The Assad Family and the Succession in Syria.".

shares the iconographic landscape with other heroes. Assad's family members, most specifically his mother, his deceased son Basel, his son Bashar … also appear periodically in the state's symbolic displays"[154]. The construction of the political cult of Hafez al-Assad's family has paved the way for Bashar, to establish his own cult when he proceeded to power. As shown by Wedeen '[Basel's] apotheosis has nonetheless facilitated his brother Bashshar's iconographic ascension. By 1996, laminated pictures, buttons, and other paraphernalia regularly showed Assad flanked by his own sons. Sometimes the three are dressed in military fatigues, signifying that the young doctor, like his dead brother and aging father, has the requisite military fatigues[155]. Thus, the constructing process of Bashar's cult had started even before he took power. Following Bashar's rise to power, the traditional of the political cult continued to take place in the public life. The image of Assad distributed during the 2007 Arab League Summit in Riyadh was captioned the 'Gaze of the Lions'. It was displayed in the windows of Syrian cars as a sign of loyalty, and also as a way of gaining privileges such as being exempted from traffic fines. In the same year, during the next referendum, the "We Love You" campaign was carried out. It suggested blind loyalty and more closely resembled the propaganda of Hafez Al-Assad's rule. The propaganda was paid for by the close circle of businessmen who became faithful economic sponsors of the Assad family.[156]

The political cult in Syria under both Hafez and Bashar, has been a socially constructed process under the supervision of the state. Thus, it became a kind of official ritual. Students in Hafez's time, through their morning line and after saluting the national flag intonated the daily motto 'bil-ruh bil-dam Nafdeek ya Hafez' 'We sacrifice our souls, our bloods for you Hafez'. In Bashar's time, Hafez was replaced

[154] Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination.* 28.

[155] Ibid, 61.

[156] Malu Halasa, Zaher Omareen & Nawara Mahfoud, eds. *Syria Speaks, Art and Culture From the Frontline.* (London: Saqi Books, 2014).

with Bashar, and the motto changed accordingly: 'bil-ruh bil-dam Nafdeek ya Bashar'. This political cult of Assad, will manifest itself after the 2011 uprising by the cultish behavior of Assad's supporters, such as the loyal motto 'al-Assad walla Mnhrek al-Balad' 'Either Assad or We Will Burn the Country'.

At the end of the day the political cult rituals in the public domain, have consolidated the patrimonial power of both Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, and asserted the collective subjection to the patron's personal power. Under the atmosphere of fear, this political cult has generated a vicious circle by which every member of society publically practices the rituals of this cult to show his loyalty and force others to follow suit. Everyone must show his obedience.

3.2.2. **Patronage Politics in Syria**

The second pillar of neopatrimonial power in Syria is the role of patronage relations and networks in the country's politics, through which patrimonial power penetratea the state and society and thereby consolidates its domination. The patronage relations establish a hierarchical relationship by definition [157] and organized in vertical measures, which differentiates it from the horizontal clientelist relationships. Hence, we can argue that patronage relations are a step forward from clientelism, in which the networks will be organized hierarchically, while the patron sits on the top of the chain. Another related difference is that the patronage relation is a kind of high-politics dealing with social groups, as opposed to clientelism, which could be limited to two persons. So, to have a patronage relation we need to have a consolidated social group from one side, and a patron on the other, in contrast to the clientelism which constitutes a relationship between two individuals.

Although, Weingord argues that patronage is founded on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients, in which each needs the other, he adds that in patronage, the patron has the power to give some benefit (such as influence, political allegiance, benefits) which the client desires, thus he stresses the inequality

[157] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad.* 181.

in power between patrons and clients.[158] So, patronage relations constitute a kind of asymmetric relationship in favor of the patron.

In the case of the Assad regime, these patronage relations have manifested in Alawite Patronage and Baath Party Patronage, each of which have been organized in a downwards fashion, while the patron take the prime position. Yet arguably, the aim of the Assad regime was never to establish an organic nation, but to control and mobilize the society in a way to serve its neopatrimonial domination.

3.2.2.1.Alawite Patronage

> A ruler can achieve power only with the help of his people. They are his group and his helpers in his enterprise. He uses them to fight against those who revolt against his dynasty. (Ibn Khaldun)

The Bashar al-Assad regime has depended on patronage relations and networks to consolidate itspower. One of the two patronage relationships he has relied on is the Alawite Patronage. Historically, the Alawite community has played a major role in Syrian politics, and particularly after the March 1963 coup which brought the Baath Party to power. The role of the Alawites in politics and mainly under the Assad regime is still a matter of contested analysis and debate. Also, dealing with the Alawite community as a homogenous group holds the risk of generalization. Some Scholars have accepted the Syrian regime to be one under Alawite dominance[159], and claim that "although Alawite constituted a minority of 12 percentage of the Syrian population, the overwhelming majority of army commanders and the heads of the security bodies –nearly 90 percent- were

[158] Alex Weingord.. "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties." *Comparative Studies in Soceity and History*.10, no.4 (1968): 337-400, 377-378.

[159] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.*

Alawite".[160] While others have undermined the role of the Alawite community in favor of the role of the Baath Party. In any case, the role of the Alawite community in the Syrian regime and politics is too big to be neglected.

Coming from poor and marginalized social backgrounds, the Alawites, who are predominant in the northwestern part of Syria, in the so-called Nusayri –another word uses to describe the Alawites- Mountains, and who constitute 12-15% of the population (before the Syrian uprising and the following mass emigrations), participate in the Syrian political and social life through the only available channel for upward social mobility; the army. Identifying with the revisionist leftist ideology of the Baath Party, by the 1960s the group became a power broker within the military wing of the Baath Party. Among those Alawite officers, three played an important role in the 1963 coup and the later politics; Muhammed Umran, Salah Jadid and Hafez Assad. Following an internal struggle for power within the junta regime and between the leading figures, the battle ended in favor of the youngest officer among them, Hafez Assad, in November 1970.

It would be inaccurate to argue that Hafez al-Assad was the man who brought the Alawites into politics, which was dominated by the army within which the minorities had been overrepresented since the independence of Syrian republic[161]. Even before the Baath took power, army recruitment from the poorer strata resulted in 65 percent of the noncommissioned officers being Alawite[162]. Hanna Batatu mentions that 'as early as 1955, Colonel Abd'ul Hamid as-Sarraj, chief of the Military Intelligence Bureau, discovered to his surprise that no fewer

[160] Eyal Zisser. *Companding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power.* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 65.

[161] Veysel Kurt.. "Fransiz Mancaciligindan Ic Savaca Suriye'de Ordu ve Siyaset." In *Ortadogu'da Din ve Siyaset*, by Veysel Kurt, 163-186. (Istanbul: SETA Vakfi, 2017)

[162] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 444

than 55 % or so of the noncommissioned officers belonged to the Alawi sect[163]. However, the Alawites' role was multiplied following the 1963 coup and the later purge, Van Dam cited in his book 'The Struggle for Power in Syria' argues that 'many Alawites were among those officers who, directly after the coup of 8 March 1963, were to fill the gaps in the army resulting from purges of political opponents. About half the approximately seven hundred officers who were dismissed were reportedly replaced by Alawites'[164] Thus, the Alawite domination of the army had started before Assad taking power. Yet, his role in the previous period should not be neglected since he occupied, between 1963 and 1970, the positions of the head of Air Force, and the Defense Minister.

Not surprisingly, Hafez al-Assad had depended on his co-sects in forming his clique of loyalists, which operated as the inner circle of the regime. The patron-client relations between Hafez al-Assad and his inner circle loyalists, did not stop on this level, but this patronage relations and networks extended downwards to become the norm in which the regime recruits loyal officials accordingly. Thus, those inner circle loyalists, had generally depended also on their own co-sects. Hafez al-Assad's brother Rifat command of the Defense Companies is an obvious example, as the praetorian guards said to be dominated by Alawite members. Muhammed Al-Khuli, member of Assad's clique has extended the patronage relations downwards, as Sadowski mentions 'after taking power, Alawites were promoted to command of all military intelligence services, under the careful supervision of Muhammed al-Khuli, an Alawite general'[165].

A secret report written on 7 November 1978 by the Middle East Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis in the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency CIA (which was later released in 2006) claims that the Alawite sect dominates the

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[163] Hanna Batatu.. *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Prinecton University Press, 1999), 157.

[164] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria,* 32.

[165] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 444

regime –especially the military and security services– and constitutes Assad power base'. The report goes further to say that "Today [1978] the key units of the military –Rifaat Assad's Defense Companies, Ali Haydar's Special Forces, the armored units and the Air Force fighting units- are primarily Alawite-controlled and the Alawite are heavily overrepresented in their composition"[166]. The report even argues that the future stability of a post-Assad Syria (in case of assassination or a serious illness) will depend primarily on the ability of Assad's inner circle of Alawite supporters to maintain cohesion and pick a successor[167].

The Alawites did not become a 'dominant minority' nor did the Assad regime become fully sectarian. It is important to state here, that the Assad regime was eager not to be associated with the Alawites' role, assuming that it was as such. Thus, on the one hand, the sectarian question was a taboo in Syria, and a matter which would lead to interrogation by the security apparatuses when mentioned. On the other hand, the Syrian presidents, both Hafez and Bashar have been keen to participate in the main prayers in the Grand Umayyad mosque in Damascus and show no disagreement nor try to distinguish themselves from the main official Sunni religiosity.

However, at the end of the day, the Alawites became a privileged group as the preferred clients for the patron and his close clients. Thus, the patronage relations transformed into a kind of patronage network, which operated mainly within the Alawite sect. In contrast to the patronage network under the Baath Party, which will be discussed later in more detail, the patronage networks resulting from Alawite patronage were limited only to the members of Alawite communities.

It can be truly argued that Hafez Assad used the Alawite power base and arranged it around his personality to consolidate his authority. However, on the other hand, the Alawite community also has its own internal dynamics and motivations which should not be neglected. As Goldsmith argues, using Ibn

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[166] CIA . *Syria Without Assad: Succession Politics.* (CIA, Middle East Division, Office of Regional Political Analysis, 1978). CIA: Approved For Release 2006/05/25, 15.

[167] Ibid, 5.

Khaldun's asabiyya concept[168], the Alawite community has its own assabiyya. The intersection between Hafez al-Assad's personal motivation with the dynamics of the Alawite community resulted in this fateful alliance. Goldsmith states that in this regard 'it was only by mobilizing Alawite asabiyya that the Assad regime could be consolidated. The key elements of the regime's security apparatus were placed in the hands of trusted co-sectarians'[169]. On the other hand, the invention of the Alawite asabiyya has arguably affected the integration of the Alawites with the general Syrian asabiyya. It also contributed to the formulation of the anti-Alawite asabiyya mainly among the Sunni populations. At the end of the day, these asabiyya and anti-asabiyya have arguably prevented the evolution of a single unified Syrian asabiyya. Moreover, it fostered national cleavages and strengthened the sense of sectarianism. These Alawite patronage networks have provided their clients with privileges in several domains. The patronage relations did not operate only within the state apparatus, but came to exist in other social domains. For instance, Ghazi Kana'an, who could be considered as one of the clique members, provided personal funding for community projects in his home village B'hamra and the surrounding region.[170] The Alawites also started to be overrepresented not only in the army but also in the bureaucracy. Hence 'an Alawi middle class emerged with the growth of the civil service, and over the past decade, the freezing of public sector recruitment has affected the Alawi community less than any other because Alawis are protected by a system of political patronage'[171].

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[168] Hinnebusch also had referred, before Goldsmith, to the role of asabiyya in the Alawite politics, see (R. Hinnebusch 2009, 7), also Fouad Ajami in his book The Syrian Rebellion p13.

[169] Leon Goldsmith. "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective." *Ortadogu Etutleri*. 3, no.1 (2012): 33-60, 40

[170] Leon Goldsmith. "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective.", 41.

[171] Fabrice Balanche. The Alawi Community and the Syria Crisis . *Middle East Instituite.* Accessed March 25, 2018. http://www.mei.edu/content/map/alawi-community-and-syria-crisis

Considering the privileged status of the Alawite community and its internal dynamics, it can be argued that the Alawites' loyalty to the Assad regime is a product of two complementary factors; privileged patronage and sectarian insecurity. The sectarian insecurity produced what Goldsmith calls sectarian asabiyya after the famous conceptualization of Ibn Khaldun's social or tribal asabiyya[172]. Yet, this asabiyya was not only a result of the insecurity that the Alawite sect felt, but also of a common religion and socioeconomic background as well as the privileged status under the Assad regime. Nevertheless, this insecurity has been an important driving force regarding the unity of the Alawite community around Assad's regime. The Assad regime has become a unified force for the Alawite community. The Alawite community includes several tribal confederations; Haddadin (Salah Jadid's tribe), Khayyatin (Muhammed Umran's tribe); other smaller tribes like Kalbiyah to which the Assad family belongs and al-Matawira. Although it is said that internal fluctuations took place from time to time, these internal rivalries subsided whenever insecurity arose.

The patronage relations under the Assad regime has boosted the Alawite assabiye, and helped the community to come together. Thereby, the Assad regime has become an essential dimension for the Syrian Alawite identity and feeling of belonging. The deeper the patronage networks spread within the Alawite community, the more they feel attached to the Assad regime. In contrast, the Assad regime succeeded in consolidating its patrimonial power, using the Alawite patronage network to penetrate the state apparatuses, mainly the army and security branches. Thereby, both Hafez and Bashar al-Assad were able to keep tight control over the army and the state altogether by utilizing and mobilizing the Alawite community through the patronage relations and networks which are arranged hierarchically while the patron sits on the top of the chain. As Stepan and Linz claim on the rule of the Alawite minority in consolidating the regime, the Alawite dominance, "within the coercive apparatus signals that we are not in Marcos or Mubarak territory here, where the organized military might unseat the ruler. The

[172] Leon Goldsmith. "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective.".

Alawite officers who do Assad's bidding know that should he fall, they and their families will face mortal danger' hence they concluded 'in Syria, there are no influential regime and opposition soft-liners to carry out semi public negotiations over the terms of the sultan's exit. A civil war prevails, with numerous fronts and competing factions fed by external supply line"[173].

Yet, the submission of the Alawites to the Assad regime is by no means assured forever, nor ,s the total submission of the Alawite community to the Assad's family. "The general Alawite loyalty to Assad's regime does not eliminate the fact the Assad's most dangerous opposition comes from within Alawite community since the Alawite form the backbone of Assad's hold in power"[174] As Dam puts it "Contrary to what might be concluded from all this sectarian propaganda, the potentially most dangerous opposition to Hafiz Assad's regime could be exercised primarily by officers who belong to the Alawite community and only secondarily by others" [175] . However, it could be argued that this danger from the Alawite community has decreased with time, mainly due to the consolidation of the patrimonial power of Assad as time passed, and it is unlikely to occur in a situation of crisis, when the feeling of insecurity reaches its peak.

The Alawite community has become deeply linked to Assad's regime and has invested in its survival, thanks to the patrimonial relations and networks. This patronage relations have contributed to the Alawite asabiyya along with the insecurity and consolidation of the community around the patrimonial family, Assad. This role has continued during Bashar's time, who even appointed two Chiefs of Staff, Ali Aslan and Ali Habib, and his latest Defense Minister, Ali Ayyub, from the Alawite community.

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[173] Alfred Stepan & Juan Linz.. "Democratization Theory and the "Arab Spring", 28.

[174] CIA . *Syria Without Assad: Succession Politics*, 13

[175] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* 73

3.2.2.2. Baath Party Patronage

In additional to the Alawite patronage, the Assad regime has utilized Baath Party Patronage to foster its patrimonial domination over the state and society in Syria. The Baath Party patronage networks were vital in expanding the social base of the regime and reaching out to various social layers. Hence, the Baath Party in Syria under the Assad family had lost its ideological idealization and had started to lose its instrumental role in the hands of the patrimonial power. The Baath Party and its organizations were very instrumental in mobilizing the people, generating legitimacy, and glorifying the patron by practicing and celebrating the political cult of Assad. The patronage relations and networks which were established through the Baath Party helped the patrimonial power to penetrate the bureaucracy and mobilize various social segments, thus increasing the amount and diversifying power-holders, all within the interest of the patron, al-Assad. As Devlin argues "Assad can rightly be assessed as the man who converted Baathism in Syria from party rule into a dictatorship"[176].

The Baath Party[177] was officially founded in Syria in April 1947 as the Arab Baath Party, by two French-educated teachers; Greek Orthodox Christian Michel Aflaq, and Sunni Salah al-Bitar. The Baath ideology at the beginning was formulated around pan-Arabism, yet it attained a social dimension mainly with the amalgamation of Akram Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party in the 1950s. Thus the party's name transformed into the Arab Socialist Baath Party. Baath Party goals could be summarized in three words, representing the slogan for the party; Wihdah (unity for all Arab peoples); Hurriye (freedom mainly from foreign powers); and Ishtirakiyya (socialism).

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[176] John F Devlin. "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis." *The American Historicak Review*. 96, no.5 (1991): 1396-1407, 1406.

[177] Baath is an Arabic word means resurrection, and referring to the revival of the Arab nation.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Syrian Baath Party remained out of power until the 1963 coup, which was staged by a group of Baathist officers, who formed a military organization, the Secret Military Committee, during the years of the unification with Egypt 1958-1961. This closed group acted separately from the main party body (th Baath Party agreed to dissolve itself during the unification to facilitate the union as Nasser had demanded). When the 1963 coup took place, the civilian members of the Baath were too few (approximately 600) to cope with the great government responsibility[178]. The officers gradually took over the party and at the end ousted its founders through 23rd of February 1966 purge, including Aflaq and al-Bitar who at the end of the day sought refuge and settled in Iraq. Once the Iraqi Baathists had won power in Baghdad, they offered asylum and assurance of continued titular leadership to Afalq and his Syrian associates[179]. The Iraqi and Syrian Baathists were never to reconcile[180].

Following the purge of the qawmiyyun (Nationalist) faction, who gathered around the historical leadership represented by Aflaq, by the qutriyyun (Regionalist) led by the members of the Secret Military Committee including Assad in 1966, intra-Baath politics in Syria settled into a contest between two factions; "Salah Jadid led faction which espoused a doctrinaire socialist system domestically and a revisionist foreign policy; in the counterpart Hafez Assad, who was more concerned with results than with doctrine in domestic affairs"[181]. The struggle of power between the two men ended with Hafez being victorious in November 1970, taking power by force after a fruitless attempt by Jadid to remove him from the party and administrative posts. Since then, the Syrian Baath Party began to be associated with the Assad regime.

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[178] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* 22

[179] John F Devlin. "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis.", 1403.

[180] For more details on the rivalry between Syrian and Iraqi Baath Party see; (Kienle, 1990).

[181] Ibid.

Hafez al-Assad needed the Baath Party, particularly in his early years. The Baath Party was a crucial instrument in consolidating his power internally and providing legitimacy both inside and outside Syria. In the early years, internally the Baath ideology and its closely associated the Arab legitimacy were particularly important for Assad, not only to ease the shock of the crushing defeat of 1967, but also to counter the Iraqi Baath's propaganda. On the other hand, Arab legitimacy in Syrian propaganda was not unconnected with the narrow societal bases of Assad regime: it had to be proven that the "Alawite, too, were valiant Arabs."[182]. Arabism and the Arab orbit was one of the three orbits (Alawite and Syria) that the Syrian regime and Assad himself acted, according to Zisser.[183] Yet, this Baath ideology and Arab populist discourse consisted of were rather too much rhetoric for the pragmatic al-Assad. Hafez al-Assad was not a sincere believer in the revolutionist Arab populism, but more a pragmatic leader who prioritized his interests and sought his survival.

Under Assad's rule, although the Baath Party has been the leading party, a position which was guaranteed by the 1973 constitution which declared in its 8th article that the Baath Party is the leader of the state and society, its real impact was less definitive. The Baath Party plays little role in decision-making in the regime and was used more as a rubber stamp for the decisions made by Assad and his inner circle him[184]. Since decision making has become the exclusive right of president Assad, the Syrian Baath Party has not been heavily involved in the decision-making process. Yet, it remains an essential role for organizing people, mobilizing the masses, and legitimizing the regime. From this point, pan-Arab ideology plays a role.

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[182] Eberhard Kienle. *Ba'th v. Ba'th, The Conflict between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989.* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1990), 55.

[183] Eyal Zisser. *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition*, 19-22.

[184] CIA . *Syria Without Assad: Succession Politics*, 13

During Hafez Assad's reign, the Baath Party enjoyed the official advantaged position in Syrian politics. The following privileges were guaranteed by the Syrian constitution: the Baath Party was to be the leading party of the state and society according to the 8th article of the constitution; the Baath Party was to lead the National Progressive Party, which includes other parties; the Baath Party is the only party that could conduct political activities in the military. This advantaged position has transformed it into a critical driver and was utilized for Baath Party patronage.

On the other hand, the party's body and affiliated organizations expanded more and more. The expanded and oversized body of the Baath Party, reveals the stretching of the patronage relations and patronage networks. The Baath Party started to be organized in every social segment and every corner of the country, yet this expansion in activities and membership, does not represent success in recruiting new believers in the party' ideology. Instead, it indicated the increasing domain of opportunism and the number of opportunists. However, the role of the state-sponsored political cult and security apparatus in pushing the people towards the party should not be neglected.

The Baath Party patronage relations goes downwards and operates to the benefit of the patron as well as the client. The patronage relations through the Baath Party was vital for Assad to maintain his political and social control, mobilize the people around his cult, generate public support and assert his legitimacy. On the other hand, being a member of the Baath Party was an advantage for a client who seeks access to power, social, bureaucratic or political upgrading. Thus, the patronage relations go in favor of both actors, and have become widespread through and by the Baath Party. These patronage relations include all party ranks, from the peasants' federation in the countryside to the central committee of the party. Men like Abdullah al-Ahmar, the son of a poor construction worker who became the highest official of the Baath Party below Assad, developed a vibrant network of clients in the business community[185].

[185] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 449.

These patronage relations and networks were established on the ground through political structures and political and social organizations of the Baath Party. For example, in order to realize the aim of patronizing Syrian politics through the party, Assad established the National Progressive Front, a Baath Party-controlled coalition of parties. It started with four parties; the Communist Party; the Arab Socialist Union; the Socialist Union; and the Arab Socialist Party. Those parties' leaders were given specific positions in the parliament and the government. However, they were not allowed to seek new members in the armed forces or schools.[186]

In the public and social domain, the role of the popular organizations (al-Munazamat al-shabiyya) was vital. These organizations organized and targeted every social segment; school pupils, university students, women, workers, peasants and so on. At the end of the day, the Baath Party established and an organization in every social field; the General Union of Peasants, the General Federation of Syrian Women, the General Federation of Trade Unions, the General Federation of Artisans Associations, the Union of Arab Writers, Munazzamet Talai' al-Baath the Pioneers of Baath Association, which targeted pupils from 6-12 years, Ittihad Shabibet al-Thawrah the Revolutionary Youth Union, which targeted students from 13-18 years, the National Union of Syrian Students[187]. Hence, '[Assad] strengthened the party-controlled organizations. These organizations helped mobilize support for Assad's regime among peasants, workers, students, women, young people, and other special groups within the Syrian society'[188].

These popular organizations could be seen as large corporatist federations. 'Corporatism conceives of society as an organic body whose different functional

[186] Charles Patterson. *Hafiz Al-Asad of Syria.* (iUniverse.com, Inc., 1991), 59.

[187] For more detailed information about theses organization see; (al-Jeba'i 2013, 224-228).

[188] Charles Patterson. *Hafiz Al-Asad of Syria.* (iUniverse.com, Inc., 1991), 58.

groups fulfill specific tasks under the leadership of the government'[189]. In the Syrian case, corporatism assured by the Baath Party and its popular organizations was operating under the leadership of the patron, al-Assad, the leader of the party. The society was organized in compulsory hierarchic associations representing different social groups. However, the Assad regime did not aim to constitute an organic society in its extreme sense, but rather these associations operated as means of social control, to guarantee patrimonial domination. For instance, the Revolutionary Youth Union and Syrian Students Union could be considered as an instrument of repression and control in high schools and universities. The Students Union will play a crucial role in suppressing demonstrations against the regime on university campuses, and moreover, it will facilitate the mobilization and recruitment of militants from among the university students to join the regime's paramilitary forces.

It is noteworthy, that these organizations could organize and operate within the state apparatuses. The organization process was a state-sponsored one, and their members were given influence over admission, academic appointment, scholarship, etc. Even in the countryside, peasants' federations held influence over the allocation of loans and credits. As Perthes mentions 'organized parallel to the administrative structure of the state and the public sector, the different party levels exercise what is referred to as 'popular control' over the respective level structure of bureaucracy'[190].

These patronage networks have extended the ruling base and increased the stakeholders in the system. New social segments from the rural in particular joined the system and started to benefit from the systematic opportunism. On the other hand, patrimonial power has expanded its controlling circle and at the end of the day was able to penetrate not only the bureaucratic domain but also the social life.

Under these patronage networks, the role of cronyism has flourished. Corruption is not only exists in these settings but have become more systematic. In this systematic corruption, the party and its members constitute the medium-level of

[189] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,* 134.

[190] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,* 158.

these circles, which are best described in the Arabic word that is widely used in Syrian society, '*wasta*'. Lust, in elaborating on the process of 'competitive clientelism', argues that the parliamentarians in Syria (who were mostly from the Baath Party by quota) work as the mediators (or wasta), between the citizen and the state.[191]. Given this function, each member of the party leadership is a powerful patron, 'even the petty party officials can exercise remarkable influence at the local level.'[192]. Hence, a new class of petty, petty bourgeoisie was arguably created in the shadow of the Baath[193].

This role of the Baath Party and its patronage relations was diminished under Bashar's rule. Bashar, in contrast to his father, did not climb to power through control over the army and the party. On the other hand, his era witnessed the decreasing role of Arabism as an ideology in regional politics, mainly following the overthrown of Iraqi Baath in 2003, and with the deepened Syria's alliance with Iran under the so-called Mehwar al-Mukawama The Axis of Resistance. Internally he opened the door for a privatization process that benefit his close clients and the upgraded awlad al-Sultah. However, the role of the Baath Party remained important during Bashar's time. The party membership witnessed a considerable expansion. When Hafez died the party's membership was around 1,4 million, and by 2005 it reached 1.8 million[194]. It is important to state here that this large membership does not reflect the real number of ideologues and believers, rather it is a result of the rooted opportunism and coercive policies which implies a compulsory membership for the student for example.

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[191] Ellen Lust.. "Competitive Clientalism in the Middle East." *Journal of Democracy*. 20, no.3 2009): 122-135, 124.

[192] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,*160.

[193] Elisabeth Longuenesse. *The Class Nature of the State in Syria: Contribution to An Analysis.* Middle East Research and Information Project, 1979: 3-11.

[194] Eyal Zisser. *Companding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power.* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 71.

Like Alawite Patronage, the Baath Party patronage and its networks have been utilized by the patrimonial power of the neopatrimonial Assad regime to penetrate the Syrian state and society and thereby consolidate the personal power of the patrimon. The patronage networks were vital in reaching out various social segments, increasing the shareholders, and mobilizing the public around the patrimonial power.

3.2.3. The Clientelism of the Assad Regime

In addition to the personalization and the patronage relations, the neopatrimonial power of Assad regime consolidates its authority through the clientelism and its networks. The clientelism networks allowed the patrimonial power to reach out to new social segments and individuals beyond the patronage networks' targeted groups. The patrimonial power which penetrated the political and social life through the patronage relations, expanded more to penetrate the economic domain through the clientelism. However, the clientelism differs from the patronage relations in its related matter. While the patronage relations and networks tend to have a hierarchical order and thus take a vertical shape, the clientelism relation could be a horizontal relation that implies an interaction between a patron and a client. So, it does not target one social group in a patronage manner which implies the patron to be on the top of the chain. Rather it extends to include all the individuals in the society through horizontal patron-client relations, regardless of their social affiliation or belonging. In other words, while the patronage relations concern group politics and thus targeted social or political groups, the clientelism is opened to all individuals who live under the patrimonial power. These two closely associated relations shown themselves in the Syrian case in different manifestations.

The patronage relations are manifested through the Alawite patronage and Baath Party patronage. Here, the patronage-clientelism relations is limited to the members of either social or political group, Alawite or Baath Party. In other words, to be a client, you need to be either a member of the Alawite community or a committed Baathist. While clientelism is a cross-sectarian and a cross-political

strata phenomenon. In the clientelism, the client-patron relation is a mutually beneficial relationship, which generally implies a martial reward. Thus, the clientelism, relatively due its nature, function and flourish in the economic domain.

Thus, the clientelism in Syria goes beyond, and it is not limited only to the political domain, whereas you need to be Baathist (or in such limited cases a member of one party of the Baath leaded National Progress Front), or to the members of the Alawite community (which dominated in the army and security domain) to be a client, clientelism under Assad regime expanded also to the economic domain. Although public sector through the state planned economy has enjoyed an upper hand in the Syrian economy, that does not mean that the private sector does not enjoy relative independence, in particular, the merchants of the two bigger cities, Damascus and Aleppo. For example, the private sector occupies an almost exclusive place in the sphere of retailing, tourism, trucking, real estate: in 1973 it officially controlled 25% of wholesale and 32% of foreign trade[195]. On the other hand, At the onset of the Syrian uprising, 70% of the Syrian economy was controlled by the private sector[196].

The merchants and businessmen community, in general, were linked to the patrimonial power through clientelism relation, But, it is important to state here that this clientelism was opened to any member of the business community regardless his background, and thus does not represent a case of high-level politics, which target a social or political group, as in the case of Alawite or Baath Party patronage. In other words, this clientelism was not associated with sectarian or organizational linkage as in the case of Alawite and Baath patronage. Through the clientelism the business community has guaranteed a license for their activities and sometimes benefited from the state-sponsored or owned projects, in contrast, they maintained their loyalty to the patrimonial power and sided with it in case of crises.

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[195] Ibid.

[196] Aurora Sottimano. The Syrian Business Elite: Patronage Networks and War Economy.*Syria Untold*. Accessed March 26, 2018. http://www.syriauntold.com/en/2016/09/the-syrian-business-elite-patronage-networks-and-war-economy/

Hence, it is understandable that this clientelism has existed more among the Sunni merchants of the urban cities in Syria, while the patronage relations of Alawite and Baath Party have found its base among the lower social class in the rural areas and the agricultural economy-based small cities such as Daraa. As argued by Nikolas Van Dam after analyzing of the statics provided in the Organizational Report (1985) of Baath Party, the Baath Party membership was lowest in the bigger cities such as Damascus and Aleppo and higher in the rural area[197]. Thus, while the patrimonial power in Syria was able to attract and control the popular mass in the rural areas through the Baath Party patronage relations, the clientelism was a useful instrument to keep the Sunni urban in close.

During Hafez al-Assad's rule, the relation between the patrimonial power and its representatives of the security and political elite from one side and the businessmen community on the other was a matter of clientelism. Thus the businessmen community was attached to the patrimonial power, although still enjoys relative independence. In contrast, Bashar al-Assad's rule witnessed a step beyond the clientelism throughout the attempts to patronize the economic domain. This could be explained in two explanation; the first one, the attempt of the patrimonial power to patronize the economic domain would come as a reasonable second step after patronizing the political and social domain, since the patrimonial power is not expected to stop expanding and penetrating all aspects of the society to consolidate its power more and more. At the end of the day the systematic clientelism, which a step forward could transform to a patronage relation by time.

The second explanation could be found in the inner circle of around Bashar al-Assad which started to include businessmen like Rami Makhlouf, the category that was not found in the clique of Hafez al-Assad. These economic and business-oriented elites would seek more penetration and patronizing of the economic domain for their benefit. While the traditional security and political elite had focused more on penetration and patronizing the political and social domains, the new formed economic benefiter elites start to target the economic domain as well. It

[197] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* 125.

is important to mention here that the risk of the patrimonialization the economic domain, is that it eliminates the last arena in which non-patrimonial attached social actors could operate. The patrimonializing of the economic domain affects directly what we can call as an economic society, which Linz and Stepan argue to be one of their five significant arenas of a modern consolidated democracy.[198] [199]

3.2.3.1.Hafez Assad's Era and Business Community

In contrast to his neo-Baathist predecessors, who were one of the most radical in the Arab world, in term of generating a social change, Hafez Assad after taking power in November 1970, started an era of reconciliation with the middle class, especially the merchants[200]. Assad tried to accommodate Sunni interests by relaxing the economic restrictions on Sunni merchants and businessmen[201]. Hafez's predecessors had adopted aggressive policies against both the notable and the merchants, trying to realize their socialist dreams of collectivized agriculture and stateness economy. However, When Hafez came to power the Syrian economy was facing persistent economic difficulties, Hafez restrained these revolutionary policies. Talk of collectivization stopped, and the existing state farms (except for a handful specializing in poultry and livestock production) were disbanded. Trade controls were relaxed, and the government underwrote a program of loans for small businesses.[202] In front of a delegation of wealthy Damascene merchants on 6

[198] Juan J Linz & Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation.* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

[199] Linz and Stepan in their book '*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation'* argue that the five major arenas of a modern consolidated democracy are; civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, economic society. In Syrian case the first four arenas were patrimonalized under Hafez's rule, however, the economic society enjoyed a relative autonomous, which Bashar's patrimonial power and the surrounding economical elites started to threaten.

[200] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 447.

[201] Martha Neff Kessler. *Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power.* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 35.

[202] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 447.

December 1970, president Hafiz al-Assad announced his intention to do all he could to enhance the role of the private sector in Syria's commerce and industry[203].

The modus operandi between the Assad regime and the business community shaped through the clientelism. The clientelism relations started to be formulated mainly between the patrimonial power represented by the political and security ruling elite, who controlled the political life and thus the state's resources, on the one hand, and the merchants and businessmen community on the other. Moreover, hereby, A partnership was forged between the Alawite officers in the army and the security services, and the Sunni merchants class. The children of the senior commanders had done particularly well by that relationship, they were called, Awlad al-Sultah (children of authority), literally sons of the authority.[204]

The cryonic problem of these clientelism relations is that whenever the economy flourishes it flourishes as well. For instance, In the 1970s the Syrian economy had witnessed the highest economic growth ever, with an economic growth rate estimated around 10.5%. However, this growth was used by the political elite to expand its clientelism network, as Barout argues. Barout claims that this process led to the emergence of what he called as 'capitalized bureaucratic class,' mainly within the bureaucratic and ruling elite, which came from the middle and lower social classes, using its possession of the power and authority.[205]

By the end of the 1970s, a new enriched class has emerged due to their connections to the central administration, which enabled them to dominate the distribution of goods coming, for example, from the government-run ports at Latakia and Tartus and across the border from Lebanon[206].

On the other hand, this newly emerged capitalized bureaucratic class, or the bureaucratic bourgeoisie started to be the driving force behind the crony capitalism. A new class of enriched individuals has started to emerge to form a 'crony

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[203] Fred H Lawson. *Why Syria Goes to War, Thirty Years of Confrontation.* (New York: Cronell University Press, 1996), 77.
[204] Fouad Ajami. *The Syrian Rebellion.* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institiute Press Publication, 2012), 73.
[205] Muhammed Jamal Barout. *al-Aked al-Akhir fi Tarih Suriye, Jadalyet al-Jumoud w'al-Islah* . (Beirut: Arab Center for Reseacrh & Policy Studies, 2012), 35.
[206] Fred H Lawson. *Why Syria Goes to War, Thirty Years of Confrontation,* 100.

capitalists,' who shares a big stake of the semi-formal and informal economic activities. Those crony capitalists will remain loyal to the regime and highly invested in its survival. For instance, smuggling and particularly from Lebanon, started to be one of the main informal economic sector that controlled by the security officers, supplied 70% of all non-military foreign trade in early 1980s[207] (Sadowski 1987, 454), it said that military and security officers who have close ties with al-Assad controlled in the mid-1980s about 5 billions US Dollars of drug trade on Lebanese borders[208]. Another interesting example was the affair of nuclear waste, which former vice-president Abdulhalim Khaddam and his family will be accused of. Ironically Khaddam himself, following his defected from the regime, will describe the economic modus operandi under Assad's regime as 'corporatization of corruption.'[209]

The networks that the regime forged with elite business actors paid dividends in times of crisis. Badr ad-Din ash-Shallah, then president of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, assured the loyalty of big business to Hafez Assad in 1982, when the regime violently crushed an uprising in Hama[210].

Assad also opened the door by 1990s for the business community to be represented in the controlled political sphere through paving the way for some Damascus Chamber of Commerce's representatives to take seats in the parliament. Hereby the regime has expanded the ruling base, although the role of the parliament in Syrian politics is, without doubt, limited and controlled. By the end of the day, capitalists were never able to transform their growing economic power into political influence, unless they act and move within the patrimonial power's consent.

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[207] Yahya M Sadowski.. "Patronage and the Ba'th: Corruption and Control in Contemporary Syria.", 454.

[208] Veysel Kurt.. "Fransiz Mancaciligindan Ic Savaca Suriye'de Ordu ve Siyaset." In *Ortadogu'da Din ve Siyaset*, by Veysel Kurt, 163-186. (Istanbul: SETA Vakfi, 2017), 175.

[209] Leon Goldsmith. "Syria's Alawites and the Politics of Sectarian Insecurity: A Khaldunian Perspective.", 44.

[210] Aurora Sottimano. The Syrian Business Elite: Patronage Networks and War Economy

The clientelism was the modus operandi through which the relations between the Assad regime and the business community had been shaped. The clientelism relations and networks allowed the patrimonial power to oversee the economic domain and its activities and sometimes to shape it in the light of its interest, and on the other hand, allowed the business community to reach out state's resources and gain the license to operate in the economic domain, which continued to enjoy relative independence and was not transformed to entirely state ruled as in the case of the totalitarian regimes.

3.2.3.2.Under Bashar's Rule; from Clientelism to Patronage

The relatively independence economic domain, in which the Sunni urban merchants were operating in the Hafez's period has been restricted under Bashar's role. Bashar's role has witnessed the emergence and the consolidation of a new class of businessmen, many of them being from the Alawite community, who enjoyed close relations with the patrimonial power. Those newly emerged class has attempted to patrimonialism the economic domain as well. Thus, it could be argued that the class of Awlad al-Sultah which started to emerge under Hafez's role, has continued to consolidate and expand under Bashar, paving the way for the upgrading of Awlad al-Sultah.

The young Syrian president during his oath speech had promised the change to the Syrian people. These promises even opened a discussion between the intellectuals about the transformation from the 'central planning' economy to the 'market economy' and from the authoritarian structure of the state to a more democratic one.[211] It appears that the liberalization process does not expand the economic liberality and the patrimonial power-free economic domain, in opposite it was instrumentalized to consolidate the patrimonial power in the economic domain.

The liberalization processes which was launched in Syria under Bashar Assad in the 2000s go in parallel with the consolidation of the patrimonialism of the

[211] Muhammed Jamal Barout. *al-Aked al-Akhir fi Tarih Suriye, Jadalyet al-Jumoud w'al-Islah* . (Beirut: Arab Center for Reseacrh & Policy Studies, 2012), 33.

head of the regime in the economic realm. Hence, the liberalization was going in favor of a bunch of 'entrepreneur' who enjoy close ties with the patron. Bashar Assad's cousin Rami Makhlouf exemplifies this new mode of corruption whereby individuals close to the regime use family connections for 'predatory self-enrichment' in the private sector.[212] The result was that. Public assets were de facto transferred into the hands of crony capitalists, privileged networks, and corporations linked with the Asads by family and clan ties, while small business and the agricultural sector – the backbones of the Syrian economy – were neglected[213].

For instance, Rami Makhlouf monopolized the sector of the mobile phone in Syria which started to operate in 2000 by two operators, Makhlouf had a share of 75% of the first operator (Syriatel) and was one of the two owners of the second operator (94). Moreover, the Syrian authority started to harass Makhlouf's partners through the security services. Thus, he ended up controlling the two operators[214]. When Riyad Saif, a Sunni businessman and a member of the parliament at that time criticized what he called 'irregularities in the phone licenses' he was soon arrested and imprisoned[215]. Saif, who fled the country and joined the opposition following the uprising, will be elected as the head of The General Assembly of the Syrian National Coalition of the Opposition and Revolutionary Forces in May 2017. Another example was Makhlouf's attempt to take over the dealership of Daimler-Benz from 'Omar Sankqar & Sons Company' which belongs to the Sanqar family a

[212] Soren Schmidt. "The Development Role of the State in the Middle East: Lessons form Syria." In *The State and the political Economy of Reform in Syria*, 25-44. (Fife, Scotland: the Univerity of St Andrews Center for Syrian Studies, 2009), 33.

[213] Aurora Sottimano. The Syrian Business Elite: Patronage Networks and War Economy.

[214] Soren Schmidt. "The Development Role of the State in the Middle East: Lessons form Syria.", 30

[215] Anthony Shadid. Syrian Businessman Becomes Magnet for Anger and Dissent. *New York Times*. Accessed in May, 5th 2018. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/world/asia/01makhlouf.html .

well-known Damascene old Sunni bourgeoisie.[216] Interestingly to note here, that Ali and Wasim Sanqar (members of Sanqer family) funded one of the earliest opposition conferences in May 2011[217].

In comparing with Hafez's policies which encouraged the private sector to take its share form public spending and to expand its activities,[218] thus, empower it although to a limited and controlled extent. Bashar's time witnessed an attempt to patrimonialism the economic domain and even arguably to swallow the private sector. The turning point in the attempt to patrimonize the economic domain was the establishing of Cham Holding, which was set up in 2007 with 73 investors and $360 million, in what seemed an attempt to tether wealthy Sunni businessmen to the government. Rami Makhouf was the vice chairman of the holding and said to be the real power in. The holding has effectively been charged with renovating Syria's aging infrastructure, attracting Arab capital in another network of support for Mr. Assad's rule.[219]

The Assad regime which formulated and consolidated its patrimonial power within the state apparatus and in the political and social domain through the penetration of the patronage relations (which comprise the clientelism), has tried to oversee and control the economic domain through the clientelism relations. However, the modus operandi of the patrimonial power in the economic domain has been upgraded throughout the rule of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad from simple patron-client relations in the early years, to a more systematic clientelism networks by the end of Hafez's time, this upgrading reached an attempt of establishing a

[216] Soren Schmidt. "The Development Role of the State in the Middle East: Lessons form Syria.", 31-32.

[217] Aurora Sottimano. The Syrian Business Elite: Patronage Networks and War Economy.

[218] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad,* 51

[219] Anthony Shadid. Syrian Businessman Becomes Magnet for Anger and Dissent.

patronage over the economic domain under Bashar's rule, eliminating more and more any space for non-patrimonial social activity.

3.3.The Neopatrimonialism and the Robustness of the Assad Regime

From 1970 until now, the Assad family was able to sustain its patrimonial role, and overcome several internal and external threats, though in the most unscrupulous measures. The Assad regime has enjoyed this notable durability and distinguished robustness thanks to its neopatrimonial characteristics. The impact of the patrimonialism on the durability of the regime, mainly in the face of any transition attempt, was studied by many scholars like Snyder and Brownlee.

Richard Snyder was one of the first to study in detail and try to lay down a model for the possibilities of a transition and change in the neopatrimonial regimes. By applying Snyder's standards and variables (as illustrated in the Figure 2 in the first chapter) on the case of the neopatrimonial regime of Syria, the results of any transition attempt illustrate the durability of the regime by showing that the outcomes would be either stability of the regime, or a failed revolution. It is clear that the first variable (institutional autonomy of the military) is so low since the army and other security apparatus are personally and directly controlled by the patron, Hafez and later Bashar Assad, who is at the same time the commander-in-chief of the Syrian Armed Forces, and the SAA.

On the other hand, the second variable (the strategies and relative organizational strengths of moderate groups opposed to the dictator) is low in the Syrian case due to the lack of the political life in pre-2011 Syria. While the third one (the strategies and relative organizational strengths of revolutionary groups opposed to the dictator) is relatively low and almost entirely depending on foreign backers. Hence, the result of any attempt to conduct a political transition in Syrian case would result, according to Snyder's model, with either stability or revolution that would not be successful due to 'relatively low' degree of strategies and organizational strengths of revolutionary groups opposed to Bashar Assad. Noteworthy that in the Syrian case and according to Snyder's argument the outcome

of the uprising that swings between stability and revolution is determined by the foreign backers and their commitment to the revolutionary oppositions.

One another hand, the relative independence of the pre-existing Assad regime from a foreign patron had strengthened the robustness of the regime, the factor which Snyder touches upon in his assessment. Snyder accepts that the 'degree to which neopatrimonial rulers are dependent on a foreign patron varies significantly from case to case', and argues that the more the regime depends on foreign powers, the less stable/durable it would be. Snyder clarifies his claim by saying that "When the dictator is heavily dependent on a superpower patron who can identify and support an acceptable (and cooperative) alternative, that patron may be able to use its leverage to remove the dictator from office in times of crisis and to ease the acceptable opposition into power… when foreign actors have limited leverage over the dictator, their ability to influence the course of political development is restricted to supporting the dictator's opposition or to intervening directly"[220] .

In the Syrian case, the pre-uprising Assad regime was enjoying a relative independence from any foreign patron. It already had allied with Tehran and Moscow, yet the relations between the Syrian regime and Iran or Russian were not patron-client relation. Moreover, no external power had the upper hand over the Syrian security or military institutions, since the Assad regime was trying their best to limit any external penetration to ensure the survival of the regime. This independence from any external patron had given the Assad Regime relative stability and a degree of robustness before the uprising took place. As Perthes claims, 'Syria's high level of independence from external forces may thus have contributed to the striking stability of the regime'[221].

In his later writing, through analyzing several cases, Snyder illustrates the possible outcomes of various neopatrimonial regime cases, by analyzing both the

[220] Rishard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorship." *Comparative Politics.* 24, no.4 (1992): 379-399, 385

[221] Volker Perthes. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad.*

structural characteristic of these regimes like the level of patrimonial penetration of the society and the state, as well as the strength of moderate and revolutionary revolutions.

Applying Snyder's Structural Characters of Sultanistic/Neopatrimonial Regimes and Possible Outcome[222] model on the Assad Regime case will result with a political stability outcome.

Table 1: Possible Regime Outcomes According To The Regime's Characteristics.

Case	Penetration of State by Patronage Network	Penetration of Society by Patronage Network	Ruler's Dependence on a Single Superpower Patron	Regime Outcomes
Syria Assad's Regime	High	High	Low	Political Stability

Yet, when we take the role of the opposition forces, and especially the role of what Snyder defined as maximalist opposition which "seek to overthought the existing regime and seize control of the state" [223] into consideration, and with the absence of a regime soft-liner, in contrast to the strength of the regime hard-liners, the result for a political transition would be a case of revolution according to Snyder's model.

[222] Richard Snyder. "Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes Combining Structural and Voluntarist Perspectives." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, by H.E Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, 49-81. (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 60.
[223] İbid, 52.

Table 2: Possible Regime Outcomes According To The Regime's & The Opposition's Components.

Case	Strength of Regime Soft-Liners	Strength of Moderate Opposition	Strength of Maximalist Opposition	Regime Outcomes
Syria Assad's Regime	Absent	Low	High	Revolution

Thus, like the result from the first model of Snyder (illustrated in figure 2) the result of any attempt to a political transition in Syria under Assad's neopatrimonial regime would be oscillating between stability of the regime and revolution.

Building on Richard Snyder's study of neopatrimonial transitions, Jason Brownlee, elaborates in his article '… And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes' the variable of 'hard-liner' strength, which already introduced by Snyder, deriving from both the regime's domestic patrimonial network and its relationship to a foreign patron. Brownlee measures the regime hard-liners as such "for neopatrimonial regimes, one way to estimate hard-liner strength during transition moments is to consider patrimonial penetration of state and society and dependence on an external superpower as measures of the capacity and constraints of incumbent political actors." Thus, he claims that 'just as Snyder measured the strength of soft-liners and opposition activists for bringing about transition, one could gauge the regime's ability to resist change and avert breakdown [224], which would mean that the 'extensive patrimonial ties can sustain a

[224] Jason Brownlee.. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes". *Studies in Comparative International Development.* 37, no. 3 (2002): 53-63, 41.

regime as long as superpower patrons do not inhibit the use of force'[225], refuting the claim that the extensive patrimonialism undermines the stability of the regime.

Interestingly, Brownlee introduced Syrian regime under Hafez Assad (1970-2000), which was able to 'brutally suppressed his most active opponents, the Muslim Brotherhood'[226] to illustrate the validity of his argument that the highest the hard-liner strength for the regime is the more stable the regime is.

Table 3: Brownlee's Strength of Hard-Liners in Neopatrimonial Regimes, applied to the Syrian Case[227]

Case	Penetration of State by Patronage Network	Penetration of Society by Patronage Network	Ruler's Dependence on a Superpower Patron	Strength of Regime Hard-liners
Syria Assad Regime 1982	High	Low	Low	High

Regarding the role of the opposition, Brownlee argued that the existence of the strong maximalist opposition, does not prevent the re-stability of the regime, thanks to the absence of the strong regime soft-liners in contrast to the high level of hard-liners. So in this regard Brownlee seems to disagree with Snyder who saw the revolution as the outcome of this case.

[225] Ibid, 36.
[226] Jason Brownlee.. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes", 42.

[227] Jason Brownlee.. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes", 41.

Table 4: Brownlee's Relative Strength of Domestic Opposition to Neopatrimonial Dictators, applied to Assad regime case[228].

Case	Strength of Regime Soft-Liners	Strength of Moderate Opposition	Strength of Maximalist Opposition	Regime Outcome
Syria Assad Regime	Absent	Low	High	Non-Transition (restabilization)

Hence, the pre-existing neopatrimonial characteristics of the Assad regime imply that any attempt to realize a political transition in Syria would lead to one of the following outcomes; stability, re-stability, and revolution. Not to forget that the ability to realize a revolution in the Syrian case will be heavily dependent on the foreign backers and their level of commitment to the hard-liner revolutionary opposition. The ability of such a revolution to realize its goals and to succeed in a political transition is another question which will be addressed partly while analyzing the role of the patronage networks in generating the counter-revolution. Interesting to note here the weakness of the soft-liners in both camps of the regime and the opposition left the outcomes to be determined by the hard-liners, and thus jeopardizes any possibility of political transition. Accordingly, what we would have in the Syrian case, is a swinging situation between restabilization and unrealized revolution.

Consequently, what makes Syria, as well as the other authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, to resist any change or even reformation attempts, is not the absence of democratic prerequisites only, but rather the presence of conditions that

[228] Jason Brownlee.. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes", 51.

fostered robust authoritarianism[229]. The presence of these conditions and apparatus which fostered the robustness of the authoritarian regimes, The Assad Regime in our case, in general through muscular coercive apparatuses, controlled by neopatrimonial power, introduced us with the dilemma of 'inability to reform'. Hence, any attempt to reform the regime, let alone to change it, would collide with the regimes' neopatrimonial resistance, that leads to a state of political stagnation which in the long run strengthens the hard-liners within the regime and the opposition and block any possibility of a peaceful transition.

[229] Jill Crystal.. "Authoritarianism and its Adversaries in the Arab World." *World Politics*. 46, (1994): 262-289.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE NEOPATRIMONIALISM OF THE ASSAD REGIME ON THE TRAJECTORY OF THE CONFLICT

4.1. A Synopsis of the Syrian Conflict

Since its outbreak in March 2011, what started out in the context of the Arab Spring as a peaceful uprising of the Syrian people, breaking the barrier of fear, demanding freedom and political reform, has transformed into one of the bloodiest wars and the most tragic humanitarian crises in the contemporary history.

The seven years of ongoing conflict has led to a horrific number of casualties with hundreds of thousands of people dead or wounded, while millions have fled their homes and became Internal Displaced People (IDPs), or refugees in neighboring country, and all over the world. The influx of refugees crossing the Mediterranean and Turkey to Europe, and the terrorist organization which occupied the scene on the ground spreading horror, have not destabilized Syria alone, but also shook the regional security and raised serious questions regarding the responsibilities of the international society and the effectiveness of the international system and its originating organizations.

Despite the regime allegation of the stability of Syria and its exceptionalism from other Arab countries that hit by the Arab Spring[230], the domino effect of the Arab Spring and its waves of public protests were inevitable. The outbreak started with children's graffiti on the wall of Arba'een Elementary School in the city of Dara in the south of Syria, the children, influenced by the new atmosphere of the

[230] President Bashar al-Assad gave an interview to the *Wall Street Journal* in late January 2011, weeks before the erupting of the uprising, in which he claimed that Syria is stable and that the regime is close to the Syrian people. (Interview With Syrian President Bashar al-Assad , 2011)

Arab Spring wrote Ijak el-Dor Ya Daktor 'O doctor, your time is coming'[231] on the wall. 18 boys were arrested in 27th of February by the security forces, and when the tribal elders and notables went to take them back they were contemptuously treated and reportedly told to forget they existed, Dara revolted after the Juma prayer in 18th of March[232]. The person held accountable for this Irresponsible behavior and reckless dealing was 'Atef Najib, the head of the Political Security Directorate in Dara and the cousin of the president Bashar Al-Assad. The security apparatus responded to the demonstration in Dara by fire, then the city was taken into siege for almost four weeks, which sparked the solidarity demonstrations in other cities under the slogan Ya Dara Henna Ma'aki Le-Mout 'O Dara, We Are with you until the Death'[233].

President Bashar al-Assad delivered a speech before a sycophantic parliament in 30th of March, in which he showed 'the extent of his isolation.'[234] The speech was, arguably, nothing than adding oil to the fire, he followed this speech with two others in 15th of April and 20th of June, in which he evoked the conspiracy claims against his regime, 'conspiracies are like germs, after all, multiplying every moment everywhere' he declared in this speech. Arguably, 'the regime continued to engage in a schizophrenic response to the protests', while continuing to make some concessions and announce reform measures, the military

[231] Early in the 1990s, a graffiti appeared on Damascus walls with the message '*Asadşescu'* and *'kul Ceauşescu biji yumu'* (Ceauşescu's day will come), hinting at the fate of Romania's ruler, Nicolae Ceauşescu, who was deposed and then executed in December 1989, (Zisser, Companding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power, 2007. P13), however, it has no popular affect. Yet this time the genearl atmoshpare helps inflaming the situation.

[232] Asil al-Zu'by. Fi Methl Hatha al-Youm, Atfal Dara Atlaku al-Sharara. *Al Arabi Al Jadid*. Accessed March 29, 2018. https://goo.gl/4gM7kB.

[233] Friday 18th of March could be considered the start point of the Syrian uprising nationwide, despite the previous attempts to organize a nationwide protest in 4-5 February (Day of Rage) and 15th of March. For more details, see; (Lesch, Syria, the Fall of the House of Assad, 2012. p 92-93).

[234] Fouad Ajami. *The Syrian Rebellion,* 76.

and security forces intensified their crackdown in cities across Syria.[235] This policy could be better described as 'applying the carrot-stick policy'.[236]

Meanwhile, the demonstration started to grow nationwide; however, it was more concentrated in the remote areas where the regime security forces have limited presence and in the suburbs of the big cities like Aleppo and Damascus. The demonstrations continued to occur in an ad-hoc manner mainly after the Juma Friday's prayer. The Syrian uprising was by no mean a revolution of the big cities, and the regime's security forces aborted the protestors' attempt to occupy the central *Maydans* as in the case of Homs in 18th of April 2011. One exception of protestors occupying the city center was Hama, although that did not last. On July 8th, Robert Ford the American ambassador came to the city of Hama with the French ambassador, the city witnessed the largest protest to date. Later the SAA would move into the city and take control. Between 31st of July and 4th of August 200 were estimated to have been killed in the city[237].

The unspoken sectarian fault lines started to float on the surface day by day, coloring the internal conflict with a sectarian tone. Starr argues that 'As the uprising continued to grow up over the summer and autumn of 2011, marked sectarian lines were drawn up: minorities were unanimously behind the regime; on the streets, Sunni Muslims were being cut down by regime gungs'[238]. By autumn and winter of

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[235] David W Lesch. *Syria, the Fall of the House of Assad.* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012), 100.

[236] Ibid, 111.

[237] Christopher Phillips.. *The Battle for Syria, International Rivalry in the New Middle East.* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2016), 67.

[238] Stepehen Starr. *Revolt In Syria, Eye-Witness to the Uprising.* 1st. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2012), 203

2011/2012, 'the murky half-light between revolt and a potential civil war in 2012'.[239]

Despite the regime's use of lethal force against the peaceful demonstrations, the demonstrations did not stop, nor did they retreat. The demonstrations reached its peak in June 2012, with more than 700 demonstration spot per week,[240] while its motto Ash-sha'b Yurid Isqat an-Nizam 'The People Want to Overthrow the Regime'[241] predominating the demonstrations. The protestors started to express this recoiling from Assad's cultish by destroying his status and cursing even the soul of his late father, Hafez. The determination of the protestors could be explained by the collapse of the wall of fear, or to the well-known phenomenon in the literature of the politics of protest, namely, the power of contagion, (or, alternatively, the power of diffusion)[242]. In contrast, the Assad's regime started to mobilize its patronage networks in its counter camping, the Alawite patronage and Baath Party's patronage relations were utilized extensively. This patrimonial mobilization of the patronage networks led to more social polarization and fed the sectarian narratives.

The use of arms by the protestors against the regime's security forces had started to show itself in various spots in Syria by mid- 2011; however, it was at that time more of individual actions under the excuse of protecting the demonstration from the Shabiha, the pro-Assad thugs. Noteworthy, taking up arms took place firstly in the rural areas or suburbs with tribal structure as in the case of Bab 'Amr

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[239] Ibid, 202.

[240] Yasin Haj Saleh.. *Al-Thawra Al-Mustahila.* (Bairut: Al Mu'assase Al-Arabiya Lildirasat Wal-Naher, 2017).

[241] The protestors using of the word *nizam* regime, instead of *hukumet* government revealed their frustration to the system as whole. Targeting the president Bashar al-Assad by demanding the overthrowing of the regime hint at the public perception that the regime embedded in the persona of al-Assad.

[242] Eva Bellin. "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Lessons form the Arab Spring." *Comparative Politics.* 44, no.2 (2012): 127-149, 140.

district of Homs, which consists of inhabitants of mostly tribal origins.[243] and which also lays in the crossroad between Homs and Lebanon. Yet later it started to take a more structural manner with the establishment of the Free Syrian Brigade which will be transformed to the Free Syrian Army FSA, by dozens of defected officers of the Syrian Arab Army SAA, and with the help of foreign countries. However, the FSA will be sidelined by the ideological motivated Islamist armed fictions, which started to occupy the scene. In autumn 2012, Eastern Ghota, as well as several districts of Eastern Damascus felt to the control of local opposition groups. In March 2013, Raqqa was the first province center to go out of the regime control. On the other hand, in the regime's camp, a mysterious accident took place, on July 18th, 2012, in which an explosion targeted the regime's 'crisis management cell.' Syrian activist and intellectual Yasin al-Haj Saleh considers this accident a turning point in the Syrian crisis and arguing that 'it is probably that Bashar and the Iranian got rid of skillful influential security elites, and then the regime turned to crush the revolution at any price'[244].

Meanwhile, the mobilization of the regimes' patronage networks reached its limit by 2013. The regime started to retreat, and the armed opposition backed by western and regional countries achieved significant progress on the ground, the regime was threatened. This progress had forced Iranian proxy Lebanese Hezbollah militias to intervene directly in the war by attacking opposition-controlled al-Qusayer on the Syrian Lebanese border in May 2013 starting a new phase on the conflict, in which the external intervention, on both sides of the conflict, although through proxy groups, started to be one of the main drivers of the conflict. Arguably, a phase of Iranian dominion over the Assad Regime had started, the dominion which will last until the Russian upper hand replaces it by end of summer 2015, when Russia will launch its military intervention following the regime

[243] Azmi Bishara. *Suriyya: Derb al-Alam Nahua al-Hurriya.* (Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2013), 192-193.

[244] Yasin Haj Saleh.. *Al-Thawra Al-Mustahila,* 24.

shaking by the notable advance of the armed groups in the northwestern part of Syrian territory.

By mid-2013, while the Assad Regime fell under the Iranian dominion, the Syrian opposition fell under the Islamic Jihadists, who started to control large swathes of the Syrian territory. Although the presence of Islamic groups could be observed before, for example in June 2012, a group called Mejlis Shwra al-Mujahedeen The Council of Islamist Mujahedeen took control of Bab Al-Hawa cross point along the border with Turkey. By the second half of 2013 the Islamic Jihadist groups occupied the scene. The rise of groups such as Cephet'ul Nusra al-Nusra Front, with its affiliation to the global Jihadist network has given the Syrian conflict another dimension. The situation will occupy a more complicated status with the announcement of the establishment of the ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa'sh-Sham the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant ISIS with its self-declared Khilafet. Having its roots ideological roots in global jihadism and its organic roots in Iraq 'ISIS was a unique addition to the conflict because it had territorial claims in both Syria and Iraq and beyond'[245].

On the ground, ISIS captured a big stake of the Syrian territory mainly at the expense of the armed opposition groups and insurgents. Around 88% of the territory ISIS controls by March 2016 was captured from the Syrian insurgents, ISIS later lost 89% of this territory to YPG[246]. At the end of the day, the rise of ISIS has provoked a new session of the ongoing conflict, in which the 'War on Terror' was added as a new driver in shaping the conflict. As the US launched the International Coalition against ISIS with fifty-plus countries, Syria had become a scene for a Jihadist versus Western conflict.

ISIS and the fight against ISIS have paved the way for other actors to be active on the ground. PKK's Syrian offshore Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat Democratic Union Party PYD, and its military wings YPG/YPJ started to be the 'boots on the grounds' for the US-led International Coalition against ISIS. Backed by the intense

[245] Ufuk Ulutas. *The State of Savagery: ISIS in Syria.* (Istanbul: SETA Vakfi, 2016), 161.

[246] İbid, 164.

aerial support, the YPG and the October 2015 established Syrian Democratic Forces SDG which YPG constitutes its backbone, advanced against ISIS and sometimes against the armed opposition, ending up with controlling almost 30% of Syrian territory by the end of 2017, giving an ethnic flavor to the conflict. The PYD took coherent steps to establish its own authority in northern Syria, the matter that considered undiscussable for Turkey, which launched Euphrates Shields Operation against ISIS and YPG's progress in Eastern Euphrates, and The Olive Branch Operation, against the YPG stronghold enclave of Afrin in the northern-west corner of Syria. Through these two operations, Turkey started to be on the ground, with its regular army.

The Turkish intervention would not take place, without its close coordination with Russia, which started to be an important shareholder of the conflict, following its direct military intervention on 30 September 2015. The Russian military intervention which took place after the significant retreat of the Syrian regime against the armed opposition which controlled the city of Idlib and the majority of its province, as well as against ISIS militants who controlled the historical city of Palmyra in the mid of Syrian desert by mid-2015, has upgraded the level of the conflict from being a regional conflict, in which the backers states fight each other through proxies, to the level of international conflict in which one of the global power, Russia, intervened directly on the ground.

The Russian intervention has offered the Assad Regime great leverage over the Syrian opposition. It enabled the Assad's regime, despite its manpower shortages to regain the full control of Homs countryside from ISIS and Syria's second city of Aleppo from the armed opposition by the end of 2016.

On the other hand, the attempts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis have been fruitless. Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, many attempts and initiatives have been launched aiming to reach a settlement to the conflict. Starting from Geneva communiqué in 2012, Geneva II in 2014, and what started to be known as the Geneva Peace Process has continued since then. In addition, starting by January 2017, Russia and Turkey's rapprochement paved the way for launching the Astana Process, to which Iran later joined, forming a troika, which tried to

establish de-escalation zones in Syria. However, Astana process and its Sochi conference could not replace the UN-led and US & UN-supported Genève process. During these six years, many ceasefires were agreed upon, yet later violated. Numerous initiatives have been launched, not to forget various UN resolutions, yet no settlement has been reached, nor the bloodshed has stopped, while the crisis has gotten more complicated with more diversification among the actors and the conflict drivers.

Throughout the course of the ongoing Syrian conflict, the Assad Regime managed to 'survive' and remain intact in the main Syrian urban cities. This does not come without a long bill of massacres, uses of chemical weapons, and crimes against humanity. Additionally, it of course, was not realized without the external support by Iranian Proxies and Russian jets, both of which undermined the Syrian regime's sovereignty. Although the external support and the foreign interventions worked both ways, for the regime as well as for the opposition, the regime's supporters were more committed to the survival of the regime.

Taking into consideration the pre-existing features of the Assad's regime, if the foreign intervention had not taken place both ways, what would the outcomes of the Syrian uprising have been? Would we have witnessed a political transition? Would the Assad Regime have suppressed the uprising in its early two years? Was there any chance to avoid the stagnation of the conflict and the dragging into a state of civil war?

At the end of the day, the pre-existing neopatrimonialism of the Assad Regime had not only fostered the Assad regime durability, but it also has affected the whole trajectory of the conflict in various ways, and thus played a pivotal role in determining the possible outcomes of the conflict.

4.2. The Neopatrimonialization of the Conflict

The pre-existing neopatrimonialism of the Assad Regime had fostered the regime durability against any attempt to carry out a political transition in Syria. This robustness has shown its effectiveness on several occasions in contemporary Syrian history, thus stood as a deterrent factor in front of any attempt to bring down the regime and realize a reform or a change in Syria. Yet the Arab Spring waves were too strong to resist, and the domino effect hit Syria launching a new phase. Following the uprising, the pre-existing neopatrimonial characteristics of the regime started to affect and to some extent to shape the trajectory of the conflict in a process we could call it as the neopatrimonialization of the conflict.

The neopatrimonialization of the conflict in Syria has its roots in the characteristics of the pre-existing Assad's regime, which, as it was shown in the previous chapter, had been constructed around the patrimonial power, through boosting the personalization of the regime and through the patronage and clientelism networks. These three millstones of the Assad neopatrimonial regime (personalization of the regime, patronage relations, clientelism relations) and their sub-elements (the role of clique, cultish politics, Alawite patronage, Baath Party Patronage, clientelism networks) has been functioning throughout the conflict, and thus affected its trajectory and possible outcomes.

4.2.1. Personalization of the Conflict: From Assad's Regime to Assad's Conflict

Personalization is the sine qua non of the neopatrimonial regimes, in which the regime and its apparatuses personalized in the persona of the patrimon. Assad Regime was not different from other neopatrimonial regimes in this regard. It has a strong personalization tendency in such a way that the unquestionable patrimonial 'rights' were coined in the constitution.

This personalization of the regime, which was best illustrated in the motto of Suriyat'ul Assad- Assad's Syria, has shaped the regime and its relations with the society as shown in the previous chapter. Moreover, it succeeded in consolidating

the role of Assad within the bureaucracy as well as among the clear majority of the public in such a way that the patrimonial role of Assad started to be unquestionable, and Assad was regularly depicted as omnipresent and omniscient as Lisa Wedden has put it. Moreover, the personalization of the security apparatuses and the army has transformed these institutions to what Weber had described as patrimonial troops.

This personalization of the Assad Regime has significantly affected the Syrian conflict from the early beginning and still does so. Its effect was radical in such a way that it determined the outcomes of the conflict, while on the other hand the whole conflict could be argued to be personalized.

The most significant effect of the personalization of the regime was its limitation of the possible outcomes on the conflict. The personalization of the regime had meant that the whole state apparatuses were treated as the personal instruments of the patron including the patrimonial army Jaysh al-Assad Assad's army. The personalization of the army, as well as the state bureaucracy, has blocked any possibility of change within the regime. Referring to Snyder's argument[247] the low level of the army's autonomy decreased any possibilities of political transition. So, other scenarios as what had been seen in the Tunisian case, in which the army refused to obey the orders of Ben Ali, or to the Egyptian case, in which the military institution took the initiative and forced Mubarak to step down in favor of the survival of the military establishment, were out of the question in the Syrian case. The personalized military institution in Syria was not to act on its own. Not to mention the bureaucratic establishment that had been neutralized and deactivated under the Assad's patrimonial domination. Hence, the defection of the second man in the bureucratic hierarchy, the prime minister, had minimal effect on the trajectory of the conflict, the impact of this defection had rather a symbolic meaning.

It could also be argued that the pre-existing personalization of the regime had also led to the lack of any alternative within the regime. In the aftermath of any crisis, the presence of alternative 'patrons' or figures is vital to facilitate the

[247] Rishard Snyder. "Explaining Transition from Neopatrimonial Dictatorship." *Comparative Politics.*

transition, and leave the doors open for negotiation. Thus, the presence of alternatives for the patron will diversify the possible roads that the crisis would follow and thus, could present alternatives for the stagnation that would lead to a civil war. Yet, in the Syrian Assad's regime, Bashar Assad was the only one without any alternatives. The absence of other alternatives was more installed after the 2012 explosion of the crisis cell, in which primer regime leaders were dead, and also after the mysterious disappearance of Faruk al-Shar', the vice president.

The blockage of the possibilities of a transition carried out by a within regime change has driven to attach the conflict and its possible outcomes to Bashar al-Assad per se. The personalization of the regime has led to the personalization of conflict. On the other hand, the perception of Suriyat'ul Assad- Assad's Syria was not limited to the regime and the opposition camp, it also started to be dominant in the international community among who oppose Assad or who support him.

On the regime's camp, this also led to more dependence on al-Assad through accepting that his survival will mean the survival of the regime and the patronage networks attached to him. Thus, in the camp of al-Assad loyalists, it was widely believed that Bashar al-Assad is the sole ruler of the Syrian regime and that his departure, under any circumstances, would lead to the collapse of the whole regime. This belief of interconnectedness and 'sharing the same destiny' was arguably deeply rooted mainly among the security elites and the regime's inner clique as well as among the clients of the patronage networks.

In contrast, the opposition from the early days of the uprising has shaped its narrative and built its discourse on anti-Assad sentiments. In the early weeks, a slogan like Yalla Erhal Ya Bashar (Come on Bashar, Leave) had taken to chanting by the crowd. Politically speaking 'the departure of Assad' has occupied the top demand for the opposition and its representatives. Even it started to be the criteria according to which the opposition groups categorized what they called 'revolutionary' groups and which are not. At the end of the day, it seems that Assad's patrimonial power was able to penetrate the opposition's realm.

On the other hand, while the within regime alternatives to Assad were out of the question. The opposition also showed the inability to present any alternative

figure that could reach the regime's component and thereby would lead a transition. The penetration of the political and social life from the patrimonial power in the neopatrimonial regime leads to restrict the independent political life and hence leave no place for any opposition figure to emerge. Taking into consideration the role of coercive measures that the regime showed to suppress any opponent movement, the emerging of any prominent figure will be almost impossible. Under Assad's patrimonial domination the Syrian politics has been struggling with infertility.

Furthermore, the centrality of the Assad persona in the Syrian conflict is easily observed in the regional and international actors' position from the Syrian conflict. The question of 'the departure of Assad' started to occupy the whole discussion about the conflict and its possible solutions. Demanding Assad to step down was made by a coordinate announcement by the US, Britain, France, Germany, and Canada as early as 18th of August 2011[248]. However, the more the western and regional anti-Assad actors insist on the Assad's departure as a prerequisite of starting a political transition, the more the pro-Assad regional an international actor hold on to Assad, simply because the departure of Assad would lead to the collapse of the regime from their perspective as Van Dam argues in the case of Russian and Iranian support of Assad 'President Bashar al-Asad as a person may have been considered as less important to Russia and Iran, were it not that his departure might contribute to the collapse of the regime'[249]

The personalization of the regime leads to the accumulation of the power in the hands of the patrimon, hereby increasing the patrimonial power and its penetration of the state's apparatuses and social life as well, which in its part strengthen the hardness of thepatronand the tenacity of the regime. After the conflict erupting, the personalization of the regime would lead also to the personalization of the conflict itself, which would narrow the possible trajectories of the conflict by eliminating other possible scenarios like a change from within the regime, as well as

[248] Christopher Phillips.. *The Battle for Syria, International Rivalry in the New Middle East,* 75.

[249] Nikolas Van Dam. *Destroying a Nation, The Civil War in Syria.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 176.

it weakens the opposition's possibility to offer another alternative. The mechanism that the patrimonial power instrumentalized to personalize the regime like the role of the clique and the cultish politics will continue to function as well and boost the personalization of the conflict.

4.2.1.1. The Role of the Clique: The Assad Regime's Hard-Liners

As has been illustrated in the previous chapter, the inner clique of the security and military elites played an important role in installing the neopatrimonial domination and in guaranteeing the personal control of the state's apparatuses. However, the role of this clique is not less important after the uprising would break out.

The role of this clique could be conceptualized by quoting Snyder's argument as the role of the regime hard-liners. Snyder introduced what he called the regime hard-liners as an important factor in making the transition of Sultanistic regimes[250]. He describes the regime-hardliners by saying 'regime hard-liners are unconditionally committed to perpetuating the dictator's' rule. They prefer to go down with the ship rather than exit gracefully and therefore must be forced to give up power.' Snyder continues that 'this group typically includes the ruling clique – that is, the dictator and his immediate circle of cronies'[251].

Taking into consideration the weaknesses of the regime soft-liners in the case of the Assad regime, which could be accepted to be representative of the third clique that the patrimonial power depends on, the role of the regime hard-liners in effecting the regime's behavior and hereby the trajectory of the conflict becomes evident. The regime hard-liners are expected to push for more coercive react and not

[250] Snyder, seems to use Sultanistic regimes (which is the extreme version of the patrimonial regime according to Weber) as synonym of the neopatrimonial regimes, the concept that he was used early. Even, Jason Brwonlee while quoting from Snyder's work he replaced Sultanistic with Neopatrimonial regimes, see (R. Snyder 1998) & (Brownlee 2002).

[251] Richard Snyder.. "Paths Out of Sultanistic Regimes: Combining Stuctural and Voluntarist Perspective." In *Sultanistic Regimes*, by H.E. Chehabi & J. Linz, 49-81. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 51.

to show any leaning towards allowing a political transition to take place. The role of the hard-liners in this regard in the Syrian case could be observed before and after the uprising. It had been said that the security elites and the old guards were behind the regime crackdown on what called at that time Damascus Spring in the aftermath of Bashar Assad' succeeding to the power. While after the uprising the leaning of the hardliners, the members of the first clique, to use the naked force and make no concession is well manifested in the remarks of General Jamil al-Hasan the head of the Directorate of Air Force Security in Syria. Al-Hasan recalled in a rare interview in November 2016 the massacre of Hama in 1982 and advocated even more coercive response that has been carried out by the regime since the uprising started. He said that 'If we had acted since the beginning of the current crisis in the same way [that we acted in during 1982], we would have stopped the bloodbath and we had not reached the point where we came today'[252].

The regime hard-liners who attached to the patron through patrimonial linkages would invest in the survival of the regime more than any other regime's component. This investment in the survival of the regime would be more obvious as Eve Bellin argues in her article, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Lessons from the Arab Spring' if the regime elites attached to the patron through bonds of blood, which is the case in the Syrian regime, in which the Alawite are overrepresented in the regime's first clique and thus more common among the regime hard-liners', Bellin claims that 'where military leaders are linked to regime elites through bonds of blood or sect or ethnicity… then the fate and interests of the military's leadership become intrinsically linked to the longevity of the regime.' Bellin adds 'the military elite becomes deeply invested in the regime's survival and perceives regime change as possibly ruinous.'[253] This investment in the

[252] Ra'es Shua'bet al-Mukhabarat al-Askariyye.*Sputnik Arabi.* Accessed March 20, 2918. https://goo.gl/GxPoca

[253] Eva Belli. "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East, Lessons form the Arab Spring.", 133.

regime's survival will force the hard-liners to take more and more coercive step trying to suppress the uprising, yet this will lead to raise the level of violence used. Bellin claims in this regard that in this case 'the military has significant reason to shoot civilians'[254], which was the case in during the Syrian uprising.

The regime's inner clique played the role of the regime hard-liner following the breaking out of the uprising. They have pushed for adopting more and more coercive measures against the uprising and invested in the longevity of the regime, thus, they stood against making any concession and hereby pushed towards a more militaristic solution to the conflict. To do so, the Assad's clique has instrumentalized the patrimonial army, and the mercenary troops of the Shabbiha and other militias, proofing the claims of Weber that the support of the patrimonial power is provided also by 'mercenary bodyguards and armies (patrimonial troops)'[255].

Arguably the regime hard-liners strengthen the durability of the regime, yet they jeopardize the whole trajectory of the conflict and diminish the possibility of a political transition. On the other hand, when the prominence of the hard-liners in the regime camp comes in parallel with the prominence of the hard-liners in the opposition camp, the result will be more and more investment in the longevity of the conflict.

4.2.1.2. The Cult in Work

The constructed political cult of al-Assad in Syria has been instrumentalized to consolidate the patrimonial power within the political and social domains. Although it could be argued that his cult is vain and is not based on charismatic qualities, and it rather depends on the coercive power that force people to 'act as if' it was real, this imposed cult and cultish rituals have left its fingerprint on the perception and attitude of both the loyalists and the opponents of the regime. While the loyalists, or whoever willing to show their loyalty to the patrimonial power,

[254] Ibid, 133.
[255] Max Weber. *Economy and Society; An outline of Interpretive Sociology.*

practiced the cultish rituals and tried to impose it publically as a proof of loyalty, the opponents, on the other hand, started to show their reclining from this cult as an act of opposing the regime and its patrimonial power.

Following the uprising, the politics of cult and its semblances started to be an indicator of political position and thus working in two ways through either submission to Assad's cult or showing disgrace with it. Meanwhile, it started to take radical leans in both ways. The radical attitude for those who wanted to show their loyalty to Assad's patrimonial power took a step forward, and they started to deify him, and impose his deification on the people. While on the other hand, Bashar and generally Assad's family disgracing started to be as the motto for the opponents and their activities. These tendencies are rather obvious on the rhetoric and political symbolism of the Syrian conflict.

Targeting the Assad cult and its semblances appeared to be one of the essential acts of the uprising, in which the opponents showed their disgrace to this cult and all its public manifestations. Thus, the demonstrators started to head towards Assad's various statues or his portrait tableaus aiming to smash them while cheering and cursing the Assad family and even the faimly's members' souls, including Hafez, Bashar and his mother Anisa. One of the first acts that show this disgracing and revolution against the Assad's imposed cult took place as early as 25th of March 2011 in the city of Homs, in which a protestor climbed high onto the facade of Army Officers' Club and started kicking a big banner depicting both Bashar and Hafaz al-Assad. He tore off the late president's face while demonstrators below chanted in ecstasy mixed with astonishment.[256] [257]. At the same day, protestors in the city of Dara'a destroyed a status of Hafez al-Assad.[258] On 15th April 2011, the protestors not only destroyed the statues of Hafez on the highway

[256] Malu Halasa, Zaher Omareen & Nawara Mahfoud, eds. *Syria Speaks, Art and Culture From the Frontline*

[257] For this moment see the video record https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inQDAf21FHA (March 25, 2011).

[258] For the video record see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9flGn0y2_d0 (March25, 2011).

between Homs and Hama, but they also burned them in rituals to vent their repressed spleen[259].

Thereafter, the removal of Assad's picture and the destruction of Hafez al-Assad's statues started to spread. Meanwhile, a slogan like Yel'an Ruhak Ya Hafez, 'Curse your soul, O Hafez' spread quickly as well and even took a kind of chanting song among the protestors. Interestingly, the cursing of Assad's family by the protestors extended to include even Anise, Hazef's mother, the protestors even quoted to cheer the slogan 'Curse Your Soul, O Anise. Due to Your Abject Birth' [260]. In other demonstrations, Bashar's brother Maher Assad was also mentioned in a slogan 'curse your soul. O Hafez….Curse you O Bashar and Maher'[261]. The slogan of 'curse your soul, O Hafiz' was also scrawled in graffiti in most of the opposition-held Syrian city and town.

Destroying the cultish politics that Assad Regime imposed, which drawn an image of Bashar Assad as omnipresent - the only one whose name would be seen everywhere and whose picture hung on every wall, was celebrated by the opposition as an achievement of the uprising. The people revolted against the Assad's monopoly of the titles and designation, and hence the opposition celebrated the diversification of titles, names, designations…etc. This tendency could be seen in an article written three months after the beginning of the uprising by Yasin Al-Haj Saleh. Saleh argued that 'The uprising gives names, while the regime demolished the names, it imposes one name on everything in the country; the Assad. The street on his name, the square on his name, the lake on his name, the hospital on his name, the library on his name, even Syria itself on his name. The uprising gives names to

[259] Azmi Bishara. *Suriyya: Derb al-Alam Nahua al-Hurriya,* 193.

[260] Cursing of Hafez and his mother Anise could be seen in this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAHvxhsDeUI , (January 7, 2012)

[261] For the video record of the demonstration see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsB8c7LQ6qQ (November 9, 2012).

places, Dara, Banyas, Al-Maydan, Bab Al-Siba', Al-Qusayr[262]… to the days, mainly Fridays[263], the Friday of Anger, the Friday of Azadi… through naming and new naming, the Syrians retake control of their lives'[264]. However, this diversification will turn to be a chaos in the opposition's camp.

On the other hand, the cultish discourse and rituals went a step forward in the regime's camp and among its followers. The cultish practices imposed before the uprisings continued to take place under the government's and the security apparatus' control. These practices were insturmentalized to counter the opposition's growing disgrace of the Assad's cult. The security forces were then sent to the streets. Minhebbek (We Love You) Demonstrations took place, hailing the ruler, aiming to manufacture consent[265]. Meanwhile, slogans like Emme Al-Asad Aw Mnhruk al-Balad 'Either Assad or we Burn the Country' started to be the motto of the loyalists. Yet, the imposed and practiced Assad's cult started to radicalize in such a way that it turned into the deification of Bashar al-Assad. This trend was embedded in slogans like Allah, Suriyye, Bashar we Bes! 'Allah, Syria and Bashar only'. A Step forward was observed through the semblances of deifying Bashar Assad done by the Shabihha and the security forces, which left a deep sense of hatred among the opponents, like the 'Your God is Bashar' and 'There is no God but Bashar' mocking graffiti which was found on the wall of the mosques after the security forces left following their move into and siege of Dara in the early month of the uprising.[266] Moreover, a number of horrific videos posted online show how the regime loyalist imposed a radical Assad's cult that deify Bashar al-Assad. In one

[262] The author here referring to the recalling of the Syrian cities, towns, squares and quarters that the demonstrations took place in, so they started to be known through media.

[263] Friday days, which became the weekly days for demonstrations, started to be given names by the activists like, Friday of Anger, Friday of Dara's Children, Friday of Azadi…etc.

[264] Yasin Haj Saleh.. *Al-Thawra Al-Mustahila,* 42-43.

[265] Fouad Ajami. *The Syrian Rebellion,* 75.

[266] Fouad Ajami. *The Syrian Rebellion,* 74.

video, a young blindfolded man is taunted by men wielding clubs, presumably supporters of Bashar al-Assad, and made to swear allegiance to the president as a God[267].

The cultish politics which the patron uses in the neopatrimonial regime to strengthen the personalization of the regime and build the patrimonial image, thereby foster the cohesion and consistency of the regime helps, in the case of the uprising, in inflaming the conflict when the uprising took place. The pre-existing cultish politics, as in the Syrian case, would add another aspect of polarization to the conflict, in which the opponents will start to show disgrace and curse the cult and its related semblance, while who wants to show loyalty to thepatrontakes a step forward in practicing and imposing the cultish rituals. The cultish politics will boost the personalization of the conflict though consolidating the personal image of the patron over the regime and over the course of the conflict, yet it will also feed the extremist in the both sides; loyalties and opponents.

4.2.2. Mobilizing the Patronage Networks

Patronage is one of the distinguished features of the neopatrimonial regimes, through which the patrimonial power is able to penetrate the state apparatus as well as the political and social life utilizing the patronage relations which established hierarchical structure the patron sets on its top. The hierarchical patronage relations help the patron to mobilize the state apparatus and the patrimonial power-linked political and social entities (like the party and the associated organs) to install and foster his personal power. This pre-existing relations would play a crucial role in the aftermath of an uprising and during the conflict. These relations provide the patron with the needed mechanisms for maintaining his control and mobilizing the state and the penetrated social domain in his favor.

[267] For similar stories see Human Rights Watch Report, Torture Archipelago (July 3, 2012) https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias

Yet, although these patron-controlled hierarchical patronage relations help the patron in countering the uprising by enhancing its mobilization capabilities, they also hold the danger of inflaming more polarization in the society and thus foster the intercommunal conflict. Taking into the consideration that the patronage forces are organized and might have political identities, their mobilizations would be perceived as an organized mobilization around one identity, forcing the other part to react in the same organized manner, that would arguably lead to ignite a civil war.

The Assad Regime enjoys an obvious patronage feature, in which the patrimonial power has utilized both the Alawite and Baath Party networks, as was shown in the previous chapter. This dual patronage has fostered the regime robustness and widened its patrimonial social base to include both the Alawites and the Baathist regardless their ethnicity or sect. This patronage played an important role in the regime's attempt to overcome faced crisis, like the 1979-1982 Islamic insurgency, and has also enhanced the tenacity of the regime and thus increased its durability throughout the 2011 crisis until now. Yet, the pre-existing patronage relations, mainly the Alawite patronage, were also a reason behind inflaming the uprising as well as it played a role in deepening the polarization of the conflict which dragged to a kind of a civil war. Thus, the patronage relations arguably foster the regime robustness, yet it can be also a main driving force behind a civil war.

Following the uprising, the Assad Regime's response by using its iron fist and the naked force to counter the protestors whom the vast majority of them transformed later to be armed rebellions. However, the Assad regime did not respond only by using the state apparatus, which was already personalized. Rather, it utilized the patronage network to mobilize counter campaigns. In this patronage counter campaign, both the Alawite patronage and the Baath Party patronage have participated, but arguably the Alawite patronage was more prominent and hereby effective. This could be understood by taking into consideration the retreat of the Baath Party's' role in Bashar's era, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, and to the internal dynamics of the Alawite community which has also internal self-motivations.

4.2.2.1. Mobilizing the Alawite Patronage Networks

Utilizing the Alawite patronage in response to the uprising by the Assad regime was vital in determining its trajectory and project its possible outcomes. On one hand, the Alawite patronage has offered the regime a significant mobilization force and a guaranteed social base. On the other hand, it also weakened the regime through uncover what could be perceived as sectarian base, hereby foster the hard-liners of the opponent uprising by offering a motivation, basiclly an ideological one. Moreover, the polarization of the conflict resulted by utilizing the Alawite patronage has stagnated the conflict and influenced its dragging into a civil war, or even a sectarian-tinted civil war, thereby eliminating any possibility of political transition let alone a peaceful transformation. As Van Dam argues 'Whereas the common sectarian, regional and family or tribal backgrounds of the Ba'thist rulers had been key to the durability and strength of their regime, the predominantly Alawi sectarian background of many of them was also one of its main weaknesses. This is because the "Alawi factor" (or the Alawi Gordian knot) is hindering a peaceful transformation from Syrian dictatorship towards a more widely representative regime'[268].

The alawite upholding of the Assad regime has been vital for the survival of the regime since its establishment. At the end of the day, As Dam puts it 'Contrary to what might be concluded from all this sectarian propaganda, the potentially most dangerous opposition to Hafez Assad Regime could be exercised primarily by officers who belong to the Alawite community and only secondarily by others'[269]. The Alawite backing of Assad Regime became more important following the uprising. Hence, the Assad regime tries at best to maintain the Alawite support by both granting no quarter to the Alawite opponents of the regime, and by intensifying the Alawites' feeling of insecurity from the early beginning of the uprising. By doing so, Assad not only succeeded in maintaining the Alawite upholding of the

[268] Nikolas Van Dam. Syria, who will win the future?. *Joshua Landis Blog* . Accessed March 17, 2018. http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/syria-who-will-win-the-future-by-nikolaos-van-dam/ .

[269] Nikolas Van Dam. *The Struggle for Power in Syria.* 73

regime, he also linked their survival with the survival of his regime. Thus, the conflict and its possible outcomes arguably tipped the mutual-dependence equation between the Alawite community and the regime in favor of the patron, al-Assad.

Assad Regime is famous for granting no quarter to the opponents, regardless being Sunni and Alawites. Yet, some claim that the Assad Regime would act more violently when it comes to the Alawite's opponents, in its aim to maintain the cohesion of the community's support. As Samar Yazbek, a known Syrian Alawite writer and Assad opponent narrate in her observation of the early demonstrations in the coastal city of Banyas, a Sunni-Alawite incorporated city, 'Even some Alawites joined them [the Islamist who came out to demonstrate]. Some of these Alawites were subjected to further oppression by the security forces, as means of intimidation' [270]. However, it is important to mention here that the Alawites' participation in the uprising was so limited and restricted to some intellectuals and previous political prisoners. Among the Alawites' opponents of the Assad regime a small minority joined the uprising in its request of changing the regime, while the majority among the Alawites' opponents to the Assad regime chose the lesser of two evils (the regime and what they named as fascist Islamists) and restricted their demands in reforming the existing regime[271].[272]

Intensifying the Alawite insecurity by the Assad regime could be tracked in the regime's official discourse, in which the regime continually emphasized on the Islamic and even Salafi dimension of the uprising, and their threatening to the existence of the minorities and their willingness to establish an 'Islamic Emirate', in a rhetoric targeting both the Western countries as well as the minorities inside Syria.

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[270] Samar Yazbek.. *A Women in the Crossfire, Diaries of the Syrian Revolution.* (London: Haus Publishing, 2012), 28.

[271] Ratib Sha'bu. "*al-Alaween wa'l Thawra al'Suriyye*." (Merkez Derasat al-Jumhuriyye al-Dimokrati, 2015), 11-12

[272] For more details on the Alawite and the Syrian uprising, see Ratib Sha'bu and others written report *al-Alaween wa'l Thawra as'Suriyye* The Alawites and the Syrian Revolution, with the consultation of 'Aref Dalila, a known Alawite intellectual and opponent to the Assad's regime. (Sha'bu 2015)

In additional to the regime official discourse, there are allegations that slogans like al-Alawyye al'tabout wel Masihiyye al'Bayrut 'Alawites to the grave and Christians to Beirut!" was circulated by members of the intelligence services who had infiltrated the demonstrations[273]. Moreover, a number of mysterious assassinations took place in the early days of the uprising, mainly in the areas of potential sectarian confrontation like Homs city. Such as the assassination of the Major Naim Muhalla in the city of Homs, one month after the uprising started in 17th of April 2011, this assassination took place after the official media warned of possible attacks by what it called vandals. Another assassination targeted the young Alawite scientist Isa Abboud in 18th of April 2011, which reminded the Alawites of the assassinations that had taken place during the Islamic uprising 1979-1982. Later, it was revealed that both assassinations were carried out 'mistakenly' by a member of the pro-regime Popular Committees militias[274]. The assassinations were utilized by the regime and reflected in the regime's media as a sectarian crime. By the early months of the uprising, the mission of entrenching the Alawites within the regime's camp was successful.

On the other hand, it is important to mention here, that the 'Islamization of the revolution' had limited the Alawite possibility of joining the uprising. At the end of the day, it is understandable that in March 2011, when the demonstrations began in Baniyas, the majority of the Alawites did not support the Sunni imam, (the demonstrations were led by Anas al-Ayrout[275], a young imam of Banyas) who were asking for single-sex schools and the communitarian rebalancing of public employment "confiscated by the Alawis"[276]. Although some refer to Assad's cynical plotting by freeing Islamist prisoners following the uprising, taking to

[273] Fabrice Balanche. *The Alawi Community and the Syria Crisis* .

[274] Ratib Sha'bu. "*al-Alaween wa'l Thawra al'Suriyye,* 14-19.

[275] For more information of Anas al-Ayrout and the role of the imams in leading the demonstrations in Banyas, see Fouad Ajami's notes on his interview with al-Ayrout (Ajami 2012 p195-198).

[276] Fabrice Balanche. *The Alawi Community and the Syria Crisis* .

considerations the regime's and its security apparatus' long history of utilizing the Jihadist groups, the rising of Islamism could not be explained only by an alleged Assad plot. However, at the end of the day, 'many Alawite felt obliged to support the regime out of fear of being violently persecuted by Sunni-dominated Islamist opposition groups on 'day of reckoning''[277].

Through granting no quarter, and by intensifying their feeling of insecurity, not to forget the role of the Islamization of the uprising, al-Assad succeeded in keeping the Alawites' loyal to the regime and placed them at the vanguard of the conflict. This resulted in Alawites' blind support to the regime. One of the manifestations of this support was the shabiha, freewheeling armed gangs of largely Alawite thugs (though not limited to them), that committed the worst atrocities of the conflict[278]. The Alawite also joined with significant numbers, the National Defense Forces, pro-regime semiofficial militias.

The Alawite collective response to the uprising by playing an active role in suppressing the demonstrations through forming and joining armed militias has strengthened the regimes' mobilization abilities and thus its durability. Yet, it also inflamed the state of a civil war in Syria. Thanks to the Alawites' mobilization, mainly in their remote villages in the mountains of Latakia and Tartus, the regime was able to overcome the manpower deficiency, caused mainly by the defections. However, the pre-existing perception of Alawite ruled regime among the majority of the Sunnis (although could be a vain perception), has been proven, according to the supporter of this allegations, by the Alawite active and sometimes voluntarily support of Assad on the round, and by the acts of the shabiha which generally illustrate radical cultish attitude. The Alawites' collective support of the Assad regime was perceived through sectarian glances and thus generated counter sectarian discourse and mobilization.

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[277] Nikolas Van Dam. *Destroying a Nation, The Civil War in Syria,* 176.

[278] Joshua Hersh. The Dilemma of Syria's Alawites. *New Yorker*. October 18. Accessed March 25, 2018. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-dilemma-of-syrias-alawites

4.2.2.2.Mobilizing the Baath Party's Patronage Networks

The Syrian Baath party, particularly during the rule of Hafez al-Assad, has a long history of relying on paramilitary forces for taking control and holding political power. Faced with the Muslim Brotherhood's uprising in the early 1980s, Hafez al-Assad resorted to arming Baathists to participate in checkpoints around the country and counter the Islamist insurgency[279]. These armed Baathist militias formed the al-Jaysh al-Sha'bi (the Popular Army). This organization remained as a reserve force until Bashar al-Assad's presidency, which saw efforts to demilitarize Syrian society, including the ruling Baath Party.[280]

During Bashar's era, the role of the Baath Party in the Syrian politics has arguably been minimized. The Party and its socialist ideologies were marginalized by Bashar's liberalization and open market policies, while notable steps carried out to demilitarize the Syrian society including dropping the military education classes from the curriculums. On the other hand, The Assad Regime's alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxy Hizbollah under The Axes of Resistance had weakened the Pan-Arabism discourse of the Baath Party. Moreover, in the new Syrian constitution issued in February 2012, the Baath Party lost, although nominally, its exceptional status which it had been guaranteed in 1973 constitution as the 'leader of the state and society.'

However, following the uprising, Assad Regime has utilized the aging Party, which had, on paper, more than 2.5 million members in January 2011, and its rickety popular organizations al-Munazamat al-shabiyya in generating the public support and even to mobilize the crowd and recruit new militants. The regime tried to set the national, provincial and even district levels of the Baath Party's network in motion to counter the uprising. Hence, the regime has pursued its counterrevolutionary strategy through those command structures and the

[279] Patrick Seale. *Asad of Syria, the Struggle for the Middle East.* (Berkeley, California : University of California Press, 1995), 327.

[280] Syria Pro-Government Paramilitary Forces. *The Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program*. (The Carter Center, 2013), 7.

corresponding state institutions—central ministries, governorates, and municipalities.[281] As Sami Moubayed states that in contrary to many expectations the Baath Party's role was revived after March 2011, he argues 'The Baath was the only party with cadres, money, buildings, periodicals, and manpower. From the regime's perspective, it was the only party that could deliver, with its 2.8 million members. The entire officer class and the civil service were Baathists after all. The regime wanted them to realize that if they go, everything will go with them. Only then, would they fight, as one body, for regime survival. The regime tapped into the Baath reservoir for support and got plenty of it'[282]. Yet, it appeared that the Baath Party's abilities of mobilization are limited, not to forget that monopoly of the real power even in the provinces was in the hand of the security apparatuses' leaders.

Syrian Student Union under the leader of Ammar Saati, a parliamentarian and a member of Baath Party's National Leadership Committee, was one of the rare success stories of utilizing the Party's organization to counter the uprising. The Union and its militant members did not only show total submission to al-Assad's rule and fulfill the cultish rituals, but they also had the security members to actively join suppressing any possible protest in the universities' campuses. The role of the union in harassing the protestors was obvious mainly in Sham Damascus and Aleppo Universities[283].

The Baath Battalions was another example of mobilizing the Baath Party and its members in countering the uprising. It had organized as an armed wing of the

[281] Souhail Belhadj. The Decline of Syria's Baath Party. *Carnegia Endowmnet.* Accessed March 26, 2018. http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/12/05/decline-of-syria-s-baath-party-pub-50258

[282] Aron Lund. The Baath Party and the War in Syria: An Interview With Sami Moubayed. *Carnegie Middle East Center.* Accessed March 26, 2018 . http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/53490

[283] Kulliyet al-Ulum al-Siyasiya bi-Dimashq. *News Center.* Accessed March 20, 2018. http://www.newscenter.news/ar/news/view/7230.html

ruling party and created by former Aleppo party chief Hilal Hilal[284], who promoted to be deputy head of the Party in July 2013. Although the Baath Battalion was launched initially in Aleppo, later it was able to organize almost nationwide. The Party's members were requested to join the Battalion to help the SAA and the security forces, mainly in controlling the checkpoints[285], the mission, which was too similar to the mission that the Baathists had undertaken during the 1979-1982 insurgency. In February 2014, the Baath Battalion started to recruit new fighters from the universities' students. It is said that this took place in close coordination with the Syrian Student Union.[286]Although members of the Baath Battalion were seen on the frontline alongside the army[287], there main activates were carried out in the universities' campuses and on the checkpoints.

The Baath Patronage relations have allowed the Assad regime to utilize the Baath Party and its al-Munazamat al-shabiyya popular organizations to generate mobilization in countering the uprising. Yet, at the end of the day, the aged Party showed limited organizational and mobilization abilities. Thus its armed wing during the uprising, the Baath Battalion, was less active and powerful than other militias like the National Defense Forces NDF, not to mention the foreign militias like Hizbollah. The NDF was created by rebranding, restructuring, and merging of al-Lijan al-Sha'bia Popular Committees, enthusiastic loyalists who organized locally and took upon themselves the task of battering protestors, as well as other pro-Assad armed groups in 2012, later it was organized under provincial and

[284] Aron Lund. Who Are the Pro-Assad Militias?. *Carnegie Middle East Center.* Accessed March 26, 2018. http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/59215

[285] Kata'eb al-Baath ila Shawar'e Demashq. *Al-Akhbar.*Accessed March 26, 2018. https://www.al-akhbar.com/Syria/62718

[286] Kata'eb al-Baath Jadid ilishyat al-Assad. *Zaman AlWasl*. Accessed March 26, 2018. https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/46979

[287] Milishyat al-Baath Ila Janeb Kuvvat al-Assad. *Enab Baladi.* Accessed March 27, 2018. https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/59137

national military commanders like Fadi Saqr, and General Ghassan Nassour[288], who are directly linked to the patrimony power, Assad. The inability of the Baath Party to play the mobilization role in countering the uprising has arguably paved the way for other organization to fill the gap. The weakness of Baath Party had created a gap that filled by these organizations which were locally organized, outlaw, fragmented militias. If the Baath Party were sufficient in generating the patrimonial requested mobilization, would the fragmentation on the regime front have been avoided?

At the end of the day, the Baath Party Patronage was exploited at most by the patrimonial power and played a vital role in keeping certain social entities like the universities under control. The mobilizing of Baath Party and even the militarization of the Party and its role in the conflict through forming the Baath Battalion have contributed to the militarization of the conflict as a whole, and have narrowed more and more a room for political solution, and hence boosted the 'military solution' on the ground and politically.

The patronage relations have played a vital role in fostering the robustness of the Assad Regime through enhancing its mobilization abilities. Yet, it also has influenced the polarization and the social division of the Syrian society hereby contributed to the transformation of the conflict to a state of civil war. This tendency could be seen mainly in 2012 and 2013, where the utilization of the patronage relations reached its limits in the regime's attempt to boost its mobilization ability and to suppress the uprising in all public spheres such as the universities. By mid-2013, the utilization of the patronage relations had reached its limits, and the patronage networks seemed to be unable to deliver any more, at that moment the direct foreign intervention was initiated by Iran's proxy Lebanese Hizbollah militias to uphold the regime. After that, the conflict came out of the Syrian, both the Assad Regime and the opposition.

The more the patrimonial power penetrates the state's bureaucracy and the social domain through the patronage networks, the more the regimes' robustness and it mobilization ability will be, or as Brownlee claims 'extensive patrimonial ties

[288] Aron Lund. Who Are the Pro-Assad Militias?

can sustain a regime as long as superpower patrons do not inhibit the use of force'[289]. However, mobilizing the patronage networks would contribute to the polarization of the society and thereby carry the risk of evoking the civil war. Thus, the patronage relations will lead to the swinging of the state of the conflict between the re-stability of the regime and the civil war.

4.2.3. Clientelist Networks Functioning

Alongside the patronage relations, clientelism networks represent a distinguished component of the neopatrimonial regimes. Through the clientelism networks, the patrimonial power, in which the patron stands in the center, is able to widen its penetration of the public and social base by the recruitment of new clients. These patron-client relation functions in the state of peace in favor of the two sides, thus it represents a mutually beneficial relationship. Over time, the clients will be attracted more and more to the patrimonial power to the extent that they will start to share a mutual fate. This sharing of the mutual fate will be crucial for the aftermath of the uprising erupting. Following the uprising and throughout the conflict, the clients, aiming to preserve their privileged status and protecting their interests, will start to invest in the regime longevity.

Taking into account that the clients are mostly operating in the economic domain and among the businessmen community, their stand with the regime is vital to ensure that the Syrian state and the regime are still intact, a point which has a significant influence mainly for the big urban cities like Damascus and Aleppo and their inhabitants. Moreover, those clients would start to function as financiers for the pro-regime activates, which range from supporting media outlets to financing paramilitary groups. However, in contrast to the patronage networks which show a relative degree of hierarchy and organization, the clientelist networks function more in ad-hoc manners, yet it still works in favor of the patrimonial power.

[289] Jason Brownlee. "And yet they persist: Explaining Survival and Transition in Neopatrimonial Regimes", 36.

Although there were businessmen who stood with the uprising, either for political reasons or due to their unrest by Bashar al-Assad's attempts prior to the uprising to patrimonalize the economic domain, the pro-uprising businessmen were a minority. On the other hand, as Bassam Haddad argues in his article 'The Syrian Regime's Business Backbone' 'There have been no significant defections, however, from the ranks of big business, at least not in Damascus and Aleppo. It is not just the president's blood relatives like Rami Makhlouf who have remained loyal. Other major players have stood firmly by the regime, financing its orchestrated mass rallies and public relations campaigns, as well as helping to float the Syrian currency'[290]. It is essential to admit here that standing in the side of the opposition is costlier than aligning with the regime since the regime and its security forces will take revenge from the businessman and confiscate their properties. Moreover, that would explain the silent majority of the businessmen community, whom some of them preferred to leave the country like Shallah and Ghreiwati.

With the transformation of the conflict into a bloody conflict, the client businessmen started to finance and in some cases set up militias. Rami Makhlouf is one of the clients who backed al-Bustan association, which includes some 11 thousand fighters from Tartus and Latakia provinces.[291] Another one was Ayman Jaber Ayman Jaber, a Syrian oil tycoon also blacklisted by Western pow-ers, finances Desert Falcons and Sea Commandos which provided 7,000 fighters to help the army in the bat-tle to recapture Palmyra from the Islamic State (ISIS).[292] Jaber is also a partner in Addonia TV a private TV channel from Damascus which adopts

[290] Bassam Haddad. The Syrian Regime's Business Backbone. *Middle East Research and Information Project*. Accessed March 28, 2018. http://www.merip.org/mer/mer262/syrian-regimes-business-backbone

[291] Aurora Sottimano. The Syrian Business Elite: Patronage Networks and War Economy.

[292] Younes Ahmed. Syria's businessmen invest in post-war reconstruction. *The Arab Weekly*. Accessed March 27, 2018. https://thearabweekly.com/syrias-businessmen-invest-post-war-reconstruction

editor narrative more radical than the official narrative regarding the uprising and the opposition. Other businessmen clients like Mohammed Hamshu preferred to support the regime army instead of the militias. Interestingly, Hamshu said to join great relations with Maher al-Assad, Bashar's brother[293].

Another role played by the clients was the mediation with actors that the Syrian regime could not reach officially, such as ISIS which controlled a vast amount of Syrian petrol and gas reserves. This mission was vital for the regime's economy and military operations. This role was played by men like George Haswani: 'middleman buying oil from ISIL on behalf of the regime' as described by Philip Hammond, the Foreign Secretary of United Kingdom[294]. At the same time, Haswani was financing the Qalamoun Shields militias, which includes 2,000 militants fighting close to the Lebanese border[295]. Another noteworthy case is the case of Husam Qaterji, an Aleppo-based trader who was little known before the uprising, and operated as a middleman for the trade of oil and cereals between the regime, the Kurdish PYD and the self-declared Islamic State (ISIS) For example, Qaterji and his traders bought up wheat from Raqqa and Dayr Az-Zawr and gave ISIS 20 percent, when the jihadist organization was still in control of these provinces.[296]

In return for their loyalty and supporting of the patron, the regime started to reward its clients. Thus, Husam Qaterji was then rewarded by the regime through the "election" and became a member of the parliament in 2016, representing the Aleppo Governorate. Another example was Fares Shehabi, the head of the Aleppo Chamber of Industry and a well-known supporter of the regime, who became the

[293] İbid.
[294] David Blair. Oil middleman between Syria and Isil is new target for EU sanctions. *The Telegraph.* Accessed March 27, 2018. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11455602/Oil-middleman-between-Syria-and-Isil-is-new-target-for-EU-sanctions.html

[295] Younes Ahmed. Syria's businessmen invest in post-war reconstruction.

[296] Joseph Daher. Assad Regime Still Reliant on Fractions of the Sunni Bourgeoisie. *Syria Untold.* Accessed March 27, 2018. http://www.syriauntold.com/en/2017/12/assad-regime-still-reliant-on-fractions-of-the-sunni-bourgeoisie/

President of the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Industry in June 2012. Accordingly, the composition of the businessmen community started to change, for instance, the Chambers of Commerce in Aleppo and Damascus at the end of 2014, saw a significant change in the membership of these chambers. In Aleppo, 10 of the 12 elected board members are new investors, many of whom were unheard of before the uprising. In Damascus, 7 of the 12 are in the same situation[297].

The clientelist relations have also functioned, as it had prior to the uprising and throughout Hafez al-Assad's era, in the regime's collaboration with fractions of the Sunni bourgeoisie, as Joseph Daher argues in his article 'Assad Regime Still Reliant on Fractions of the Sunni Bourgeoisie'[298]. This collaboration has contributed to the regime's ability to remain intact mainly in highly Sunni populated cities of Damascus and Aleppo.

Clientelism consitiutes one of the milestones of the neopatrimonial Assad regime after the eruption of the uprising, as it had been before. The clients' commitment to the regime and their investment in its longevity has strengthened the regime durability. What distinguishes clientelism form patronage relations in additional of being less organized networks, is being cross-sects, and social groups relations. In this regard, the clientelism has helped the patron to maintain his relations outside of his inner clique and beyond his patronage networks.

[297] Jihad Yazigi. *Syria's Implosion: Political and Economic Impacts* . (Middle East Directions, Rober Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 2016).

[298] Joseph Daher. Assad Regime Still Reliant on Fractions of the Sunni Bourgeoisie.

5. Conclusion

The Assad regime under Hafez and Bashar al-Assad's rule has represented a case of a neopatrimonial regime, in which the traditional 'patrimonial' domination existed side by side with the 'neo' patrimonial-penetrated bureaucratic domination. As other neopatrimonial regimes, the Assad regime was based on consolidating the patrimonial power through the personalization of the state and its apparatuses, and on the patrimonial penetration of the political and social life through the patronage and clientelism relations and networks, the processes which result in a robust personal regime.

Throughout almost five decades, the patrimonial power has accumulated in the persona of Hafez al-Assad and later inherited by his son Bashar. After having eliminated his rivalries and gathered the power in his hand, Hafez al-Assad surrounded himself with a bunch of loyal security and political elites who showed total submission and obedience to him. Through this clique, Hafez was able to preserve tight control over the security and military establishments and the state apparatuses altogether. After securing the state apparatuses, the patrimonial power of Hafez al-Assad started to be installed in the public sphere, through the constructed political cult. The state-organized and imposed personal cult of Hafez al-Assad in the public life, which extended to include his family members among them his sons, had paved the way for the constructing of the House of al-Assad. Despite being nominally a republican regime, Syria has transformed to a kind of a presidential monarchy, the manifestation of this transformation could be seen in Bashar's inheritance of the rule following his father's death.

The installing of the patrimonial power comes in parallel with the patrimonial penetration of the state bureaucracy and the social life through the patronage and clientelism networks. Rising to power as a representative of the Baath Party, Hafez al-Assad, who took the full control of the party as its chairman, had utilized the Party to consolidate his authority, through the patronage networks that the party's members have enjoyed, and which allowed them to occupy central positions of the bureaucracy. The same mechanism which was applied through the

Alawite patronage. The Alawite community, which already had a notable representation in the security and military establishment, has enjoyed a patronage status following Hafez's rise to power, who himself is a member of the community. Hafez al-Assad was dependent on his loyal community to penetrate the state apparatuses, and mainly the army and the security establishment, to guarantee his control, while on contrast, the Alawite officers, and Alawites in generals, who had no other channels for social upgrading, have offered their submission to the patrimonial power in return of the patronage assets.

The dual patronage relations that Hafez al-Assad regime has enjoyed through the Baath Party Patronage and the Alawite Patronage went in the two sides; on the one hand the patron was able to penetrate the bureaucracy and to some extent the society through the patronage networks, and thereby consolidate his power, while on the other hands, the clients of the Baath Party and Alawite community members took advantage of the privileged position and the patronage subsidies for their social upgrading, illegal enrichment and for building their pride. However, although these patronage relations were mutually beneficial relations, they were organized in a hierarchical manner in which the patron sets on the top of the chain, and thereby was able to mobilize and utilize these networks when needed.

Similar to the organized patronage relations, the clientelism functioned between the patron and the clients, though in a more ad-hoc manner. Beyond the Alawite community and the organized Baath Party, the patrimonial power continued to penetrate the social life, and mainly the economic domain through the clientelist relations. Hafez al-Assad, in contrast to his preceding Baathists, eased the state's hand over the private economic activities, and thus went down well with the Sunni urban merchants. The clientelism has allowed the patrimonial power to expand its penetration and extend its public base, while on contrast the clients were able to reach out the state resources and enjoy the privilege of being close to the authority.

No radical change took place in the ruling system and the domination mechanism following the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000 and the rise of his son Bashar to power. This personal power has transformed smoothly to Bashar, while the inner circle of political and security elites whose interest has been tightly

attached to the longevity of the regime facilitated this transformation. Meanwhile, the construction of Bashar's cult which had started before his rise to the power as part of the cult of the al-Assad family has continued in the same manner that his father's cult followed. The continuity of the regime has also guaranteed the continuity of the domination relations. Thus the patronage and clientelism relations continued to function as it had been. The smooth transition of the power from Hafez al-Assad to his son Bashar was realized, thanks to the neopatrimonial domination and its relations.

Although not in the domination structure, Bashar's rule witnessed differences in the patronage and clientelism relations. On the one hand, the Baath Party's influence and role in the political and social arena started to retreat, which resulted in the retreat of the Party's ability to penetrate the social life and mobilize the people. On the other hand, Bashar's rule witnessed an earnest attempt to patronize the economic domain. Following consolidation of his personal power over the state, Hafez al-Assad had patronized the political life and imposed his cult in the social domain. Yet, arguably there was no attempt to patronize the economic domain, in which the clientelism was functioning. Partly because the economy under Hafez was more state-centric in contrast to Bashar's open market policy, but also because Hafez was willing to keep the Sunni urban merchants in his side, so he eased their activities and kept their relations with the patrimonial power on the clientelism level, and did not attempt to upgrade it into systematic patronage, thus they continued to enjoy relative independence while in return they remained loyal to the patron even in the situation of crisis as during the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency.

In contrast, Bashar al-Assad rule, who inherited the patrimonial domination of the state and political life from his father, witnessed an attempt to patronize the economic domain through an attempt to systemize the clientelism and transform it to a kind of patronage relations. Thus, the presidential palace started to be a permanent partner, though behind the curtain, in the economic activities, through a number of economic figures which have close relations to the president himself.

Rami Makhlouf was an obvious example, who was said to be the real power behind the 2007 established Cham Holding, which gathered dozens of investors.

Taking into consideration that the state with its apparatuses and the political life were already patrimonialized, patronizing the economic domain, meant expanding and consolidating the patrimonial power to almost every aspect of the social life. Chocking the relative independent political life led to some frustrated reactions, though limited, among the businessmen community. The cases of Riyadh Saif and Sunqur are among the known ones. Meanwhile, the economic policy of Bashar al-Assad has also severely affected the low-income people[299] [300], who reside mainly on the suburbs of the big cities like Aleppo and Damascus, which joined the uprising in its early weeks. Hence, when the uprising erupted, Bashar al-Assad had already frustrated the businessmen community and offended the low-income people.

The Assad regime's neopatrimonial domination has fostered the regime durability and strengthened its robustness. Yet, this has not come without adverse consequences. The consolidation of the patrimonial power in the bureaucratic realm, as well as in the political and social life resulted with the obstruction of the system, in the way that no one except the patron himself could fit the built-up system. On the other hand, the imposing of the patrimonial domination though utilizing the loyal clique and its controlled security apparatus, on the expense of the political life, has led to the strengthening the hard-liners at the expense of the soft-liners on both the loyalists and the opponents' camps.

The pre-existing neopatrimonial domination and its characteristics had not only shaped the political and social life in Syria before the uprising, but they have also been influencing the trajectory of the ongoing Syrian conflict since its eruption

[299] Muhammed Jamal Barout. *al-Aked al-Akhir fi Tarih Suriye, Jadalyet al-Jumoud w'al-Islah* . (Beirut: Arab Center for Reseacrh & Policy Studies, 2012), 35.

[300] Muhammed Jamal Barout in his book *Syria in the Last Decade: The Dialectic of Stagnation and Reform,* analyzes the economic policies and its impacts during Bahar al-Assad's rule and argues that what he called the authoritarian liberalization policies has resulted with more unemployment, deepening the social gaps and raising the poverty rates. Hereby it went in favor of the businessmen and in particular the new businessmen on the expense of the low-income people (Barout 2012, 89-136).

in March 2011. While the Assad regime had already built up around the persona of Assad, following the uprising, the conflict has been built up around the persona of al-Assad as well. This centralization of al-Assad in shaping the conflict could be seen easily in the rhetoric and discourse of the internal opposition from the early beginning as well as in the international response. The Syrian conflict started to be all about Assad's departure. On the other hand, when the uprising took place, the state with all its functioning branches acted in a patrimonial manner, showing total obedience and unquestionable loyalty to the patron. Moreover, the clique of loyal security elites which the Assad regime has depended on has played the role of hard-liners pushing the regime towards more coercive measures and leave no room for negotiable exit from the tunnel of the civil war. Besides, the cultish politics, which the Assad regime had been using for constructing the personality cult, has been radicalized in both sides, pushing the conflict more to the extremes.

The patronage and clientelism relations, which were used as mechanisms for penetrating the bureaucratic realm and the political and social life, started to be utilized to mobilize these spheres in the interest of the patrimonial power. Thus, the Assad's neopatrimonial regime has depended from the early beginning of the uprising on the mobilization of the patronage networks. However, the Baath Party's patronage networks were ramshackle that they were unable to deliver nationwide and thus played a limited role. On the other hand, the Alawite patronage networks were more convenient and showed more correspondence to the patrimonial mobilization attempt, which its reasons could be traced in the internal dynamics and self-motivation of the Alawite community as well. However, the patronage networks of the Assad regime were not able to generate the needed mobilization to suppress the uprising, the matter which was most evident in summer 2013, herein the direct intervention of Iran's proxy Hizbollah militias in the Qusayer town southeastern of Homs took place.

The patrimonial mobilization of the patronage networks has contributed to the Assad regime's robustness and fostered its durability. However, it also has contributed to the militarization of the conflict through militarily mobilizing as much as it can from the Syrian society and thus firmed the military solution of the

conflict at the expense of any possible political solution. The Patrimonial mobilization of the Alawite patronage networks has also had a decisive role in feeding the sectarian perception and sentiments of the conflict and thus contributed significantly to the evoking the state of the civil war in Syria.

The retreat of the Baath Party, and thus its patronage will leave the Assad regime depending more and more on the Alawite patronage network, and which would lead to more Alawite domination jeopardizing the representation ability of the regime. Hence, the Assad regime seems to face a challenge to generate another patronage networks through which he could reach out and mobilize the other non-Alawite segments of the society. Meanwhile, the mobilized militias that the Alawite patronage networks have generated felt to a large extent under the Iranian influence, the matter that jeopardizes the regime's dependency, and hereby risking its robustness.

In contrast to the organized patronage networks, the clientelism relations instead function in an ad-hoc manner. Thus, its mobilization in the case of crisis seems to be more complicated, and also not guaranteed. The business community, in which the clientelism functions the most, has reacted in several levels to the crisis; the businessmen who had already refused to accept the role of client has taken place in the side of the opposition; while the businessmen who are attached to the patrimonial power have invested in the longevity of the regime and supported the regime's activities, including the military one, in various ways. Yet, it could be argued that a notable number has tried to be neutral or even choose to withdraw from the scene, fleeing the country. Herein, it could be argued that the more the clients are attached to the patrimonial power, the more they will act in its interest and invest in the longevity of the regime. Thus, the more the social sphere, the economic domain in our case, is being penetrated and patrimonialized from the patrimonial power, the more that this sphere will be mobilized in the interest of the patrimonial power in the situation of crisis. Hence, arguably the patronage relations contribute more to the regime's robustness than the clientelism.

One of the factors that fostered the durability of the Assad regime before and in the early chapters of the uprising was its relative independence from external

patrons. However, following the uprising, the Assad regime started to depend more and more on external powers, firstly on Iran and its proxies and economic credits, and later on Russia and its military intervention and diplomatic umbrella. This dependence has jeopardized the independence and sovereignty of the Assad's regime. It has also increased the leverage that external powers, namely Iran and Russia, enjoy over the regime. The Assad Regime's dependence on Russia particularly, started to show indications of patrimon-client relation. A symbolic scene of the newly established patron-client relation between Assad Regime and Russia or more specifically between Assad and Putin is the humiliating moment when Bashar Assad was stopped from following Putin by Russian soldiers through Putin's visit to the Russian military base near Tartus in Syria[301].

After seven years of conflict, the Assad regime has succeeded in remaining intact, yet at the expense of his sovereignty and independence. The patronage networks have felt to a large extent under the Iranian influence, while Russian influence on the military institutions has been increasing day to day. Iran and Russia have penetrated the wreck of the Assad regime, who became a client for the external patrons.

The neopatrimonialism framework represents a useful conceptualization to analyze the authoritarian regimes and its structure, as in the case of the Assad regime. It helps to assess the durability of these regimes and forecasts their attitude and response in a case of uprising or insurgency, and hereby to predicts the possible outcomes of such a situation. Taking into consideration the level of the consolidation of the patrimonial power and the level of the penetration of the state and society through clientelism and patronage networks, the neopatrimonialism helps also in the comparative studies of the durability of the authoritarian regimes and the post-uprising status as in the case of the Arab regimes and the post Arab

[301] Julian Robinson. Humiliating moment Assad is stopped from following Putin by Russian soldiers on SYRIAN soil during 'victory' announcement. *Daily Mail*. Accessed April 5, 2018. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5171633/Humiliating-moment-Assad-stopped-following-Putin.html

Spring periods. Despite its usefulness, the neopatrimonialism has yet to attract the academics and scholars focusing on the Middle East.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

NEOPATRİMONYALİZMİN SURİYE'DEKİ ÇATIŞMANIN GİDİŞATI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

Bu tez, Suriye yönetiminin doğasının 2011 ayaklanmasından bu yana Suriye'de devam etmekte olan çatışmanın gidişatını nasıl etkilediği sorusunu cevaplamayı amaçlamaktadır. Tez, Esad yönetiminin doğasını ve yapısını kavramsallaştırmaya ve yönetimin dayanıklılığını ve sürekliliğini incelemeye çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca yönetimin doğasının ve özelliklerinin çatışma süresince nasıl işlediği ve böylece gidişatı nasıl etkileyip sonucu nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Bu tez, Suriye krizini erken dönemlerinden bu yana derinlemesine ve devamlı olarak takip etmemden dolayı zihnimi meşgul etmekte olan sorulara tatmin edici yanıtlar arama girişiminde bulunmaktadır. Şu gibi sorulardır bunlar; Suriye ayaklanmasında yanlış giden neydi? Neden Suriye'nin ayaklanma sonrasındaki gidişatı diğer ülkelerdekinden farklıydı? Esad yönetimi ayakta kalmayı nasıl başardı? Bu sorular beni, değişimin herhangi bir şekilde mümkün bir sonuç olup olmadığını sorgulamaya dahi itti.

Bu tez, bu soruları cevaplamaya çalışan bütünsel bir kavramsallaştırma sunmayı ve çatışmanın çeşitli özelliklerini açıklamayı denemekte ve Esad yönetimi ve Suriye çatışması hakkındaki anlatımlarının birçoğuna meydan okumaktadır. Ayrıca bu tezde sunulan kavramsallaştırma, otoriter yönetimlerin doğasını incelemek ve/veya herhangi bir zoraki dönüşüm teşebbüsünün muhtemel sonuçlarını öngörmek için diğer benzer durumlara uygulanabilecektir.

Tezin odak noktası, 1970'den beri Suriye'de hüküm sürmekte ve patlak vermesinden bu yana çatışmayı etkilemekte olan ve tez tarafından esas aktör olarak kabul edilen bir fail (Agency) olarak Esad yönetimidir. Esad yönetimin doğasını anlamak için tez, yönetimin 1970 sonrası tarihsel evrim sürecini incelemekte ve Esad yönetimini ve yönetimin yapısını otoriter yönetimler literatürü içerisinde değerlendirmektedir. Varolan kavramsallaştırmadaki eksiklikleri ve yönetimin doğasını göz önünde bulundurarak tez, birbiri üzerine kurulmuş dört hipotez ileri sürmektedir.

Birinci hipotez: Esad yönetimi, neopatrimonyal bir yönetim örneği sunmaktadır.

İkinci hipotez: Yönetimin neopatrimonyal doğası, yönetimin dayanıklılığı ve sürekliliğini beslemektedir.

Üçüncü hipotez: Yönetimin neopatrimonyal doğası herhangi bir siyasal dönüşüm olanağını tehlikeye atmaktadır.

Dördüncü hipotez: Yönetimin neopatrimonyal doğası ve özellikleri çatışmanın gidişatını pekiştirmiş ve iç savaş durumunu tırmandırmıştır.

Tez, neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırmasını, kavramın Weberyan kökenine doğru izini sürerek ayrıntılandırmaktadır. Kavramın evrimini, 'geleneksel' patrimonyalizmden modern 'neo' patrimonyalizme kadar izlemektedir. Burada tez, neopatrimonyalizmi kavramsal bir çerçeve ve şahsi otoriter yönetimler incelenir ve çözümlenirken kullanışlı olabilecek bir yönetim modeli olarak geliştirmekte ve karakterize etmektedir.

Esad yönetimin neopatrimonyal bir yönetim örneği sunduğu hipotezinin incelenmesi için, Esad yönetimi, tezin geliştirdiği neopatrimonyal yönetim modeli içerisinde değerlendirilmektedir. Bu değerlendirmede, Esad yönetimi örneğinde kullanılmış olan kontrol ve iktidarı güçlendirme önlemleri çözümlenmekte dolayısıyla neopatrimonyal yönetim modeli, Esad yönetimi örneği içerisinde geliştirilmekte ve tanımlanmaktadır.

Bu tezde ileri sürülen bir diğer hipotez, yönetimin doğasının ve özellikle Esad yönetiminin neopatrimonyal doğasının yönetimin dayanıklılığını tahkim etmiş olmasıdır. Bu hipotezi değerlendirmek için tez, literatüre göre neopatrimonyal

yönetimlerin dayanıklılığını etkileyebilecek olan çeşitli etken ve değişkenleri ölçmeye çalışmaktadır. Böylece neopatrimonyal modeldeki yönetim biçimlerinin incelenmesiyle, benzer yönetimlerin dayanıklılığının ölçülebileceğini ve dolayısıyla herhangi bir zoraki dönüşümün muhtemel sonuçlarının öngörülebileceğini göstermektedir. Nitekim neopatrimonyal model, neopatrimonyal yönetimlerden dönüşümün mümkün olup olmadığı sorusunu cevaplamak için faydalı olacaktır.

Esad yönetiminin yüksek dayanıklılığına ve yönetimin şahsi karakteri ve yönetime sıkı sıkıya bağlı kişilerin varlığı gibi neopatrimonyal özelliklerine dayanarak tez, yönetimin doğasının bir siyasal dönüşüm ihtimalini tehlikeye attığını iddia etmektedir.

Yönetimin doğasının çatışmanın gidişatına etkisini incelemek için tez, çatışma ve çatışmanın özellikleri üzerine derin ve kavramsallaştırılmış bir analiz sunmaya çalışmaktadır. Tez, ilgili kaynaklara dayanarak, Esad yönetiminin neopatrimonyal özelliklerinin çatışma süresince nasıl işlediğini ve böylece gidişatı nasıl etkilediğini anlamaya çalışmaktadır.

Varolan literatüre, kitaplara, makalelere ve internet kaynaklarına ek olarak, yazarın kişisel deneyimlerinin yanısıra, ayaklanmadaki olayları belgeleyen, internet aracılığıyla yayınlanmış video ve bloglar gibi birincil kaynaklardan da yararlanılmıştır. Tez boyunca, bu birincil ve ikincil kaynaklardan yararlanmak için, söylem analizi kadar içerik analizi yöntemi de kullanılmıştır.

Ülkeyi Mart 2011'de vuran Arap Baharı'nın Suriye dalgasını takiben halk protestoları olarak başlayan olaylar, yavaş yavaş bir ayaklanma ve sonradan bölgesel ve uluslararası bir çatışmaya terfi edecek olan bir iç savaşa dönüştü. O zamandan beri Suriye, bölgesel ve uluslararası aktörlerin yanında, çeşitli devlet dışı aktör ve terörist örgüt için de bir gelişme alanı işlevi görmektedir. Tüm bu devlet ve devlet dışı aktörlerin arasında Esad yönetimi, belirgin bir dayanıklılık ve çatışmanın gidişatı üzerinde inkar edilemez bir etki göstermektedir.

Şüphesiz ki Suriye çatışması, örtüşen ve rekabet eden dahili ve harici etmenler tarafından derinlemesine şekillendirilmektedir. Vekalet savaşları, yabancı savaşçılar, terörizm, bölgesel ve uluslararası müdahaleler tam da devam etmekte olan çatışmayı şekillendiren dinamikler arasındadır. Fakat Esad yönetimi, her

şeyden önce Hafız ve Beşar Esad'ın yönetimi altında kırk yıldan uzun bir süredir devam etmekte olan Suriye üzerindeki hakimiyeti sebebiyle, çatışma ve gidişatı şekillendiren en önemli aktördür.

Esad yönetiminin devam etmekte olan çatışma üzerindeki etkisi Mart 2011'deki ayaklanma ile ortaya çıkmış olmayıp, daha ziyade, Esad yönetimi ve yönetimin Suriye toplumuyla ilişkisi ve etkileşimleri, daha önceden varolan durumu bir çerçeveye oturtmuş ve bu vesileyle rejimin dayanıklılığını etkilemiş ve herhangi bir ayaklanma ya da siyasal dönüşüm girişiminin muhtemel sonuçlarını şekillendirmiştir. Esad yönetiminin Suriye'deki çatışmanın gidişatı üzerindeki etkisi, daha önce varolan yönetimin tipolojisinin, devlet ve toplum ile ilişkilerinin ve bunların, çatışma boyunca, muhtemel sonucu belirleyecek şekilde, yönetimin tavrını nasıl etkilediğinin analiz edilmesiyle en iyi şekilde anlaşılacaktır.

Tezin ilk bölümü neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırmayı sunmaktadır. Bu, Weberyan 'geleneksel' patrimonyal egemenliğin 'neo' bürokratik egemenlik ile birleştiği melez bir egemenlik biçimi olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Birinci bölüm, neopatrimonyalizmi Weberyan köklerine doğru izlemekte, ilgili literatürün incelenmesi aracılığıyla neopatrimonyal egemenlik mekanizmalarını ve ağlarını ortaya koymakta ve sonrasında neopatrimonyal yönetimlerin dayanıklılığını ve bu yönetimler altında dönüşümün olduğu ve olmadığı muhtemel senaryoları tartışmaktadır. Bu bölüm, neopatrimonyalizmin ve onun alt unsurlarının Ortadoğu bağlamında mevcudiyetinin gözden geçirilmesiyle sona ermektedir.

Weber, patrimonyalizmden, bu egemenlik türü içerisinde kişisel yönetimin rolüne vurgu yaparak, üç saf egemenlik türünden biri olarak bahsetmektedir. Daha sonra Eisenstadt, kavramı, hem Weberyan geleneksel patrimonyalizmi hem de 'neo' rasyonel-bürokratik egemenliği içerecek şekilde değiştirmiştir. Peter Pawelka neopatrimonyal yönetimlerin meşrulaştırılması için iki temel olabileceğini iddia etmiştir. Geleneksel sadakate (miras gibi) ek olarak Pawelka, maddi ödüllerin (iş ve hibe dağıtma gibi) de neopatrimonyal yönetimler için meşruiyet kaynağı olacağını savunmuştur. Bu argüman, J.F. Medard, M.Bratton ve N. Van de, G. Erdmann ve U. Engel ve D. Bach gibi bilim insanlarının neopatrimonyal yönetimlerin inşasında klientalizm ve patronaj ilişkilerinin rolünü irdelemelernin önünü açtı. Böylece,

kişisel patrimonyal iktidara ek olarak, patrimonyal iktidarın devlet ve topluma nüfuz etmesini ve bu vesileyle kişise kontrolünü devam ettirmesini mümkün kılan klientalizm ve patronaj, neopatrimonyal yönetimler için olmazsa olmaz olarak görülmeye başlandı.

Snyder ve Brownlee gibi diğer bilim insanları bu tür yönetimlerden dönüşümün olanaklılığına odaklandılar. Kendi çalışmasında öncü olan Snyder, devrimci dönüşümün yanısıra, 'askeri darbe, iç savaşa devrimci olmayan bir geçiş ve süregiden istikrarın' da neopatrimonyal yönetimlerden dönüşümün muhtemel ürünlerinden olacağını savunmuştur. Snyder'in çalışmasına dayanarak Brownlee, yönetimin 'çökme tehlikesiyle karşılaştığı ama iktidardan uzaklaştırılamadığı' dönüşümün olmaması durumunun da bir diğer muhtemel sonuç olacağını eklemiştir. Hem Snyder hem de Brownlee, yönetime sıkı sıkıya bağlı insanların rolünün, neopatrimonyal yönetimlerin dayanıklılığını besleyen bir değişken olarak önemini belirtmiştir.

Ortadoğu'daki yönetimlerin büyük çoğunluğu apaçık kişiselleştirme ve yerleşik klientalizm ve patronaj ilişkilerine sahip patrimonyal özellikleri paylaşıyor olsa da neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırması literatürde sınırlı bir yere sahip olmaya devam etmektedir. Pawelka'nın Mısır örneğinde maddi-ödüllendirme türündeki neopatrimonyalizmin rolü üzerine olan çalışması bu alandaki nadir çalışmalardan biridir. Hinnebusch gibi diğer akademisyenler, neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırmasından 'modern ve geleneksel iktidar tekniği ve egemenliğin birleşimi' olarak bahsemişlerdir ama onu, Ortadoğu yönetimlerinin analizinde bir bütünsel kavramsal çerçeve olarak kullanmamışlardır. Dolayısıyla neopatrimonyal çerçeve, Ortadoğu Çalışmalarında ve özellikle de Arap devletlerinin yönetimlerinin çalışılmasında bir boşluğu doldurmaya yardım edebilirmiş gibi görünmektedir.

İkinci bölüm, otoriter Esad yönetimi hakkındaki literatürün ve bu yönetimi anlatmak için kullanılmış çeşitli kavramsallaştırmaların incelenmesi ve tartışılmasıyla başlamaktadır. Bölüm, Esad yönetimi ve bu yönetimin yapısının neopatrimonyalism çerçevesi içerisinde analiz edilmesiyle devam etmektedir. Bölümde, Suriye yönetiminin neopatrimonyalliğinin üç önemli dayanağa sahip

olduğu iddia edilmektedir: yönetimin kişiselleştirilmesi, patronaj ağları ve klientalizm.

Van Dam gibi bazı bilim insanları, Esad yönetiminin inşa edilmesinde ve devam ettirilmesinde Aleviliğin rolü üzerinde önemle dururken, Hinnebusch gibi diğer bilim insanları, Esad yönetimini analiz etmek ve araştırmak için popülist-otoriteryanizm (populist-authoriterianism), yükselen-otoriteryanizm (upgrading-authoriterianism), ve post-popülist otoriteryanizm (post-populist authoriterianism) kavramsal çerçevelerini kullanmış ve bu yüzden siyasal ve ekonomik dönüşümün ve otoriter yönetimin yükselmesinin ana faktörü olarak merkezde bulunun patronun kişisel motivasyonunu ihmal ederek yönetim mekanizmalarına odaklanmışlardır. Bundan dolayı neopatrimonyalizm, Esad yönetimi ve benzer yönetimler için daha bütünsel ve açıklayıcı bir çerçeve sunuyor görünmektedir.

Suriye yönetiminin kişiselleştirilmesi alt başlığı altında bölüm, Hafız ve Beşar Esad'ın yönetimi altında, kişisel takım ve dayatılmış kişisel kült aracılığıyla yönetimin kişiselleştirilmesinin tarihsel süreci ve mekanizmalarını ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Esad'ın kişisel iktidarını sağlamlaştırma sürecinin merkezinde, devlet aygıtlarının ve özellikle de güvenlik aygıtı ve ordunun sıkı kontrolünün devam ettirilmesinden sorumlu, sadık üyelerden oluşan grubun rolü yatmaktadır. Güvenlik birimlerinin ve ordunun kişiselleştirilmesi, onları, Weber'in 'patrimonyal birlikler' dediği askerlere dönüştürdü. Devlet üzerindeki kişisel kontrolün devam ettirilmesine paralel olarak Esad'ın kişilik kültünün kamusal ve düşünsel alanda inşa edilmesi Suriye'yi, Suriyet'ul Assad, Esad'ın Suriyesi'ne dönüştürdü.

Devamında bölüm, Esad yönetiminin bürokratik alana ve topluma nüfuz etmek için yararlandığı ikili patronaj ilişkilerini çözmektedir: Alevi patronaj ve Baas Partisi patronajı. Patronun en tepede olduğu, hiyerarşik biçimde düzenlenmiş olan Alevi ve Baas Partis patronaj ağları, patronun devlete ve topluma nüfuz etmesine olanak sağlamıştır. Aynı bağlamda bölüm, klientalizmi, patrimonyal iktidarın ekonomik alana ulaşmasını sağlayan, patrimonyal nüfuz etme süreçleri içerisinde işleyen diğer bir mekanizma olarak değerlendirmektedir. Fakat aynı zamanda, Beşar'ın iktidara gelişinden sonra ortaya çıkan değişime işaret edilmekte ve Beşar'ın döneminde, ekonomik alanın patrimonyal iktidar ve ilişkili, sadık işadamları

tarafından patrimonyalleştirilmesi eğiliminin görüldüğü savunulmaktadır. Böylece Beşar yönetimindeki patrimonyal iktidar, Hafız Esad yönetiminde klientalizm aracılığıyla idare edilen ekonomik alanın patrimonyalleştirilmesiyle, nüfuzunu bir adım öteye taşıyarak genişletmiştir. Tez, nüfuzun genişlemesi sürecinin, bu tür yönetimlerde kaçınılmaz olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

İkinci bölüm, yönetimin neopatrimonyalliğini ve yönetimin sürekliliğini etkileyen özelliklerini hesaba katarak, Esad yönetiminin dayanıklılığının değerlendirilmesiyle sona ermektedir. Esad yönetiminin sürekliliğini değerlendirmek için Snyder ve Brownlee'nin değişkenlerini uygulayan tez, Esad yönetiminin varolan özelliklerinin ve devlet ve toplumdaki patrimonyal nüfuzun yüksek düzeyinin, Suriye'de herhangi bir zoraki siyasal dönüşüm gerçekleştirme girişiminin istikrar, istiklararın yeniden sağlanması ve belirsiz devrim neticelerinden birine ulaşacağına işaret ettiği sonucuna varmaktadır. Fikirlerine sıkı sıkıya bağlı kişilerin hem yönetimdeki hem de muhalif taraftaki ayırd edilebilir rollerini göz önünde bulunduran tez, herhangi bir siyasal dönüşüm ihtimalinin tehlikeye atılacağını ve dolayısıyla Suriye'de sonucun, yönetimin istikrarı yeniden sağlaması ve gerçekleştirilmemiş devrim arasında gidip gelen bir durum olacağını iddia etmektedir.

Üçüncü bölümde, Suriye çatışmasının özetini takiben neopatrimonyalizmin rolü ve Suriye çatışmasını şekillendiren ağlarının değerlendirilmesi yapılmaktadır. Bölüm, Suriye yönetiminin kişiselleştirilmesinin, Suriye çatışmasının kişiselleştirilmesini de etkilediğini iddia etmektedir. Devletin sıkı kontrolünün devam ettirilmesi için araçsallaştırılmış olan kişisel takım, patronun patrimonyal birlikler üzerindeki kişisel kontrolünü garantilemeye devam etti, yönetimin dayanıklılığını arttırmakla birlikte çatışmanın gidişatını daha da askerileştiren, yönetime sıkı sıkıya bağlı kişilerin rolünü üstlendi ve müzakere edilmiş dönüşüm olanağını tehlikeye attı. Diğer taraftan kült, her iki tarafı da radikalleştirdi ve bu vesileyle çatışmanın bir bütün olarak radikalleşmesini etkiledi. Daha önceden varolan mezhepsel siyaset, muhtemelen, çatışmanın kutuplaşmasının aşırı uçlara taşınmasını teşvik etti.

Bölüm, ayaklanmayı takiben, patrimonyal iktidarın, ayaklanma ve direnişe karşılık vermek için, bürokrasi ve topluma nüfuz etmekte kullanılmış olan patronaj ağlarından yararlanmaya ve bu ağları harekete geçirmeye bağladığını iddia etmektedir. Patronaj ağlarının harekete geçirilmesinin, çatışmayı daha da kutuplaşmaya ve askerileşmeye iterek, Suriye'yi iç savaşa sürüklemekte yaşamsal bir rol üstlendiği iddia edilmektedir. Fakat burada patronaj ağlarının, yönetimin Hizbullah gibi yabancı vekil milis kuvvetlere ihtiyaç duymasına neden olan sınırlı hareket kapasitelerine işaret edilmektedir. Baas Partisi'nin patronaj ağlarının hareket kabiliyetinin sınırlılığı, kısmen, Beşar'ın yönetimi altında, partinin öneminin, partinin ayaklanma sonras geleceği ve Esad yönetiminin yaşlanan, partinin yerine geçecek ve Alevi patronajının etkisini dengeleyecek yeni bir patronaj ağı üretebilme kabiliyet hakkında ciddi sorulara neden olan geri çekilişinden kaynaklanmaktadır.

Ayrıca bölüm, klientalizmin işleyişini ve çatışma boyunca varolan ilişkilerini değerlendirmekte ve bu ilişkilerin çatışmanın gidişatı üzerindeki etkisini tartışmaktadır. Tez, müşterilerin (klientlerin) , Esad yönetiminin uzun ömürlülüğüne yatırım yaptıklarını, bu yüzden yönetime sıkı sıkıya bağlı olan kişileri beslediklerini ve bu vesileyle siyasal dönüşüm olanağını tehlikeye attıklarını iddia etmektedir. Bu bölüm, patronaj ve klientalizm ilişkileri Suriye'de bu kadar yerleşmiş olmasaydı, çatışmanın muhtemel sonuçlarının çok daha farklı olacağı sonucuna varmaktadır.

Daha önceden beri varolan neopatrimonyal hakimiyet ve özellikleri, yalnızca ayaklanma öncesi siyasi ve sosyal alanı şekillendirmekle kalmayıp, Mart 2011'de patlak vermesinden bu yana, devam etmekte olan Suriye çatışmasının gidişatını da etkilemektedir. Erken dönemlerden itibaren, yurtiçindeki muhalefet ve uluslararası karşılıkların retorik ve söylemlerinde kolaylıkla takip edilebileceği gibi, Esad yönetimi halihazırda Esad'ın kişiliği etrafında inşa edilmişken, ayaklanmayı takiben, çatışma da Esad'ın kişili etrafında inşa edilmiş, Suriye çatışması, tamamen Esad'ın ayrılışıyla alakalı bir hal almaya başlamıştır. Diğer taraftan, ayaklanma sırasında, işlemekte olan bütün birimleriyle devlet, patrona topyekun bir itaat ve sorgulanamaz bir sadakat göstererek patrimonyal bir tavır almıştır. Üstelik, Esad yönetiminin kendisine dayandığı, sadık güvenlik güçleri seçkinlerinden oluşan takım, fikirlerine sıkı sıkıya bağlı kimselerin rolünü üstlenerek yönetimi daha zorlayıcı tedbirler

almaya itip, iç savaş tünelinden müzakere edilebilir bir çıkşa hiçbir yer bırakmazken, Esad yönetimi tarafından kişilik kültü inşa etmek için kullanılmış olan mezhep siyaseti, her iki tarafı da radikalleşirerek çatışmayı daha uç noktalara taşımıştır.

Bürokratik alana ve siyasal ve sosyal hayata nüfuz etme mekanizmaları olarak kullanılmış olan patronaj ve klientalizm ilişlerinden, patrimonyal iktidarın çıkarı doğrultusunda bu alanları harekete geçirmek için faydalanılmaya başlandı. Böylece Esad'ın neopatrimonyal yönetimi, ayaklanmanın ilk dönemlerinden bu yana, patronaj ağlarının harekete geçirilmesine dayandı. Fakat Baas Partisi patronaj ağları ülke çapında kullanılamayacak kadar harap durumdaydılar ve sınırlı bir rol üstlendiler. Diğer taraftan, Alevi topluluğunun iç dinamikleri ve öz motivasyonuna dayandırılabilecek sebeplerle, Alevi patronaj ağları daha elverişliydiler ve patrimonyal hareket geçirme girişimlerine daha fazla uygunluk gösterdiler. Fakat Esad yönetiminin patronaj ağlarının ayaklanmayı bastırmak için gerekli olan seferberliği oluşturamıyor olduğu 2013 yazında iyice belirginleşince, İran'a bağlı Hizbullah milisleri Humus'un güneydoğusundaki El-Kusery şehrine doğrudan müdaha etti.

Patronaj ağlarının patrimonyal seferberliği, Esad yönetiminin dayanıklılığı ve sürekliliğine katkıda bulunduğu gibi, çatışmanın, olası tüm siyasal çözümler pahasına askerileşmesine de katkıda bulunmuştur. Alevi patronaj ağlarının patrimonyal seferberliği de, çatışmanın mezhepçi algı ve duygularını beslemekte belirleyici bir rol oynamış ve Suriye'de iç savaş durumunun ortaya çıkmasına önemli katkılarda bulunmuştur.

Baas Partisi'nin, Esad yönetimini Alevi patronaj ağlarına gitgide daha fazla dayanmaya terk eden geri çekilişi, Alevi hakimiyetini, yönetimin temsiliyet kabiliyetini tehlikeye atacak şekilde arttırmıştır. Bu nedenle, Esad yönetimi, toplumun Alevi olmayan kesimlerine ulaşıp onları harekete geçirecek başka bir patronaj ağı üretme zorluğu ile karşı karşıya kalmış görünmektedir. Aynı şekilde, Alevi patronaj ağlarını tarafından harekete geçirilmiş milis güçlerinin büyük oranda İran etkisi altında kalması da yönetimin bağımsızlığını ve dayanıklılığını tehlikeye atmaktadır.

Yedi yıllık çatışmanın ardından, Esad yönetimi, kendi egemenliği ve bağımsızlığı pahasına da olsa sağlam kalmayı başarmıştır. Patronaj ağları üzerinde İran etkisi büyük ölçüde hissedilirken, askeri kurumlar üzerindeki Rus etkisi günden güne artmaktadır. İran ve Rusya, dış patronların müvekkili haline gelmiş Esad yönetimi enkazına nüfuz etmektedir.

Bu tez, çatışmanın gidişatını etkileyen esas aktör olan Esad yönetimine odaklanarak Suriye çatışmasını ve çatışmanın dinamiklerini anlamaya çalışmıştır. Bu bağlamda, neopatrimonyal kavramsallaştırma, yönetimin anatomisini ve devlet ve toplumla olan ilişkilerini incelemek için bir çerçeve olarak kullanılmıştır. Tez, bir çerçeve olarak neopatrimonyalizmin, Ortadoğu ve Arap ülkelerindeki otoriter yönetimlerin incelenmesinde ve ayrıca herhangi bir zoraki dönüşüm girişiminin akıbeti ve muhtemel sonuçlarının analizinde yararlı olacağını göstermektedir.

Patrimonyal iktidarın devlet ve toplumdaki sağlamlığının ve nüfuzunun seviyesinin değerlendirimesi aracılığıyla otoriter yönetimler üzerindeki neopatrimonyalizm çerçevesinin belirtilmesi, meydana gelebilecek bir olayda, yönetimin muhtemel tavrının ve ayrıca dönüşümün muhtemel gidişatının ve çatışmanın sonuçlarının öngörülmesinde yararlı olacaktır. Bu tez, yönetimin daha önceden varolan tipolojisi ve özelliklerinin, herhangi bir muhtemel zoraki dönüşüm ve çatışmanın sonuçlarını etkileme ve şekillendirmede hayati bir rol üstleneceğini doğrulamaktadır. Yönetimin doğası ve çatışmanın sonuçları arasındaki bu ilişki, Arap Baharı olarak adlandırılan olaylara şahit olmuş Arap ülkeleri gibi diğer örneklerde de incelenmelidir. Harici müdahalelerin diğer faktörlerini göz ardı etmeden bu tez, yönetimin doğasının, yönetimin harici müdahalelere karşı savunmasızlığını başlı başına belirlediğini ve daha önceden varolan tipoloji ve özelliklerin, daha önceden varolan muhalefet alanını şekillendirerek muhalif güçleri dahi etkilediğini göstermektedir.

APPENDIX B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

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