

Saudi Arabia Briefing Paper

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Introduction

Being the largest country in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia feels a responsibility to assist towards and help pursue a resolution to the conflict of the Syrian Civil War. This responsibility has led to continual Saudi support of the Syrian Opposition, in both arms and finances. Overall, the Saudis are dissatisfied with the current leadership within Syria, leading them to greatly support the cause of the Syrian National Coalition, the primary union of oppositional groups within Syria. Syria and Saudi Arabia have long endured a shaky diplomacy. The Saudis have always been displeased with Syria's leadership; in 2008 Saudi Arabia both withdrew their Syrian ambassador and boycotted the Arab League Summit in Damascus. Saudi Arabia wishes to see the Syrian Civil War end peacefully, however their ideal resolution is different from many other world powers: the ultimate disposition of the Assad rule.

Background

Being the birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia is home of Islam's two holiest shrines in Medina and Mecca. The modern Saudi state—an absolute monarchy ruled by sharia—was founded by Ibn Saud (1882-1953) in 1932 after a thirty year campaign to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. As a descendant of Wahhabi leaders, he seized Riyadh in 1901 and became the leader of the Arab nationalist movement. In 1906, Saud established Wahhabi dominance in Nejd and conquered Hejaz in 1925. Being one of the biggest suppliers of oil in the world, the oil industry of Saudi started around 1933 and exports in 1939. Major productions of oil began under United States-controlled Aramco in 1938, but in 1972, Saudi gained control of 20% of Aramco, lessening United States control. A year later, Saudi led an oil boycott against several Western countries that led supported Israel in the October War against Syria and Egypt, causing oil prices to quadruple. Saudi later manages to take full control of Amaco in 1980. Saudi

severed diplomatic relationships with Egypt after it made a peace treaty with Israel. However, they manage to resume their diplomatic relationship in 1987. In 1990, Saudi accepted the Kuwaiti royal family and 400,000 refugees after the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait but expelled citizens of Yemen and Jordan because of their government's support of Iraq. A year later, Saudi is involved in both the air attacks on Iraq and the land forces that went on to free Kuwait. King Fahd, who succeeded in 1892, decreed the division of Saudi Arabia into thirteen administrative divisions in the September of 1993. In the December of that year, the Consultive Council was inaugurated, composing of a chairman and sixty members elected by the king. A year later, Osama Bin Laden was stripped of his Saudi nationality. In 1997, King Fahd increases the sixty members of the Consultive Council to ninety, and twenty Saudi women were allowed to attend just two years later. The relations between Saudi and the United States skewed after the September 11th attack in 2001, in which 15 of the 19 attackers were Saudi Arabians. In November of 2002, Saudi foreign minister claimed that "his country" will not allow the United States to use its facilities to attack Iraq. Western and Arab troops were allowed to deploy on its soil during the liberation of Kuwait, but the ongoing presence of the foreign troops Kuwait was liberated built up substantial tension between the Kuwaiti royal family and the public until all operating United States troops left Saudi in 2003. Many cases of suicide bombers and gun attacks left victims and suspects dead, such as the attack in the United States consulate in Jeddah and the car-bomb explosion in central Riyadh in 2004. Police were able to arrest 127 terror suspects in Early April of 2007, but in December, religious police were banned from apprehending suspects. Being one of the most lucrative deals in United States history, U.S. officials confirmed their plan to sell \$60 billion worth of arms to Saudi. Women were beginning to be held in higher regards when King Abdullah announced more rights for women, including the right to vote, to drive, and to be appointed to the Consultative Shura Council. In 2014, Saudi and four other Arab states joined the United States in airstrikes against IS militants in Syria.

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Governance

Syria, before the conflict, endured a long period of tension among its citizens, with the government fearing a revolutionary uprising, similar to the Arab Spring protests that were then sweeping across the Middle East and Africa. This led President Bashar al Assad to establish a strong police presence throughout the country in attempts to suppress any potential protests. This, however, did not stop the opposition, only fueling their rage and dissatisfaction with their government, leading them to create the Syrian National Coalition, a coalition of opposition groups in the Syrian Civil War.

Syria's relationship with Saudi Arabia was equally unstable leading up to the conflict surrounding the civil war. Throughout the 1990s, relations were positive. In February of 2005, however, former Prime Minister of Lebanon Rafic Hariri, ally to Saudi Arabia and political opponent of Syria, was assassinated by Hezbollah, a militant party in Lebanon. Although investigations showed that Hezbollah was responsible, Saudi Arabia feared Syria may have been at play. However within the years leading up to the Civil War, diplomacy appeared viable. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia visited Damascus in October of 2009, after withdrawing Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Syria and boycotting the Arab League Summit in Damascus just one year prior. This gave the impression of the rift between the two countries slowly shrinking, an impression that became similarly shaky not long into the war.

At its core, the Syrian Civil War is a fight between the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, with support from Iran and Russia, among others, and the Syrian National Coalition. The Islamic State has made things rather difficult and muddy, seeking to erase the border between Iraq and Syria, creating one united state of its own. They, however, were not a part of the initial conflict; they only became a part of the war around 2013. Saudi Arabia's primary concerns are to have Assad overthrown in Syria, and to fight the terrorism of the Islamic State,

who are responsible for several terrorist attacks within Saudi Arabia. Because of these motivations, Saudi Arabia has become one of the opposition's largest funders, sending both arms and funds to the opposition. They have even sent heavier artillery to the opposition, like anti-tank weapons, among others. This supply of artillery greatly increased the opposition's resources, in turn increasing the amount of power that they yield over the Syrian forces. However, American officials have noted that the opposition still remains operationally inconsistent.

Many, including the opposition themselves, wish to see a democratic government rise after the downfall of Assad. Saudi Arabia is not as interested in this goal. They feel less that there will be a need for a new constitution or government reform, only a change in power. Saudi Arabia is dissatisfied with the leadership of Assad, and has gone to extended efforts to topple the Syrian regime, these efforts led by Saudi Prince Bandar. Saudi Arabia has even gone as far to send inmates sentenced to death to fight for the Syrian opposition. To the Saudis, external third party intervention is key to achieving victory for the opposition. This position has been abundantly clear, whether it be through their collaboration with Qatar, purchasing heavy artillery from Croatia to send to opposition fighters, and in the persistence of Saudi Arabia encouraging the United States to intervene in the conflict. The more third parties are involved in the conflict, the quicker and easier that resolution can be achieved.

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Strategic Security

The fighting capacity of the Syrian army—one of the biggest in the Middle East—has been cut in half by the Syrian Civil War. There are around 314,000 troops in current Syria and around 20,000 in the air defenses. The Syrian army is equipped with mainly Russian-made weapons with over 4,950 tanks when the fighting began. Being two of the biggest players in the Syrian conflict, both the United States and Saudi Arabia are slowly sending relief, troops, and

money over to help the Syrian rebels. Russia, another key player, is one of Bashar Al Assad's most important international backers. In September 2015, Russia launched airstrikes against rebels and hit Western-backed groups. Turkey, another supporter of the Syrian opposition, agreed to let the United States led coalition against the IS (Islamic State) to use its air bases for strikes on Syria after an IS attack in July, 2015. Iran is one of Assad's closest allies, with regional Shia power spending billions of dollars a year to reinforce Assad and his Alawite-dominated government, providing military advisers, subsidised weapons, and as well as a line of credit and oil transfer. Iran was believed to influence Hezbollah's decision to send fighters to western Syria, where they assisted pro-Assad forces. Amongst the conflict, Saudi Arabia plays a salient role in Syria by being one of the main supporters of the Syrian rebels. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's military, backed by Iranian-led militiamen and the Russian military, terrorized Aleppo and even had thoughts about commencing a ceasefire. This move threatened the Syrian rebels, who were provided with money and weaponries by Saudi Arabia. The Sunni majority country of Saudi Arabia formed allies with the United States, both opposing Assad because of his alliance with the Shiite rival of Iran. Officials of Saudi responded by dispatching warplanes to Turkey, another opponent of Assad. Saudi leaders announced large-scale military exercises that would involve around 20 Arab and African nations. Not only a risk to just Syria, letting Iranian soldiers and Russians win will be a threat to national Saudi Arabia security. While the number of soldiers belonging to Syria is significant, the number of foreign fighters throughout Syria is critical. An estimated number of foreign fighter flocking to Syria since the breakout of the war in 2011 ranges from 27,000 people to 31,000 people from at least 86 countries. Data provided in 2014 by the Soufan Group approximated 12,000 fighters from 81 different countries. To an intense degree, Saudi invests sources and militaries in determining the future stability of Syria by sending numerous troops. On February 7th of 2016, Saudi launched the "Northern Thunder", described as "one of the largest military exercise in Middle Eastern history". Participants from over 20 countries were sent to Hafar al Batin in northern Arabia with more than 350,000 troops participating in these maneuvers. Saudi has spent large sums of money modernizing its troops and has a land force of 75,000 strong. Saudi Arabia does not support a ceasefire nor does the country want to be involved. The following ceasefires will not be as useful nor is it part of the

agreement amongst the different countries at the Syrian peace talks. Prior to the conflict, Syrian borders were not strong yet not as weak as the one today. There had been multiple clashes near the Syrian border with Turkey. Today, most Syrians trying to escape into Turkey don't survive, after the president of Turkey built a 10 feet tall barricade around the area bordering Syria and Turkey. Turkey has taken in 3 million Syrian refugees in recent years, and has sealed off its borders in the wake of spring 2016. Most of the borders around Syria is sealed and Turkish Border Guards were reported to have shot people seeking protection. More than half a million people are currently holding out in the border areas hoping to escape to Turkey, while the camps are overcrowded with a lack of supplies such as food and shelter. Before the Syrian conflict, Syria's own army had 8,000 soldiers in the gendarmerie and around 100,000 in the popular militia of the Baath Party. The ground army consisted of seven armoured divisions, three mechanized infantry divisions, two special forces divisions, and a Republican Guard. The challenges that ISIS poses for Syria is consequential. Despite losing about a quarter of territory it once held in Syria, ISIS continues to strike targets beyond its territory. The involvement of ISIS with the Syrian Civil War has aggravated the conflict, leaving over 300,000 dead, two-thirds of the Syrian people in need of humanitarian aid, and 7 million internally displaced. Overall, the crisis in Syria has increased security awareness with surrounding countries, especially one of the highest military aids: Saudi Arabia.

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Local Security

The Syrian Arab Republic has been a democratic republican state since its current constitution was approved in 1973. This constitution gave most political power to the Ba'ath Socialist Party, which has had the al-Assad family in the presidential role since its founding in 1973. The al-Assad's have tried to maintain tight military control over Syria, this is caused in part because the Assad's are shiite muslim while 80% of the population is sunni muslim. This has caused many divisions within the Syrian state and has further separated the government from the people. This may have been a contributing factor which helped push the Syrian government to react so harshly against any anti-government statements or actions. As president and commander in chief of Syria, Assad controlled an army of around 400,000 men before the

outbreak of war. Syria was often accused of being too harsh against its own citizens because of Assad's style of rule. Many have stated that the Syrian government used secret police to enforce government policy along with mass killings to control people. The al-Assad family had ruled with an iron fist with little compassion for their people for a long time before the war. For locals the Syrian civil war has made it impossible to live in their own homes. Bombings are very frequent in some areas, while other places are ruled by terrorist organisations. It is not safe for people to live in Syria because it is a far too volatile and tumultuous for anyone to live in safety. Even in public areas in regime Syria, terrorist attacks are frequent, often killing and wounding many. People don't feel safe in their own homes anymore. The established government in Syria and the alternative governments are trying to create a safe environment for people to live, but currently their focus is on fighting the civil war. Most of Syria today is a war zone, many populated cities have become battlefields and it seems clear that Syria is unable to protect its population from the threats they face. The Syrian government has made allies with many powerful nations including Iran, Russia, and China. Because of these allies they have a large amount of support adding on to their own military of 400,000. The government has a large war making capability and is effectively using it against Isis and other regional threats to the regime. It is estimated that Isis has 80,000-100,000 fighters with about 50,000 fighters in Syria. Syria has a huge oil industry because of the large oil deposits underneath the land. The oil is a large part of the reason why there are so many contenders vying for control of Syria. The official and alternative use the oil to finance their operations and Isis uses the oil for a very similar purpose. The oil fields are almost as important to the local contenders as cities because of the potential financial benefits that come from controlling them. Oil has also been used against Isis in the conflict. There has been a bombing campaign against Isis, which targets the oil fields and refineries that Isis has captured from the old Syrian government. The oil industry is what enables many of the regional contenders to stay operational. It is estimated that Isis profits \$1-2 million daily from their oil fields and refineries, without their oil Isis would be struggling to finance their fighting. There are a large amount of guns which are entering Syria. It was estimated that the Syrian army had about 2,010,000 firearms before the war. The civilian population had an estimated 735,000 firearms, both legal and illegal. It is very difficult to know

the exact number of guns going into Syria because many countries don't have restricted gun trade. It is also takes a very long time to track a gun from the assembly line to the battlefield through only a serial number, which can be difficult to find as well. Many countries are supplying firearms and ammunition to rebel groups or the Syrian government, which is not tracked by organization. Guns can easily get into Syria, this has allowed Isis to capture military objectives and along with it large amounts of guns and ammunition. This makes it very difficult to estimate how many guns and how much ammunition they have. The war has brought in a huge amount of firearms and other weapons. Global powers have been continuously funneling arms into Syria, which has made the proxy war being fought there better equipped than ever. The Syrian government lost a lot of territory to Isis at the beginning of the conflict. This failure has been extremely detrimental to their fight because the weapons and gear seized by Isis when it originally took the territory is the only advanced weaponry they are known to have.

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Social Reconstruction

The structure of Syrian society was similar to that of other Middle-Eastern countries, being divided into the three separate factions of the tribe, the village, and the town. Though the three factions shared similarities, they varied in their practices of Arab culture, and as a result the factions viewed each other as greatly dissimilar. Despite their differences, the factions depended on each other for acquiring different types of items and products. Beyond these factions, there were several other social rifts that separated one Syrian from another. Around 70% of the population consisted of Sunni Muslims, who at the time were led and controlled by the Shia, a minority, making up 12% of the population. As a result of the Sunni majority, the Shia in power used heavy governmental control and oppression to maintain their position. As well as Sunnis and Shias, about 7-10% of the population was taken up by the Kurds, who were given practically no voice in government, and denied the freedom to express Kurdish culture, with even the teaching of Kurdish in school being prohibited.

The Syrian government did not take criticism lightly, extending strict control over any activity that appeared to threaten its power. This included a wariness to acts of civil society, as non-governmental organizations were seen as a threat to governmental power. Following shortly after Bahram al-Assad's entrance into presidency, a brief period called "Damascus Spring" occurred in which some of the government repression was retracted and people were able speak openly of the Syrian government and its faults in forums and associations. The Assad regime, however, began to feel threatened when calls for reform of the constitution were demanded and, fearing that Syria's future would slip through their fingers into the hands of the people, arrested several prominent activists including Human Rights Association of Syria president Haitham al-Malih. The Syrian government also heavily ignored comments and ideas from Human Rights Activist groups, and held a strict, repressive policy towards freedoms of speech and press. Before its removal in 2011, Syria had in place an Emergency Law that allowed them to imprison people without any evidence of crime. This led to the torture and imprisonment of human rights activists, peaceful protesters, and journalists/bloggers without any due cause, rejecting their rights to freedom of expression. Online access was also heavily monitored, as the government has recently been discovered to have implanted Blue Coat

appliance log files to survey online activity. The technology aided them in blocking pro-democracy sites and in the tracking down of protesters and potential rebels.

Syria has signed several treaties that are set in place to secure certain human rights. These treaties include the treaty of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Rights guaranteed within these treaties include the rights to freedoms of press, speech, and assembly, the freedom to choose a political party, and the freedom to a certain quality of life regardless of age, sex, race, or religion. The status of human rights that was maintained in Syria, however, did not correspond with these standards. Religiously, Syrian law and the Syrian constitution protected its citizens freedom of religion, yet there were several restrictions. The constitution required that the Syrian president be a Muslim, and most legal and political procedures were carried out in the philosophy of Islamic thought. Although there was legally freedom of religion, there were still many tensions between different religious groups that often affected the carrying out of the law. For example, proselytizing was not necessarily illegal, but frowned upon, and missionaries or other certain religious people were often jailed if they were thought to be threatening order. Furthermore, conversions of people from Islam to Christianity often caused the stir in the community, and these discriminations were not controlled, causing the newly converted people to often have to relocate to a new community.

Besides religious oppression, Syrian social downfalls also existed in the unequal treatment for men and women. Rights for women were guaranteed in the constitution, yet the personal status laws, which pertain to marriage, child custody, divorce, and inheritance contained discrimination towards the female sex. In 2010, a new draft of the personal status laws was submitted that still contained female oppression, yet it was later terminated by Bahram al-Assad in response to vehement protests from women's rights groups. Later on in the year, Assad updated the Syrian Penal Code so that those accused of "honor" crimes were to receive a small sentence of a minimum of two years in prison; "honor" crimes being the act of abusing or killing a female member of the family by a male member for bringing dishonor to the family. Yet being gay in Syria was even worse than being a women, as homosexuality in Syria

was deeply outlawed, with Bahram al-Assad issuing agents to track down homosexuals and capture them for either torture, imprisonment, or execution. All these faults and splits in society made many Syrians want to flee the country; however, the government also restricted freedom of movement, requiring citizens to have exit visas as a means of keeping people from leaving. Movement within the country was easier, yet as stated in the Article 38 of the constitution, law officials have the ability to restrict movement for certain persons from one Syrian territory to another.

Outside of major human rights, other common rights, such as property rights, were carried out with similar negligence. Syria was granted a score of around 10-20 on the property rights index, an index that measures the competence with which a country's judicial system is able to carry out property rights cases, the probability that a property will be expropriated, and the ability of citizens to enforce contracts. A score of 10-20 is incredibly low, as scores range from 0 at the lowest to 100 at the highest. This was due to corruption and ineffectiveness in Syria's judicial system, causing property rights to be practically impossible to enforce and protect. For housing, over half of Syrian citizens lived in urban areas as a result of the mass migration of families from rural to urban land in past years. This caused housing in major cities to be quite scarce, with many makeshift homes that often had no running water existing on the outskirts. In rural areas, sharecropping, renting, or buying land were common practices, and traditional methods of buying and selling housing were often carried out.

Beyond these faults, there still existed hope for improvement in pre-war Syria, as many structures of society appeared to be changing for the better. Before the war, the Syrian education system was steadily rising. 93% of Syrian youth had received a basic education. In terms of medical care, the health care system in Syria was also on the rise, even with a lack of public investment, as the average age life expectancy climbed from the age of 53, as it was in 1970 to 73, and infant and maternal mortality rates dropped. Although, the Syrian health care system still faced challenges. There was often a lack of qualified physicians, an inability to utilize capacity, lack of coordination between healthcare providers, and cases of inequity. Mental health care was scarce, with only 70 physicians for 21 million Syrian inhabitants, and only two mental health facilities; with one in the rural outskirts of Damascus and one in Aleppo.

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Cross-Border

Syria has its own distinct relationship with all of its border countries. One of the most important roles they all play with Syria, is refugee intake. Prior to 1998, Turkey's relationship with Syria was not strong, but when the Adana Agreement was signed between the two, there was a shift in the dynamic. This agreement against the PKK, a terrorist group, provided the two with more better relations. Since then, the relationship between Turkey & Syria has become increasingly important due to Turkey's large intake of refugees. Turkey is Syria's largest neighboring country and has taken in close to three million refugees, the most of any Syrian neighbor. Despite the fact that Turkey has taken in by far the most refugees, their borders are becoming harder to cross. A wall along the border is being built, anticipated to be completed in the spring of 2017. Along with this, during 2016, border entry points were closed and physical force was placed on the borders for security. Jordan and Lebanon are Syria's much smaller neighbors, and have opened their doors to refugees. Due to their size, refugees create a higher demand for resources and require significant government spending. Jordan has taken in just over one million refugees, but at a large cost. Only one-percent of refugees have work permits, making it difficult for the majority to secure jobs. The government is forced to spend approximately twenty-five percent of their state budget supporting refugees. In hopes of regulating refugee entry, in 2012, Jordan became more selective of refugees they let in. In June of 2016, Jordan closed off its border with Syria, causing many refugees to be stranded.. In the earlier states of the crisis, Jordan had allowed in more refugees, but they needed to become stricter since they couldn't financially support all these people moving into their country. While Lebanon has taken in just over one million refugees, they have the highest concentration of refugees in the world. Refugees have been able to cross their borders, but again with a strain on resources, Lebanon has moved to reduce the number of refugees they take in. Lebanon leaders such as president Michael Aoun, have called for the refugees in Lebanon to return back to Syria. Suggestions of safe zones by leaders has been another strategy for the refugee crisis. Lebanon hopes that if safe zones in Syria are created, refugees will return to there. Israel has not allowed the influx of refugees that Syria's other border countries have. Refugees are not taken in like they are in other nations, and are seen as infiltrators in Israel. For many, refugees

are seen as a threat. Even those countries in favor of taking in refugees are not thinking in terms of large numbers. Over the coming years, countries are able to take in fewer and fewer, making it harder for refugees to leave, which is why the crisis needs to be resolved soon for the sake of the lives of the Syrian people.

Before the crisis in Syria, the country contained many refugees, primarily from Iraq, due to its open door policy. By 2007 the number of Iraqi refugees in Syria was over 1.2 million, which created numerous pressures on the resources of Syria. An increase in the cost of living, significantly higher water consumption and unemployment were all due to the refugee population increase. The demand for medical care steadily rose, leading to a shortage of hospitals. Since education in Syria is free, enrollment spikes led to a need for more schools. The majority of refugees from Iraq settle in cities, specifically Damascus. Living in Syria allows refugees to settle in a relatively inexpensive area and escape many of the dangers back home. Refugees often had problems finding work, leaving them with little money to locate to safer areas as Syrian cities became more and more dangerous. Another place refugees often settled, were camps. Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and many other places with high refugee influx have camps. These are designated areas in which refugees live, alone or with their families. Camps are very large and often divided into smaller areas within. Just outside the Jordan/Syria border is Zaatari, a refugee camp housing around 80,000 people. Because Zaatari is so large, it's divided into districts. Life in refugee camp is hardly ideal, although for many it trumps the alternative. The difficulties for refugees in camps are often similar to those in cities, for example, finding work in camps is often as hard as it is in cities. Violence, fear, lack of resources/education and relying on charity of others are only a few of the concerns at camps. As the situation in Syria gets worse, Iraqi refugees currently face a devastating solution; stay as the violence escalates, or return to the dangers they once fled.

Within the war between the rebels and the government, the sectarian and the proxy war both have terrorist involvement. Since the conflict between the people and president Bashar-al Assad aroused, conflict within has risen. The sectarian war involves fighting between Sunni and Shiite, with ISIS fighting the rebels within that conflict. Hezbollah is a participant in the proxy war, fighting against the United States. Formed in 2004, ISIS has been a threat to

Syria long before the current crisis. The civil war has only amplified that threat due to the chaos and violence Syria is experiencing. In 2014, ISIS controlled over 34,000 miles of land in Syria and Iraq. Through different media platforms and propaganda ISIS has been able to spread their message to the distressed people of Syria on a large scale. Leading up to the conflict ISIS is responsible for many acts of terrorism in different nations. The crisis in the middle east has allowed them to become more active. In the city of Damascus, Yarmouk, a Palestinian camp has experienced multiple assaults from ISIS. Resources have been limited and the attacks of ISIS only demand the need for medical help in the camp. Humanitarians have worked to secure food and water, which are extremely limited, and to make living conditions for residents safer. ISIS has always posed a threat in the middle east, but through this conflict they have been able to amplify their message through violence and crime.

The drought Syria faced from 2006 to 2009 has proven to be a large environmental pressure and has only escalated since the war. It has created unemployment, poverty, and is driving many away. The drought left numerous farmers out of work, forcing them to move to cities, creating overcrowding. This has left many unemployed and created tensions among the people. Water became scarce and food became expensive, displacing many alongside the already displaced Iraqi refugees living in Syria. The environmental conflict Syria faced is not fleeting, the environmental patterns that lead to this drought are observed to be longer lasting, causing the effects of this drought to be as well. As the civil war has progressed, the effects of the drought have only been highlighted due to people in need to food and water, not available to them. The drought, has created many more issues for people at a time when Syria's resources are already very scarce.

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Economy

Although the economy of Syria was never very good to begin with and free trade as well as business opportunities were only slightly above average, Syria's economy although not great was a stable one and was not as bad as it is today.

Before the war, the centralization of Syria was somewhere in between, although not totally government controlled, the amount of business choices and opportunities were severely limited.

The majority of the businesses were privatized at the time, the government didn't have much control on the economy and trade in the country was relatively free.

Major imports including cars from other countries, Raw Sugar wheat, Seed Oils and Baked Goods. Major exports included raw cotton, Apples and Pears, Calcium Phosphate and Crude Petroleum. As of 2011, roughly 4% of Syria's economy was dedicated to military expenditure.

According to the CIA's health expenditures, it is around 3.3% as of 2014. The education expenditures of the government were around 5.1% as of 2009. Prior to the civil war, the gender rights of both people, although not equal were in many cases better than that of its surrounding neighbors, in recent years however, due to shifts in power, the rights of women are worse than that of what they once were. The banks in Syria were planning on being privatized prior to the civil war, right now however, the banks in Syria are not looking good as the economy is too terrible for people to be borrowing money as they do not have much to spend. Syria's economy has been completely and utterly destroyed by the civil war with the GDP of the country falling by over 30% in 2012. Many factories are either destroyed or not running and many basic infrastructure has been reduced to rubble. The economy is in tatters and the government is in no position to fix the problems. With most people either fleeing the country or hiding, there is very little work in Syria, the people are unwilling to work in such dangerous conditions and there is very little work to do because of how dangerous it is. Before

the war, unemployment rates were rather low, with sources of around 8%, this is due to the economy growing during this time. The economy grew gradually over the course of around 5 years with unemployment going down over time. IN recent years however, unemployment has spiked to over 50% of people not being employed. The cotton industry of Syria is one of the largest in the world, having a total export of over 80 Million dollars' worth of raw material, calcium phosphates and Apples are also major exports. The majority of the population is very young with many of the population being children, around 31% are aged 0-21 years of age and another 30% 25-54.

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