The Contemporary Middle East

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REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE

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CHRONOLOGY

1963, October	Sixth National Congress of Ba'th Party radicalises Party ideology
1964, April	Muslim Brotherhood rebellion in Hama repressed
1964	Formation of General Union of Peasants
1965, January	Nationalisations of business herald "socialist transformation"
1965, May	Eighth National Congress of Ba'th Party reflects party internal power struggle
1965–66	Jordan waters dispute; Syrian-backed Palestinian guerrillas raid into Israel
1966, February	Radical coup led by Salah Jedid ousts Aflaq and Bitar
1967, June	Third Arab-Israeli war; Israel occupies Syrian Golan Heights
1969	Land reform completed
1968–70	"Duality of power:" struggle between radicals and Hafiz al-Asad's pragmatist faction inside Party and army
1970, September	Syrian intervention in Jordan during "Black September"
1970, November	Asad seizes power, ousts radical Ba'th faction
1971, March	Asad elected President
1971–72	First *infitah* or economic liberalisation
1973, October	Fourth Arab-Israeli war: Syria fails to recover Golan Heights
1973	Euphrates Dam completed; Lake Asad forming
1974, May	Kissinger brokers Syrian–Israeli disengagement on the Golan Heights
1976, June	Syrian intervention in Lebanon, clashes with PLO
1976–80	Fourth Five-Year Plan intensifies industrialisation
1977	Asad denounces Sadat's visit to Jerusalem
1978	Syrian troops clash with Christian militias in Lebanon
1978	Anti-Camp-David Syro-Iraqi unity talks
1979, February	Iranian revolution; Syria recognises new government
1980 October	Syria supports Iran in Iran–Iraq War
1978–82	Islamic Rebellion in Syria
1981	Israel annexes Golan Heights
1982	Hama rebellion crushed
1982	Israeli invasion of Lebanon
1983	Syrian-backed Palestinians fight Arafat's PLO in Tripoli
1983	Agricultural cooperatisation completed
1984	Syria foils Israeli-Lebanese peace accord
1984	Rifat al-Asad's bid for power fails
1986–88	Economic crisis in Syria; second *infitah* begun
1987, December	Palestinian *intifadah* begins
1989	Lebanese General Aoun challenges Syria's Lebanon presence
1989, October	Taif Accord blueprints settlement of Lebanese Civil War
1990, August	Syria enters anti-Iraq Gulf coalition
1990, October	Syria crushes Aoun, consolidates power in Lebanon
1991, May	Law No. 10 encourages foreign investment in Syria
1991, May	Syrian-Lebanese Treaty of Friendship signed
1991, July	Syria enters Madrid peace negotiations with Israel
1993, September	Oslo Accord between PLO and Israel threatens to isolate Syria

1994, January	Asad-Clinton meeting reinvigorates Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations
1996, March	Turkish–Israeli alliance announced
1996, May	Likud election victory in Israel dims Syrian–Israeli peace prospects
1999	Election of Barak in Israel revives Syrian–Israeli peace prospects

FOREWORD

The death of Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad on June 10, 2000 marked the end of an era for Syria and the Arab world. In the last decade of his life, Asad had an almost unique stature as the last credible standard bearer of Pan-Arab nationalism. His death arguably signals the end of this Arab dream.

His career paralleled the rise of the Ba'th Party and the consolidation of the modern Syrian state. The son of an Alawi peasant family, Asad rose to power through the Ba'th Party and the military, and was part of the Ba'th military cabal which overthrew Syria's feudal oligarchy in 1963. He was a member of the leadership that launched the Ba'th revolution from above including the land reform, the expansion of education and the state-sponsored industrialisation which benefited Syria's popular strata. He was also defence minister in the government that, in the name of the Palestine cause, provoked the disastrous 1967 war with Israel in which Syria lost the Golan Heights. From this trauma, Asad emerged determined to recover the lost land and honour from Israel.

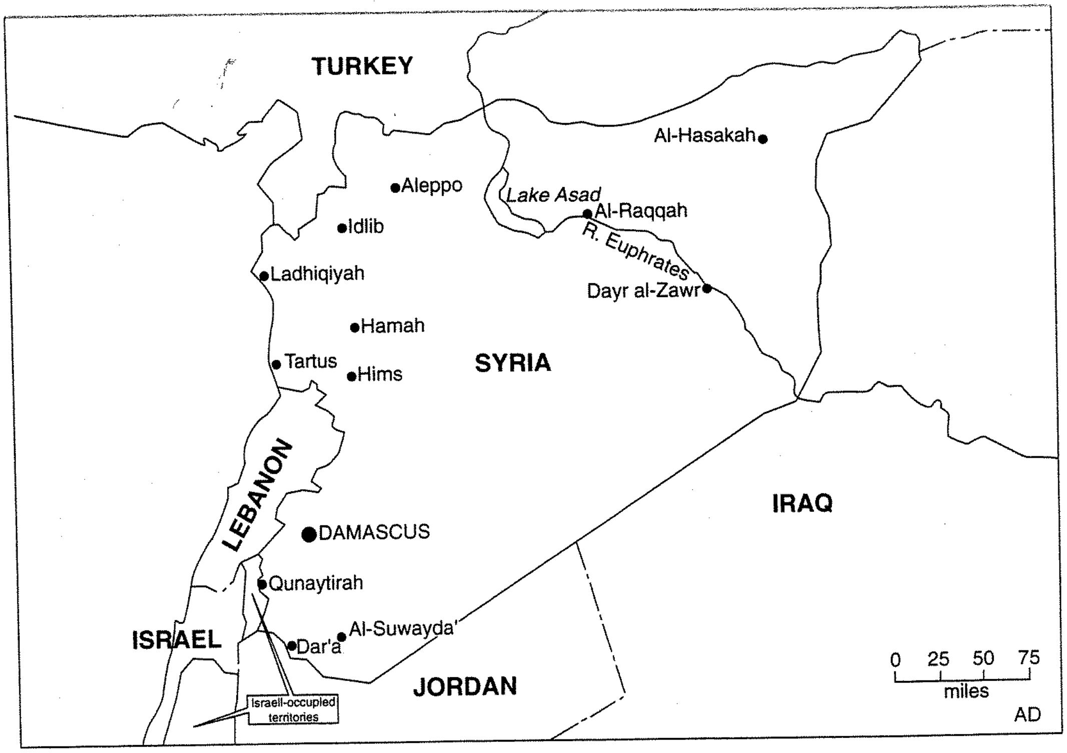
Taking sole power in 1970, Asad thereafter created a stable state, turned Syria from a victim of stronger forces into a respected regional player, and conducted a tenacious struggle to contain Israeli dominance in the Middle East. Unlike Sadat, who abandoned Arab rights, and Saddam who squandered his country's bright future in reckless adventures, Asad was rightly admired by many as the one Arab leader to combine nationalist principle with a realistic strategic vision.

But this was achieved at significant economic cost and with the sacrifice of political freedoms. Asad's personalisation of power enervated all political institutions. Nothing more strikingly signals the failure of Syria's political modernisation than the seeming transformation of a radical republic into a new dynasty; this Asad engineered. If the result is the continued stability of a fragmented society, many Syrians will consider the price to have been a reasonable one. But Asad leaves his son and successor Bashar al-Asad formidable challenges: to bring the economy into the modern world and to satisfy the desires of the younger generation for a better, freer and more peaceful life. Asad failed, as well, to reach the honourable peace in the pursuit of which he mortgaged Syria's future; it is up to his successors to do so without sacrificing the standards for an honourable settlement which he established.

It is this story, the saga of modern Syria, of which Hafiz al-Asad was both a typical product and a major shaper, which the following pages will tell.

GLOSSARY

ABSP	Arab Ba'th Socialist Party
asabiya	Group solidarity, based on kinship or a religious cause
ASP	Arab Socialist Party
ayan	Notables, normally land owning, possibly holding public office and enjoying local prestige
bilad ash-sham	Geographic Syria, including contemporary Jordan, Israel and Lebanon
comprador	Commerical middlemen, usually importer-exporters, between the "core" developed economies and "peripheral" less-developed countries
ha	Hectare, equivilant to 2.47 acres
ikhwan	Muslim Brotherhood
infisal	Separatist regime in Syria after the UAR (1961–63)
ISI	Import Substitute Industrialisation, the early stage of light to medium industrialisation aiming to domestically manufacture commodities formerly imported from the developed states
jama'a	Group, referring to Asad's personal faction
Jazirah	Eastern grain-growing area roughly corresponding to the province of Hasakeh
mukhabarat	Secret police or intelligence service
NDP	Net Domestic Product
PA	Populist Authoritarianism, authoritarian regime seeking mass support against the old oligarchy
qaumi	National, referring in Ba'thi parlance to anything pertaining to the wider Arab nation
qutri	Regional, referring in Ba'thi parlance to Syria, a "region" of the Arab nation
qutriyun	"Regionalists," referring to Ba'thi militants from the provinces whose political ambitions focused on Syria rather than Pan-Arab union
SAR	Syrian Arab Republic
shari'a	Muslim law
shura	In Islamic parlance, consultation of the ruler with qualified advisors and representatives of the people
S.P.	Syrian pound, worth about 45 to the $US in the 1990s
suq	The traditional urban market
ulama	Collective term for Muslim religious scholars and jurists
umma	The Islamic community or polity
zakat	Making charitable contributions, a pillar of Islamic duty


TURKEY
Al-Hasakah
Aleppo
Lake Asad
Al-Raqqah
Idlib
R. Euphrates
Ladhiqiyah
Dayr al-Zawr
Hamah
Tartus
Hims
SYRIA
LEBANON
IRAQ
DAMASCUS
Qunaytirah
ISRAEL
Al-Suwayda'
Dar'a
JORDAN
0 25 50 75
miles
Israeli-occupied territories
AD

Map of Syria

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUALISING THE SYRIAN BA'TH STATE

The theme of this study is the nature and development of the Syrian state, chiefly as it has emerged over nearly four decades of military-Ba'thist rule. The Ba'th party was by no means Syria's only important political force but it left the most profound imprint on modern Syria. Indeed, the Ba'th's half century history has paralleled the history of modern Syria itself. The Ba'th created a regime which proved remarkably enduring. It confounded observers who expected its collapse or transformation from the Nasserist opposition of the sixties, the Islamic uprising of the late seventies, from the economic stagnation of the eighties, from the end of the Cold War's Soviet aid and protection, and from economic globalization and democratisation. Moreover, this regime is arguably strong: it carried out a substantial revolution from above in the 1960s and since the 1970s its economic and foreign policies have retained a remarkable consistency in spite of substantial changes in its domestic and international environments.

There is considerable controversy over how the Syrian Ba'th regime may best be conceptualised, perhaps reflective of its complex nature. The Ba'th came to power by a military coup and the army is a central pillar of the regime, but it is an "army-party symbiosis," not mere military rule (Rabinovich 1972). The Alawi minority sect has dominated it, but it is not simply a minority regime and incorporates a cross-sectarian coalition (Van Dam 1981). At its centre is the personal dictatorship of Hafiz al-Asad, but his power rests on complex institutions (Perthes 1995). It has been described as a regime of the state bourgeoisie (Perthes 1995), but it also rose out of and incorporates a significant village base (Van Dusen 1975). Thus, no single one of the typical explanations of the regime – army, sect, class – adequately captures its complex multi-sided nature.

The Ba'th regime is, however, by no means wholly unique and indeed, it may best be understood as a version of the dominant form of state in the Middle East, the prototypes of which were the region's most successful and imitated state building experiments, Ataturk's Turkey and Nasser's Egypt. This regime type may perhaps best be labelled "populist authoritarianism" (Hinnebusch 1990: 1–3; Ayubi 1992;

Ayubi 1995: 196–223). Populist authoritarian (PA) regimes embody a post-decolonization state-building strategy adopted by nationalist elites which face simultaneous external threat and internal instability. These regimes, artefacts of the early stages of state building, led and supported by elements of the small middle class, and initially based primarily on command of the military and bureaucracy, face the challenge of winning legitimation for their power among the mass public. New entrants to the international system at the bottom of the world power hierarchy and on the "periphery" of the world capitalist system, they also seek to consolidate independence through state led "defensive modernisation" based on import substitute industrialisation in the virtual absence of an industrial bourgeoisie (Hudson 1977; Ayoub 1995).

This state building project is seen to require, in Trimberger's (1978) words, a "revolution from above." Such a revolution effects a major transformation in elites, political institutions and social structure but is initiated from above by "reform coup" and without the mass violence and insurrection from below typical of great revolutions. Insofar as the PA regime uses its concentrated power chiefly to attack the old dominant classes while seeking legitimacy through egalitarian ideology and the political incorporation of middle and lower strata, it is arguably "populist," that is, an "authoritarianism of the left" which challenges rather than defends the traditional, privileged status quo. But PA regimes neither necessarily remain popular or representative of popular interests; indeed they suffer from a built-in contradiction between their attempt to mobilize yet control popular participation. Whatever their limitations, however, such revolutions from above have been the main vehicles of socio-political change in the Arab world where both mass revolution from below and evolutionary democratic reform have been rare.

I. EXPLAINING THE RISE OF POPULIST AUTHORITARIANISM

What the Ba'th called its "Eighth of March Revolution" (thawrat ath-thamin min athar) is sometimes viewed as a mere military coup or sectarian power seizure, but it was substantially more than these. Indeed, the Ba'th's rise to power had features of what Walton (1984) calls "national revolts" from below, that is, social movements which have many of the ingredients of "great revolutions," albeit less explosively combined. In the Syrian case, a radical coup grew out of an anti-oligarchy alliance of a radicalised lower middle class, including strategic elements of the officer corps, with marginalized minorities and a significant proportion of the peasantry mobilised by agrarian conflict. Such an alliance depends on certain ingredients, adumbrated below, which arguably came together in the Syrian case.

1. International Context: Imperialism and nationalism: The rise of radical regimes in the Third world is a function of nationalist struggle against imperialism and the more damaging the impact of imperialism or prolonged the nationalist struggle, the more nationalism is radicalised, as was arguably so of Syria. The external imposition of state boundaries which fragmented historic Syria and corresponded to no popular identity, combined with the creation of Israel on a part of this territory, generated powerful supra-state irredentist ideologies – Pan-Arabism, Pan-Syrianism and Pan-Islam – with enduring revisionist claims. National and social conflict became inter-linked as the traditional elite's association with imperialism destroyed its legitimacy. Moreover, as the national struggle mobilised and incorporated ever more plebeian elements, nationalist leaders proposed ever more radical social solutions to the national problem; in particular, it was their combination of nationalist ideology and struggle for land reform that nationally mobilised Syrian peasants which, in turn, ensured the national revolution would also be a social revolution.

2. The New Middle Class: The rise of authoritarian-populist states is an artefact of a particular, fairly early, stage of development and class formation. A landed oligarchy dominates the chiefly agrarian bases of national wealth while a small rising bourgeoisie has launched early capitalist development, sharpening the substantial existing class inequalities. Capitalist and bureaucratic growth, coming in cycles, creates a growing salaried and/or small-property-owning "new middle class" but, periodically faltering, frustrates its expectations; the oligarchy also obstructs its political ambitions. PA regimes are normally, first of all, vehicles of a "new middle class" radicalised by the perceived incompatibility between the oligarchic order and the satisfaction of its demands for modern careers and a share of power (Halpern 1963: 51–78; Huntington 1968: 39–59). This was so of Syria.

3. The military: Army officers are normally elitist and conservative, but may be radicalised if: a) radical reform is seen to be essential to the "defensive modernisation" needed to cope with external threats, and b) the military is autonomous of the dominant class, being recruited from the lower middle class and/or marginal ethnic groups, or from the rural hinterland. All of these conditions held in Syria (Wolpin 9–26, 114–116; 1963: 251–280; Trimberger; Huntington 1962; 1968: 192–237; Halpern 1963: 251–280).

4. **Minorities:** Where, as in Syria, low class status is associated with certain deprived minorities, that is, where class and communal cleavages overlap, not only will conflict be particularly intense, but deprived communal groups may view class revolution as the solution to their particular deprivations. In addition, the unevenness of mobilisation of different communal groups due to such accidents as geographical location, population pressure and access to education, often results in the disproportionate representation of radicalised minorities in national or class-based populist movements. This was so of Syria, where the main peripheral minorities, the Druze, Ismaʿilis and above all the Alawis, embraced the most radical versions of Arab nationalism as a way both of integrating into the national community on an equal basis and contesting the power of the dominant Sunni elite.

5. **The Peasantry:** Huntington (1968: 292) points out that middle class radicalism merely produces instability and that it takes a middle class-peasant alliance to produce durable radical change. However, peasants are only available for political mobilisation when radicalised by intense land hunger and when the landlord class lacks a leadership role in the village (Moore 1966; Anderson 1974). Syria's historically sharp gaps between urban-based landed magnates and the village, combined with the agrarian crisis arising from capitalist penetration and land concentration, radicalised important sections of the Syrian peasantry. Localised peasant movements, combined with the recruitment of peasant youth from the most mobilised regions into the Ba'th party and army, prepared the way for the Ba'th coup and thereafter the Ba'th's mobilisation of a broader rural base from above.

II. STATE FORMATION UNDER BA'THIST AUTHORITARIANISM

If populist revolt is to succeed, it must be institutionalised in a state. A paradigm for understanding how authority in PA regimes is established and evolves can be derived from various models in the literature. In Ibn Khaldun's Middle East-specific paradigm a new state is founded by a movement from the periphery fired by a vision of radical change which seizes the "city" – i.e., existing bureaucratic chains of command. This corresponds to Max Weber's authority type in which the charismatic leader of an ideological movement aims to launch revolutionary social

change. Huntington (1968: 140–47) disaggregates the rise of new authority into two phases, arguing that its success requires that the seizure and *concentration* of power at the centre be accompanied or followed by the *expansion* of power. This requires the revolutionary leaders create political organisations, notably an ideological party, to mobilize new participants whose activism expands the political energy at the regime's disposal. Finally, the consolidation of new power requires, according to Weber, that it be "routinized" in stable institutions, but this may take two quite opposite forms. Power may be *diffused* through legal-rational institutions based on consent and the satisfaction of (largely economic) interests; alternatively, it may be routinized in personal patrimonial authority in which case state power capabilities actually *contract* (Weber 1964: 363–373). The Syrian case largely replicates this "life cycle:" power was concentrated through an ideological movement and a revolution from above, expanded through party-building, and consolidated through patrimonialization, at the cost of a later contraction in power.

A. Building new power

1. **Power Concentration: Sect and the Regime Core:** The attempt of the Ba'th regime to concentrate power in a new state centre based on ideology and collective party institutions (a mix of charismatic-ideological and legal-rational authority) was obstructed by the factionalism of the new elite, reflective of Syria's fragmented society. Contenders in intra-regime power struggles, even when turning on ideological issues, made use of *asabiya* – kinship and sectarian solidarity – and Alawis, by virtue of their disproportionate recruitment, were best positioned to succeed. The centre was stabilised only when one faction finally won out and its leader, Hafiz al-Asad, established patrimonial authority. Although Asad forged a cross-sectarian coalition, at its core were loyal followers from his Alawi sect. This personal authority was then semi-institutionalised in an office – partly bureaucratic, partly patrimonial: a virtual "Presidential Monarchy." Arguably, this outcome was compatible with the political culture transmitted from Syria's patrimonial past.

2. **Power concentration: the military pillar of power:** The Ba'th regime used coercion to establish power against the resistance of the majority of the political class, not only the oligarchy but the urban middle class as well. This required reliable instruments of coercion, including the "mukhabarat" (secret police), but above all the transformation of the military into a reliable regime pillar.

In fragmented societies, the army is often the most organised, national-oriented social force with the largest stake in the state and the best equipped to impose order. But whether the military acts to concentrate power or, reflecting society's fragmentation, dissipates it through praetorian coups and counter-coups, depends on its incorporation into a system of authority. The Ba'th attempted to make the military an instrument of the ruling party through ideological Ba'thization (the Leninist model) but this only infected the army with the party's ideological rivalries. It took the "Ataturk option," the authority of a dominant military politician – Asad – to contain, albeit not eliminate, military praetorianism: a huge military establishment became the shield of the regime while personally loyal Alawi guard units became key power brokers.

3. **Power expansion: the party:** As a seminal volume on the Arab state (Dawisha and Zartman 1988) suggests, understanding the durability of Arab regimes requires that analysis go "Beyond Coercion" which alone is never enough to ensure stability: government can never directly coerce more than a minority; the ability to coerce depends on the always problematic loyalty of followers, and coercion can only concentrate, not expand power; the weak state captured by the Ba'th had so little power and urban centred opposition had such effective means of resistance that regime survival required power expansion, that is, bringing in new participants through regime institutions.

If the military is crucial to the concentration and defence of power in PA regimes, the single or dominant party is the key to the mass incorporation on which power expansion depends. According to Perlmutter (1981: 2–5), such a political infrastructure is the chief feature distinguishing modern from traditional authoritarianism. Huntington argues that the Leninist party, with its core of ideological militants and mass auxiliaries penetrating society, is uniquely capable of both concentrating power and expanding it (Huntington 1968: 334–343; 1974).

But is authoritarian single party rule compatible with political participation? It is certainly not compatible with fully inclusive participation but it can, arguably, accommodate limited participation. In fact, authoritarian regimes are normally a function of a split society in which one coalition of social forces imposes its rule on another: while the more common "bureaucratic-authoritarian" (BA) regimes of Latin America aimed to politically exclude the masses in order to impose capitalist development favouring the dominant classes, PA regimes invert this, excluding the dominant classes while seeking to mobilize and incorporate a counter-vailing mass constituency (Waterbury 1983: 6–11; Ayubi 1992: 98–101; Huntington 1968: 344–396).

This "mobilised participation" is crucial for the consolidation of PA regimes, but it may also make a difference for policy outcomes as well: arguably, the more the seizure of power is preceded, accompanied, or followed by social conflict and political mobilisation, the more the ruling revolutionary party will incorporate true activism, and the more enduring its populist orientation will be as its constituents become a constraint on dilution of the radical ideology and egalitarian policies initially used to mobilize them (Huntington 1974; Huntington and Nelson 1976: 7–10; Nelson 1987; Skocpol 1979). In the Syrian case, the Ba'th came to power by coup, not mass mobilisation, but a prior decade of social crisis and anti-oligarchy party activism meant the coup was a delayed outcome of prior political mobilisation which the regime subsequently reactivated and incorporated through the party and its associated corporatist structures.

B. The political economy of power consolidation

Weber argues that, as ideology inevitably declines, regimes must consolidate power through economic rewards to followers. PA regimes initially do so through re-stratification, the demolition of old distributions of wealth and the state creation of new ones (Apter 1965: 123–133). The state levels the dominant classes, the most independent social forces; control of the public sector and land reform allows it to redistribute resources and opportunity, and thereby foster upward mobility for its constituency while making mass society state-dependent.

The consolidation of PA regimes in the Middle East cannot, however, be detached from war, war preparation and the state's position in the international system. In the Syrian case, the insecurity stimulated by the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the defeat in 1967, legitimated the creation of an authoritarian national security state. On the other hand, the resources for this project partly derived from Syria's exploitation of Cold War rivalries which allowed it to access Soviet protection, arms and development aid. Moreover, the oil price explosion in the seventies and Syria's status as a "front line state" with Israel allowed it to extract oil rent from regional donors. This transformed Syria into a partial or indirect rentier state, with some of its new rent deployed as patronage needed to satisfy the regime's constituency once redistribution was exhausted (Beblawi & Luciani 1987; Leca 1988).

The patrimonialization of the regime centre, combined with the fluidization of the social structure and the new rentierism permitted the consolidation of a "Bonapartist" regime – one led by a dominant patrimonial leader who uses the bureaucratic and distributory command posts of the state to balance and arbitrate between levelled old and rising new social forces. As the regime's autonomy of society is thereby enhanced, its orientation alters: defence of state interests – its legitimacy, capabilities, and resource base – is put above responsiveness to the regime's initial popular constituents. Intra-regime politics becomes bureaucratic rivalry over jurisdictions, resources, and incremental policy change while in society class conflict is displaced by individual and group competition for access to state patronage.

C. *Power contraction: patrimonialization, rebellion and the retreat of the state*

Consolidation of PA regimes in the Middle East has typically been associated more with patrimonialization than the legal-rational diffusion of power. For their under-investment in institution-building, such regimes typically attempt to substitute legitimation through supra-state ideology (Pan-Arab or Islamic) and reliance on sub-state *asabiya*. Given the great strength of supra- and sub-state loyalties relative to the weakness of identification with the state in the Middle East, this is perhaps inevitable. But the weakness of institutions means, particularly as ideology is exhausted, a contraction of the state's power to drive change.

There are various ingredients in this decline. First, PA's built-in contradiction between the incorporation of new social forces and the authoritarian compulsion to control them eventually results in such low tolerance of activism that the regime forfeits the "political energy" of its own followers; it also sacrifices the potential of party institutions to check the tendency of power elites to treat the state as their private patrimony. At the same time, to the very extent regime consolidation ends the class conflict with the old oligarchy, the regime loses the functional substitute for competitive politics which hitherto kept it responsive to the masses. Moreover, as formerly radical elites, using power to get wealth, are embourgeoised, they lose their radical ideological commitments and turn into a "state bourgeoisie" receptive to the use of wealth by privileged groups to buy political influence at the expense of their plebeian constituency. Finally, as the state is patrimonialized, the power of the regime to get things done, in particular to drive social change from above, melts away. All these tendencies were quickly apparent under Asad.

The descent into patrimonialization and embourgeoisment generates two consequences which result in a substantial alteration in state-society relations. First, political Islam becomes an ideology of protest – even rebellion – which goes well beyond resistance by the old oligarchy to populist reforms and spreads to the much wider groups frozen out of state patronage networks or damaged by state intrusions in the market, notably educated unemployed youth and the commercial petite bourgeoisie. At the same time, patrimonialization, in enervating the state's economic capabilities, forces an economic liberalisation which revitalises bourgeois factions not readily controlled by the state.

The PA regime may counter these threats to its power either by repression or by appeasing the opposition through limited liberalisation. Its precise strategy depends on the balance of threat and opportunity it faces: specifically, while economic liberalisation pushes the regime to appease the bourgeoisie through some parallel political liberalisation, Islamic rebellion deters it from any relaxation of control. In the Syrian case, the dimensions of the Islamic challenge precipitated massive repression which deadened political life; yet thereafter, the regime, having eradicated all opposition, was positioned to concede a modest political decompression which appeased the bourgeoisie and substituted for serious democratisation. But power was barely diffused and the bourgeoisie remained too weak, divided or state-dependent to check the state or demand further political liberalisation (Ehteshami and Murphy 1996). However, the decline in the capabilities of a regime facing a more mobilised, complex society shifted the state-society balance of power against it. Thus, a regime which once had the power to enforce revolution from above could now, at best, manage incremental policy change.

III. REGIME CONSEQUENCES: CAPABILITIES AND POLICY OUTCOMES

The authoritarian-populist regime ostensibly aims to carry out a revolution from above and establish a strong state able to hold its own in the international arena. In the early phases of the Ba'th regime, class-shaped populist ideology animated plebeian elites who concentrated the power to impose major social reforms against vested interests. Nationalizations and land reform broke the power of the oligarchy and initiated a levelling social revolution. The outcome certainly qualifies as a revolution from above. But the aims of the revolution were only realised at significant cost and the political energy to impose it was soon exhausted. The very techniques used to build power – patrimonialism, militarism and populism – enervated the economic base of the state while the expansion of its functions outran its implementation capacity.

A. Agrarian revolution from above

The main test of a revolutionary regime which rose out of the village was arguably its ability to implement land reform, a notoriously difficult challenge which few regimes get right. The outcome of the Syrian Ba'th's efforts is a matter of some controversy. Some have insisted either that the chief beneficiaries were the rural middle landowners (Perthes 1995: 80–94) or that rural change was imposed on peasants by an unresponsive bureaucracy (Hannoyer 1985). While such side effects did distort the regime's attempted rural revolution, my evidence (Hinnebusch 1989) and case studies by Metral (1980, 1984) and Khalif (1981) show that land reform was implemented with only a temporary cost in production and that small and middle peasants benefited from substantial land re-distribution and state support. The primary political consequence was the incorporation of the peasantry into the regime, giving the PA state a rural base, analogous to, but quite different from, the alliance with the landlord class typical of BA regimes.

B. "Neo-mercantilism:" The political-economy of etatist-populist development

PA regimes claimed to follow a third way to economic development, neither capitalist or communist. By contrast, Marxist critics insisted that they followed a state capitalist strategy, substituting for and aiming to create a national capitalist class and engineer a transition from "feudalism" to capitalism. Neo-liberal critics, on the other hand, believed PA regimes merely generated rent-seeking forces obstructing capitalist development.

Evidence can be adduced for both such contrary and possibly unintended *outcomes* of the PA strategy, but its *initial logic* is better captured by the concept of "neo-mercantilism" (Apter 1965: 408–16). A neo-mercantilist state fosters economic development, not just as an end in itself, but as essential to the creation of *state power*. Neo-mercantilism is essentially a strategy of "defensive modernisation" which aims to counter security threats while diluting the economic dependency which is believed to constrain an independent foreign policy in post-colonial states. As such, the economic logic of *capital* accumulation (maximised in the capitalist paradigm) is, under neo-mercantilism, subordinated to the political logic of *power* accumulation – that is, creating the bureaucratic instruments of power, winning support through patronage and populism, and acquiring military capabilities.

Yet, such regimes are not wholly inimical to either economic development or capitalist forces. Import-substitute industrialisation is seen as essential to create the economic base of national power and may be pursued with enough success to leave a permanent deepening of economic development, despite much sacrifice of short term economic rationality (M. Chatelus and Y. Schemeil 1984; Waterbury 1983: 3–21). Moreover, unlike communist states, PA states tolerate, even foster a state-dependent capitalist class; although they also constrain it and their re-distributive reforms retard private capital accumulation, the private sector persists as an alternative engine of development which may subsequently be reactivated. Thus, PA strategies are, indeed, a "third way."

PA has, however, built-in vulnerabilities which make it a necessarily transitional strategy which is gradually exhausted. Bureaucratic over-development, populist distribution, corruption and military spending generate a crisis of capital accumulation while the vulnerabilities of import-substitute industrialisation result in trade imbalances and debt. Continued neo-mercantilism depends on acquisition to rent, whether from oil or geopolitically motivated foreign aid. Periods of rent boom, however, only further the over-development of the state, making it more vulnerable to economic crisis in times of rent contraction (e.g. decline of oil prices). Inevitably, once the exhausted state can no longer drive growth or provide spoils, it must start to "retreat" from its multiple economic functions.

Meanwhile, neo-mercantilism fosters a new bourgeoisie at the heart of the state while permitting politically-connected elements of the private bourgeoisie to thrive. As the state's resources are exhausted, the state bourgeoisie begins looking for investment outlets for its (often illicitly accumulated) capital through partnerships with private and even foreign capital (Ehteshami and Murphy 1996; Waterbury 1992). This generates scenarios for economic *infitah*: revival of the private sector and an opening to the world market. Economic liberalisation, in turn, fosters further détente, even a certain amalgamation, between the state elite and both the new state-dependent private bourgeoisie and the remnants of the old oligarchy, thereby altering the social base of the state.

This has certain political consequences. It is accompanied by an opening of corporatist access to decision-makers for the bourgeoisie while, at the same time, corporatist structures are used to contain protest at the austerity and economic reforms which shrink popular welfare and labour rights. On the other hand, a full restoration of capitalism is obstructed under Middle East PA by the rent seeking behaviour of neo-patrimonial elites; by the preservation of enough popular rights to protect the regime's social base which deters investors; by the reluctance of the state elite to share power with the bourgeoisie, a historical enemy; and because of the discouragement of private investment by war or instability. In Syria's case, this was compounded by sectarian obstacles to the amalgamation of the state and private bourgeoisies and nationalist obstacles to the Westward foreign policy re-alignment required to elicit major foreign investment. In addition, since partial economic liberalisation often initially results in import booms and debt rather than much increased private investment, the state will be reluctant to wholly abandon its economic functions to the private market.

As a result, the seemingly strong authoritarian state is reduced to incrementalism, its policy caught between persisting statism and half-way economic liberalisation. Its policy autonomy is curbed by the contradictory interests (bureaucratic, bourgeois, popular) it needs to satisfy which, in turn, obstructs the reforms needed to reinvigorate state capabilities and the economy. Two outcomes can break the stalemate. One is the maturation of a BA state-bourgeoisie alliance to exclude the masses in the interest of capitalist development through full re-incorporation into the world capitalist market. Alternatively, the formation of a democratic coalition between liberal wings of the state elite and the bourgeoisie with surviving elements of civil society could push toward democratisation in which all strata would acquire greater freedom to fight for a equitable distribution of capitalism's burdens and benefits in the post-populist order. In the Syrian case none of these alliances has matured.

C. State formation and foreign policy-making

The construction of the Ba'th state under Asad ostensibly aimed at forging a regime capable of carrying on the struggle with Israel; as such, state formation was a function of the external threat stressed by the "realist" school of international politics. However, an influential alternative view holds that in third world states foreign policy is shaped by domestic instability. Indeed, according to Steven David (1991), the anarchic struggle for power is less in evidence externally – as most Third World states lack the military capability to threaten each other – than internally where regimes lacking legitimacy, institutions, and secure identity are frequently threatened by rebellion. Foreign policy, in the absence of real capabilities, is thus largely anti-imperialist rhetoric and the exaggeration of external threats to win domestic support (Calvert 1986; Dawisha 1988). In the Syrian case, Daniel Pipes (1990: 115–193) argues that Asad's nationalist foreign policy was meant to divert attention from repressive minority rule at home.

While Syrian foreign policy was, indeed, long a function of domestic instability, Syria also faced – contra David and Pipes – intense and actual, not invented, external threats. These threats motivated and legitimated a drive for state strengthening from which, after 1970, the state attained the cohesion, autonomy of domestic forces, and power capabilities to concentrate on and cope with external threats, much like a realist "rational actor." Thus, two prominent studies of Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad apply versions of the realist model, depicting him as an astute "Sphinx of Damascus" (Ma'oz 1988) engaged in a "struggle for the Middle East" (Seale 1988).

Even in such a consolidated authoritarian regime, however, foreign policy is not as insulated from domestic politics as realism implies: since precarious legitimacy remains rooted in nationalism, domestic stability depends in good part on foreign policy successes. Syria's relatively greater success in the struggle with Israel under Asad goes a long way toward explaining the greater stability of his regime.

IV. PLAN OF THE BOOK

The following study will examines three dimensions of politics in modern Syria: 1) political change is examined in chapters two and three which show how the instability of the post-independence period opened the door to the Ba'th's revolution; 2) the consolidation of power in the Ba'thist state and the resulting state-society relations is assessed in chapters four and five; and 3) the outcomes of power, that is, the impact of Ba'thist policy on Syria's socio-economic development and foreign policy performance is analysed in chapters six and seven.