

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE NATURE OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIME IN SYRIA**

#### **A. THE STRUCTURE OF SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND ITS SOCIETY**

It's truly important to understand the structure of Syrian government because the root of the problem is started from it. Syrian government is a adopting a republic governmental system but in practice it implement the authoritarian government due to the centralized system with a very limited degree of public accountability.

##### **A.1. the Constitution**

Based on Syrian Constitution of 1973, and as amended in 1984, provides for a republic a government which consists of the president, three vice presidents (currently there are two) is appointed by the president, the cabinet, and a 250-member legislature elected by the citizen's countries today including women. The President nominated by the decision-making branch of the ruling Ba'th Party, which was approved by the legislature, and propose to the voters in a referendum. In practice, power is concentrated in the president's office. Prime Minister usually deals with routine administrative and economic policy, but on sensitive issues such as defense and foreign affairs is exclusively the domain presidency. The U.S. State Department describes Syria as "a republic under a military regime with almost absolute authority in the hands of the President," and goes on to say that

although their rights to vote, citizens "do not have the right to change their government."<sup>25</sup>

## **A.2. The Branches of the Government**

In the executive branch, the president is approved by the popular referendum for a period of seven years. According to the constitution, a candidate must be an Arab Muslim Syria, proposed by the Baath Party, and nominated by the legislature. The Constitution was amended in June 2000 to reduce the mandatory minimum age of 40-34 to make the president Hafiz al Asad son, Bashar, to be eligible for nomination. The President can be removed from power only in terms of committing high treason. He is the head of state and the head of government as well as executive commander of the armed forces. He has the right to choose the vice president for three (today is two), also has a right to point and reject the prime minister, deputy prime minister and other members of the Board Ministers (cabinet), as well as military officers. The Council of Ministers serves collectively as the executive and the presidential state administration. The president holds the right to dissolve parliament. And the most presidential prerogatives are declaring war and state emergency, issuing law to be ratified by the people's council, declaring amnesty, and approving five years economic plans.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices — 2003, Syria* Feb. 25, 2004

<sup>26</sup> Library of Congress — Federal Reserve, *Country Profile: Syria*, April 2005 p: 16

Legislative branch consists of 250-seats unicameral people council. Members are elected by direct popular vote on the basis of single-member electoral district for four years. Half of seats in the House of Representatives are reserved for the Baath Party. Council sat in three regular sessions each year, but can be called into special session. In theory, the function council includes the nomination of presidential candidates, the rule of law, the discussion of government policies, approval of the general budget and development plan, and the agreement ratification. In practice, however, the legislature does not have independent authority, because the executive branch effectively control the legislative process.<sup>27</sup>

Judicial branch consists of three levels of courts: courts of first instance (trial judge, Summary justice, peace court), the appeals court (one per province), and the Court of Cassation in Damascus, which serves as the highest court of appeal with the authority to resolve both judicial and jurisdictional issues. High Judicial Council chaired by the President and composed of senior civil judges, appoint, transfer and dismiss judges. The Special Court is outside the basic three-tiered structure. State security court, topped by the State Security Court, to hear cases related to national security. In this trial, judgment is not subject to appeal, the president must approve the verdict, and the court bound by the same procedure as the jurisdiction of the regular courts.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*,

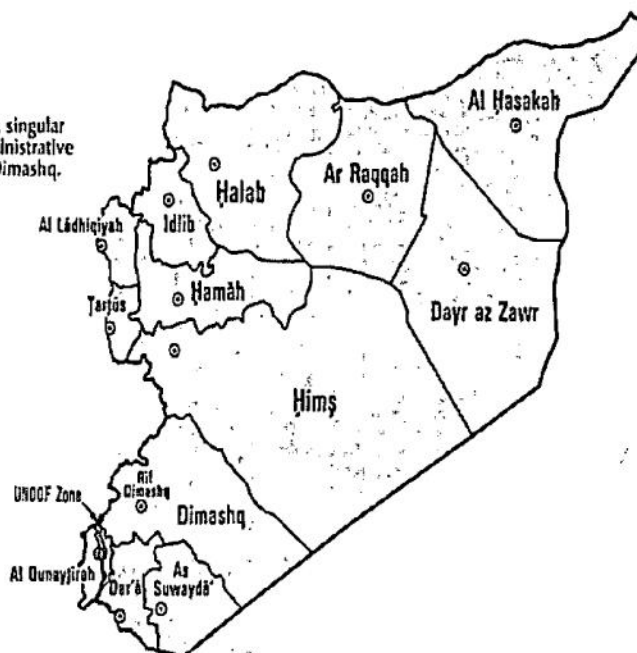
### A.3. Administrative Divisions, Provincial and Local Government

Syria has 14 provinces muhafazat Halab, Dimashq, Dar'a, Rif Dimashq, Dayr az Zawr, Hamah, Al Hasakah, Hims, Idlib, Al Ladhqiyyah, Al Qunaytirah (includes the Golan Heights), Ar Raqqa, As Suwayda, and Tartus. Syrian maps also include the Turkish province of Hatay (Iskenderun). Damascus (Dimashq), Syria's capital, was designated as a province in 1987.<sup>29</sup> Below is the Syria Administrative division:<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 1: The Syrian Administrative Divisions**

#### Administrative Divisions

Syria has 14 provinces (*muhāfazat*, singular *muhāfazah*). Damascus is the administrative capital of both Dimashq and Rif Dimashq.



Source: [www.eia.doe.go](http://www.eia.doe.go)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p:18

<sup>30</sup> Retrieved from, <http://www.syriatoday.ca/2-administrative-divisions-map.htm>. on October, 30 2012

#### **A.4. Political Parties**

Syria is essentially a one-party state, dominated by the Arab Socialist Resurrection (Baath) Party. The umbrella of the National Progressive Front (NPF) includes the Baath and eight (increased from the original six) its allies, so it looks like a multi-party system. NPF has little power independent of Baath Party.

Baath Party is an institution integrated with the structure of the Syrian government. Baath party members are in key positions to control the executive and legislative branches of Syria government. Baath Party is dominated by the military, controlling most of the economic resources. Every four years, the branches of the party have to choose a representative to the Congress party, who then elect the members of the party; Central Committee has 90 members, and the Regional Command has 21 members. Regional Command is the highest body of the party in Syria. Presidential Candidates must obtain approval from the Area Command before it was nominated to run for office. The party is headed by a Secretary General, a position which led by Hafiz al-Asad and his son as his successor.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Library of Congress – Federal Reserve, *Country Profile: Syria*, April 2005 p: 18

#### **A.5. Development of the Asad Regime and its Pillar**

The death of Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad in June 10, 2000 removed one of the longest head of the state in the Middle East and the important figures in the regional affairs. The last President Asad, is a former of air force commander and defense minister, he came to power in a bloodless coup in November 1970, and was elected repeatedly over the next seven years through a referendum, most recently in 1999. The late President is running uncontested authority because of his personal prestige, his control over the army and some other power center, its success is also can be seen in the use of regional development that brings benefits to Syria. The elder Asad seems to have done much to open up the remained authoritarian regime.<sup>32</sup>

In order to support the Asad regime, there are actually three important pillars that play the great role in its succession. The first pillar is the Allawite sects. Alawite religious sect, who evolved from the Shia sect of Islam constitutes about 12% of the Syrian population. Formerly the most economically and socially disadvantaged in Syria, the Alawites rose rapidly in the ranks of the military establishment and the Ba'th Party in 1960s and have dominated political life in Syria since then. The Alawite as a whole, and the Asad family in particular, is forming the important basic for the late President Hafiz al-Asad, and at least very

---

<sup>32</sup> Alasdair Drysdale, and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 1991, pp. 39 – 40

influential for his son and successor for the time being. Although committed to maintaining the excellence Alawite community, the Asads has tried with some success to co-opt support from other sects, in fact, some of senior position held by the other sects including Prime Minister chaired by members of the Sunni Muslim as a majority. However, the most important position, particularly in the security institutions, remained in the hands of Alawite.<sup>33</sup>

The second important pillar for the As'ad regime is the Ba'ath Party. The, pan-Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, came to power in Syria in 1963., With about 2 million members, it is the senior partner in a multi-party coalition called by National Progressive Front, which won 167 of 250 seats in the 1998 elections and again in 2002 on the Syrian parliamentary elections, a consultative body with little effective power. Although the Syrian constitution is determining role for Ba'th party and providing the regime with political legitimacy, Ba'th party is more than instrument for the execution policy rather than the originator of it. Although many do not Ba'athists Alawi, but there is a complex synergistic relationship between the parties and the public. The party's top decision-making body, known as the "Regional Command," sits at the top of Syria's policy-making process and membership in this body is a stepping stone to the top positions in Syria. In June 2000, when senior Syrian Officials were orchestrating the succession of Bashar al-Asad to the Presidency after the death of his father, one of their first steps was to

---

<sup>33</sup> Van Dam, Nikolaos, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*. New York, St Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. 118 -

arrange for Assad to be elected Secretary General of the Regional Command, replacing his late father.<sup>34</sup>

The third essential pillar of the As'ad regime is the military and security establishment. The role of the armed forces and the national security service has been prominent in the Syrian regime and preceded by several years of formation Ba'thist regime. Factionalism within armed forces is the main cause of instability in Syria in the past, such as the military gang fighting for power. This situation changed abruptly after 1970 when the old Asad gained no doubt supremacy over the military and security forces. The President finally appointed supporters, mainly from the Alawite sect as the key of military positions and intelligence posts, thus creating reliable military elite to help keeping the Asad regime in power. President Bashar al-Asad actually does not have any deep connections to the Syrian armed forces like his father. Because of his older brother Basil death, Bashar returned from advanced medical studies in London to Damascus in 1994 fulfilling the President Asad's request and held several military positions, notably as commander of the Presidential Guards with the rank of colonel.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Scott Wilson, "Syria's Ba'thists Under Siege," Washington Post Sept, 24, 2012

<sup>35</sup> Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*. London, I. B. Tauris, 1996, p. 142.



## B. THE SYRIAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

### B.1. the Main Economic Sources

There are basically three elements of Syrian economic sources, the energy, industry and the agricultural factor. Syria has 2.5 billion barrels of oil reserves as of January 1, 2011, according to Oil and Gas Journal. Syria's known oil reserves, especially in the eastern part of the country near the border with Iraq and along the Euphrates River, a number of smaller fields located in the center of the country. Since peaking at 582,000 bbl / d in 1996, Syrian crude oil production (including lease condensate) expected to decline to 387,000 bbl / d in 2010. Heavy oil accounts for about 60 percent of Syria's oil production. The Largest and most mature fields are Al-Furat Jbessa and Omar field, which reportedly has a production capacity of 100,000 and 200,000 bbl / d, respectively, in 2010. Other smaller mature fields, such as Oudeh, Gbeibe, and Tishrine, are under contract rehabilitation field for China's CNPC.<sup>36</sup>

Table: 1

Current Year* Production by Field Operator			
Operator	Liquids ('000 boe/d)	Liquids & Gas ('000 boe/d)	Share of non- Syrian Total (%)
CNPC	11.8	11.8	5%
DEZPC	24.6	45.2	20
Gulfsands	22.5	22.5	10
HayanPetrol	9.8	24.1	11
Shell	80.2	85.6	39
Sinopec	13	13	6
SuncorEne	4.5	18.5	8
Syrian Gas	8.4	45.6	
Syrian PetCo	203.4	243	
Grand Total	378	509.4	

Source: Wood Mackenzie

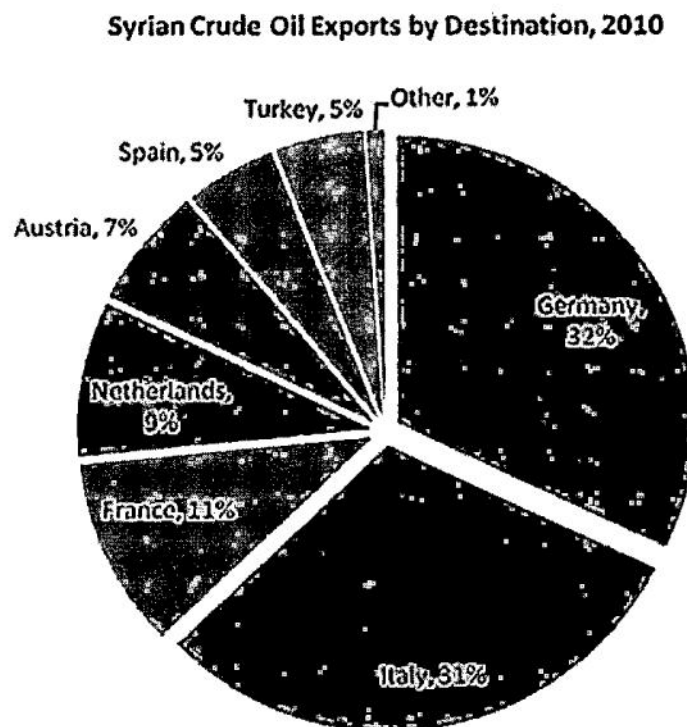
<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

The overall Syrian economy is essentially still dependent on oil sector although in practice the government is trying to develop on other economic sectors. It is implemented in order to counterbalance the impact of declining oil production. Oil sector is a key pillar of Syrian revenue which began to show a negative performance during the last 5 years. According to data released by the IMF Syrian, real GDP growth was ranging from about -4.1% per annum over the period 2004 to 2009. IMF data also suggested that overall oil balance reached a deficit of U.S. \$ 1.2 billion in 2010. However, the oil sector still remains a major focus of the government of Syria. One of them is trying to attract foreign investments to conduct the new exploration particularly for gas production and oil refining. Syrian crude oil production increased 3.1%, equal to 387,357 barrels per day (b / d) in the first nine months of 2010. According to the ministry of petroleum, light crude oil represented 40.6% of the total production while heavy crude is 59.4%.

Syria is not only focusing on the oil producing but also expanding the income from the crude oil exporting sector. Syria has three Mediterranean oil export/import terminals, all managed by the Syrian Company for Oil Transportation (SCOT). Baniyas (7 berths) and Tartous (2 berths) are larger ports from which Syria's two main export crude oil are exported. Latakia handles smaller cargoes. The terminals are connected to refineries through the domestic pipeline network. Syria's net petroleum exports were estimated to be 109,000 bbl/d In 2010, and down slightly from 117,000 bbl/d in 2009. Syria exports two

crude oil blends, Syrian Light and Souedieh (or Syrian heavy), through its state marketing company Sytrol. Heavy crude oil accounts for about three-fourths of Syria's oil exports. Souedieh, heavy, very high-sulfur oil, is produced by SPC from Soueidieh and Jebeissch, two of the country's oldest oil fields.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 2: The Syrian Crude Oil Export by Destination 2010**



Source: Global Trade Atlas, Lloyd's APEX Database, EIA

An Agricultural sector in Syria is still considered as a major sector for its importance in trading activities. It is caused by the large contribution in the provision of food ingredients and effectiveness in creating the employment

<sup>37</sup> "Country Analysis Brief", retrieved from <http://www.eia.gov/cabs/Syria/Full.html> on December 3, 2012

sector. It was able to employ about 30% of the total of workforce and agrarian products able to achieve 16% to 22% of all exports.

The most important thing to note is, the focus and concern of the government to agriculture. It was proven by the provision of subsidy by the government in the agricultural sector of around U.S. \$ 1.5 billion. Besides, the president of Syria has issued two new decrees on June 2012. The two major decisions were very vital. The first major decision is implementing the national plan for the transfer of land irrigated from irrigation across the country with traditional patterns to the modern ones. The main goal in the first decision is to rationalize the consumption of water used for irrigation the second decision relates to the organizing of cultivation, cotton ginning and marketing, as well as the production and development of cotton seeds. The main objective of this second decision was to organize the whole industry to halt trading of fabrics and cotton inputs such as seeds, which are produced exclusively in the local market.

### **C. THE STRATEGIC OF SYRIAN GEOPOLITICAL FACTOR**

Syria is a country in the *Syams* region which directly adjacent to Turkey in the north, Palestine and Jordan in the south, Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea in the west and Iraq to the east. Therefore it can be said that the geographical Syria is the link between the two continents, Asia and Africa. The strategic location makes Syria contested areas the various elements of the global power. Initially Syria was part of the territory of the Ottoman dynasty, based in Turkey. However, in 1918 with the support of Britain, Syria finally broke away from

Ottoman Daulah and in 1920 formed the Syrian Arab Republic (al-Jumhuriyyah Al-As-Suriyah Arabiyyah). In 1958-1961 Syria joined the pan-Arabism after finally broke away due to a military coup led by Abdul Karim Nahlawy which is nothing but followers of Shia Alawiyah. After the military coup, the political map of Syria Ba'ats dominated by the Socialist Party (Hizb al-Ba'ats Al-Isytiraki) a majority of members come from the Shiite Alawiyah. Through this Ba'ats Shiite party Alawiyah mastered political map of Syria.<sup>38</sup>

Although Syria produces relatively modest quantities of oil and gas, but its location is very prospective for the energy transit routes. Regional integration in the energy sector is approximately expected to increase as a result of ongoing plans for expansion of the regional oil and gas pipelines which connecting Syria with Turkey's neighbors, Iraq and Iran.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 3: The Syrian Map**



Source: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)

<sup>38</sup> Muhammad fakhry Ghaffur, *Membaca Konflik Suriah*, retrieved from <http://www.politik.lipi.go.id/index.php/en/columns/timur-tengah/669-membaca-konflik-suriah> on November, 02, 2012-

<sup>39</sup> *Syria, Country Analysis Brief*, [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov), August 2011

The ongoing pipeline project is truly prospective for Syrian economic development. Syria has a plumbing system that was developed in the country to transport crude oil and petroleum managed by SCOT. The pipe is covering 250,000-bbl / d, 347-mile Tel Fennel-Tartous crude line linking SPC and other fields to the port located in Tartous with a connection to a refinery in Homs, and oil products pipeline connecting to the refinery Homs of Syrian major cities. Two trans-national pipelines across Syria have been built to transport oil from Saudi Arabia and Iraq to the terminal in the Mediterranean. The 500,000 bbl / d Tapline built during 1940's to transport crude oil to an Arabian export terminal in Lebanon, but it was closed during the 1970s because uneconomical factors. Proposals have been made to rehabilitate Tapline, but it still remains closed. The second was built during the 1950's to transport oil from Kirkuk in northern Iraq to the terminal of Banias in Syria and Tripoli in Lebanon. It is about 800 kilometers (500 miles) pipeline system that has been re-habilitated in 2000, but it was closed in 2003 during the war in Iraq. Minister of Syria and Iraq were discussed to rehabilitate this pipe, as well as building the new ones. In June 2011, Syria and Iraq signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further improve the existing 800 000 bbl / d pipeline system, and to build two new ones, including pipes 1.5 million bbl / d of heavy crude to bring Iraq, and 1.25 million bbl / d pipeline to transport light crude oil from Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

Simply speaking, Syria plays the great role in the Middle East area for its potential economic power as well as its strategic location. Therefore it was not

---

<sup>40</sup> ibid

quite surprising if there are a lot of parties involved in gaining the interest from Syria.