

## SYRIAN SOCIETY ON THE THRESHOLD OF FREEDOM — THE UNFULFILLED DREAM OF DEMOCRACY

Marek BODZIANY\*

\* Faculty of Security Sciences, General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces, Wrocław  
e-mail: m.bodziany@wso.wroc.pl.pl

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### Abstract:

*Why did the revolution in Syria happen? That is the question the answer to which leaves no illusions. The Syrian Revolution began, because the society motivated by disturbances in other Arab countries wanted to break free from the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad. It was to give an opportunity to the young generation of the Syrians for a better life, and to change this beautiful and inhabited by hospitable and friendly people country into the 'oasis' of peace and prosperity. Today it is already clear that the Syrian 'dream of democracy' has not been fulfilled and the society was unable to establish a new order. The revolution in this state turned out to be other than those, which took place in almost all the Arab States and some Muslim ones. It was even different from the Libyan uprising that changed into the civil war. This rush turned into a blood slaughter - a civil war on the scale hitherto unprecedented, and its implications drive to the reflection on the future of this state. The purpose of this article is the analysis of sources of change in Syria, as well as the prediction of opportunities to rebuild its statehood.*

### Keywords:

*Arab Spring, Syria, Syrian Revolution, mass revolt, civil war*

### INTRODUCTION

As a preliminary remark, some reflections on the title of the article including two cognitive threads. The first of them directs the reader's attention to the social and political changes in Syria initiated in 2011 as a result of the tide of social unrest in the Arab

states. The second one concerns the implications of those changes for Syria and the vision of the state failure, which is currently very realistic. The turbulent transition process considered from the perspective of retrospection and conventionally referred to as the Arab Spring or the Arab Awakening has been metaphorically treated as the *domino effect*, in which the mass revolt in Syria can be compared to one domino activated under the influence of events in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and other countries of the MENA zone (MENA: Middle East - North Africa). What made the Syrian society - young and well-educated, and at the same time locked in the "cage" of isolation and 10-year dictatorial regime of Bashar al-Assad - decide to improve their lot and break with the existing system? There are numerous factors, but they all have one thing in common: the tide of mass riots in the Arab world. At that time it seemed that the success of the revolution in Syria was a matter of time, and the Bashar al-Assad's regime would soon be overthrown. However, it was not realized what consequences the rush was going to bring and what state the country would be led to. No one predicted that this revolution would lead to a bloody civil war, which resulted in the almost completely degraded economy and infrastructure as well as gave grounds to anarchy, lawlessness and the paralysis of legitimate authorities. It was not recognized that almost 300 thousand citizens of Syria would lose their lives and over 4 million people would emigrate to Europe and other "peaceful" regions.

It is worth noting that the domino effect<sup>1</sup>, which Syria was involved in, this is not an accidental phenomenon, since the waves of mass uprisings and unrest in the Arab world do not belong – contrary to common opinions – to phenomena of spontaneous or affective nature. As in other countries, the social rush was the result of accumulation of stresses associated with the long-lasting dictatorship, isolation of society, but also - very importantly - the poor state of the economy. The latter factor appears the most important. If it had not been for the global economic crisis of 2007-2008, not only the revolution, but also the revolt in the Arab countries called *the Arab Spring* or *the Arab Awakening* would have never taken place. The crisis had an impact on the reduction in creditworthiness of the Arab States as a result of a sharp drop in oil prices on world markets [2], as well as the decline in production in Syria. Its consequence was the growth of the unemployment rate, which on the eve of the revolution made up more than 20%. Several years of drought, impoverishment of the middle class and the influx of immigrants [4] further exacerbated the economic problems of Syria. Thus, when analyzing the causes of the revolution in Syria, one must take into consideration the effects of uprisings and social unrest in other Arab countries, as well as the factors that led to them, that is 10 years of the regime and the poor state of the economy.

Two years of crisis led to giving Syria the status of a falling state in 2010, in accordance with the Failed States Index. Currently, it is commonly believed that it is not only a failed state, but also one of those that will never recover from the fall without the help of the international community. Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, who gave up the function of the envoy of the UN and the Arab League to Syria, stated in 2014: (...) *This war will not remain within the borders of Syria, it will explode and blow off the*

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<sup>1</sup> The domino effect – the conventional term for the tide of revolutions in the Arab countries.

*entire region (...) It will be another Somalia. Syria will not be divided, as some predict. It will become a failed state; local warlords will be at war with each other across the country* [13]. This statement calls for some thought, for even then in many opinions voices appeared on what was observed from the very first moment when the revolution was transforming into a civil war. Today the situation in Syria is even more complex, because the conflict has no clear boundaries and has extended to the whole region; there is the lack of measures to protect against its spread and solve the current problems in the region as well. Syria and its international environment has become the field of confrontation between the Islamic State, government forces recently supported by Russian troops, and pro-Islamic groups. What is more, Syria is a state that has ceased to be one, where the society has become a hostage of the regime and a victim of the unfavorable international situation resulting from the inactivity of the international community, convulsive actions of the UN, as well as the place of political games between Russia, Turkey and other countries. This situation causes that in the coming years the state may completely lose its sovereignty and become just the administration area ruled by criminal groups.

## 1. SOCIAL CAPITAL OF SYRIA BEFORE THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION

The analysis of the social capital of pre-revolutionary Syria necessitates the references to the main pillars of this concept proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, who emphasizes, among others, the economic and cultural capital [15]. Bearing in mind the vast range of the concept of social capital, for purposes of illustrating the condition of Syria before the revolution, the Author focuses exclusively on:

- the social structure and demography;
- poverty and prosperity of the society;
- intellectual potential.

This approach aims to show the starting point for a comparative analysis of the state before and after the revolution, and more precisely, to present the consequences of the Syrian society's desire to improve their lot.

### 1.1. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF SYRIA – RETROSPECTION AND CONTEMPORARY TIMES

The analysis of the social structure of Syria leads to the historical reflection on the formation of social groups that, despite changes, has survived to the present day. Their beginnings can be found already during the reign of the Romans (64 BC – 637 AD), when administrative reforms – important from the point of view of settlement and social division – were carried out several times. Thus, the state was divided into 10 districts<sup>2</sup>, and then in the year 193 into Coele Syria and Phoenice, which during the reign of subsequent emperors were gradually changed territorially and administratively. It is worth emphasizing that besides the administrative reforms, Syria owes to the

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<sup>2</sup> These were the following districts: Commagene, Cyrrhестice, Pieria, Seleucis, Chalcidice, Chalybonitis, Palmyrene, Apamene, Cassiotis, Laodicene.

Romans also the system of law and social order, which in the later period – under the reign of the Arabs – allowed the formation of four main social classes:

- the first social class – the elite in the Syrian society consisting of the ruling Muslims, and members of the court of the Caliph and the Arab aristocracy;
- the second social class – the most numerous, consisting of foreigners forcibly converted to Islam, the so-called *neophytes*;
- the third social class – the followers of revealed religions, comprised of people of the book *ahl al-kitab*, mainly Christians, Jews and believers of other monotheistic religions. This social class was quite specific, because the Arabs guaranteed them life, availability of property and the freedom of religion. However, the existence of its representatives was associated with many restrictions. They were not allowed to join the army or derive benefits from the conquests, and, moreover, they were obliged to pay taxes;
- the fourth social class – of the lowest position in the social structure included slaves who were subject to the law of liberation that has been regarded by the Quran as a good deed, which contributes to the salvation of the soul [16].

The period of influence of France and Great Britain, which continued until the end of World War II was of relevant importance for the formation of the Syrian society. At the end of the War Syria gained independence, while France lost all colonies in its territory. The society that for over 25 years had been opposing the French influence got to the point where their state became free and independent. The distraction of both countries from the Middle East enabled the establishment of multiple political parties in Syria, among which the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party is particularly noteworthy. It was founded by Michel Aflak and is known today as the Ba'ath Party [16].

The sovereignty of Syria and the change of the social order almost from the beginning were associated with destabilization and the sense of threat from Israel and the intervention of the British in the Middle East aiming to ensure the free flow of goods to India. Persistent revolts and the subsequent Israeli – Arab wars, as well as the economic crisis in the 1980s aggravated the injurious internal situation of the state and the poor condition of the Syrian society. Its consequence for Syria was the decrease in the standard of living as result of the decline in oil prices on world markets. Only in 1990s the situation improved significantly and Syria began to rebuild the economy, rather neglected due to the marginalization of the private sector.

Syria recorded the growth of the economic importance only during the presidency of Bashar al-Assad, when he created a model of society somewhat "suspended" in relations with politics, religion and economy. During this period, the class of private owners, previously devoid of trust, started to gain a voice. Owing to foreign contracts, which were advantageous for the state, this class began to play an important role in politics, influencing the shape of the structure of the economy, as well as investment plans. Due to the economic potential this class became the bourgeoisie, however, was not homogeneous. As most social classes it was characterized by internal stratification - social stratification- that consisted of:

- the old bourgeoisie – formed during the Roman Empire, consisted of descendants of noble families with trading traditions, coming mostly from urban areas, represented by the Sunnis;
- the state bourgeoisie – dominated by the ruling Alawites, belonging to the families of the political elite of Syria, coming mostly from the cities; they played a significant role in major sectors of the state economy: oil, petrochemical, construction, telecommunications, and trade-related areas in the duty free zones;
- the rentier bourgeoisie – in contrast to the state bourgeoisie, it was to a small degree independent from the regime, was formed by the Sunnis and Christians as well; at that time they worked mainly in areas related to import, electronics trade, tourism and food processing industry;
- the independent bourgeoisie – as the name indicates, it was independent from the Syrian regime, and it included entrepreneurs of various faiths, working mainly in the field of foreign trade, light industry and in sectors related to the production of advanced technologies; it stood in opposition to the regime and the policy pursued by al-Assad;
- the petty bourgeoisie – the lowest positioned class of entrepreneurs running small, usually family or single companies associated with the sector of trade and services: shopkeepers, retailers or craft workers [5].

It is worth noting that in Syria ruled by the al-Assad "dynasty", only classes and social groups that were in favor of their policy had privileges. This quite sarcastic term "dynasty" has its reasons, as from the beginning of the presidency of Bashar al-Assad's father – Hafiz (1971) the al-Assad family installed their almost absolute rule over Syria<sup>3</sup> and greatly influenced the development of the social structure in the country.

## 1.2. DEMOGRAPHY AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF SYRIA

During the reign of al-Assad, Syria was a specific state among other Arab countries in terms of social, ethnic and religious structure. It was characterized by heterogeneity and the mosaic structure of religious and ethnic groups, which consisted of the Sunnis (the Arabs and the Kurds) – 75% of the population, the Syrians – 10% (including those of Armenian origin), the Alawites – 13%, and the Druze, the Shia Muslims, the Ismaili Muslims [12]. According to the data of 2010 from the "Pew Research Center", the religious structure of the country was as follows:

- Islam – 92.8% (including the Sunnis, the Alawites, the Druze, the Ismaili);

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<sup>3</sup> The election of Bashar as President on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2000 was a very clear manifestation of the power indivisibility of the al-Assad family. His brother's death in a car accident in 1994 became the main premise for the election of 34 year-old Bashar as the president (the minimum age to be a candidate in Syria was 40 and was lowered for the needs of the elections). Both the age at which he became the president and his education – doctor of medical sciences in the specialty of ophthalmology, prove the strength of the ruling Ba'ath Party.

- Christianity – 5.2% (Orthodoxy – 2.9% Catholicism – 2.1%, Protestantism – 0.2%);
- no religion – 2.0%.

From the early 1980s Syria, like most Arab countries, recorded the rapid population growth, which largely contributed to the imbalance of the age structure. The fertility rate decreased significantly from 7 children in the 1980s, to 5 on the 1990s and 3 in the year 2010 [1]. In addition, Syria increased the population of 9.1 million in 1980 to 21.4 million in 2010. The attention should be paid to one meaningful fact, namely since 2003 the country has attracted about 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, the number of whom substantially affected the modification of the population size and the ethnic structure. The high population growth significantly influenced the age structure of the population in Syria, where young people in need of employment constituted the largest proportion. The increase in population resulted in the recorded enormous population pressure on the labor market, due to the fact that each year it was powered by 200 to 250 thousands of young Syrian citizens. Importantly, the rate of growth in jobs deviated significantly from the demand for them, which in turn led to a surplus of human resources generating problems and social costs for the state. Figure 1 represents the change in the population of Syria in the years 1980-2010.

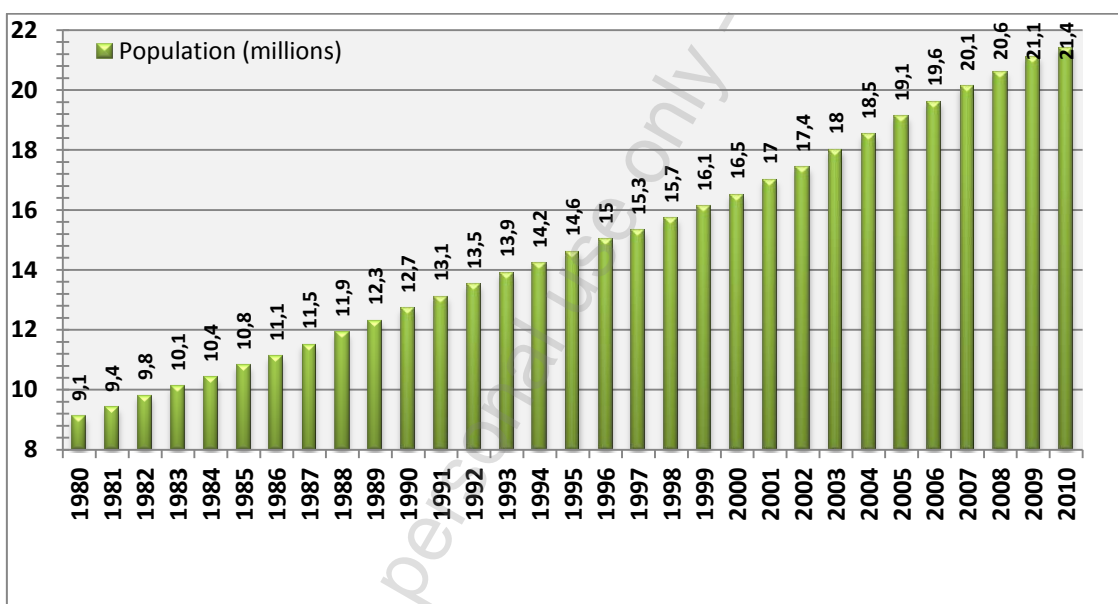
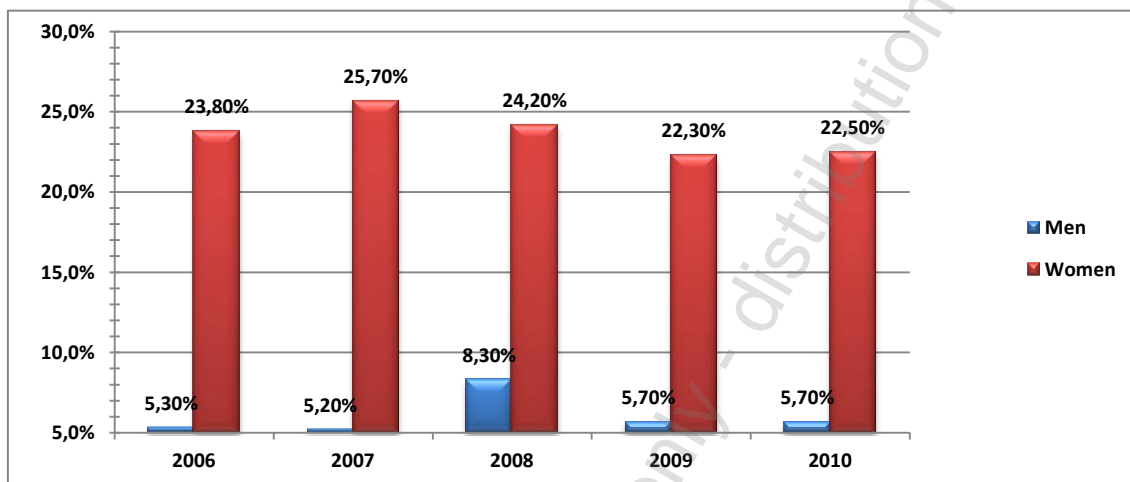


Fig. 1. The change in Syria's population in the years 1980-2010

Source: Own study based on: <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/index.php>

The first attempt to solve the problem took place in 2000, when the number of jobs in certain sectors such as: the administration and the army, as well as institutions of public order, was "artificially" increased. This action failed to meet with the approval of the public, although it gave the opportunity of gaining employment and reducing expenses associated with social assistance. The reason for dissatisfaction was low wages stimulating corruption, which later became a barrier for the national economy [5].

As to the employment, the attention should be given to the participation of women in the labor market, as well as indicators describing their unemployment. The analysis of the data of the years 2006-2010 provokes reflections on the unemployment rate of women. During that period, the average annual percentage of unemployed women was 23.7%, which in confrontation with the average annual percentage of unemployed men – 6.04%, allows the conclusion that there were four working men for one working woman. Another observation concerns the increase in the number of unemployed men in 2008 from 5.2% to 8.3%. This drastic increase is the effect of the global crisis and mass redundancies. Figure 2 shows the unemployment rates for men and women from 2006 to 2010.



**Fig. 2.** Women's and men's unemployment rates

Source: Own study based on:

<http://www.data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.MA.ZS/countries/SY?display=graph>

Disparities in women's and men's access to the labor market had their sources in the specificity of Arab societies, which describes the traditional model of society. Its typical element is the patriarchy, in which a man occupies the supreme social position and maintains the family, while a woman in the vast majority of cases is a housewife. Cultural factors were just one of the reasons for the restrictions on the labor market in Syria. The second important factor was related to the structure of the economy, which prevented women from the access to the labor market.

The inseparable element of the social landscape of then Syria was the internal migration from small towns and villages to large urban agglomerations. As a consequence, "poverty enclaves" appeared at the periphery of the cities, inhabited by immigrant population and the social margin. Such a picture of Syrian cities was not something phenomenal, as in most Arab states, and not only in them, "enclaves of poverty" have been the isolated part of the society conducting its own specific lifestyle. Despite the relatively high pressure to create a positive image of the country at the time of Bashar al-Assad, those places lacked the basic means of existence. The poor were deprived of the access to electricity, running water, municipal services such as garbage disposal or sewerage. Poverty in the suburbs of Syrian cities was intensified by the chronic lack of employment among residents combined with the limited access to education and

medical care. The triangulation of unemployment, illiteracy and diseases distorted the image of Syria created by politicians, as the state devoid of any trace of social anomy and powerlessness of the authorities towards the poverty caused by the extremely poor social layer called sub-proletariat. Poverty of the part of the Syrian society is only a selected fragment of the reality. The level of social inequality was also crucial from the point of view of the national economy, and according to the Gini coefficient for the year 2010 it amounted to 0.4 (40%)<sup>4</sup>. The scale of social inequality was intensified by contrasts between the "enclaves of poverty" situated beyond the "people's eyes" in the suburbs and city centers, which were vibrant in spite of the dictatorship.

Marta Urzędowska in the article published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* in September 2015 reflects contrasts between Syrian cities in an illustrative manner. There a reader can find very interesting facts from the Syrian daily life, based on the observation of life of the inhabitants of Damascus, presenting an amazing character of peace and beauty of the streets. The author shows people involved in spontaneous harmony, living in relative prosperity, health, cleanliness and friendly co-existence not only in the relationship with their own culturally heterogeneous people, but also with foreigners. She also draws attention to the specificity and yet the endemic nature of the Syrian culture, even against the background of other cultures of the Arab states [14]. Noteworthy is the hospitality particularly expressed during the mass exodus of the Iraqis at the time of the war in Iraq in 2003. As pointed out by M. Urzędowska: *Syrian hospitality in difficult times was repeatedly tested by the neighbors – it was here in 2005 where over a million of the Iraqis fleeing from the religious war took refuge, and who still in 2010 accounted for 6 percent of the Syrian society. I remember a joke that was doing the rounds around the Syrian capital: "Two Iraqis are talking in Damascus: You know what happened to me today? – one of them said with excitement – I have met two Syrians!"* [14] The relative peace and existential symbiosis of the Syrian society were one side of the reality, because in the background of this "idyll" there were regime and real problems of social nature.

The analysis of the Syrian society induces the evaluation of the importance of the state in the international arena. The study by the United Nations presented in the ranking of Human Development Indicators (HDI) proves its significant increase in importance in the world rankings in the 1980s. It is evidenced by the fact that in 1980 the average growth rate per citizen in Syria was 0.420, while in 2011 it reached 0.630. In the said period, until the outbreak of the revolution, Syria was ranked 119<sup>th</sup> among 187 coun-

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<sup>4</sup> The Gini coefficient, also known as the Gini index, having the name of its creator - the Italian statistician Corrado Gini, is used in statistics as the measure of concentration (inequality) of the random variable distribution. In econometrics the Gini coefficient is called an indicator of social inequalities and is used to express numerically an uneven distribution of goods, particularly of income (such as households). It shows income inequalities of a society – and should be read in such a way that the higher it is, the higher income inequalities in the country occur. The Gini coefficient takes values from the range [0, 1], but often it is given in percentages and the value of zero indicates the full distribution uniformity. The increase in the value of the coefficient means the increase in the distribution inequality. [online]. [available: 12.03.2016]. Available on the Internet: <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/GiniCoefficient.html>.



tries surveyed [9]. This indicator is important as it provides the basis for the assessment of the present position of Syria in the framework of the HDI, which puts it on the 173<sup>rd</sup> place, and it means a huge decline of 54 positions in the global ranking of development [14]. The position from the pre-revolution period was not impressive, since the Syrian Arab Republic was ranked below the regional average. This indicates that despite the oil production the state did not take advantage of its resources so as to develop the human potential [5]. The lack of efficiency in the use of the economic potential was overlapped by social problems, among which noteworthy is the low level of health services. Even though the public health system was functioning, the range of services and medical care was narrowed down to a minimum and most of the costs, including medication necessary in hospital treatment, were covered out of patients' pockets. A similar situation took place in education at the primary, secondary and higher levels, where funding directed to the functioning of the schools were minimal. Both health care and education sphere functioned in two kinds of reality: state and private, creating a social dichotomy involving the possibility of giving the rich and reducing opportunities for the poor to live in health and educate in good schools ensuring employment. A limited number of health services and schools in confrontation with high birth rate in the 1990s caused a serious surplus of young people who were not able to continue learning, and thus were forced to find work, which *de facto* was impossible. The situation slightly improved after 2001, when the government authorized the activity of private universities [5].

## 2. THE SYRIAN ECONOMY

The assessment of the condition of the Syrian economy forces to take a look at it from the perspective of domestic policy pursued by "the al-Assad family". It was characterized by a peculiar ambivalence, which could be justified by two kinds of targets. One of them was the desire to transform the economic system of the country and the improvement of social conditions, and the second one – the attempt to maintain control over the widest possible area of activity of citizens. The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic enacted in 1973 contains a provision that the economy is *a socialist planned economy, the aim of which is to eliminate all forms of exploitation* [3]. Such provision meant that the private sector practically did not exist and all the entrepreneurial initiatives were effectively blocked. This stemmed from the conviction of Hafiz al-Assad that the establishment of private companies would translate directly into depriving the state of support of important social groups. Such a state of affairs would contribute to their stratification and provoke social conflicts. It was not until the late twentieth century when a great deal of changes was brought about, primarily due to the growing crisis in the country. After taking office Bashar al-Assad recognized the problem, and therefore allowed for deep economic reforms. The private sector became liberalized, but under the strict control of the state in order to avoid conflicts of interests of private entrepreneurs with government policy objectives. In this way, the social structure changed as well.

The changes in philosophy behind the approach to the economy resulted in the increase in private sector share in forming GDP of Syria. An example is private trade, the

share of which did not exceed 10% in the total trade in the 1980s, while in the early 1990s it already reached 45% of the total trade in the state. In 2000, Syria was a moderately wealthy developing country, and its GDP fluctuated at the level of USD 17.33 billion, which compared to the large at that time population of over 16 million gave the GDP per capita of USD 1062 [5]. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the agricultural sector accounted for 24.7% of GDP, and employed more than 1.38 million people representing more than 30% of the total workforce. In 2009, the value of GDP produced in agriculture drastically dropped to the level of 17%. This was the lowest value of GDP during the reign of al-Assad [7]. The total value of GDP of Syria was significantly influenced by the condition of the mining sector and the industry, which according to the data of the year 2000 produced more than 30% of GDP, the vast majority of which was by the mining sector focused around crude oil and was almost completely dominated by the state. Despite its small deposits, in 2006 it brought 23,64% of GDP. Figure 3 shows the GDP growth in Syria.

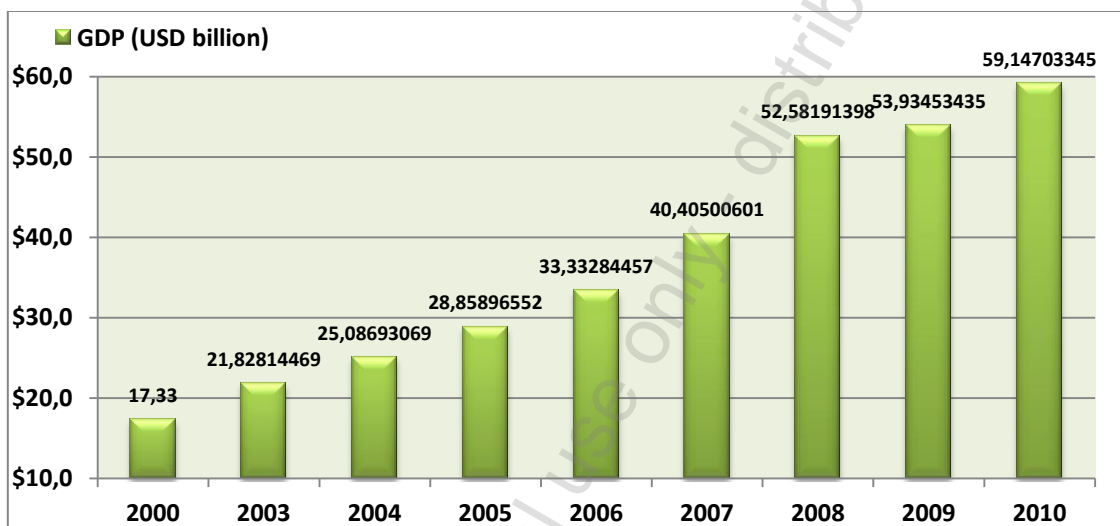


Fig. 3. The GDP growth in the Syrian Arab Republic

Source: Own study based on:

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/SY?display=graph>

From the data presented in Figure 3 one can see that the greatest growth occurred in the years 2006-2008, and its cause was the rapid development of entrepreneurship among private companies. The liberalization of the private sector brought the increase of its share in GDP to 49.5% in 2006. In 2007 there was another increase in the private sector share in GDP to the level of 50.7%, and then in 2008 – up to 53.3% [8]. Subsequent years showed the ruling cabinet that the new agenda for the economy, based on the pillars of private enterprise, proved to be the source of success. Bashar al-Assad's new perception of the state development, somewhat extorted by the economic situation, introduced Syria onto the tracks of modernity and relative prosperity. Janusz Żebrowski, the author of "History of Syria", wrote about al-Assad and his initiatives in the following words: (...) *Both before appointment and later as well he established himself as a spokesman for the country's modernization. He earned recognition by, among others, the introduction of the previously forbidden Internet, permission to in-*

*stall satellite TV antenna enabling the reception of foreign stations, and an uncompromising fight against corruption. He is interested in modern technology. He is aware of the necessity to increase efforts to modernize the structures of the economy and the state, and conduct deep social reforms, which Syria urgently needs, not excluding democratization [16].*

The need for change resulted not only from the poor state of the economy and the unfavorable demography. Almost equally important incentive to the reforms was a prediction of the future of the state related to the dwindling oil reserves. Research and analyzes showed that its resources would last until 2035, which in the reality of the lack of diversification of such a lucrative sector of the economy like mining would put Syria in the face of economic dependency and inevitable recession. Such a vision of the future forced the authorities to open the local market to foreign capital, in the effect of which the exchange of goods and services and capital flows has significantly increased since 2004. This was due to the abolition of tariffs, import restrictions, as well as the taxation of exports. Bashar al-Assad also signed a series of agreements with Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan on free trade. In parallel, the process of establishing economic relations with the European Union was launched, but finally the negotiations were interrupted because of France's objection [6]. Nine investment projects were carried out from 1990 to 2009 as a result of changes in foreign policy and economic reforms. The investment aimed at modernizing the infrastructure of Damascus and providing better conditions for the people living there was began in 2010.

In addition to economic reforms, Bashar al-Assad also drew attention to the social reforms; he emphasized *the need to strengthen and activate the private sector, reduce red tape, improve administrative procedures and the quality of personnel, increase the level of education and develop information technology, as well as attract new investments and create jobs* [5]. Despite the declaration only a few objectives were achieved. The pace of change in the country and the growing position of the bourgeoisie having more and more financial resources gave rise to the fear of loss of control over the state and its citizens. The main concern was the mining sector, which in the face of free trade began to record smaller and smaller profits. Such a situation was caused by the lack of modernization and poor money management. On the basis of slowdown in reforms and growing corruption, the social discontent began to build up, which after the wave of dramatic clashes and their crackdown by government forces resulted in the outbreak of *the Syrian Revolution* lasting from 26 January to 15 March 2011. The dream of democracy and civil liberties in Syria disappeared almost immediately, since the revolutionary rush turned into a bloody civil war, which continues to this day.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Syrian society from the period before the outbreak of the Arab Spring, conducted from the perspective of retrospection, encourages and authorizes some conclusions about the extent of degradation of the state and the tragedy of the Syrian society. Besides the fact that Syria virtually lost the foundations of statehood and has been a failed state for several years, its territory has become the world's largest habitat of social pathologies and the field of confrontation of different forces and

terrorist groups seeking to destabilize the situation not only in the Middle East region, but also in the territory of almost all Arab states. Syria is also a geographical area, where recently influences of Russia have been clashing with NATO countries, especially Turkey, which aim at maintaining or expanding their impact in the Middle East. In the face of such a confusing and turbulent geopolitical system, with the lack of any opportunity and an idea for a solution to the crisis, a question arises "*What fate awaits the Syrian society shaped by centuries of rich and turbulent history at the same time? Will it ever regain peace and freedom?*" The record of the Civil War leaves no doubt. Syria has become the place of execution for its own nationals. In 2013, after two years of fighting it was estimated that 2 million people, representing about 10% of the population, had left the state. In 2014, the number of refugees increased to 3 million, and in 2015 by another million. Importantly, the scale of emigration from Syria takes on alarming dimensions, as evidenced by the fact that in 2012 the number of refugees emigrating to border states amounted to less than 218 thousand, at present it not only rose to 4 million, but also has extended its territorial scope by covering Europe, North African countries and relatively calm states of the Middle East. In Lebanon, the number of refugees increased 17 times only in the year 2014 [11]. The UN report shows that the external emigration is not the only problem, because out of 21 millions of the Syrians up to 6.5 million have been forced to abandon their homes and move around the country in search for a safer place to live in. The summary index of migration of citizens of Syria indicates that half of the population left their homes before the outbreak of civil war, half of which were children. The UN data highlights the scale of the tragedy claiming that approximately 5,000 people leaves Syria every day. Equally important is the balance of the victims of the civil war, which - according to the UN data- claimed at least 191,000 people until the year 2014, and by mid-2015 nearly 300,000. At the same time almost 1 million people were wounded.

Migrations and the victim are the most important problem of social nature, but it is difficult not to address economic issues. As M. Urzędowska writes: *(...) the conflict deprived the country of wealth and capital for good. It became a real disaster for Syria. In terms of social development Syria dropped in the rankings from the middle position to 173<sup>rd</sup> among 187 countries. It became a country of poverty: four-fifths of the Syrians live in poverty, and one-third – in extreme poverty. Though Syria has never been rich, the war completely ruined the modest economy. (...) The country possesses oil – before the war mined approximately 330 thousand barrels were produced per day – but it is of poor quality and requires expensive treatment. Even the climate has never pampered the Syrians - four years of drought from 2006 to 2011 made life a misery so much that, according to one of theories, it is the lack of water was the cause of anger that spilled on the Syrian streets in 2011 thus starting the revolution [14].*

The collapse of the Syrian state has two pillars: social and economic. The scale of the devastation underlines the economic ruin the state, which in 2015 was estimated at USD 200 billion, or nearly 400% of GDP. In contrast, the statistical data on migration, victims and the scale of moral degradation of citizens prove the social fall of the country. Also demographic indicators cannot be ignored, since their changes describe, for example, the increase in natural mortality. Before the war, the Syrians died most often

in the effect of heart diseases and strokes, and the average age of death was 80 years. Currently this age is estimated at 56 years. This is a result of the war and limited access to medical facilities. Compared to 2011, currently half of the hospitals function in a limited scope. The scale of the tragedy is worsened by the lack of health prevention especially among children, although before the war the 100% vaccination was carried out against almost all diseases. The same applies to education, which has been almost completely degraded, and the young people are officially said to be "the lost generation".

These drastic figures are only a prelude to the analysis of the status of the Syrian society after almost 5 years of the war. Despite their general character, it can be stated that Syria has fallen and the society has lost its "own house". Today, it knocks on the gates of European countries and other countries in which there is a chance for peace and safe life. Paradoxically, the Syrians – the same friendly people, who have taken nearly 5 million of refugees for 15 years, now have experienced this fate. *What awaits them, will the war in Syria ever end and will they return to their homes? Or maybe will they become a proto-nation – people deprived of the state that will be left at the mercy of others?* Today, no one knows.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**Marek BODZIANY**, PhD – doctor of sociology, university lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Security Sciences of the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces. The Chief Editor of the MALF Publishing House, the Chief Editor of the Scientific Journals of the Student Movement. His main scientific interests are: sociology of culture, sociology of conflicts, globalization, sociology of social change.

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