The Fracturing of the Syrian Resistance Coalition and the Tripolar Civil War

https://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/07/the-fracturing-of-the-syrian-resistance-coalition-and-the-tripolar-civil-war/

DAVID REAS, MAR 7 2014

The Fracturing of the Syrian Resistance Coalition and the Creation of a Tripolar Civil War

Creating Syria's Tripolar[1] Landscape

The Syrian Civil War can currently be divided into three phases. The first phase began in March 2011 during the early months of the Arab Spring and was marked by the popular demonstrations against the regime by numerous sectors of Syrian society. The second phase started when soldiers in the Syrian military refused to fire on protestors and instead defected to form the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to combat the regime. The third phase arose with the arrival of foreign *jihadists* along with the increased radicalization of the resistance and has subsequently been marked by a split in the resistance's ranks. Syria's civil war is currently in that third phase, it has transformed from a bipolar conflict between the Syrian Resistance Coalition[2] (SRC) and the Ba'athist regime into a tripolar conflict[3] between the non-*jihadist*[4] members of the SRC, the *jihadist*[5] members of the SRC, and the regime. This transformation from bipolar to tripolar warfare has primarily been the result of the fracturing of the SRC into two sometimes cooperative and sometimes competing poles. This split of the SRC into two independent poles was the result of a combination of factors including the fact that neither pole needed the other to continue fighting, but more importantly the split was a result of incompatible visions for Syria in the event of a victory by the SRC.

The Politics of Alliance Building

Alliance formations in civil wars have played a role that can be as equally important as the actual military confrontations. A reason for the assortment of SRC affiliates is due in part to the fact that individuals within the coalition have at one point or another felt marginalized because of the growing fortunes of others within the coalition, the marginalized individuals then brake away to form their own armed groups in order to increase their position within the SRC.[6] Another way to understand why breakaway affiliates form is to look at them as being what Robert Oprisko would call *exemplar par excellence*. According to Oprisko rebellion occurs when an actor has to compromise its values and is unable to do so in good conscious, the actor, by rebelling, distinguishes itself from what is considered mainstream.[7] In this case the breakaway SRC affiliates do not see themselves as being represented by the mainstream SRC affiliates and therefore attempt to distinguish themselves as valuable to the SRC by breaking away from previously established affiliates. Various academics[8] have written about the complicated politics that govern alliance building, some of their work will help one to better understand the factors that have driven the shifting SRC alliances. Helpful contributions include the interests of Schweller's *status quo* and revisionist poles, Walt's perception of threats, Christia's alliance dynamics in multiparty civil wars, Bueno de Mesquita's and Altfeld's partner commitments to alliances, and Fedder's and Morrow's views on the purpose of alliances.

The Contenders

According to Schweller the tripolar system is the most unstable system in comparison to other existing polarities.[9] The reason for this instability is due to the fact that depending on the level of cooperation or conflict between any of the two poles can result in two of the poles joining forces to eliminate the lone pole.[10] Therefore all of the competing

poles are attempting to court the support of one of the two other poles in order to defeat the lone pole. At the same time all of the poles are trying to avoid becoming the lone pole themselves. Overall the anarchy of the tripolar system creates a world where the possibility exists that "today's ally will be tomorrow's enemy."[11]

Schweller sees poles as divided into three overarching categories of interest that includes poles in support of the *status quo*, poles that are indifferent towards the *status quo*, and poles that seek to revise the *status quo*.[12] Within the larger *status quo* and revisionist categories are found two smaller subcategories. *Status quo* poles can be further divided into poles that will accept limited revisions to the *status quo* and poles that will staunchly support the *status quo* and the revisionist poles can be further divided into poles with limited revisionist aims and poles that are unlimited in their revisionist aims.[13] Staunch defenders of the *status quo* will protect the established order at any cost, while other *status quo* supporting poles will accept peaceful changes to the *status quo* in order to better preserve it.[14] Limited-aims revisionist poles value some aspects of the established *status quo* but wish to change it according to their own interests, while the unlimited-aims revisionists seek to at least conquer a portion of the world if not the entirety of it.[15]

The regime can be seen as a staunch *status quo* supporter, the non-*jihadists* are limited-aims revisionists, and the *jihadists* are unlimited-aims revisionists. The reason for assigning these interests to the three poles has to do with their current actions in the civil war. Before the Syrian Civil War became a civil war it had started out as a peaceful and popular uprising, but the regime proved unwilling to peacefully alter the *status quo* and instead resorted to violence to maintain its perception of the natural order.[16] Non-*jihadists* are the fighters who for the most part seem to be solely intent on bettering Syria and are much more likely to cooperate "should certain carrots be waved their way."[17] The *jihadists*' agenda is not entirely restricted to Syria; foreign fighters who travel to Syria are not only expected to assist in the implementation of a hardline Islamic regime but are also likely to use the skills that they have learned in Syria to overthrow the governing authorities in their own homeland.[18]

Choosing Sides

At the onset of the Syrian Civil War all opposition fighters were required to remain staunchly allied because of the circumstances. This unity was perhaps most evident when the United States declared the al-Nusra Front, an early *jihadist* faction, a terrorist organization – a decision that was poorly received within the SRC due to the al-Nusra Front's and the rest of the coalition's identical desire to defeat the real terrorists, the regime.[19] The case of the SRC's beginnings bears a semblance comparable to Morrow's asymmetrical alliance, something that comes about when there is a compromise between two partners; one partner will sacrifice some of its autonomy (freedom to pursue desired changes to the *status quo*)[20] for security (military capabilities of the actor)[21] while the other will sacrifice some of its security for autonomy.[22] Early non-*jihadist* fighters were originally seen as the ones capable of bringing a "multidenominational and potentially progressive" Syria for all Syrians.[23] On the other hand the *jihadist* fighters of the SRC brought military experience that some had gained from fighting in places like Afghanistan and Iraq over the years.[24] The two groups of fighters became interdependent, the non-*jihadists* had the legitimacy to act but lacked the necessary military skills and the *jihadists* had the necessary military skills but lacked popular support. Unfortunately for the non-*jihadists* their deal with the *jihadists* would prove to be a deal with the Devil.

At its core, civil war alliances are formed in order to be strong enough to win while remaining small enough in order for the participants to maximize their share in the spoils of war, according to Christia.[25] However Schweller sees this minimum winning coalition as a concept practiced exclusively by revisionist poles.[26] Currently the entirety of the SRC is a revisionist alliance that seeks to overthrow the *status quo* regime (although there is more to the coalition than victory over the regime). In a system with two revisionist poles, Schweller sees the revisionist poles forging a temporary truce in order to overpower the lone *status quo* pole.[27] Naturally the elimination of one of the poles results in the emergence of a bipolar system where the surviving poles resume their rivalry.[28] This explains the current situation on the ground. While the SRC remains committed to altering the *status quo* in the near term, their differing goals are likely to result in the splintering of the coalition, a process that has arguably began.

A Partnership in Name Only

A common criticism regarding the entire SRC has been the fact that there has been no effective national level coordination between the SRC's coalitions and factions, for example there has been no known discussion regarding some kind of FSA-IF union. Altfeld and Bueno de Mesquita see four varieties of alliance commitments as existing and the type that best fits the SRC is the "no commitment" type which lacks coordinating action between allies.[29] Although coordination is not entirely lacking among all of the actors that makeup the SRC, it has proven to be much more successful at the local level, but less so at the national level. Smaller factions have proven that they are capable of joining together to form larger coalitions; the Army of Islam which operates around Damascus is one such example (the Army of Islam has since coalesced with other similar SRC factions and coalitions to form the IF). Christia sees trust between the participants as existing when they share the same identity, something that is likely to be easier at the local level and less common among members of a larger coalition at the national level.[30]

Currently the SRC is being held together because of the individual interests of its members, a likely reason being what Fedder would call to create an "augmentive" alliance in which the allies side together in order to increase their own power in relation to that of the enemy.[31] The actors who make up the SRC are likely seeking to create a strong enough coalition that will be capable of gaining a numerical advantage and therefore use that numerical advantage to both overrun the regime and reduce the casualties of one's own group. In spite of the appearance of a supposedly united front the actors of the SRC are still according to Fedder keeping "all of their individuality, all of their separateness."[32] None of the participants are going to change their current identities or their goals for the sake of the coalition. The participants who refuse to develop a closer partnership with the rest of the SRC place emphasis on their identities and those who share that identity.[33] This emphasis on identity helps one to see why coalitions like the IF were successfully formed by factions with similar identities, while greater integration among groups with different identities has failed. Hence this could also be a reason for the divisions that currently exist between the non-*jihadist* pole and the *jihadist* pole.

Inherent Instability in the SRC Partnership

Currently the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is perhaps the most feared and most capable of all the SRC's affiliates thanks to its skills, superior supplies, and reputation.[34] While the rest of the SRC is dealing with the repercussions of the ISIS there is still the threat of the regime. This puts the remainder of the SRC in the position of having to choose which threat to confront. Walt sees an accurate way of assessing whether or not an actor will ally with another actor based not on power, but on how threatening the actor appears.[35] The lack of noticeable defections in favor of the regime suggests that the ISIS is likely perceived as less of a threat when compared to the regime. Approximately forty to fifty percent of the SRC's fighters share a politico-religious ideology akin to the ISIS'.[36] Overall despite existing fear of the ISIS it is perhaps seen as the lesser of two evils in comparison to the regime.[37] Even though the non-*jihadist* members of the SRC might be fearful of the ISIS, they do not see it as the immediate threat. Regardless both the ISIS and other *jihadist* factions along with the non-*jihadist* factions are revisionists and revisionists naturally "flock together."[38]

Despite currently being on the same side of the civil war for the most part – albeit as two differing poles – the SRC shares the same short-term goal of ousting the regime; it is their long-term goals that diverge. Due to the existence of a shared enemy in the present but conflicting goals in the future it raises the question over what kind of partnership the SRC is. The type of partnership that best fits the example of the SRC is Fedder's idea of a coalition. A coalition is "a set of members acting in concert at X time regarding one to n issues."[39] Currently the entirety of the SRC partnership is based around overthrowing the regime with few if any definitive plans for greater cooperation in a postwar Syria. The SRC is working together at the moment in time that the regime exists with the intent to overthrow it; once that goal is achieved the ultimate aftermath remains up for debate.

Fedder has a largely negative view of alliances. While alliances are the result of two groups being in a conflict with the same adversary alliances merely serve as a way to temporarily suppress conflict between the two allies.[40] Conflict between allies does not always have to be out in the open, it can be covert. Morrow sees the credibility of alliances as the source of its value.[41] Credibility is dependent on the common interests of those within the alliance, more common interest means more credibility and less common interest means less credibility.[42] With more or less credibility comes greater or lesser security respectively.[43] Without a doubt the credibility of the SRC is very minimal

because the coalition is caught in a vicious cycle of "fight[ing] the regime one day, fight[ing] each other over resources the next, settl[ing] the differences the day after that, and then return to fighting the regime once more, *ad infinitum*."[44]

The Viability of the SRC

Alliances do not always last forever, at any point they can break apart. Christia argues how alliances can break apart "along fault lines that predate the conflict."[45] One would assume that this fracture was caused by the ideological differences between the non-*jihadist* and *jihadist* SRC members. But Christia does not see belligerents in civil wars as users of any kind of identities when it comes to building alliances.[46] While this might not explain why *jihadist* factions like the al-Nusra Front or the ISIS have occasionally opposed some of the non-*jihadist* groups because they are perceived as being "secular… [and] allied to the West," the truth of the matter is that identity still does play a role in forming alliances.[47] Christia sees the true reasoning for placing emphasis on identities such as ideological identity is to use it as a "tactical preference" to justify alliance choices.[48]

As previously stated Walt believes that alliances are established in order to counter a perceived threat.[49] Accordingly the immediate threat from the point of view of the SRC should come not from some of the fighters within the SRC no matter their different stated reasons for opposing the regime; instead it should be the regime. The result of this perceived threat is what Walt would call balancing, because the fighters do not see each other as an imminent threat; instead the regime is seen as "the principle source of danger."[50] Despite the SRC's previously united stance that time has long since passed because of the rising influence of the*jihadist* fighters. Confidence on the part of the *jihadists* in their position of power compared to that of the other belligerents is by far much greater. *Jihadist* confidence is due in large part to the fact that their so-called allies have little if no better alternative allies to turn towards.

Although there might be some doubt as to whether or not the SRC's two poles can openly fight one another while maintaining their existing coalition, Bueno de Mesquita reveals how intragroup conflict does not always precede the breakup of an alliance. Alliances can still exist after the onset and termination of intragroup warfare. Bueno de Mesquita points out how fighting between allies does not always result in fundamental changes in their relationship.[51] There is a very small if any chance that one of the revisionist poles in the SRC would join forces with the *status quo* regime. According to Schweller a revisionist pole will only align itself with a *status quo* pole in the event that its survival "absolutely demands it."[52]

So because of the core conflicting viewpoints between some of the SRC affiliates, the more aggressive groups are free to exert pressure on their allies. As Bueno de Mesquita points out the aggressive ally can force its will upon its ally and force it to maintain a policy that is favorable to the aggressor.[53] Although this might no longer arguably appear to be the case with the creation of an anti-ISIS coalition amongst some of the SRC's coalitions and factions who have gone on the offensive against their supposed ally. But not all of the SRC affiliates have suddenly turned on the ISIS possibly because fear might still be keeping the ISIS somewhat allied to others in the SRC.

In early January after months of inflicting havoc throughout the ranks of the SRC the ISIS' dominance through fear was threatened by a few groups in the SRC. This new impromptu anti-ISIS coalition has included the FSA, a select few of the IF's factions, the Syrian Revolutionaries Front (SRF), the Mujahideen Army, and some units of the al-Nusra Front. While at first glance this might appear as a sudden shift in the thinking on the part of the other resistance coalitions and factions deep down it shows that divisions still exist within the SRC. Despite the fact that these groups have emerged as the ISIS' enemies their levels of commitment to defeat the ISIS have varied. Both the SRF and the Mujahideen Army had spearheaded the initial offensive against the ISIS even though the sudden offensive had partially been blamed by the ISIS' murder of an IF commander.[54] Even though a universal condemnation from all of the factions making up the IF was issued it did not translate into a universal declaration of war due to the differing policies of the IF's factions.[55] Inaction by some factions within the IF (along with the overall delay by some within the IF in opposing the ISIS) shows the hesitancy on the part of some of the opposition fighters to turn against such a dangerous group.

Even though it might appear at first glance that the fortunes of the ISIS are turning for the worse it still has allies. *Jihadist* groups continue to support the ISIS with some of the al-Nusra Front's fighters showing a lack of willingness to fight their fellow *jihadists*.[56] Perhaps since the ISIS is still seen as a dangerous and aggressive foe it has managed to implicitly coerce the SRC's other affiliates such as the uncommitted IF factions into remaining on the sidelines. These uncommitted groups are possibly having their will forced upon them by the ISIS, as previously stated by Bueno de Mesquita.[57] So even when it looks like there may be shared interests between non-*jihadists* (with some *jihadist* support) the groups still have difficulty in creating a single anti-ISIS agenda because of their fear of the faction. The fact that not only has the covert cold war between the non-*jihadists* and *jihadists* emerged out in the open but the fact that divisions exist over who the biggest threat to the entire SRC is does not bode well for the coalition's future.

Syria's Possible Endgame

Based on the current intragroup dynamics of the SRC the future unity of the group appears far from likely. The entirety of the SRC is governed around the concept that partnerships are fluid and subject to change depending on the capabilities of its multitude of affiliates. No indicators seem to exist concerning the possibility of a pan-SRC alliance that would unite the armed opposition under a single unified command structure instead of operating as a variety of competing affiliates, something groups like the FSA and the IF likely hope to achieve but have so far failed in accomplishing. Although conflict within the SRC has remained a consequence of the civil war it is highly unlikely to subside in the event of an SRC victory. If the SRC does defeat the regime peace in postwar Syria peace still seems to be an implausible outcome. Syria's last best hope for peace will only come about at the conclusion of a potential fourth phase to the Syrian Civil War in which the current SRC civil war within a civil war either ends with a complete non-*jihadist* victory or a complete *jihadist* victory.

Bibliography

Al-Abdeh, Malik. "Rebels, Inc. For Syria's Armed Opposition, Business has become the Key to Survival. Unfortunately, that doesn't always mean Fighting Assad." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 12/6/13. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/21/rebels_inc?page=0,0.

Altfeld, Michael F., and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. "Choosing Sides in Wars." *International Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1979): 87-112.

Benotman, Noman, and Emad Naseraldin. "The Jihadist Network in the Syrian Revolution: A Strategic Briefing." *Quilliam Foundation*. Accessed 12/5/13. http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-jihadist-network-in-the-syrian-revolution.pdf.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. *The War Trap*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Christia, Fotini. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Fedder, Edwin H. "The Concept of Alliance." *International Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1968): 65-86.

Hassan Hassan. "Rebel vs. Rebel: Syrian *Jihadi* Groups are now Kidnapping and Killing one Another. Is this the Beginning of an all-out War, or an Opportunity for the Moderates?," *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 12/5/13. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/09/18/rebel_vs_rebel_syria_jihadists_groups?page=0,0.

Hegghammer, Thomas, and Aaron Y. Zelin. "How Syria's Civil War Became a Holy Crusade: One of the World's Most Influential Clerics Declares War." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed 12/4/13. http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139557/thomas-hegghammer-aaron-y-zelin/how-syrias-civil-war-became-a-holy-crusade?nocache=1.

Lister, Charles, and Phillip Smyth. "Syria's Multipolar War." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 12/5/13. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/10/31/syrias_multipolar_war.

Lister, Charles. "Syria's Insurgency: Beyond Good Guys and Bad Guys." *Foreign Policy*.Accessed 12/4/13. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/09/09/syrias_insurgency_beyond_good_guys_and_bad_guys.

—. "Syria's New Rebel Front." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 1/19/14. http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/01/08/syrias_new_rebel_front.

Lund, Aron. "Pushing Back Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: The Islamic Front." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed 1/19/14. http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54121.

—. "Pushing Back Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: The Syria Revolutionaries Front and the Mujahideen Army." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed 1/19/14. http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54103.

—. "The Syrian Revolutionaries' Front." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed 12/13/13. http://carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910.

Morrow, James D. "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances." *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 904-933.

—. "Arms versus Allies: Trade-offs in the Search for Security." *Internationa Organization* 47, no. 2 (1993): 207-233.

Noueihed, Lin, and Alex Warren. *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era Updated Edition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Oprisko, Robert. "The Rebel as Sovereign: The Political Theology of Dignity." Revista Pléyade 5, no. 9 (2012): 119-136.

Reas, David. "Aiding Syria's Moderates: A Critical Security Requirement for the Present and Future." *Security and Intelligence Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2013): 21-27.

Schweller, Randall L. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*. New York City: Columbia University Press, 1998.

—. "Tripolarity and the Second World War." *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1993): 73-103.

Traub, James. "Everyone is Scared of ISIS: Can Anyone Stop the Radicalization of Syria's Rebels?." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 12/5/13. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/04/everyone_is_scared_of_isis_syria_rebels?page=0,1.

Walt, Stephen M. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power." *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-43.

[1] This paper was inspired largely by the Neoclassical Realist Randall Schweller's Balance of Interests theory which had first been introduced in his paper "Tripolarity and the Second World War" and subsequently expanded in his book *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*.

[2] The use of the term *Syrian Resistance Coalition* is not a formal name used by any opposition figure[s] within the entirety of the Syrian opposition (to the author's best knowledge). This essay uses the term to refer to the more than one hundred thousand fighters fighting against the regime. The phrase is meant to cover the entire spectrum of fighters from secular nationalists to radical Islamists. Although the use of the term SRC in this essay does not include Kurdish fighters who are not actively fighting at a national level, Kurdish opposition fighters have expressed more interest in fighting at the regional level for greater Kurdish autonomy.

Approximately one thousand groups have taken up arms against the regime. In order to clarify the terminology in

reference to the numerous groups this essay seeks to divide up the armed opposition in the following manner: the SRC refers to the entirety of the armed opposition, the SRC is composed of coalitions and other independent groups, coalitions are made up of factions, factions are made up of sub-factions, and sub-factions are made up of individual units. Here is an actual example: individual units make up the sub-faction known as the Islamic Brigade, the Islamic Brigade is one sub-faction within the faction that is called the Army of Islam, and the Army of Islam is one of the factions that makes up the coalition known as the Islamic Front (IF), and the IF is one of the many coalitions and other independent groups that makes up the entirety of the SRC.

[3] In this instance tripolar conflict refers to fighting that involves a conflict between three poles according to Randall Schweller; Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1998), 41.

[4] For the purpose of this essay non-*jihadist* refers to the fighters who only seek to overthrow the regime in Syria. There is no agreed upon post-war government among this group, but there is no interest on the part of the wider non-*jihadist* fighters to overthrow and establish new governments outside of Syria.

[5] For the purpose of this essay *jihadist* refers to the fighters who not only seek to overthrow the regime in Syria but to also establish a hardline Islamic state in Syria and seek to establish hardline Islamic states throughout the wider Islamic world.

[6] Aron Lund, "The Syrian Revolutionaries' Front," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed 12/13/13, http://carnegie-mec.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=53910.

[7] Robert Oprisko, "The Rebel as Sovereign: The Political Theology of Dignity," *Revista Pléyade* 5, no. 9 (2012): 131.

[8] The academics whose work will be used in this paper include: Randall Schweller, Stephen Walt, Fotini Christia, James Morrow, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Michael Altfeld, and Edwin Fedder.

[9] Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*, 40.

[10] Ibid., 42.

[11] Ibid., 62.

[12] Ibid., 10.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 24.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring: Revolution, Counter-Revolution, and the Making of a New Era Updated Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 226.

[17] Charles Lister, "Syria's Insurgency: Beyond Good Guys and Bad Guys," *Foreign Policy*, accessed 12/4/13, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/09/09/syrias_insurgency_beyond_good_guys_and_bad_guys.

[18] Thomas Hegghammer and Aaron Y. Zelin, "How Syria's Civil War Became a Holy Crusade: One of the World's Most Influential Clerics Declares War," *Foreign Affairs*, accessed 12/4/13, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139557/thomas-hegghammer-aaron-y-zelin/how-syrias-civil-war-became-a-holy-crusade?nocache=1.

[19] David Reas, "Aiding Syria's Moderates: A Critical Security Requirement for the Present and Future,"*Security and Intelligence Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2013): 22.

[20] James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 912.

[21] Ibid., 911.

[22] Ibid., 916.

[23] Charles Lister and Phillip Smyth, "Syria's Multipolar War," *Foreign Policy*, accessed 12/5/13, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/10/31/syrias_multipolar_war.

[24] Noman Benotman and Emad Naseraldin, "The Jihadist Network in the Syrian Revolution: A Strategic Briefing," *Quilliam Foundation*, accessed 12/5/13, http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-jihadist-network-in-the-syrian-revolution.pdf.

[25] Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 32.

[26] Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*, 64.

[27] Ibid., 49.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Michael F. Altfeld and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Choosing Sides in Wars," *International Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1979): 97.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Fedder, "The Concept of Alliance," 67.

[32] Ibid., 81.

[33] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, 33.

[34] James Traub, "Everyone is Scared of ISIS: Can Anyone Stop the Radicalization of Syria's Rebels?,"*Foreign Policy*, accessed 12/5/13, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/04/everyone_is_scared_of_isis_syria_rebels?page=0,1.

[35] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 8-9.

[36] Lister, "Syria's Insurgency," http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/09/09/syrias_insurgency_beyond_good_guys_and_bad_guys.

[37] This may or may not remain true on account of the sudden clashes between some within the SRC and the ISIS. This abrupt turn of events may indicate a changing tone for some within the SRC regarding who their immediate enemy is, with the ISIS being on par with the regime. For more on the conflict between some of the SRC affiliates and the ISIS see the next section.

[38] Randall L. Schweller, "Tripolarity and the Second World War," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1993): 84.

[39] Edwin H. Fedder, "The Concept of Alliance," *International Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1968): 80.

[40] Ibid., 79.

[41] James D. Morrow, "Arms versus Allies: Trade-offs in the Search for Security," *International Organization* 47, no. 2 (1993): 215.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Malik al-Abdeh, "Rebels, Inc. For Syria's Armed Opposition, Business has become the Key to Survival. Unfortunately, that doesn't always mean Fighting Assad.," *Foreign Policy*, accessed 12/6/13, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/11/21/rebels_inc?page=0,0.

[45] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, 33.

[46] Ibid., 32.

[47] Hassan Hassan, "Rebel vs. Rebel: Syrian *Jihadi* Groups are now Kidnapping and Killing one Another. Is this the Beginning of an all-out War, or an Opportunity for the Moderates?," *Foreign Policy*, accessed 12/5/13, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/09/18/rebel_vs_rebel_syria_jihadists_groups?page=0,0.

[48] Christia, *Alliance Formation*, 32.

[49] Walt, "Alliance Formation," 4.

[50] Ibid., 4-5.

[51] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 161.

[52] Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*, 64.

[53] Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*, 162.

[54] Aron Lund, "Pushing Back Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: The Syria Revolutionaries Front and the Mujahideen Army," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed 1/19/14, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54103.

[55] Aron Lund, "Pushing Back Against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: The Islamic Front,"*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed 1/19/14, http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54121.

[56] Charles Lister, "Syria's New Rebel Front," *Foreign Policy*, accessed 1/19/14, http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/01/08/syrias_new_rebel_front.

[57] Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*, 162.

—

Written by: David Reas
Written at: Butler University
Written for: Robert Oprisko
Date written: February 2014