

## **Causes of the failure of the state in Syria (2010-2019)**

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### **Abstract**

What broke out as the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2010 stroke Egypt and shed its light on the Middle East, including Syria. During the first few days of demonstrations in Syria, the spring turned into a bloody fall and a full-scale civil war. Political-security crises and economic and social problems that had dominated the country during Assad's family rule left the state in deep defeat. Meanwhile, the arena of war turned into the scene of conflict between different political forces and their regional and international supporters, caused Syria to encounter immense foreign intervention. In this regard, this article attempts to figure out the answer to this question, "What are the causes for the Syrian state of failing during 2010-19?" The authors hypothesize that "the state in Syria has failed since the beginning of the protests due to persistent social, economic and political-security crises that led to the militarization of the country by the opposition and insurgent groups." The findings also indicate that the Syrian state faced historical crises after 2010 in economic imbalance and decline, demographic and environmental pressures, political-administrative corruption, and weak public services, which deepened after 2011, and it spread to other areas such as ethnic-religious violence.

**Keywords:** Failed State, Ethnic-Religious Violence, Environmental Issues, Poverty & Economic Decline, Public Services, Security Apparatus.

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### **1.Introduction**

The discussion of the failure of the state in Syria as the main issue of this paper stems from the developments that took place in the country after 2011, as well as in the Middle East and North Africa region. The initial protests of the Syrian youth, which had erupted under the influence of developments in other countries in the region, led to an irreversible moment in the developments in this strategic Arab country due to the inability of the state to address and respond to these demands. The moment when the changes led to the destruction of infrastructure, killing of hundreds of thousands of people, poverty, displacement, and finally, the militarization of Syria after 2011 until today, and paved the way for foreign intervention in this country. These developments, as will be discussed later, are an example of the failure of the state in Syria. Although Bashar al-Assad, as the president of this country, which is gradually being accepted from a regional and international perspective, is trying to get out of the crisis of state failure, this does not diminish the depth of state failure in the recent years.

It should be noted that in the crisis of state failure, Syria is not the only state to be referred to as fragility. Still, the Arab Part of the Middle East, is now a region that has accommodated many of these states. Therefore, the need to understand, identify, and investigate the causes of Syria falling into the trap of crisis, has become a necessity for the authors of the article. Now according to this introduction, the main question of the article is that "What are the causes for the Syrian state of failing during 2010-19?" in response to this question, it was hypothesized that "the state in Syria has failed since the beginning of the protests due to persistent social, economic and political-security crises that led to the militarization of the country by the opposition and insurgent groups."

### **2.Methodology**

In this paper, descriptive- analytic methodology, along with structural explanation, has been used to discover the relationship between the effective components in state failure and the whole. The resources are based on library-based research and statistical information analysis.

### **3.Theoretical Framework**

The sovereign states in the International System are responsible for providing welfare and security for their citizens. Therefore, states that fail to provide these minimum standards are described as "weak," "fragile," or "with poor performance" (Torres and Anderson, 2004: 5). States with worse

conditions are labeled as "failed" or "collapsed" (Cramer and Goodhand, 2002: 889). Although we are witnessing revolutions in the features of states today and it is not only the state that plays a role in the international system, failed states are usually unable to accomplish their primary responsibilities and functions.

Zartman (1995) believes that failure happens when the basic functions of a state do not work. According to Rothberg (2002: 85), "Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and bitterly contested by warring factions. In most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals". As Robert Jackson (1998: 2) by "failed states," I shall be referring exclusively to states which cannot or will not safeguard minimal civil conditions, i.e., peace, order, security, etc. domestically." The database prepared by the World Bank has classified 209 countries based on six dimensions, including voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption (Kauffmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2005: 1).

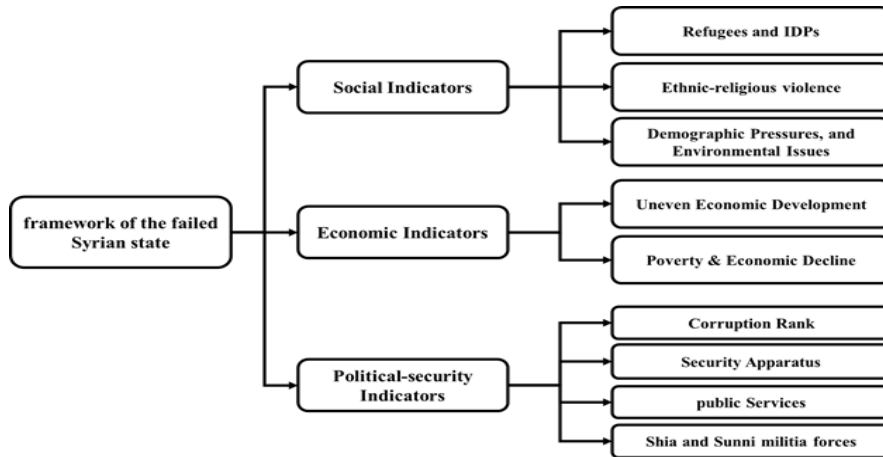
According to the Fund for Peace, such states may experience the following issues:

- The loss of physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force;
- The erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions;
- An inability to provide reasonable public services;
- The inability of the state to interact with other states (FFP,2015:3-4).

In this study, "failure refers to a situation in which the state is not able to accomplish its political, security and economic functions on an internal level for its citizens, leading to the crisis inside this country. Failed situation soars as a result of approaching conflict and finally war, and different social and political groups will initiate a military confrontation with the government. If the failure situation of the state worsens, a part of the country will fall into the hands of paramilitary groups, and the state loses its control over these regions, which is something we witnessed in Syria during 2010-19.

In the present study, a general framework was designed based on the different attitudes of failed state theories and the Fund for Peace approach. The structure of this framework is designed as follows:

**Figure1: The general framework of the failed Syrian State 2010-2019**



As shown in this model, the state in Syria is under pressure based on social, economic and political-security indicators. Under this pressure, the Syrian State lost its power as a high official because it does not have an integrated shell. The Syria State not only was unable to provide the citizens with services in the mentioned sectors but also lost its control over parts of its territory and lost its position, legitimacy, and authority. Based on the proposed model, the Syrian state is faced with some challenges which are classified into three major groups:

- Social indicators: Refugees and IDPs, Ethnic-religious violence, Demographic Pressures, and Environmental Issues
- Economic indicators: Uneven Economic Development and Poverty & Economic Decline;
- Political-security indicators: Corruption Rank; public Services, Security Apparatus and Shia, and Sunni militia forces (F.F.P.,2010-2019).

As seen, the general headings of the above indicators are adopted from the model of fragile states in the Fund for Peace.

#### **4. Social indicators**

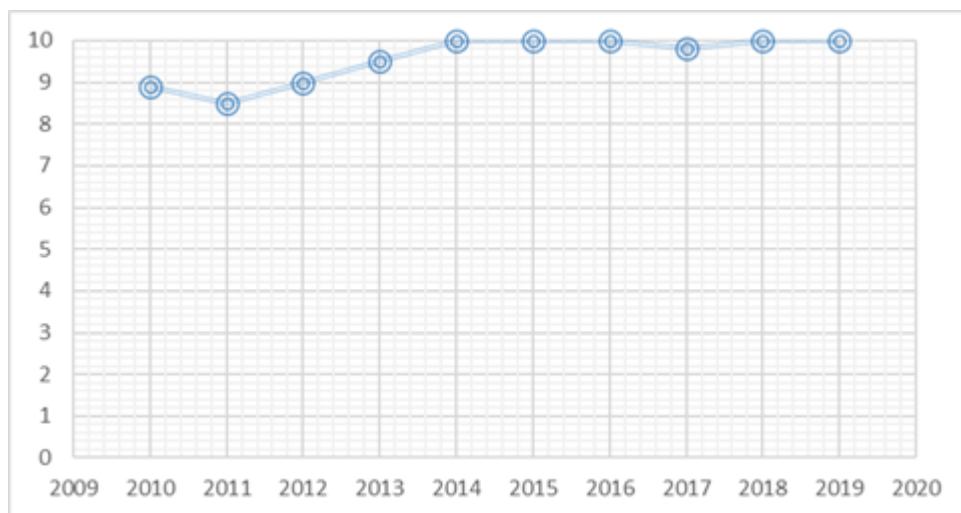
##### **1-4. Refugees and IDPs**

Syria has had one of the most complex humanitarian crises in the world for nine years. The crisis on refugee and displaced issues is a complete tragedy for humanity in the 21st century. By 2016, over 4.8 million Syrians had to flee their country, and 6.5 million were displaced within the country

(UNOCHA, 2019). In 2018, Syria had the highest number of refugees who fled the country. That year, about 6.65 million refugees left the country. (Statista,2020)

According to the reports by Mercy Corps, Syrian families are fighting for survival. Some endanger their lives on the way to Europe. Many Syrian asylum seekers are living in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq. The number of these asylum seekers is increasing every year (Mercy Corps, 2015). According to 2018 statistics, about 5.6 million people have fled the country, and another 6.3 million people have been displaced inside the country (World vision,2018). Given the 20 million population of Syria, this number of asylum seekers and displaced people indicate the depth of the crisis in this country. The chart below shows the situation of Syria refugees and IDPs from 2010 to 2019. A score of 0 means the stability of the state, and a score of 10 means the state is entirely failed.

**Graph 1: Refugees and IDPs from 2010-2019**



(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)

The situation in Syria among the countries affected by the refugee crisis is a humanitarian catastrophe and is likely to remain one of the most important domestic, regional, and international issues for the next decade. Lack of internal security, weak social and health infrastructure, lack of hope for the future, and the collapse of economic infrastructure are the most important

reasons that make these people afraid to return to their country. On the other hand, they have become a lever of political-security pressure against Europe and the Syrian government from Turkey, which is home to more than 3 million Syrian refugees, which complicates their situation.

#### **2-4. Ethnic-religious violence**

Due to the war and mass migration in this country, accurate statistics on population and ethnic and religious ratios are not available, but before the crisis, the population was about 22 million people, which in terms of ethnicity is about 87 to 90 percent Arabs, about 7 to 10 percent were Kurds and about 3 percent were Turks and Armenians. Religiously, about 74 percent of the country's population is Sunni, about 13 percent Alawite and Shiite, about 10 percent Christian, and about 3 percent Druze and other religions. (Bayat, et al, Spring,2020,52) In Syria, ethnic and religious divisions are much more active and serious than the divisions arising from the confrontation between tyranny and freedom. (Mirzaei.jegarloei, Kazemi and Motaghi, Winter,2017:83)

As a result, Syria is a country engaged in ethnic and religious violence, which has been witnessing an intensification of ethnic and religious conflicts since 2011, with the onset of the internal crisis and, in particular, with the rise of ISIL in 2013. So another layer in the critical situation of Syria in the social domain is that the country has drowned in a deep ethnic-religious violence crisis. Due to the ethnic diversity and historical gap between ethnic-religious sects of the region, the demonstrations became violent and turned into a civil war division of the country among ethnic and religious groups, i.e., Kurds, Shias, Sunnis, Alavids, and Christians. Intensification of the violence has caused Syria to face a civil war, and the military groups of different ethnicities and tribes got armed and pushed the government away from their cities and towns.

As a result, Syria became the battlefield of the war of all against all. In June 2013, the United Nations declared that 90 thousand were killed in these conflicts. It is estimated that there have been almost 207,000 civilian casualties since the beginning of the conflict in 2011 (Statista,2020). In March 2018, the Syrian Human Rights Watch stated that about 511 thousand people had been killed since the beginning of the war in Syria 7 years ago. This violent war has turned into a slaughterhouse for civilians, the military, and the paramilitary. More than 6,800 per month were reported

from March 2011 to March 2018, which means roughly 200 people were killed per day in Syria during this period (Reuters,2018).

Although violence has become an internal situation in Syria's political, cultural and social structures during a decade of civil war, it is a major threat posed by Islamist aggression forces affiliated with countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This threat has exacerbated the ethnic-religious crisis in Syria and has led to the failure of the state in Syria. These countries are pursuing their own interests and disrupting the internal unity of these groups in the pluralistic religious atmosphere of Syria, and they have been able to play a major role in the failure of the state in this country in the years under review.

#### **3-4. Demographic pressures and environmental issues**

Another key social factor is demographic pressures and environmental issues. The two have a direct impact on each other at the same time and have become a crisis considering climate change in recent decades. Today, due to population explosion, resource depletion, gap between rich and poor, increasing human needs and advances in science and technology, the environment is more endangered than before (Ahmadi and Akbarzadeh, Autumn,2018: 97). This crisis is one of the drivers of the failure of the state in Syria. The fund for peace states:" Pressures on the population such as disease and natural disasters make it difficult for the government to protect its citizens or demonstrate a lack of capacity or will. Includes pressures and measures related to Natural Disasters, Disease, Environmental crisis, Pollution, Food Scarcity, Malnutrition, Water Scarcity, Population Growth, and Mortality" (FFP, 2013: 10) These varied criteria on population pressures will be presented at the end of the section, based on Syria's annual scores on the fund for Peace data (bar chart).

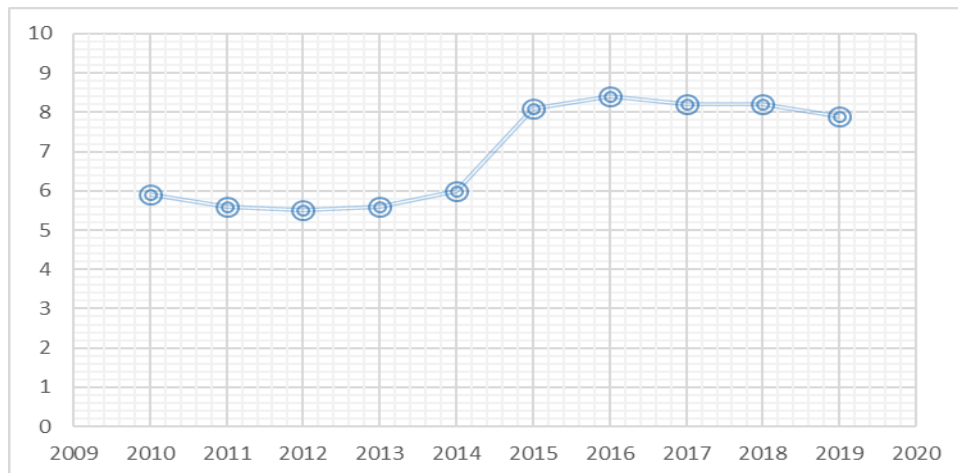
Studies on population pressures and environmental issues in Syria show that the lack of natural water and the decrease in precipitation, Syria was experienced severe droughts beginning in the mid-2000s. In the last years, increasing population has added to the growing demand for water and other natural resources in Syria. Increased land use is needed to support this growing population, which contributes to erosion and makes much of the land unusable (Haktanir and et al,2004:2-4). "Severe multiyear drought contributed to the displacement of large populations from rural to urban centers, food insecurity for more than a million people, and increased

unemployment—with subsequent effects on political stability" (Gleick, 2014:334) and that this, in turn, precipitated large-scale migration from the Syrian countryside. As about ' 1.5 million people were internally displaced by the drought' (Kelley and et al, 2015:3241–2).

Commenting on the role of desertification and drought in the Syrian crisis, Gianluca Serra states: “Back in 2009, I dared to forecast that if the rampant desertification process gripping the Syrian steppe was not halted soon, it could eventually become a trigger for social turmoil and even for a civil war. In an article on *The Ecologist*, Alex Kirby writes that the severe 2006-2010 drought in Syria may have contributed to the civil war. The ecological crisis created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the rural areas of the country, followed by massive internal displacements that the government failed to tackle and manage. For the first time, Syria had to rely on massive international emergency food aid in 2008" (Serra,2015).

Migrants from the drought were a contributory factor in the country's 2011 unrest. It intensified social uprising, exacerbating the pre-existing political instability, and the fragile situation of the Syrian State has further compounded this environmental crisis. Now, based on the annual condition of Syrian population pressures at the Peace Foundation from 2010 to 2019, we have plotted the following bar chart:

**Graph 2: Demographic pressure from 2010-2019**



(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)



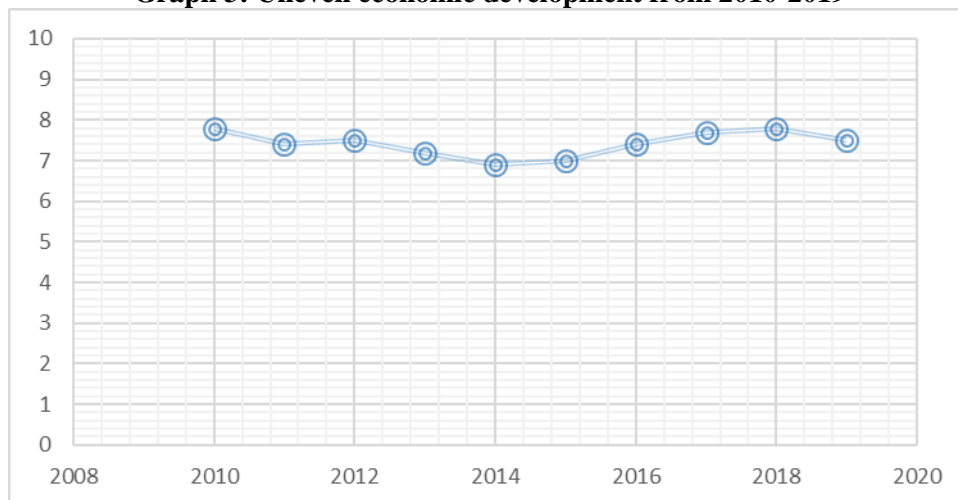
## 5. Economic indicators

### 1-5. Uneven economic development

Regarding this indicator, the Fund for Peace points out that uneven economic growth in a country means inequality in economic development in different parts, groups, factions, and regions in a country. It means that the tendency of the state toward a faction or ethnic and religious sect or a particular group or party causes them to enjoy economic development, while the rest will be kept deprived. The constituents of this indicator include the Gini index, the highest 10% revenue share, the lowest 10% revenue share, dispersion of rural services compared to urban ones, access to advanced services, and the rate of slum population (FFP,2015:17).

Scoring each parameter in the fragile states index is based on a 0-10 scale; the closer the index to 0, the more even the economic development, and it shows a dynamic economy. The closer the index to 10, the more uneven its economic development will be, and there will be a severe income difference between upper and lower deciles and severe discrimination between urban and rural services and access to advanced services in different regions. For this indicator, we tried to utilize the Syria fragile states index data proposed by the Fund for Peace from 2010 to 2019 (FFP,2010-2019).

**Graph 3: Uneven economic development from 2010-2019**



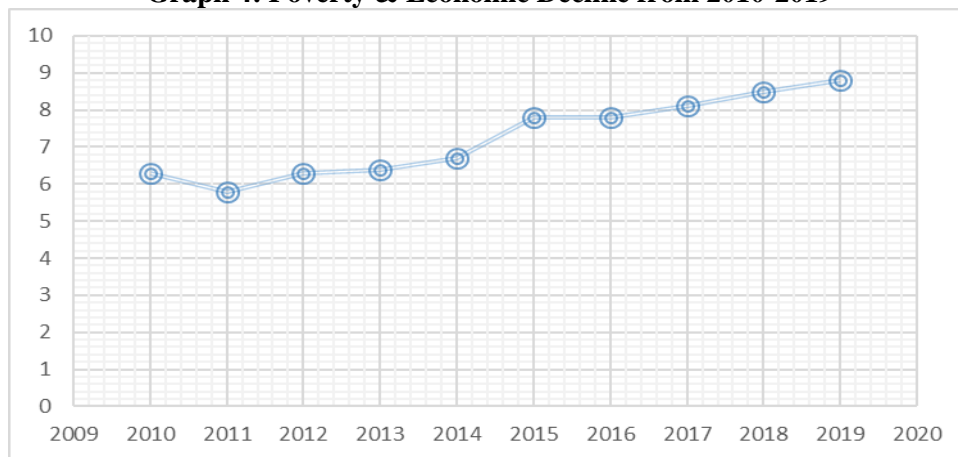
(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)

According to this bar chart, Syria's score is close to 10, which means it is in a fragile situation and is one of the highly fragile countries in the Middle East. It should be noticed that due to the civil war in Syria, the economy of this country has collapsed, and the regions involved with war have the worst economic situation. Syria's unbalanced economic development is by no means the product of the post-2011 civil war crisis but is rooted in rent-seeking in the country, which has benefited groups affiliated with the country's political system and left others helpless. The crisis intensified after 2011 and became one of the causes of the protests. As a result, civil war erupted and turned Syria into a completely failed economic state in the last decade.

#### 2-5. Poverty & economic decline

Severe poverty and economic decline mean the states' inability to fulfill the needs of those civilians who are unable to meet their needs. The economic downturn of a state can be reflected in indicators such as economic scarcity, government debt, unemployment, people's purchasing power, G.D.P. growth, and inflation (F.F.P.,2015:17). As stated earlier, scoring each parameter is based on a 0-10 scale. A score close to 10 shows severe unemployment, low purchasing power, economic scarcity, government debt, low per capita income, and decreased GDP (FFP,2010-2019). The situation of Syria's economy, according to the index of poverty and economic decline from 2010 to 2019, is as follows.

**Graph 4: Poverty & Economic Decline from 2010-2019**



(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)

As shown in the bar chart, Syria's economic situation has worsened year after year. Syria's poverty and economic decline scores have been 7.8 in 2016, 8.1 in 2017, 8.5 in 2018, and 8.8 in 2019 (FFP, 2010-2019). Due to the crisis, Syria's economy declined by 70%. Severe international sanctions alongside with destruction of the infrastructures during the war have been the major causes of such decay. The unemployment rate in Syria in 2017 was 50%, and 82.5% of people live below the poverty line (CIA,2020). Despite the constant attempts of Assad's government to re-control the country, this indicator shows the failure of the state during these years.

Overall, rising public poverty, inflation, unemployment following the civil war, the collapse of the national currency, the destruction of parts of the economic infrastructure, and the government's lack of control over the country's oil resources are among the most important consequences of state failure in Syria and expansion economic decline in this country.

## **6. Political-Security Indicators**

### **1-6. Corruption Rank**

Corruption happens at different levels, and there is usually a difference between the “macro” level or political corruption on the one hand and the “micro” level or administrative corruption on the other hand. The first one influences the high levels of the government and the leaders leading to erosion of good governing, rule of law, and economic stability, while the second one is related to paying bribes in exchange for better services, benefits, or hiring friends in reliable jobs. Although the negative effects of the first one are on the distribution of resources and high-level political decisions that are regularly discussed in the media, this is the administrative corruption that is conducted by the government’s employees at all levels (UNODC,2013:12).

One of the best ways to understand the corruption status in Syria is to refer to the Corruption Perception Index carried out by Transparency International (TI,2003-2019) every year. This index ranks the corruption status of the countries based on corruption in the public sector based on this definition, “Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” In other words, this index is an indicator that shows the public sector corruption rank of a country among other countries. According to this index, a score closes to zero indicates severe corruption, and a country with a score

of 100 is highly clean and transparent (TI, 2003-2019). To understand the corruption status in Syria, we referred to the annual rankings by Transparency International.

**Graph 5: Transparency international rank of Syria from 2010 to 2019**



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL

(Source: Trading economics, 2010-2019)

According to the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, Syria is the 178 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries. The corruption in this country worsens with an increasing trend during the years of civil war, and the worst status was calculated in the last year (TI,2010-2019). Based on this indicator, civil war, division of the country, and external interventions have worsened Syria’s place in this index. The Syrian government also faced political-administrative and financial corruption before the war, which was the result of central government rents to certain groups and individuals. The crisis, as shown in the table, escalated sharply after 2012 and culminated in 2016, making Syria one of the most corrupt countries in the world, which has been instrumental in defeating the state.

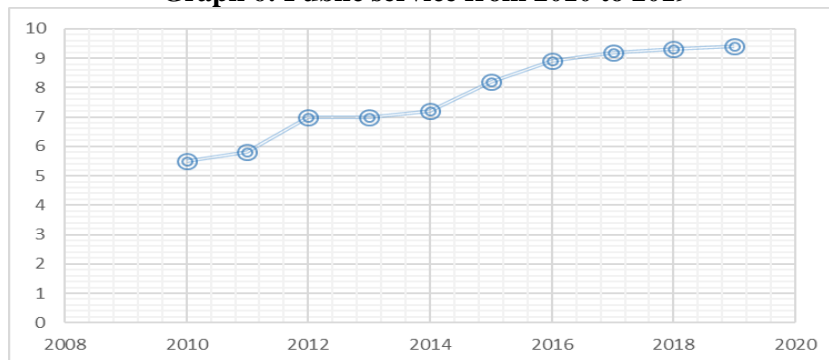
**2-6. Public services**

As a result of the state's failure and intensification of the civil war in Syria, the people of this country have had severe problems with having access to education and health services, and the infrastructures in all sectors of public services have faced severe damages. According to the statistics published by

the United Nations Office from 2011 to 2016, we have witnessed that about 11.5 million Syrians needed health care, 13.5 million required humanitarian support, 12.1 million needed water, 5.7 million children require educational assistance. Also, about 2.7 million had no access to schools and education. About 2.5 million people were in food insecurity, and 1.5 million needed shelters and life facilities (UNOCHA,2019). At least 50% of sewage systems are affected by hostilities and are not functional, exposing communities to significant health risks. 6.5 million people are food insecure, and 2.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity (UNOCHA,2019).

According to the statistics published by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA,2018), at the beginning of the civil war in Syria, 1.6 million Syrians did not have access to electricity. Due to the war and complete destruction of most conflict regions, this country lost a large part of its electrical infrastructures. Besides, by May 2016, the forces close to Bashar al-Assad targeted 310 hospitals and health facilities 454 times (Allen-Ebrahimian, 2017). In comprehensive research of the destructions of the public and service sector in three towns Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama in March 2017, the World Bank writes these three towns have been destroyed from 50% to 80%. Also, the destruction rate of education infrastructures has been more than 53%, which has caused 74% of the students to be deprived of education. These statistics are only a part of the crisis in the public, health, education, and life situation of the Syrians since the beginning of the crisis. The following bar chart depicts the weak status of public services in Syria because of war from 2010 to 2019 based on the Fund for Peace reports.

**Graph 6: Public service from 2010 to 2019**



(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)

Based on the chart above, the state of public services and the destruction of its infrastructure during the years under study, which has continued the crisis and civil war in the country, reached from 5.8 in 2011 to 9.3 in 2018. Under these circumstances, the state of Syria's public service is approaching the red dot and the crisis a year. The country's score in 2012 and 2013 was 7, in 2014 was 7/2, 8/2 in 2015, 8/9 in 2016, and 9/2 in 2017. The state of public services plays a key role in the fate of the Syrian state. Public services are closely linked to all previous factors. As long as public services are weak, the displacement and asylum-seekers crisis not only continue, but there is no solution. Poor public services will mean more ethnic-religious divisions over how to divide them and will lead to unbalanced economic development. The result of poor public services is an economic decline and state failure. This is quite evident from 2010 to 2019.

### **3-6. Security Apparatus**

Historically, the Syrian army is one of the most important components of this country and has a historical background in the developments in this country. In fact, this army has its roots in local and tribal forces which merged into the country's official army after the end of the French guardianship and the independence of Syria (Pollack,2004). It plays a vital role in the Syrian government, resulted in five military coups in 1949, 1954, 1963, 1966, and 1970 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010: 273). By 2010, the army had about 250,000 personnel in different sections (Dagher,2018). It is the main source to keep Bashar al-Assad's authority and the main pillar of stability inside the country although it has conducted repressive measures against the civilians.

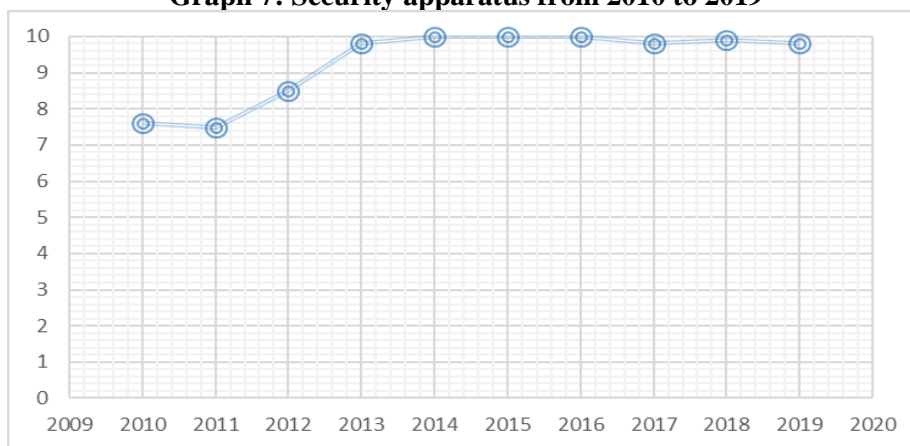
With the onset of the crisis in Syria and the spread of anti-government protests in 2011, we witnessed a breakup in some parts of the country's official army. Since 2012, the Syrian military has played a significant role in supporting the Assad government and preventing the empowerment of the opposition, suppressing the protesters, rebel groups, and the free army. During that year, about 10 thousand personnel of the army quit their posts and formed the Free Syrian Army to fight the Assad government. Also, the free army had an estimated number of 200 thousand personnel. In 2012, due to the unwillingness of some militias to oppose and suppress the protesters, they quit their posts and were estimated to be 60 thousand people (Emre and Abu-Nasr,2012). On June 14, 2013, 73 officers of the Syrian army sought

asylum in Turkey, among whom there were seven generals and 20 colonels (Daily Star,2013). Later, these officers formed the central command pillar of the Free Syrian Army.

Before being supported by Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah, the Syrian army underwent serious defeat, and before 2016, a large part of Syria was taken out of the control of the government and army and was controlled by the free army, al-Nusra, ISIS, and most importantly the Kurds and other militant groups. After the army was strengthened and most regions were reclaimed by al-Assad and his advocates, he tried to show the lost power and authority of the army. In December 2016, with the fall of Aleppo and its control by Assad, the army took control of 5 other populous cities. The army air forces were not reluctant to use chemical weapons and to target residential areas, civilians, and hospitals in cities and regions controlled by insurgents and the opposition (Laub,2017).

The most outstanding chemical attacks are the one in Khan Shaykhun on April 4, 2017, and one in Douma on April 7, 2018 (Hubbard, 2018). The inefficiency of the military in Syria and the spread of war against all, the violence against the civilians demonstrate the profound weakness of the state. The Syrian army has gradually been able to regain control of the country; however, it was possible because of foreign assistance and not the independent power of the army. The position of fragility in Syria in this index is as follows.

**Graph 7: Security apparatus from 2010 to 2019**



(Source: Fund for Peace, 2010-2019)

#### **4-6. Shia and Sunni militia forces**

The onset of the Syrian crisis and its escalation, along with the weakness of Assad's army, paved the way for various political and military movements in Syria (Davtala, Kazemi Zand and Zakerian, Spring 2020:226). Most of the Shia-led forces are formed in the crisis in Syria. After 2013 when ISIS, rebel groups, and Sunni opposition spread in Syria and becoming a threat to Shias, Shia militia groups also became incited to take part in the Syrian battle. Since that year, we have witnessed an increase in Shia foreign fighters in Syria to defend Assad's state and prevent the fall of Syria. Lebanese Hezbollah militias are among the most famous and probably the most important of these groups, but they are not the only force. Iraqi Shia militias also sent their fighters to Syria and sent some troops to Syria like Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and other military groups (Lund,2015). Since the beginning of 2016, many Hezbollah forces in Syria that are estimated to be 4 to 8 thousand, with the help of the Russian Air Force, have played a key role in pushing and clearing Syrian lands from opposition forces. Hezbollah has often been at war with Sunni forces opposed to Assad (Laub,2017).

Two other Shia forces operating in Syria are Liwa Fatemiyoun and Liwa Zainabiun that have mobilized in support of Assad's state. Liwa Fatemiyoun consists of Afghani Shias who support Assad and are estimated by various sources to be between 10 and 20 thousand. Liwa Zainabiun is Pakistani Shias that support Assad (Heistein and West,2015). These forces are known as forces loyal to Assad and the Holy Shrine Defenders. They defend Assad and protect Shia religious sites in Syria against his opposition forces. These Ummah-centered forces have originated from state failure, and they will be the main source of state failure in the future due to their motivations and goals.

Another active military force that played a significant role in the fragility of the Syrian government was ISIS. It is a Sunni Multinational Islamic extremist terrorist group that roses from al-Qaeda's ashes in Iraq and renamed it the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in 2013. ISIS, as the bloodiest outcome of the jihadist Salafist movement, was the real result of the failure of the state, the closure of political solution horizons, and deepening crises in Syria and Iraq (Abu-Bakr Ali,2015:7-8). Since 2014, ISIS has been considered as the key to state failure in Syria. It is led by and mainly composed of Sunni Arabs from Iraq and Syria. As of March 2015, it



has control over territory occupied by 10 million people in Iraq and Syria (Mossallanejad,2016:3).

It sought to replace state-centered world order with a global Islamic state based in Iraq and Syria, expand its branches and networks in other countries (CIA,2020), and finally use the Islamic laws as the basis of legislation for its caliphate. The rapid empowerment of this force in Syria and Iraq, which were both failed states, quickly gained international attention, and the United States launched airstrikes on ISIS in Iraq and then Syria in the form of an international coalition. ISIS spread its attacks and moved toward the Kurdish city Kobani and besieged it for four months. As a result of U.S. airstrikes and the struggles of the Kurdish forces in Kobani, ISIS suffered its first defeat and retreated from the city. It was the first time that ISIS forces had retreated. In May 2014, ISIS conquered the historic city of Palmyra and began to destroy parts of this cultural area (Glenn,2016). Within months of bloody and suicidal battles, the Islamic State had seized vast areas of western Syria and eastern Iraq with a population of more than 10 million people in 2014.

In early 2017, the U.S. officials warned that ISIS might have 10,000 loyal troops in Iraq and Syria. During the same year, Kurdish forces, along with the United States, launched new operations against ISIS (Glenn, 2016). In 2018, ISIS lost its control over much of the regions in Syria and only had control over limited Syrian-Iraqi borders and southern Syrian regions (CIA, 2020). With its gradual defeat, it became a force without any lands under the rule; however, it still had the necessary power in the form of secret and suicide layers. With the current tense situation in northern Syria under attack by Turkey and with the United States withdrawing from the region, ISIS is likely to revive.

## **7. Research Findings**

The findings of the study indicate that the state in Syria has failed in all social, economic, and political-security dimensions during the period under study. At the societal level, the country of 20 million people has faced a crisis of displacement and asylum of 12 million people, which means that more than 60% of the country's population has been displaced during these years. A large part of this displaced population is also made up of ethnic-religious groups that the Assad government has been unable to protect and secure. These groups are also the main subject of war-related violence, with

most reported deaths, displaced persons, victims of sexual violence, as well as poverty and malnutrition. At the same time, in completing the triangle of social crises, the crisis of demographic and environmental pressures has itself become an unfortunate situation that has a lifespan of more than three decades. The drought crisis caused by declining annual rainfall, coupled with Turkish pressure to block the Euphrates River and build massive dams, has hurt Syria, and the growth of a population that needs more water for agriculture and drinking has added to the complexity. Such social crises are likely to become a serious problem for the state and society in the coming decades, and severe climate change will add to the burden.

On the other hand, the economic situation in Syria, which was facing problems before 2011, with the onset of the crisis in the country and the spread of civil war, gradually slipped into a deep crisis and with the expansion of development gaps in different parts of the country suffered a gradual but deep economic decline. These conditions have forced the country to ration basic goods such as bread. The findings of the article show that more than 10 million Syrians are experiencing food insecurity. The crippling sanctions have also plunged the economy into a deep recession that cannot be overcome without foreign aid, as the country suffered \$ 300 billion in damage to all sectors of the economy, security, and society from 2011 to 2020.

The findings of the article show that the political-security impact of the conflict is also very significant and is constantly increasing. Lack of continued access to health, education, housing, and employment services has exacerbated the effects of the conflict, leading millions to unemployment and poverty. With a severely broken health care system, the Syrians are now facing the deepest health crisis of a century, the outbreak of Covid-19, which is still spreading, and there are no facilities to deal with the virus. The crisis looks daunting in the context of the collapse of the country's health infrastructure, as there is no proper system for testing citizens.

At the same time, Kurdish, Shiite, and Sunni Arab militias alongside the government have inflicted another part of the political-security defeat in Syria. Although parts of these forces are in alliance with the government (Shiites) or an unwritten agreement with it (the Kurds), the Syrian army is no longer the only carrier and armed force in the country to seize power.

Rather, the Sunni insurgents in Idlib and Afrin and the allied actions of the United States in the areas of Kobani, Hasakah, Qamishlo, Jazira, etc. have military-security power. They are the main cause of the state's failure in the political-security dimension because they have seriously challenged the state's control over a large area of Syrian territory.

### **8. Conclusion**

Overall, this paper sought to develop a model that would fit the situation in Syria between 2010 and 2019 and be able to analyze the failed state of Syria. We attempt to examine the critical internal situation of Syria within the framework of three major indicators of social, economic, and political-security leading to the failure of the state. According to the three indicators, the state in Syria has been unable to meet the accumulated demands of the people. Thus, there was a situation that led to domestic protests, the spread of corruption, the lack of public services, the lack of political freedoms, the lack of government accountability, unemployment, and economic decline. The suppression of civil protests by the military and disciplinary forces led Syria into a crisis that led to a war against everyone. In this context, religious groups, especially jihadist currents, found the space appropriate to grow and paved the way for the promotion of religious violence in the country. This situation saw the rise of Salafi and radical jihadist groups such as ISIL, al-Qaeda and al-Nusra, and dozens of other currents that had a crucial role in deepening the Syrian crisis. These groups have been the most important cause of the escalation of violence and war, adding to the continuing failure of the state in Syria. Consequently, the authors believe that the state in Syria has been a failed state in the years under study.

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