

Example of the syrian opposition argumentative essay

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The Syrian Opposition

The Syrian revolution differs from the other Arab Spring revolutions in various ways, but what is the most curious is why the Syrian opposition is in such disorder and how it managed to be formed at all? The answers to these questions lie not in the current uprising but in the Syrian half-century history. Before the supremacy of the current Ba'ath Party, Syria was characterized by continues chain of coups and fighting between various political and religious groups, which were approaching their own internal and external goals. When Hafez al-Assad seized power during the 1970 Correction Revolution, his main goal was to keep the unity of the country and dominance of the Ba'ath Party (Ottaway and Choucair-Vizoso, 2008, p. 65). Form the strategic perspective, having previous experience of multi-fractioned political movement and continuous coupes, this objective could be achieved only through destruction of any potential opposition. Thus, he proclaimed the regime of violent repressions against any kind of opposition to the Ba'ath rule. Those oppositional elements, which were not destroyed in the first years of his rule, were systematically eliminated during the Islamic uprisings of the Muslim Brotherhood during 1976-1982, featuring the most famous massacres in Aleppo and Hama. During this period, the death toll of executed opposing elements and ordinary civilians reached 30-40 thousands (Ottaway and Choucair-Vizoso, 2008, p. 74). Under such rule and methods of goals achievement, development of strong and functional opposition was quite a challenge. The situation was complicated by the nature of opposition, which was based on different socioeconomic and ideological positions.

Traditionally, Syrian oppositional forces could be divided into three categories:

“ The most moderate opposition consisted of the recent defectors from the regime -

former party members, old business elites, who had found themselves losing ground to

“ sons of the regime” The secularist opposition - intellectuals inside Syria, the

Muslim Brotherhood, secularist supporters living abroad Finally, local leaders within Syria, likely of an Islamist bent” (Ottaway and Choucair-Vizoso, 2008, p. 79).

On the other hand, death of Hafez al-Assad, in 2000, gave a new opportunity for the democratic self-expression of the Syrian intellectuals and revival of political opposition. The movement was named the Damascus Spring, which was a peaceful argument of the 1000 Syrian intellectual elite for the democratic reform of Syria (Shimko, 2012, p. 321). This movement was ended by a chain of arrests of the main leaders. The relevance of the aforementioned historical data for the current opposition is in a few aspects. First of all, opposition as a unified and strong front had never existed in Syria and to expect that it would appear today is simply delusional. This is conditioned by pre-Assad fractured nature of the Syrian politics and diverse religious and ethnical differences within the country. Secondly, due to the Assad family repressions, the opposition lacks any kind of reaction and

ability to make workable and efficient decisions, since it expects further punishment from the ruling party (Landis, 2006/2007, p. 48). Thirdly, after the decades of repressions and destruction of all political opposition, there were very few strong and progressive opposing groups which could unite and give a proper response to the existing regime.

The main reasons why two coalitions cannot stand as a unified front include the following. First of all, while NCC is a relatively new formation created in September 2011, SNC includes the groups which took part in the previous uprisings including The Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change, which was born in 2001 during the Damascus Spring; the Muslim Brotherhood, which being radical element preserved its activity since 1980's and some new grassroots groups (Shimko, 2012, p. 382). From one point, due to the presence of the veterans of the opposition, SNC is more realistic in its comprehension that existing regime should be overthrown; while NCC still believes that constructive dialogue is a workable solution. Another difference between two coalitions is that SNC is acting rather from abroad than from inside the country like NCC. Most of SNC members and both leaders were in exile in the European countries (Abdelbaset Sayda from Paris replaced Burham Ghalion from London in June 2012). On the other hand, whether their political declarations can be called actions is another matter.

The main problem for both oppositional coalitions is that they are delusional about what is actually taking place in the country; they build their programs concerning restructuring the future post-Assad Syria, forgetting that in order to achieve that Syrian people would have to achieve success in the

revolution, which can no longer be of “ non-violent character” (Ulutas, 2011, p. 92). From strictly political perspective, the Syrian opposition acts and proclaims goals in a sense that it waits for someone else to bring freedom to their people. On the other hand, they have a mutual conviction that humanitarian intervention would not be able to resolve the problem in the country (The Economist, 2011, p. 82).

Incapability of the Syrian opposition to form a unified front and decide the final agenda of resistance conduct, further reforms and after-Assad foreign policy resulted in a lack of a substantial support from the international community. By substantial support is meant working on an efficient plan of interference either in the framework of the UN intervention or humanitarian support by individual countries. In this context, foreign states even those in opposition to Syria, managed to achieve certain status quo with the Assad government, mainly because he ruled the country as a unity. Thus, unpredictability of the revolution’s outcome makes the neighboring countries and world community in general hesitant concerning their official positions, not to speak of the potential actions (Pollock, 2012, A17).

Foreign states simply do not know what to expect from the future oppositional government mainly because the opposition itself has no idea. If the Syrian opposition had an exact position about its objectives and main goals, it could have chosen foreign allies accordingly. Irrespective of the fact Burham Ghalion is a recognized academic and activist, his confusing statements about position of Israel in respect to the revolution were the greatest diplomatic mistake. By calling Israel “ an enemy of the Syrian

revolution” and expecting that after the civil war Israel would return strategically vital Golan Heights was not just delusional, but very dangerous statements for the whole Syrian populations (Ulutas, 2011, p. 104).

Looking at the Syrian revolution from the point of realistic school of International Relations theory, any scholar would argue that for a new or transitional state the most crucial goal would be to entice potential foreign allies from the authorities they fight with. In other words, if Syrian coalition wanted to succeed it would have to work as one front towards gaining of the external support. In this context, it would not be so complicated to negotiate with Russians about preservation of their maritime base in the port of Tartous (Baev, 2011, p. 15). The same could have been the case with Israel – by promising the improvement of bilateral relations and recognition of Israel’s control over the Golan Heights, the opposition could have gained the support which might have them immediate success (Pollock, 2012, A17).

The cost of this success would have been pride and recognition of the Israeli supremacy, but in exchange Syrian people would have gained freedom from tyranny and could live in a reformed, democratic country (Shimko, 2012, p. 412). In this context, the problem of oppositional coalition is that it consists of political thinkers rather than militaries and strategists. From a strategic point of view, they would consider the cost-effectiveness of each of their decisions and if their aim was peace for their people and elimination of the Assad regime, they would have reconsidered their passionate statements about Israel and eternal need to choose between Russia and the West

(Erdbrink, 2012, p. 2b). In the end, in the Middle East, the key to any success is Israel.

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