

# **Role of Economic Factors in Political Movement**

## **The Syrian Case**

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## **Abstract**

The political movement, sparked off in Syria in March 2011 with the main demand being political freedoms, is an indication that the society has reached unacceptable stages of institutional, economic and social development. This paper highlights the economic factors affecting such movement from a comprehensive development perspective.

The Syrian economy has in the past decade achieved positive results on the macro level in terms of growth rates, relative price stability and low budget deficit and low debts level. Oil contribution to the GDP, exports and fiscal revenues has retreated giving way to other sectors with higher added value.

However, these indicators hide structural imbalances. Economic growth is depending on quantitative factors including physical capital, increased real estate and financial speculations, expanding informal sector in trade, tourism and services in general. This was accompanied with poor productivity and low wages. Employment ratios have been very weak in the past decade and the contribution of both genders in the labor force has shrunk in both rural and urban areas.

Other factors include inefficient public investment, wastes in the state-owned enterprises, investment environment plagued with rampant corruption and monopoly, coupled with concentration on indirect taxes. Energy price liberalization played a negative role, reflecting on productive sectors in terms of increased costs and declining competitiveness.

Economic development did not succeed in reducing money metric poverty, and development did not serve the interests of impoverished people in the last decade. Besides, liberalization policies had a negative impact on living standards. Development suffered great disparity between regions in respect of economic activity, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

The root cause of economic development imbalances lie in inefficient performance of institutions, lack of transparency and accountability, and absence of an integrated future vision. Public service underperformance, and inefficient preparation and implementation of public policies, have occurred as a consequence. Besides, absence of basic freedoms of expression, sharing and accountability, coupled with a crippled civil society role, has contributed to the increase of social contradictions between the political economic elites and large segments of society.

Syria's development model has adopted a "low equilibrium" approach reflected in poor productivity, large informal sector, oligopoly and high costs in parallel with substandard but almost free social services, including health, education, and subsidy of basic commodities, in addition to dominate political institutions and weaken of accountability and participation.

Syrian society's aspirations for the future, and the state of frustration caused by decline of its relative position, absence of a way out of the unproductive performance of the development process, and fragmented reform policies, have probably constituted a critical factor in breaking away of the existing equilibrium, taking advantage of the Tunisian revolution, which opened the door for " the possibility of change."

The paper concludes with general recommendations for achieving the desired future development goals.

## **Introduction**

Since March 2011, Syria has witnessed a deep socio-political crisis, the consequences of which have revealed the complexity of involved factors; politically, economically and socially, at both internal and external levels. But, the social movement in Syria has undoubtedly been political par excellence. It has right from the beginning upheld and consistently adhered to the value of freedom, demanded by most parties in different forms and manifestations. It has come as an expression of the essence of the crisis, manifested by denial of political freedoms and lack of efficient and transparent representative institutions.

The factors that led to the current crisis are rooted in "institutional bottleneck", which marginalized large segments of society, and deprived them of effectively contributing to the political, economic and social development. The state of "institutional bottleneck" in Syria is reflected in the loss of political and economic institutional ability to change over time and reflect the aspirations, interests and expectations of the new society. These institutions themselves were formed by old institutions, which promised developmental policies, including large government investment in health, education and services. These have been associated with a tremendous cross-border transfer of knowledge and expertise into Syrian society, through IT revolution, which helped elevate society's development expectations. Aspired changes were not associated with activation of partnership conduits, involving essential parts of individuals and groups, due to the absence of representative institutions, poor political parties, and suppression of civil society.

Institutional deficiency is represented in the protracted absence of efficiency and accountability from existing institutions, which produced an inadequate economic and social situation represented by low productivity, structural imbalance of national economy, in addition to spread of unemployment, migration, and relative decline of economic competitiveness. These were accompanied by declining intellectual and cognitive production, and underprovided education and health services, in addition to regional disparities and environmental damage.

Consequently, development challenges in Syria have accumulated over the past decades. Arising problems have not been deeply addressed, to empower the Syrian society to improve its aspired economic, social and institutional priorities. That situation created major imbalances leading to a decline of relative development status in Syria, in comparison with the developing countries, coupled with a mounting failure of national economy to bear the social development and environmental pressures, in addition to pressures occurred due to Syria's role in the region.

Economic factors play an important role in determining the nature and causes of social and political movement. Shape and function of existing institutions, and the social relationships associated with the economic interests of individuals and groups, as well as production and distribution of wealth are highly essential requirements for design of ruling regimes and ideologies. Thus, it is necessary to understand the role of economic development in reaching social mobility against the existing institutions. In this context, the profound relationship between the economic, social and political aspects must be taken into consideration, based on the expanded concept of development, aimed to broaden people's choices, prove them with proper opportunities, and enable them to enjoy a decent, long and equitable life.

Within this framework, the issue of injustice, marginalization and deprivation will be discussed, as a reflection of economic development in Syria, in addition to addressing the expectations of individuals and groups as to what is fair and equitable. According to Amartya Sen, individuals feel injustice when they think they are no longer capable of overcoming obstacles that prevent them from having a better, "more equitable" situation. It should be noted, however, that a search for basics to have a just society is impossible and unnecessary, but there is a consensus vis-à-vis unfair situations, or relatively less equitable situations (Sen 2009).

The presented paper addresses the most important economic factors, contributing to the development failures, which caused the "social turmoil", based on a reading

of what lies beyond the conventional economic indicators. While macroeconomic indicators point to a relatively stable economic situation in terms of inflation, public debts, deficit in budget, trade, and current balance, and achievement of comparatively high growth rates over the last two decades, as well as a consistent unemployment rate of 8%, with international institutions reports praising the achieved economic reforms, especially in the last decade, we find that indicators of standard of living of Syrian families on the one hand, and rates of new job opportunities , and labor force contribution, on the other, are in a state of decline. In addition, development is inequitable between regions, economic development sources are largely dependent on finance, services and real estate sectors, coupled with insufficient competitiveness at the level of enterprises, and oligopoly, which reveals deep structural challenges in the Syrian economy.

The economic equilibrium at macro level was at a minimum, characterized by poor productivity, modest investment rates, paucity of adequate public services, persistent erosion of economic public sector, and expansion of the informal sector. These factors produced an inaccurate perception vis-à-vis economic development situation.

Development in its broad sense has failed to pursue a clear perception whereby intellectual potentials may be unleashed, and to provide these potentials with a conducive and proper environment. What is happening now does not show that this equation has been understood. Hence, economic, social, and political marginalization occur as a source of thwarting national capacities, basically viewed as institutional imbalances related to participation, accountability, and mechanism of distribution of wealth/power among different social segments.

The economic, social, and institutional aspects of economic development during the past decade will be discussed in the following three sections. The fourth section will review low equilibrium, characterizing Syria's economic development. It concludes with the significance of designing a developmental model that incorporates innovative properties capable of transforming the current crisis to an opportunity to embark on a new future.

### **(1) Economic Development:**

Amartya Sen's contribution in the 1990s focused on a return to the essence of the development process, required to improve individuals' lives. The concept of development was thoroughly discussed, through concentration on expanding human choices by proper investment of their potentials, and providing them with equitable opportunities to be used in an effective manner. These opportunities

include their right to participate in the political process, through election and accountability, in addition to activating NGOs' role. People's contribution to the production process and provision of social security for those unable to work, should also be ensured.

The concept of equitable distribution of opportunities among individuals has developed, and concern for justice and poverty has become a major issue for many international organizations, where Millennium Development Goals, which largely focus on poverty and empowerment, have been adopted at the turn of the millennium. Besides, concepts supporting the causes of impoverished groups, inclusive growth, and participatory and sustainable development prevailed. New strategies and programs to reduce poverty in third world countries have evolved.

In parallel, economic development theories have developed in the last two decades, where durable sources required for sustainable economic growth that takes into consideration provision of material base suitable for achieving long-term social welfare have also been sought. Studies show the importance of effective involvement of various social sectors in the economic process, on the one hand, and equitable distribution of growth revenues, on the other, aimed at maintaining social stability, as a basic prerequisite for sustainable development. Studies have highlighted the role of institutions as a most important source for sustainable development (Acemoglu et al 2005). This subject will be dealt more elaborately in the case of Syria. In this section salient economic indicators will be discussed, and other complementary indicators outlining structural deficiencies will be presented.

### **1. Economic Growth:**

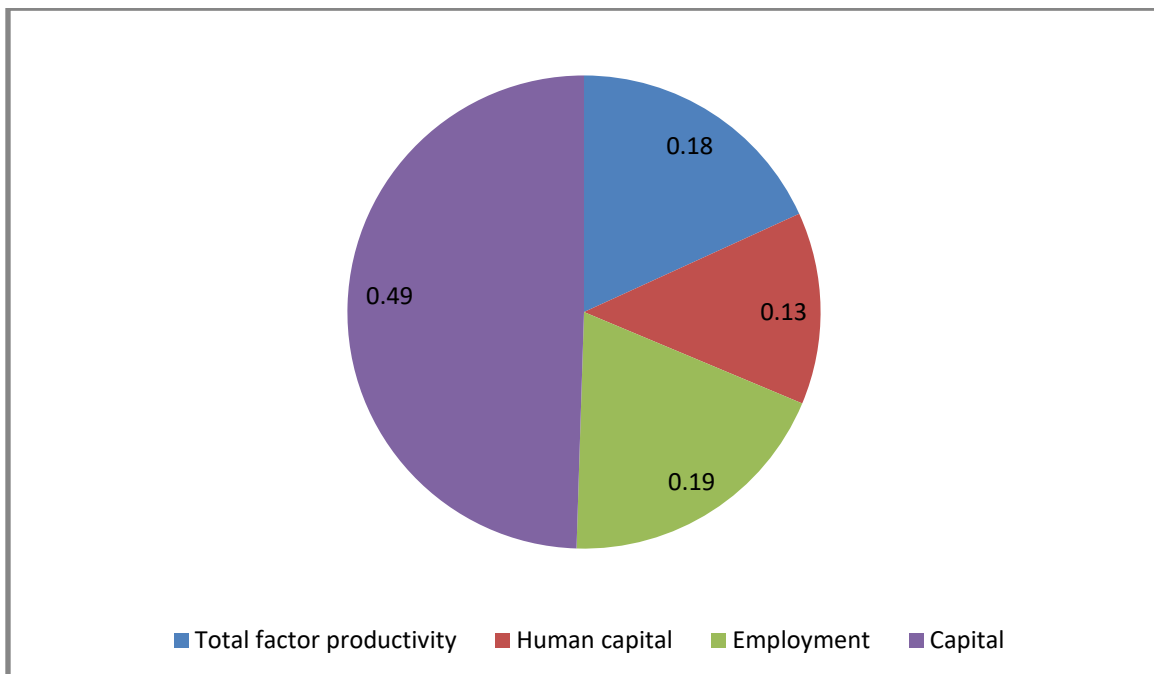
National economy has achieved relatively high economic growth rates, reaching an average growth rate for the period 2001 - 2010 of about 5.1%. It accounts for an annual per capita GDP growth of 2.6%, given that population growth rate registered 2.5%, considered to be among the highest in the world. Absence of population policy over the past decades has contributed to keeping the rate of population growth high (Population status in Syria, 2010).

Despite the relatively high growth rate, structural challenges of economic growth exist, such as low labor productivity in Syria, compared with other neighboring states. This situation reflects the need for upgrading economic productivity levels, to improve economic competitiveness and maximize economic returns.

Considering the long-term sources of growth, figure (1) below, explains that physical capital contribution is the main long-term source of growth, amounting to

about 49% for the period 1965 and 2010, followed by labor force, total factor productivity, and human capital. Some studies indicate (Nasr 2008) that total productivity factor productivity in Syria is largely dependent on agricultural sector growth rate, and is negatively affected by internal and external crises, i.e. "residuals" do not reflect a technological advancement in the case of Syria. On the other hand, labor contribution to long-term economic development in the last decade has considerably dropped. This may be attributed to paucity of created job opportunities, meaning that economic growth was not inclusive from the employment point of view.

**Fig. 1 : Contribution of the sources of economic growth in Syria (1965-2010)**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

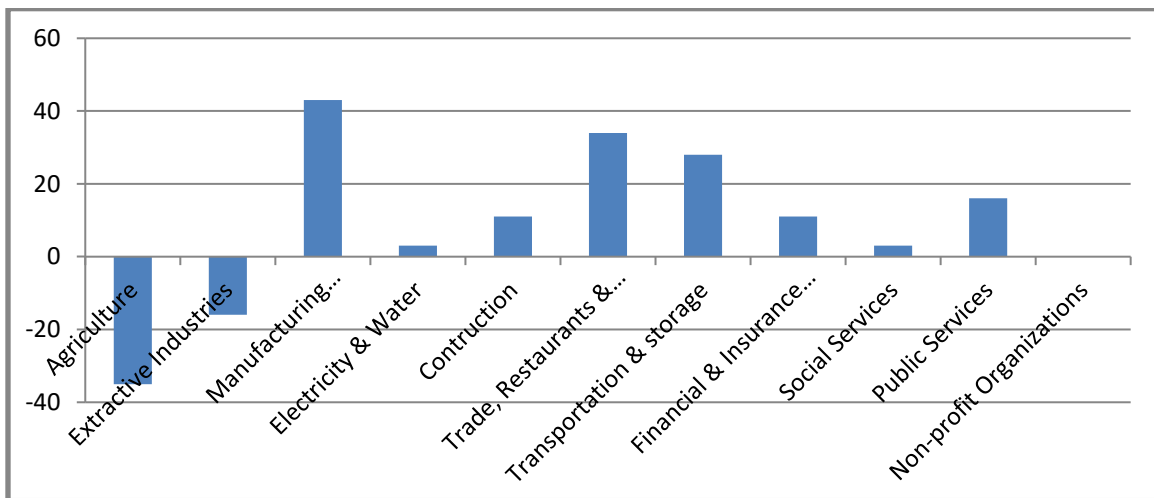
In terms of sector growth contribution during 2001-2010, fig. (2) shows that trade, transport, communications, finance, insurance, and real-estate sectors have achieved high growth rates. The latter sector has been affected by the large expansion of emerging banking and insurance sector, coupled with real estate boom experienced by the national economy. In addition, social and government services have also expanded, due to the expansion of health services, education, and public sector wages increases.

The manufacturing sector has contributed to the economic growth, benefitting from the establishment of industrial cities, which provided a better environment for available enterprises, resulting in the improvement of manufactured exports. Extractive industries (mainly oil) have achieved negative growth results due to declining production, with Syria becoming a net oil importer, after years in which oil was a major source of exports and budget revenues. This change constituted a fundamental challenge for economic management and pushed towards the need for pursuing deeper reforms.

The agricultural sector, meanwhile, has experienced a severe crisis due to drought, mismanagement of water resources, and delayed implementation of vital projects, including modern irrigation, as well as liberalization of energy and fertilizer prices. This downturn has impacted job opportunities creation, food security and commodity prices, in addition to economic growth.

National economy's structural composition has generally improved, as a result of decreased dependence on revenues generating sectors, particularly oil, coupled with improved performance of manufacturing sector. However, large expansion of real estate and finance speculation, as well as the expansion experienced in the trade and transportation sectors, especially in the informal sector, did not contribute to raising the productivity of the national economy over the long term.

**Fig. 2: Sector contribution to economic growth in Syria (2001-2010)**



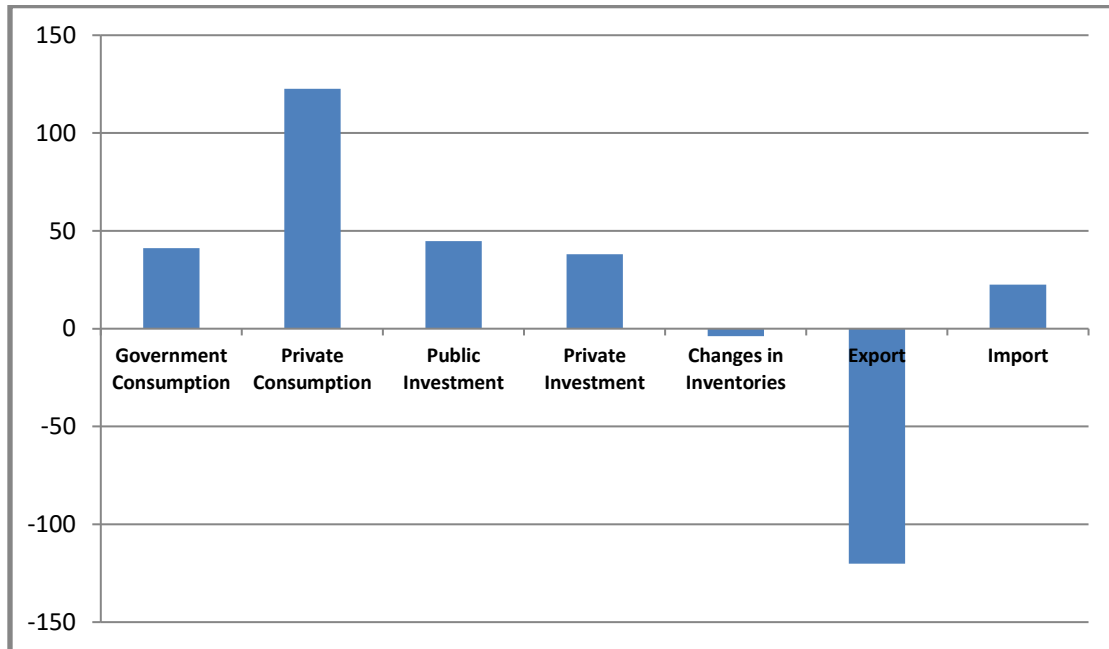
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

From demand side, fig. 3 highlights the main internal demand contribution to economic growth. Notwithstanding the decline in exports contribution to the growth, especially with oil exports decline, private and public consumption



increase, coupled with increased investments, have boosted economic growth rates.

**Fig. 3: Contribution of demand components to economic growth (2001-2010)**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

Public investment growth rates have been modest, and have been directly affected by the declining oil revenues, and the increasing in public sector wages. Besides, private investments were not sufficient to upgrade investment as a ratio of GDP, which remained around an average of 20%. Private sector investment, which accelerated at the beginning of the last decade, concentrated primarily on real estate and financial sector.

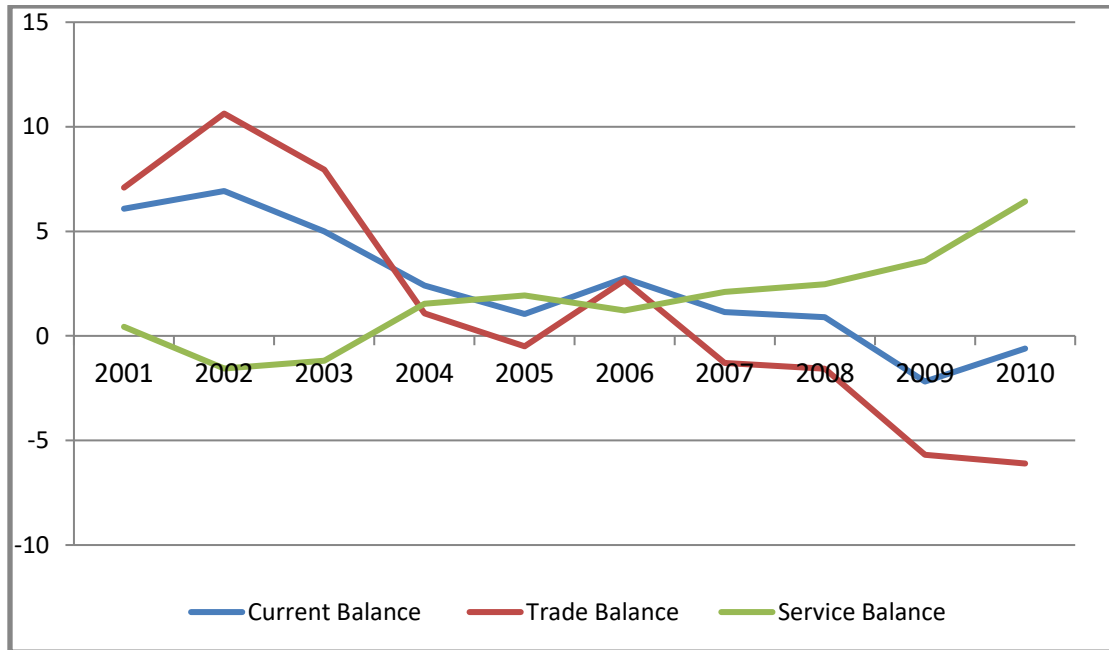
Private consumption growth conceals an important contradiction. Private consumption growth rates of resident Syrian families at fixed prices achieved negative growth rates during the past decade. Positive growth rate of internal private consumption at national accounts, may be attributed to the consumption made by Iraqi families, which raised the local demand, considering that average consumption of Iraqi families is higher than that of Syrian households.

## **2. Foreign Trade and Competitiveness:**

Merchandise imports have grown at rates higher than that of merchandise exports, which were negatively affected by the decline of agriculture and oil products,

despite the growth of non-oil exports. That situation was adversely reflected on trade balance (Fig. 4). On the other hand, services boomed, influenced by tourism sector improvement.

**Fig. 4: Current, trade and services balances (% of GDP, 2001-2010)**



Source: Central Bank of Syria; researchers' calculations

Terms of trade for Syrian exports improved, as a result of shifting to manufactured exports, which included higher value-added rates, coupled with oil price rises, regarded as a key national export commodity. However, in 2010, terms of trade experienced another downturn indicating that improvement was not sustainable. The shift of exports from Europe to the Arab countries also increased the demand for Syrian products in neighboring countries, especially Iraq and the Gulf States, causing Syrian exports to thrive.

Open trade policy, which was not associated with fundamental reforms of the productive sector and its environment, such as the free trade agreement with Turkey, impacted many economic sectors, including agriculture and manufactured industry, especially in labor-intensive sectors, like furniture and food. Trade liberalization does not automatically lead to enhancement and competitiveness of national economy, based on neo-classical argument, internal institutional constraints shift openness to a new source of revenues, and a decline of national productivity.

To maintain growth rates of non-oil exports, it is necessary to reform investment environment in a more profound manner so as to ensure production capacity increase in both quantity and quality, enabling exports to be more competitive. This may be realized through allowing individuals and institutions to have freedom of participation in the economic activity within a competitive and non-proprietary environment, which is still inherent in national economy, and prevents citizens to access the markets in different sectors. Several activities are monopolized by few businessmen, officials and a number of foreign investors. Besides, the investment environment still suffers from rampant corruption, bureaucracy and financing difficulties. We refer here to Syria's decline on Global Competitiveness Index from 78 (out of 134 countries) in 2008 to 97 (out of 139) countries in 2010.

### **3. Fiscal and Monetary Policies:**

#### **A. Fiscal policy**

Despite introduction of many laws and legislations that aim at improving public finance performance, fiscal policy suffers inefficient tax system. This is evident in the inadequate direct tax collection, manifested in a greater tax evasion, and attributed to the complexities of laws and legislations, large size of informal sector, lack of qualifications, and poor accountability.

One of the challenges posed by national fiscal policy is that it is not designed to focus on far-reaching effects. No system is in place to assess the impact of spending, but performance assessment is based primarily on the level of financial spending and achievement of physical plan.

Budget decline as a GDP percentage reflects a receding government's role in general, and economy in particular. The global financial crisis has once again revealed the importance of state intervention to maintain stability in the real sectors. The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP aimed to ensure that state budget would account for 34% of GDP, while it did not exceed 27%, owing to poor tax reform, and delayed administrative and public sector reform.

Budget deficit remained within acceptable limits of less than 5% during the last decade, despite oil revenues declines. Public investment dropped from 11.4% in 2001 to 8.7% in 2010, as a GDP percentage, while it was planned to increase to 14% of GDP in the past year. Public investment is still carried out without integrated feasibility studies, depending instead on poor financial feasibility studies. In most cases funds are allocated to replace or carry out partial restoration of an existing investment without any feasibility study, while it is assumed not to provide funds

except for integrated projects that have been studied from both direct and indirect economic aspects, in addition to studying the anticipated social and environmental impacts.

Delayed public sector reform, which suffers mismanagement, corruption, and poor accountability, played a role in the lack of revenue growth generated by public sector economy. Many of these institutions sustained debts in favor of other public sector companies, described as financial entanglements, which are administratively resolved, only to recur the following year, with no possibility for a final solution.

Wage expenditure, on the other hand, experienced high increases, leading to improvement of relative status of government workers, which ensures equitable distribution of income among individuals. But these increases were met by shock type liberalization of energy prices, leading to a price rise by 15% in 2008. That increase adversely reflected on consumers' purchasing power.

Subsidies account for a large part of state spending by providing direct support to citizens in respect of a number of essential commodities and oil derivatives, in addition to supporting some key agricultural products, such as wheat, sugar beet, and cotton. Size of provided subsidies in 2008 accounted for 18% of GDP. Oil production declines, coupled with rising world prices, and increased local demand for energy, led to a considerable rise of import bill and government subsidies, prompting the government to hastily liberalize prices, without carrying out a comprehensive study of the economic and social consequences of the introduced liberalization process.

## **B - Monetary Policy**

Financial, insurance and real estate sector has recently developed, as a result of upgrading the role played by the Central Bank, in both legislative and strategic aspects, as well as improving the tools used, and the contribution made by the private sector as a competitor in the banking market. Consequently, CBS had to play an effective supervisory role. A standard exchange rate was adopted, which remained stable until 2005, when exchange rates deteriorated, followed by an overestimated rise lasting until early 2011, which negatively reflected on competitiveness of exports.

The role of monetary policy, as seen by CBS was limited to price stability and exchange rate, ignoring the important role of monetary policy in maintaining the sustainability of production, and stability and development of the real sector.

Recent literature has introduced miscellaneous ways through which monetary policy may intervene for facilitating economic growth by providing finance to the innovative and creative industries, despite the amount of risks involved. These industries are rated as a major source of long-term development.

In the monetary sector, during the last decade, demand deposits declined, and were replaced by time deposits, allowing the banks longer-term credits in sectors with far-reaching investments. As regards credits, private sector's share rose from 24% in 2001 to 47% in 2009. It should be mentioned in this regard that credits issued to the public sector were mostly subsidies meant for wheat, cotton and fuel. Credits went in particular to the trade sector, in addition to spread of consumer loans. The industrial sector, on the other hand, still receives a small portion of the funding, and hence the importance of allocating more resources for the benefit of the manufacturing industry's sector, which is presumed to be a major anchor for the development process in the next phase.

#### **4. Employment and Unemployment:**

A look at the stable unemployment rate in the last decade gives the impression that national economy has taken on all newcomers to the labor market, estimated at 1.6 million during the last decade. However, analysis of labor force participation rates indicates a significant decline in female and male entrants to the labor market from urban and rural areas, where number of new entrants to the labor market between 2001 and 2010 came to about 340,000 only. The sharp decline in labor force participation is generally viewed as a negative indicator, and points to exclusion of large segments of society from participation in the economic life. This situation has been further aggravated by the expansion in the number of students in secondary and undergraduate levels, leading to delays concerning their access to the labor market. Large numbers of female and male graduates have failed to join the labor market. The share of early retired among male and the share of "housewives" among female have increased (Table 1) (Nasr and Mehchy 2012).

National economy has created about 400 thousand jobs during the past decade, an employment growth rate of 0.9% is an evidence of inability of the national economy to achieve an inclusive growth capable of creating real job opportunities. Economy has been affected by the sharp decline of agricultural sector operation. Other sectors, however, could not take on surplus agriculture labor at rates commensurate with their respective growth rates.

Should labor force participation rates maintain their 2011 status, unemployment rate in 2010 would come to about 24%, and the difference between 8% and 24%

as unemployment rates, represents unemployed groups at production age, but has been laid out of economic life. This challenge requires long-term strategy aimed to develop and diversify national economy sectors, and to ultimately increase the capacity to accommodate larger numbers of recruits regardless of their qualifications and specialties. It is also necessary to upgrade and reform labor market institutions, and create conducive environment to enable individuals to have the opportunity for decent jobs. But, reality suggests that no action has been taken to meet this challenge as it should be, considering that labor strategies were short-lived, and not linked to a comprehensive strategy to develop and reform national economy. Besides, employment agencies, including laws, regulations and relating implementation mechanisms, remained incapable of properly improving the working environment and circumstances, needed to raise contribution and recruitment rates. (Nasr and Mehchy 2012)

**Table 1: Labor market participation by gender and urban/rural (2001-2010)**

	2001	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Male</b>	81.3%	80.1%	76.3%	72.8%	74.1%	74.0%	72.5%	71.7%	72.2%
<b>Female</b>	21.3%	23.2%	19.0%	14.5%	14.9%	14.4%	14.6%	13.0%	12.9%
<b>Urban</b>	48.5%	47.5%	45.7%	43.7%	45.2%	43.9%	43.8%	43.3%	43.0%
<b>Rural</b>	56.4%	58.0%	50.7%	46.5%	46.4%	46.0%	44.2%	42.7%	42.4%
<b>Total</b>	52.3%	52.5%	48.0%	44.9%	45.8%	44.9%	44.0%	43.0%	42.7%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

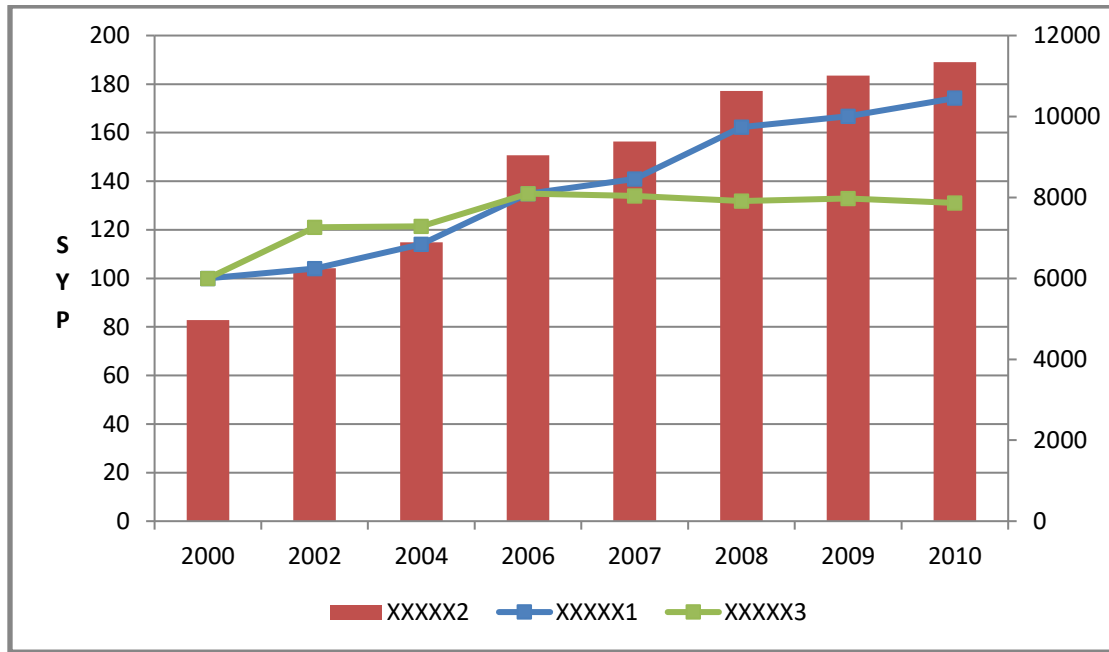
As regards workers' educational levels, the vast majority of workers are holders of primary school certificates and under, despite the slight increase in number of university graduates in recent years, due to introducing new activities to the Syrian economy (private banks, insurance companies, and IT enterprises), requiring relatively high skills.

The Government has, over the past decade, refrained to expand public employment, where rate of government sector workers remained at about 27% over the period between 2001 and 2010, while formal private sector workers rose from 34% to 43% during the same period, but this rise has not led to a clear improvement of working conditions. For example, a relatively large number of workers in what is considered "a formal private sector" are not registered with Social Security Establishment, and do not, therefore, enjoy full rights as workers.

In terms of wages, wage increase was considerable during 2001 – 2010, for both genders, where population groups with relatively high wages increased from 1% to 28%, during the same period. However, this increase applied only to nominal

wages, while real wage increases were limited to the period from 2001 to 2006, followed by a steady decline until 2010, suggesting a purchasing power decline of salaried workers, as a consequence of recent economic policies. Fig. (5).

**Fig. 5: Average nominal and real salaries, 2001-2010 (SYP)**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

## (2) Economic and Human Development:

Literatures have developed, emphasizing that realization of development, capable of providing capacities, equitable opportunities, and decent and long-standing living, needs a sustainable economic support. Many studies have highlighted the interrelationship between a sustainable economic development and human resources growth based on a healthy and educated society, a social solidarity, anchored in trust and participation, as well as equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities.

This section discusses most important human development indicators in Syria over the past decade, and their relationship to the economic aspect.

### 1. Population:

Population growth rate in Syria is characteristically high. During the past decade, population growth stabilized at around 2.5%, down from what it was during the

1980s and 1990s. This situation poses a challenge for national development, vis-à-vis the need to invest in the capacities of younger generations, and provide them with appropriate opportunities that would enable them to contribute to the development process.

Fertility growth rates did not decline in the last decade, which indicates a need to design a population policy capable of playing a more active role in raising population awareness, in addition to developing both public and private educational systems that help reduce family size. Development of economic structure and females' participation in labor force are essential for fertility rates decline.

Syrian society's youthfulness needs to be invested; otherwise, younger generations will become non-productive, and need assistance, instead of contributing to the production process. It was previously noted that national economy capacity to create employment opportunities had declined, and that labor market participation had also declined for both males and females, causing younger generations to be frustrated and to seek other options, including migration. Although available estimates vary, numbers of Syrian migrants abroad are high. According to a study carried out by World Bank, number of these emigrants in 2010, accounted for 4.2 per cent of total population number, i.e. about a million emigrants. Studies also revealed that 75 % of these emigrants search for job opportunities in other Arab countries (Gulf, Libya, Lebanon), while the developed countries attract highly qualified persons, causing drain of domestic human resources of various qualifications, a feature characterizing Syria's economy over the past many decades. Besides, migration to Syria has affected the demographic composition of the Syrian society, and caused pressure on the existing facilities and infrastructures. Number of immigrants to Syria has dramatically increased after the invasion of Iraq, with the total number of migrants to Syria in 2010 reaching some 2.2 million, including the Palestinians, accounting for about 10% of total population.

## **2. Education and Health:**

Syria has pursued a policy of providing free health and education services for decades, including the provision of basic facilities. But, the quality of education and health services has considerably deteriorated in the early 80s, due to the unsatisfactory standards of public spending and mismanagement by public services providers.

### **A. Education:**



Primary education is still considered a main challenge for development in Syria, where dropout rates, especially for the second primary stage, are still high. Another challenge is illiteracy, which fell from 17.8% down to 15.6% for individuals above 15 years of age, between 2001 and 2010. But illiteracy is still high, especially among females, i.e. 2.4 times higher than male illiteracy rates. Illiteracy rates are greater in rural areas, compared to urban regions. Labor force education structure reveals the size of the challenge, manifested in integrating adults with primary school certificates and below into economic activities.

Secondary and university education admissions increased over the past five years, allowing students a large number of options to choose from, including private universities, parallel and open undergraduate programs. Increased enrollments in these programs may delay but not revoke young graduates' integration into the labor market. This situation will push the government to create job opportunities for highly skilled individuals.

Despite increased spending on education, expenditure/ GDP ratio is still low by international standards, estimated (4%). Besides, concentration on quantitative goals has negatively affected quality and education's ultimate goals. Education outputs are still disproportionate with labor market needs. Private sector's contribution to the educational process has not sufficiently improved the quality of education, given the need for civil society's efforts to develop non-profit education.

Scientific research in general and development related research activities in particular are underprovided. Research centers and bodies (already few in number) suffer a lack of funding and a scarcity of skills and institutions. Scientific research in universities is still poor, and is not often used for public policy development. Global Competitiveness Report (2010 -2011) indicates that Syria is way behind (127 out of 137 countries) in terms of quality of scientific research centers.

## **B. Health:**

Value of public spending on health does not exceed 2% of GDP, causing citizens to choose either good quality with high cost or low quality with relatively low cost. In addition, poor institutional environment, including legislation and regulations governing health sector work, such as lack of quality and health insurance coverage for all segments of society, as well as ineffective control over health services, and inequitable distribution of these services among regions and provinces are characteristic features of this sector.

Improved life expectancy represents a comparative advantage in Syria over the past years. Health indicators, however, have not significantly improved between 2001 and 2009, based on a household health survey. This also applies to infant mortality rates for infants and children under five years of age, in addition to underweight and malnutrition. Rates of patients with chronic diseases are high (10% of population), considered a serious indicator that points to the spread of costly and difficult to detect and treat cases. It may be argued that Syria has not seen improvement in the quality of health services provided to citizens. Consequently, quality of health care provided to individuals has not developed, despite life expectancy improvement.

### **C. Housing Conditions:**

Living conditions associated with housing in Syria are relatively good, based on 2009 figures. Percentage of households using public water network for drinking water constitutes 85% of total households. 91% of Syrian families own their houses, and average number of people per room is two. Percentage of households using improved source of drinking water is 90%, and households using improved toilets account for 99% of total population.

However, price rises caused by real estate boom in the past decade complicated the opportunity to own a house, especially for young groups. Internal migration to the suburbs has also affected the housing conditions in slums and unregulated areas. In this connection, studies indicate an increased poverty rates in these neighborhoods, associated with inadequate housing and other related services.

## **3. Equitable Distribution and Poverty:**

### **A. Equitable Distribution:**

Gini index is used to measure the inequitable distribution of income and spending. With regard to Syria, household spending data is based on the household income and expenditure survey, due to difficulty of obtaining figures about real incomes. According to this index, which stood at 0.34 in 2009, Syria is rated among countries with medium equitability, compared to the rest of the world. But, UNDP Arab Development Challenges report for 2011 points to the index failure to include the richest segment that was not represented in the survey, thus causing the index to be biased, and tending to make the indicator look more equitable than it really is.

We also find that positive economic growth at macro level (GDP growth), is matched by negative real household spending rates that are based on household

income and expenditure survey data, covering Syrian families; whereas, private consumption covers the entire Syrian population, including the Iraqi families with average high spending. Survey data indicate a decline in real expenditures (using actual surveyed prices) with respect to Syrian families between 2004 and 2009, at negative average rate standing at (2.1%), Table (2). Consequently price rises surpassed household nominal spending.

Energy and food prices rises worldwide, local liberalization of fuel prices, fertilizers, and poor market efficiency, caused a considerable rise in prices and erosion of purchasing power. In other words, public welfare level declined. On the other hand, we may observe a considerable discrepancy between the various provinces in respect of average household spending, which reflects unbalanced development between provinces. These discrepancies have a social and economic impact on the residents of "marginalized" areas.

**Table 2: Household spending for the years 2004 and 2009**

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Current spending 2004</b>	<b>Current spending 2009</b>	<b>Spending of 2009 in 2004 prices</b>	<b>Average spending growth 2004-2009</b>
<b>Damascus</b>	28377	42942	24001	-3.30%
<b>R. Damascus</b>	20114	34222	20646	0.50%
<b>Homs</b>	20770	31702	18961	-1.80%
<b>Hama</b>	21832	30549	19149	-2.60%
<b>Tartous</b>	23831	37161	24980	0.90%
<b>Latakia</b>	20789	36419	23422	2.40%
<b>Idleb</b>	22014	26747	16986	-5.10%
<b>Aleppo</b>	18232	32170	18304	0.10%
<b>Al-Raqqa</b>	21351	28527	17440	-4.00%
<b>Deir Ezzor</b>	23248	25696	13550	-10.20%
<b>Al-Hasakeh</b>	23931	30576	20386	-3.20%
<b>Al-Sweida</b>	17858	30661	21243	3.50%
<b>Dara'a</b>	25633	36748	18939	-5.90%
<b>Al-Qunaitra</b>	20791	34158	19818	-1.00%
<b>Syria</b>	<b>21694</b>	<b>32755</b>	<b>19556</b>	<b>-2.10%</b>

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics; researchers' calculations

As another indicator on distribution equitability, contributed workers' compensations to gross national income is relatively low, reaching about 32% in

2010, down from 35% in 2005, which reflects poor distribution of national income in favor of capital at the expense of work. Workers' wages also vary. Lowest wages are paid to informal private sector's workers, particularly females.

## **B. Poverty in Syria:**

- Money Metric Poverty:

Studies made about money metric poverty in Syria in 2007 reveal that about 12% of the population lives under lower poverty line, and 34% under upper poverty line (UNDP 2010). Lower poverty line declined in the past decade, as a consequence of treating it as priority; while poverty in general increased when upper poverty line was applied, causing many application problems to crop up. Researchers' and decision makers' concentration on reduction of severe poverty has eclipsed the importance of the strategies required for reducing general poverty. Consequently, population groups, living between the two poverty lines increased. These vulnerable groups, mainly living in the suburbs, have grown in number.

Poor people in Syria are undereducated and have weak participation in the labor market. They are distributed in geographically unbalanced areas. Northern and eastern regions continue to attract the majority of poor people. Poverty has also increased in new areas, as a result of internal migration caused by drought, especially to the southern regions.

- Calorie Deficiency:

Poor calorie level represents yet another indicator to measure poverty. Calorie deficient individuals are identified by measuring the minimum number of calories needed by individuals in normal life, based on age, gender and nature of work. Methodologically, already consumed calories at household level are compared with calorie level needed according to international family health standards. Any family with consumed calories under the standard level will be considered calories deficient. This index does not mean that these poor families do not spend anything on non-food items, but the money they spend on food is less than required, which may affect the health of the family in the long run (individuals' capacities), and, of course, such families do not meet their demand or all the required non-food items.

Based on this simplified method, proportion of calorie deficiency in Syria stands at 18.2% of total population for the year 2009. Table (3) explains poor families' distribution according to this index by province, manifesting the great disparity in the levels of food deprivation between regions.

**Table 3: Percentage of calories poverty in 2009 by governorates**

<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Calorie shortage 2009 (%)</b>
<b>Damascus</b>	15.6
<b>Aleppo</b>	13
<b>R. Damascus</b>	25
<b>Homs</b>	24.2
<b>Hama</b>	19
<b>Latakia</b>	12.9
<b>Idleb</b>	34.2
<b>Al-Hasakeh</b>	12.4
<b>Deir Ezzor</b>	17.6
<b>Tartous</b>	17.2
<b>Al-Raqqa</b>	2
<b>Dara'a</b>	23.4
<b>Al-Sweida</b>	20.1
<b>Al-Qunaitra</b>	11.9
<b>The Country</b>	<b>18.2</b>

Source: Household income and expenditure survey (2009); researchers' calculations

- **Poverty Targeting Projects:**

Globally successful experiences in poverty reduction efforts have adopted pro-poor development strategies, aimed at achieving an equitable distribution, with targeting procedures used in exceptional cases. The main flaw in the targeting concept is that it is used by some researchers and decision makers as a key procedure for poverty reduction, which reflects a lack of understanding of poverty mechanisms in the long run. Addressing the phenomenon of poverty requires building individuals' capacities and providing them with equitable opportunities, as well as ensuring their integration, rather than providing them with funds or services, as temporary solutions.

The development plan in Syria includes many programs and targeted projects. But, most of these programs or projects have not been implemented, or have failed to achieve any success. This applies, for example, to the Eastern region, where development indicators point to failures to achieve any improvement. Other projects include the revolving funds at the Syrian desert region, women's empowerment and poverty reduction project, covering 750 villages, and the

National Social Aid Fund project, the implementation of which was delayed until 2011.

### **(3): Institutions' Political Economy:**

Interest in the institutional factor has developed in the economic reform programs following the failure of liberal policies in many developing countries in the 1970s and 1980s. There is an increased literature on the role of institutions since the early 1990s (North, 1990), including Roderick, Acemoglu, Hoffman and others. Institutions have been viewed as a prime factor of long run growth. A. Sen's contribution has also underlined the significance of institutional structure for achieving the desired development. This structure explains the extent of allowing people the opportunity to choose their system of government and hold their rulers accountable, on the one hand, and public administration efficiency, on the other.

Institutions' quality measurement indices have developed, as a criterion of good governance, transparency, political risks etc... However, many such indicators suffer from the impact of subjective factors on survey answers, and adoption of western institutional measurement tools, as an optimal model for institutional performance assessment.

Institutions affect economy through identification of incentive structure that affects sources of growth, like physical and human capital, and technology, which are determined by the shape of existing institutions. Institutions and relevant policies also play a key role in the allocation of resources, including, for example, taxes and subsidies. It should be noted that communities do not necessarily choose institutions that achieve public good and economic welfare, but they tend to choose institutions that achieve political balance among different social forces, depending on group's influence, and the way it tends to communicate through political institutions. Some may object to the pro-growth institutions because they do not get benefits from them.

Developing countries' institutions, according to Acemoglu et al (2001) are influenced by contemporary colonial history. While negative institutional impacts are indicated in certain cases, positive impacts are highlighted in others. In densely populated occupied territories, colonialists tend to promote the culture of exploitation, and eclipse partnership, transparency and accountability. In contrast, in less densely populated areas where they plan to settle, they firmly establish the concepts of efficient and transparent institutions.

#### **A. Institutions in Syria and external effects**

The creation of institutions in Syria, and in most Arab countries, was affected by the Ottoman occupation 400 years ago and later by the 25-year French occupation. The institutions were initially built to facilitate colonial exploitation and reduce resistance and costs. This took different shapes including laws, legislations, distribution of power and wealth among social elites and anchoring a culture of corruption and rent.

The influence of the “center” on the peripheries as described by Samir Amin can be seen in the unequal international relations imposed on the developing countries sometimes using the military influence of the developed countries and sometimes the economic and cultural influence. This has taken more sophisticated aspects by concentrating scientific, knowledge and technological production in the developed countries. However, this influence has been widely cleaved by many emerging countries that are trying to activate their international participation and get rid of the technological, economic and cultural dependency vis-à-vis the developed world. Yet, Syria has not chosen this course; it is still witnessing a state of knowledge and technological stagnation and there is no national vision to circumvent this situation.

Getting rid of dependency requires more research, cultural and technological contribution of the Syrian society and this is the source of sustainable development through free, integral and competent institutions. Syria is still in the world's marginalized zone and the nature of international relations do not allow a way out from – if not sustain - such unequal relationship between the developed and the underdeveloped. Thus, the creation of development oriented regional institutions that support developing countries is essential.

For example, Syria rejected liberal policies due to the leftist ideology of the state institutions which oppose liberalization and reduction of state involvement in economic development. However, the lack of an alternative integrated vision had reproduced the partial reforms with the very liberal approach that established a liberalism without an integrated development vision.

Another example about the influence of the “center” was the creation and support of Israel which created an environment of animosity and injustice against the region's population and contributed to derailing the development process in many Arab countries, especially Syria which focused on militarizing development that affected the nature, roles and policies of state institutions hence leading to direct and indirect development losses for the country.

## **B. Efficiency of Syrian institutions**

Syria has Non-democratic political institutions with no real participation opportunities and poor representation and accountability. The country lacks political freedoms including freedom of parties and expression and government accountability through the judiciary parliament and the media within a representative electoral system. This created long-term development frustration which affected the economic and social performance of individuals and communities.

Meanwhile, government performance is inefficient with poor sector coordination, hence clearly affecting the quality of public services. The Parliament does not practice effective control on the government performance. Poor local and provincial decentralization reduces individual participation. This has, among other things, caused confusion in the policy of liberalizing the prices of oil derivatives given the absence of institutions capable of efficiently managing the prices and targeting the subsidies.

Public policies witnessed critical turning points in several occasions in the past. For example, the 1980s economic deterioration led to heavy losses in both the national economy and individuals' living standards. The late 1990s economic deterioration, which came as a result of partial liberalization policies lacking an integrated development vision, led to the establishment of new interest groups operating mainly in real estate and financial speculations with no positive impact on the business environment especially SMEs. Monopoly continued as a major aspect of the national economy reflecting the influence of interest groups that do not rush reforms. Wages were frozen and energy prices were partially liberated despite the increase in oil revenues, which severely damaged the middle class.

The new millennium started with attempts to draw a conception for economic development through public sector reforms, policy development, fighting corruption and enhanced participation through expanding the margins for the media and civil society forums. However, this process came to an end in 2002 limiting itself to some liberalization policies in foreign trade and financial sector and to increases in public spending and wages. The main characteristic of all public policies in Syria was to maintain the low equilibrium.

In 2004, a deeper reform approach was envisaged in the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan. Institutional reform was a core theme during the planning process but once again, implementation as of 2006 did not tackle the main challenges. Instead, it re-concentrated on price liberalization while putting off administrative reforms as well as restructuring the public sector which continued to deplete resources due to ill-management and corruption. This was evident even in such sectors like health and



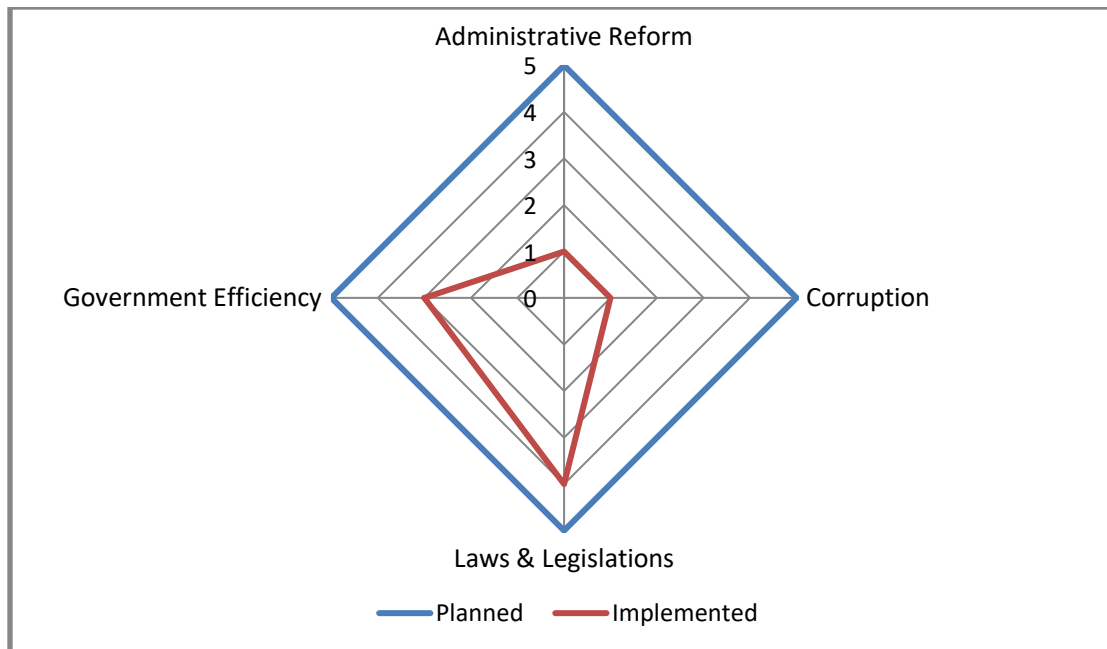
education, which witnessed quantitative expansion without quality improvement. Health indicators witnessed no improvement throughout the period 2001-2010, while expansion in secondary and higher education was offset by greater dropout levels from primary education.

The human development concept of the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan was interpreted into routine liberalization policies based on reducing capital spending, increasing the share of indirect taxes at the expense of direct taxes, delaying public sector reforms, liberalizing energy prices, putting off social protection programs together with the lack of monitoring and evaluation systems (all simply opposite to the plan). The lack of institutional reform has affected the business environment and created more opportunities for monopolists and speculators including the Gulf investors who, benefiting from politically motivated facilitation, heated real estate speculations, which strengthened the monopoly of the influential financial minority.

The inefficiency of public policies was also evident in many examples including the 3-year drought that caused huge migration (around 300,000 persons) from the eastern region to urban outskirts. In response, the government did almost nothing but liberalizing the energy prices which hurt the farmers who depend on well irrigation and then liberalizing fertilizers prices which increased the farming costs.

The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP mid-term evaluation showed that the lack of institutional reforms was the main implementation defect (Fig. 6), which reflects the the lack of seriousness of the reforms. In spite of this nonetheless, the government did not get the lesson when it developed the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP with lower community participation and without serious debates about the main reasons of failure during the past decade or about future prospects.

**Fig. 6: The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP mid-term evaluation**



Source: The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP Mid-term Evaluation Report, 2009

Fig. 6 shows that implementation of institutional reform (inner line) fell short of the plan (blue frame) with the absence of administrative reform/anti-corruption initiatives.

There are a number of quantified indicators that can be reservedly used to measure progress in institutional reform though they do not cover all relevant aspects. The National Competitiveness Report stated improvement in the overall indicator of public and private institutions but sub-indicators show many weaknesses including the continued waste of public funds, complicated judiciary procedures, poor accountability and supervision systems, inefficiency of boards of directors, burden of government regulations and nontransparent government policies.

The Political Risk Index (an international indicator reflecting the institutions reality and efficiency with sub-indexes covering political stability, investment risks, internal conflicts, corruption prevalence etc.) hit a bottom in 1988 reflecting poor institutional performance. However, since 1989, this index started to rise quickly to peak in 1993 before dropping again till 2010.

The early 1990s witnessed the development of various PRI components including corruption, rule of law and government stability. Therefore, the liberalization policies of the previous decade have not met the expectations in the institutional arena.

The partial reforms that did not address the core development challenges in Syria have frustrated individuals and community expectations hence increasing the feeling of injustice and exclusion. This was deteriorated by the undemocratic political institutions which block participation through partisan channels and by the absence of civil organizations capable of advocating the public interests and lobbying the decision makers.

The timely deployment of resources for implementation was not possible due to the lack of an integrated vision as well as the required balance among various elite groups that may lose ground for other groups in the process of an inclusive development project that serves the public interests. It seemed that the elite stopped at a certain equilibrium point inappropriate for long-term development especially with the absence of institutional channels to reflect the conflict of interests and this most likely contributed to triggering the social unrest.

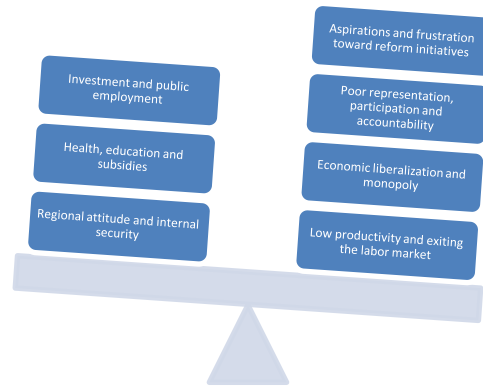
#### **IV. Low Equilibrium**

The absence of accountability for government officials and influential figures and businessmen has been a major sign of the desire to maintain equilibrium at low level through the correlation of a number of factors that keep the economy stable at its lowest potential, with the main aspects being poor institutional environment, modest quality infrastructure, stifled economic and technological development and costly access to information and markets. The result is low-performing, risky and costly economic activity.

Most political regimes in Syria since independence have tried to maintain such low equilibrium necessary to perpetuate their rules. This means low productivity, wide government employment, broad informal sector together with adequate infrastructure for minimum living conditions including health and education services and subsidized energy and essential commodities. It also means alliances among the existing economic and social elites. All this has happened with a regional atmosphere opposing Israel and the US intervention supporting it coupled with the absence of freedoms and political participation.

The equilibrium has been affected by the liberation policies and new elites especially pro-regime economic elites and by the shrinking oil revenues and retreating capability of social intervention coupled with expanding poverty and marginalization in addition to the most important factor – community aspirations. The development of human capital, especially among the youth has led to clashes with the low-performing institutions which blocked the possibility of using such capital in achieving high productivity levels.

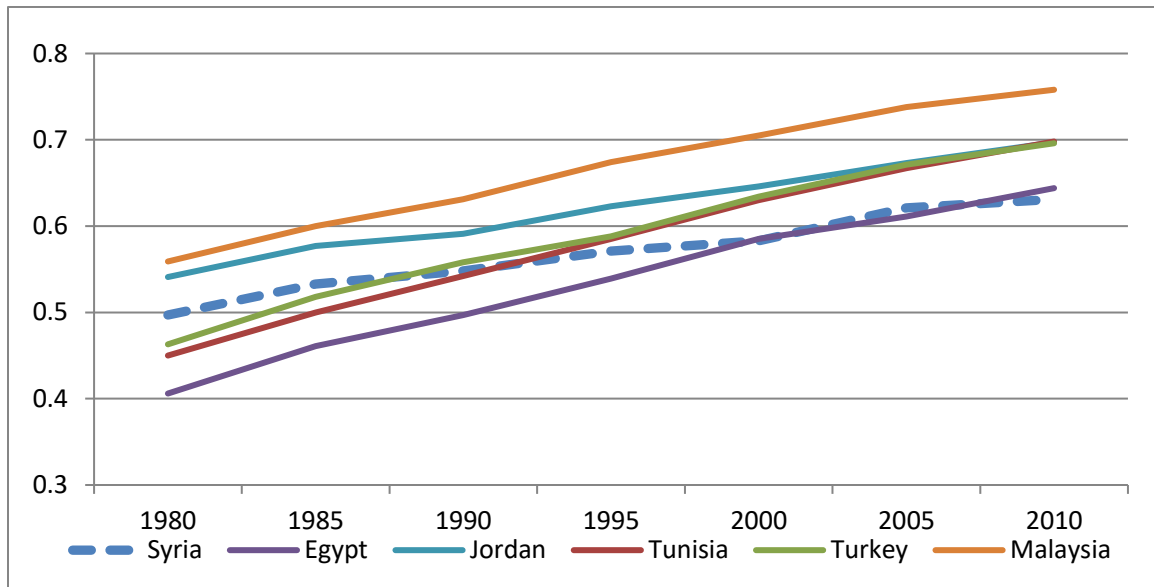
**Fig. 7: Breaking the low equilibrium**



Benchmarking development indicators across the time or with countries of similar economic, social and political circumstances where the community culture and aspirations are absent shows that such aspirations may be highly ambitious the fact that reduces the importance of achievements even if we excel other countries under comparison.

This view stems from the Amartya Sen's The Idea of Justice in 2009. Individuals feel injustice when they believe they are able to overcome the barriers preventing them from reaching the best and "most just" status given that seeking the essentials of a just society is not possible and not necessary.

**Fig. 8: Human development index for Syria and comparison countries (1980 – 2010)**

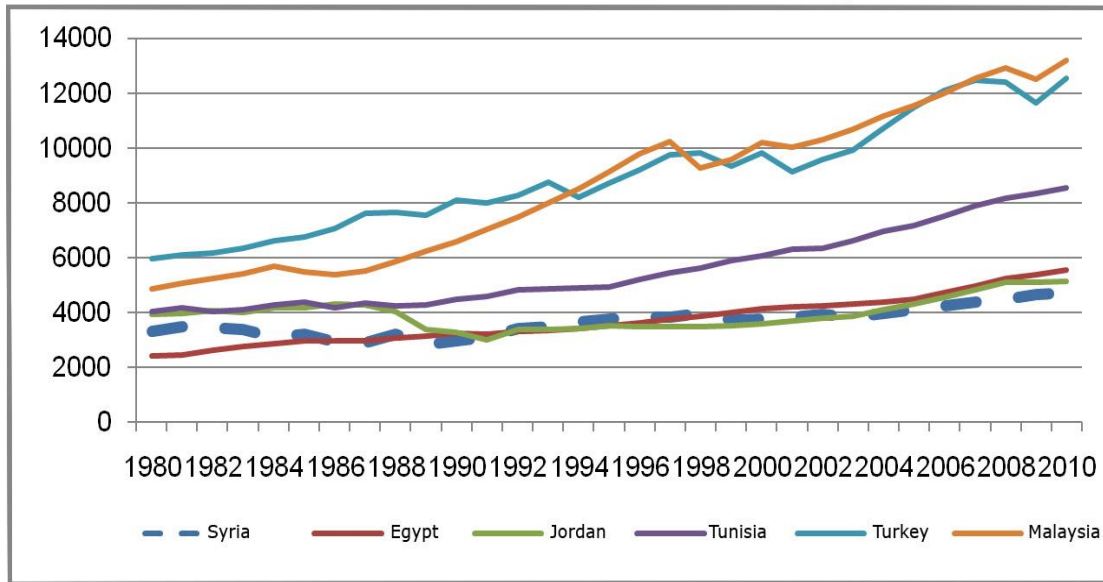


Source: UNDP Database, 2012

In the Syrian case, these aspirations reflect a history of bright hopes the Syria society has cherished since the independence including Arab unity, industrialization, economic welfare, social justice, superiority over the Israeli enemy among others. These aspirations have faced multiple setbacks, which created deep dissatisfaction.

On the development front, Figure 8 shows the retreat of the Syria human development index compared to other neighboring/developing countries. Figure 9 reflects the retreating in the GDP per capita in spite of the huge natural, human and cultural resources in Syria.

**Fig. 9: GDP per capita in purchasing power parity and constant prices of 2005 (US\$)**



Source: UNDP Database, 2012

The increased social awareness of possible institutional change has raised public expectations in respect of the level of justice they seek and consequently widened the differences between the current status and potential future, which created more social pressure. The demographic aspects have also played an important role in increasing such pressure. More and more young generations have enrolled in education and become aware of the experiences of other countries through modern communication channels. This has raised the ceiling of their expectations and led to clashes with the tardy institutions. The recent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have substantially changed the collective consciousness that changing the incumbent institutions is not impossible hence raising the level of expectations as well as the trust of building a more just society.

## V. Findings and Conclusion

### A. Findings

The Syrian economy has in the past decade achieved positive results on the macro level in terms of economic growth rates, relative price stability and low budget deficit and indebtedness levels. Oil contribution to the GDP, exports and fiscal revenues has retreated giving way to other sectors with higher added value.

However, these indicators hide structural imbalances. Economic growth is depending on quantitative factors including physical capital, increased real estate and financial speculations, expanding informal sector in trade, tourism and services in general. This was accompanied with poor productivity and low wages. Employment levels have been very weak in the past decade and the labor force participation among males and females has shrunk in both rural and urban areas.

Public finance has been plagued with tax avoidance/evasion and increased indirect taxes at the expense of direct taxes in addition to inefficient public investment, high waste in state-owned enterprises and an investment environment crippled with corruption and monopoly in different sectors. The monetary policy is dominated by continual attempts to stabilize the exchange rates with regardless of the developmental effects. Liberalizing the energy prices has had negative impact on production sectors leading to higher costs and lower competitiveness.

Sustaining economic development needs human capital as well as social stability. The state in Syria has acted as a sponsor of health and education, consumer subsidies, services and housing infrastructure; yet, this was quantitative expansion at the expense of quality. However, during the past two decades, the government started to gradually relinquish this role, hence adding burden to individuals who cannot assume it with such low wages, which affected the quality of health and education services. Economic liberalization has led to increased prices and decreased purchasing power.

As for distribution, available data show growth in household spending in the past decade but this growth is negative in real prices. Poverty is widening in the country especially among marginalized groups in urban outskirts who are about to join the extreme poverty circle. Growth has not been pro poor during the past decade and the levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy differ between one region and another due to the deep development gaps among different Syrian regions.

The above economic and human development imbalances are mainly the result of the "institutional bottleneck" where Syrian institutions are suffering from the lack of efficiency, transparency and accountability in addition to the absence of an integrated vision. The poor performance of public services as well as the inefficient development and implementation of public policies is just one consequence. The absence of basic freedoms (expression, part and accountability) and the role of civil society have increased social contradictions especially the deteriorating monopoly and speculation of the economic and political elites. Policies in general and economic policies in particular suffer from low commitment of state institutions

towards their own objectives and towards quality performance and implementation.

In brief, the low equilibrium status has been characterized by low productivity, big informal sector, monopoly by the minority, and high costs, coupled with subsidies for essential commodities, free social services (health and education) though of low quality, in addition to political tyranny and absence of participation and accountability.

The frustration among the Syrian population as a result of the deteriorating situations and the lack of a concrete vision to overcome poor performance, in addition to the big human capital among the youth and partial economic liberalization policies with all negative consequences, and finally Tunisia spark that triggered a change process, all these have flamed the political dynamics towards really representative institutions that can ensure public freedoms and move the society to advanced development stages with fairer and more participatory distribution of power and wealth.

#### B. Characteristics of future development model

Arab countries are experiencing highly critical situations, which came after decades of development and knowledge deterioration. Crises constitute an opportunity for substantial change in the existing institutions and interests structure toward institutions with mutual and more interactive relations with the global civilization, and accountable institutions that can benefit from human and physical resources to achieve sustainable development that would ensure decent human life.

Institutional imbalances are not limited to countries; international institutions also suffer from major imbalances with regard to transparency, justice and accountability. Reading through the International Monetary Fund/World Bank reports, we find that Tunisia, Egypt and Syria were doing well in the economy and development fronts. However, with the advent of the Arabic Spring, these institutions' assessment of the countries witnessing unrest has changes but unfortunately they are once more recommending the same policies (development models).

On the other hand, the global financial crisis has liberated the research work which used to provide one-way economic and development policies. This has created the chance to develop more integrated policies based on the human understanding



of the development process. Thus, the recommended models should adopt a participatory approach in developing appropriate policies for each country.

Here are the main characteristics of the recommended development model for Syria:

- Political and developmental independence is key for a health start. Development priorities based on the Syrian context are different from those of the developed countries. Independence would protect individual and social freedom in managing various scenarios and resources.
- Freedom is another cornerstone. This means the freedom of all Syrians. It ensures the expression of their views, interests, potentials and innovations in the best possible way. However, freedom does not mean promoting individualism; it rather means enhanced social capital and communal solidarity while respecting the individual and society options in a fair participatory and representative way.
- Competent institutions through promoting the values of discipline, work and accountability and enhancing the role of civil society, elected supervision bodies and the judiciary. The development state assumes full responsibility in institutional protection and development, in promoting such vital sectors like knowledge, research, cultural production and technology, and investing in priority sectors that benefit the society. Moreover, the state needs transparency and participation to sustain its roles.
- The market should serve the development process through strengthening the institution with the values of transparency and fair competition, controlling speculations, providing information, supporting entrepreneurs and having influence through promoting the development of priority sectors. The private sector should have a key production role but not without controls to protect the rights of workers and society by ensuring fair wages, decent jobs, environment protection and community participation.
- Ensuring justice and equity, which are the right of everybody, through investing in the potential of all Syrians while providing decent living standards, adequate infrastructure, and equal job opportunities with wider options for everybody and fair redistribution of wealth through taxation to bridge the development gaps among the Syrian regions.
- Knowledge in a cornerstone for competitiveness. It builds on empowered human capital in an environment of intellectual freedom and equal chance together with enhancing the capacities of local production by benefiting from the knowledge products.

- Clean environment is not luxury. Water and land in Syria are two major challenges and resources protection, including pollution control, is key to protect the society.

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