

The Syrian Rebellion

By Fouad Ajami

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Fouad Ajami offers a detailed historical perspective on the current rebellion in Syria. Focusing on the similarities and differences in skills between former dictator Hafez al-Assad and his successor son, Bashar, Ajami explains how an irresistible force clashed with an immovable object: the regime versus people who conquered fear to challenge a despot of unspeakable cruelty.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

When the Arab Spring exploded across the Middle East, it was no surprise that the eruption in Syria came after the upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Bahrain. The Syrians had taken their time, knowing that they were in for a particularly grim and bloody struggle. But four decades of a brutal dictatorship under the Assad dynasty could not crush their spirit—people were done with the Assad tyranny and ready to pay the ultimate price. The dictatorship alternated savage violence with promises of reform, but the barrier of fear had been broken; its horrific deeds only strengthened the resolve of those who wanted done with that cruel regime.

In *The Syrian Rebellion*, Fouad Ajami offers a detailed historical perspective on the current rebellion in Syria. Focusing on the similarities and differences in skills between former dictator Hafez al-Assad and his successor son, Bashar, he tells how Syria has overcome decades of repression, numerous coups, and other hardships to arrive at its current state of affairs: a people poised to throw off the yoke of oppression and move forward.

In 1994 Hafez Assad's oldest son, Bassel, whom he had been grooming for succession, was killed in a car accident. Hafez then settled on his other son Bashar, an eye doctor, as his successor. Syrians hoped for the best, thinking that perhaps this gangly youth, with a stint in London behind him, would grant them the freedoms denied by his father. They were wrong. When the political hurricane known as the Arab Spring hit the region, Bashar al-Assad proclaimed his country's immunity to the troubles. He was wrong. As Ajami explains, Bashar, the accidental inheritor of his father's political realm, now had his own war. He had stepped out of his father's shadow only to merge with it. But the house that Hafez Assad built, some four decades ago, is not destined to last.

From the Back Cover

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON? THE LOST BEQUEST OF HAFEZ ASSAD

Arabs are firm believers in *nasab*, inherited merit passed on from father to son, a nobility of the blood. So what mattered when a rebellion broke out in Syria in 2011 was the insight into the similarities and the differences between Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar. The father had rigged the succession, with fear completing the trick. Although the people fervently hoped that Bashar would open up the prison that Syria had become under his father, it was not to be.

In *The Syrian Rebellion*, Middle East expert Fouad Ajami explains how an irresistible force clashed with an immovable object: the regime versus a people who conquered fear to challenge a despot of unspeakable cruelty. Offering a detailed historical perspective, he shows how, for four long decades, the Assad dynasty, the intelligence barons, and the brigade commanders had grown accustomed to a culture of quiescence and silence. But Syrians did not want to be ruled by Bashar's children the way they had been ruled by Bashar and their parents had been by Bashar's father. This book tells how a proud people came to demand something more than a despotic regime of dictatorship and plunder.

Fouad Ajami is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the co-chair of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order.

About the Author

Fouad Ajami is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the cochair of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order. From 1980 to 2011 he was director of Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *The Arab Predicament*, *Beirut: City of Regrets*, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, and *The Foreigner's Gift*. His writings also include some four hundred essays on Arab and Islamic politics, US foreign policy, and contemporary international history. Ajami has received numerous awards, including the Benjamin Franklin Award for public service (2011), the Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Opinion Journalism (2011), the Bradley Prize (2006), the National Humanities Medal (2006), and the MacArthur Fellows Award (1982). His research has charted the road to 9/11, the Iraq war, and the US presence in the Arab-Islamic world.

Users Review

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