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Seven Years of Research on the Syrian Conflict

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Preface

Raymond Hinnebusch & Omar Imady

Syria stands on a precipice between change and stagnation. Both, at times, seem equally ominous. March 2021 marked the tenth anniversary of the Syrian civil war which has taken hundreds of thousands of lives and has displaced millions more. Wednesday 26th May marks the date of the next Syrian presidential elections.

This special issue of *Syria Studies* presents a selection of the research published in this journal throughout this tumultuous period, on the eve of the next phase of Syria politics. Haian Dukhan offers an analysis of the tribal elements of Syria's society and political system and their role in the Uprising of 2011. Continuing with the theme of social and political authority, Rana Khalaf explores the nature of state building and governance during periods of conflict in the country. This is followed by an account of the emergence of Syrian civil society's political voice by Tamara al-Om, and an investigation by Diana Bashur into the sales of arms by America and Europe to the Middle East during the first three years of the Uprising. Joanne Hopkins next analyses the theme of coercive control in the context of the Syria conflict. Focussing on the reconstruction process, Omar Imady examines how the rebuilding process is being weaponized by various players in the region. Lastly, Dina Ramadan offers an in-depth exploration of the implications of the digital age for Syrian politics, and how harnessing the power of the internet may facilitate much-needed change.

These selected articles cover the political dimension of this period, the economic, the social, and the digital, presenting both lenses of analysis and opportunities to reflect upon past predictions. Over the past ten years it has been an honour to publish such studies and provide a platform for the discussion and dissemination of analysis and approaches to the conflict, with the aim of contributing, in whatever small way, to its resolution. It is our hope that the next decade will proffer new research on the rebuilding of Syria, on its reconstruction, and debates as to the best way to restore a country and civilisation, on how to learn from lessons past and avoid repeating mistakes. And we look forward to an era of articles on a revival of those aspects of Syrian life which have been overshadowed by conflict, buried in the rubble, and eclipsed by the ugliness of war.