Syria was once a country that relied heavily on agriculture and oil and the petroleum industries. It has been known to be politically corrupt under the rule of President Hafez al-Assad, with most of its oil revenue diverted to the Assad regime as reported in a recent article by William R. Polk in *The Atlantic* ([theatlantic.com](http://theatlantic.com)). Syria used to be its own main source of food and clothing and was a main exporter for its top crops of wheat and cotton. After Syria’s civil war began their exports have dropped by 45%, from $12.5B in 2010 to 613M in 2015 and imports have dropped 25%, from $19.7B in 2010 to $4.68B in 2015 according to economic statistic cited in The Observatory of Economic Complexity ([atlas.media](http://atlas.media)). The biggest developmental problem Syria faces is its civil war and how it has turned back the economic clock for Syria nearly half a century.

The civil war that is going on in Syria has caused massive destruction and economic collapse across all of Syria. 50% of hospitals have been partially or completely destroyed according to a March 2016 article by Raziye Akkoc in the UK newspaper, *The Telegraph* ([telegraph.com](http://telegraph.com)). With the numbers of injuries and deaths Syria is facing from the war, the loss of medical care and hospitals are detrimental to the country and its citizens. The war is causing many civilians to flee the country, including many who are medical personnel and doctors from the hospitals. "Half of all medical staff have fled Syria and only one third of hospitals are functional. Each doctor used to look after the needs of around 600 people - now it's up to 4,000," as reported by Unicef in Akkoc’s article. The civil war is causing declines in all categories of life expectancy. “2010 life expectancy in Syria was almost 80 years. Today, life expectancy
from birth is estimated at 55 years” reported Robin Wright in a 2015 article in Newsweek (newsweek.com). The civil war has threatened everyone’s life in the country. Men, women, and children are subjected to death from cross-fire, artillery, and bombings; no one is safe in Syria since the war began.

“All the people living in the countries of the bottom billion have been in one or another of the traps that I have described in the preceding four chapters. Seventy-three percent of them have been through civil war” (Collier 6). What Collier is trying to prove by saying this is that if people are unlucky enough to get caught in the traps, such as the Conflict or Natural Resource Traps then there is a very good chance they will end up in a civil war. This is what happened to Syria, their peaceful protests were shut down by force from the government. This resulted in rebel groups forming and banding together against their government. Once a civil war starts according to Collier, “A civil war doubles the risk of another civil war. Civil war is development in reverse. Both economic losses and disease are highly persistent: they do not stop once the fighting stops” (Collier 2). Collier explains perfectly how Syria’s civil war is the biggest problem they face for their growth of development. During a civil war Syria can go no direction but backwards in their progress of development.

The citizens of Syria are feeling the effect of the civil war by fleeing their country, displacement of families, injuries, and by death. The civil war has destroyed the way of life for its citizens; their growth of development is all but lost as long as the war rages on. The war stripped the citizens of Syria of their freedoms and sense of safety. Sen’s main points of development are freedom and development and how a person’s freedom helps drive their development. There is little hope for Syria’s citizens to have enough freedom to help advance
and to enable their development as long as the war carries on. According to Wright’s *Newsweek* report, Four out of five Syrians live in poverty; two-thirds are unable to secure basic foods and essentials for daily life, and Syria “has become a country of poor people,” the report warns (*newsweek.com*). Due to the war, citizens are forced to move out of their homes when bombings or a fire-fight enter into their towns. These people have no say about what they can and cannot do; everything they do is revolved around the actions of the war. Wright continues, "An estimated 400,000 people are living in besieged areas where humanitarian access is limited, and where some are dying of starvation." (*newsweek.com*). The warfare is causing great damage to many cities and their supply of food, shelter, electricity. “A majority of the country live half their lives under a blanket of darkness as the damage accumulated in the war has caused 83 per cent of the country’s electricity to be cut” according to News Corp Australia (*news.com*). This is no way for any human being to live. Syria’s citizens are struggling to survive, and there are many who lost the battle with their survival during this time of war. “Half of the population of Syria has either died or been wounded (*telegraph.com*).

“Since March 2011, conflict has devastated Syria. Now it is internationally recognized as the largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. The Syrian civil war has set back the national standard of living by decades — now that healthcare, schools, and water and sanitation systems have been damaged or destroyed.” according to an article by World Vision on the refugee crisis (*worldvision.org*). The civil war has caused a large mass of displacement among the citizens, many citizens are forced to flee Syria and become refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria.
Meanwhile about one million have requested asylum to Europe.” (http://syrianrefugees.eu). As if the war has not caused enough damage to Syria, it has also formed a new terrorist group called ISIS. ISIS has caused terror through terror attacks all across the East and the West. The reason Syrian's cannot take shelter in the United States of America is because the United States has been affected through their civil war. ISIS has captured, killed and attacked Americans and have attacked on America’s own soil. President Trump created a ban that has stopped refugees into America because of the threat that ISIS holds. It is hard to determine who is a member of ISIS. “The new measures will block citizens of Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen from obtaining visas for at least 90 days. The order also suspends admission of refugees into the US for 120 days, directing US officials to improve vetting measures for a program that is already widely regarded as extremely stringent.” According to Ben Wedeman of CNN (cnn.com). This is an example of how the civil war again is affecting Syria’s development in the way that they are unable to get aid from one of the most powerful countries in the world. Their civil war caused them to become enemies with the most powerful military country in the world. And if it was not enough that Syrians were already fighting against each other now their newly formed terrorist group is grabbing the attention of all world powers. This is causing even more fighting and bombings that are destroying homes and cities all across Syria. “Homs, Syria and the city, which was the third largest in the country and once home to a population of over 800,000, has been completely destroyed. Buildings and homes have turned to rubble, the city look like the aftermath of the apocalypse, and the people have disappeared.” According to an article on Gizmodo (sploid.gizmodo.com). This is one of many cities in Syria that has been completely
destroyed by bombings. Causing many deaths and injuries to its citizens and forcing many to flee from their homes.

While the civil war rages on, Syria has no chance to work towards their growth as a country. “Once boasting one of the highest literacy rates in the Middle East before the war, figures last year showed more than 45 per cent of children were no longer attending school. The report's authors warned this would have a "dramatic impact" on Syria's future.”(telegraph.com). Citizens of Syria no longer value school as much as they did before the war. Their value of school is what will grow this country, when they have more educated citizens. The war has forced them to focus on their survival and going to school can be threatening now in Syria with all the fighting and bombings. They are inhabitants of a country that is not able to make advances in technology because of a scarcity resources and lack of skilled labor. The countries with the highest growth of development are countries that focus on improving their technology. In Sachs chapter 2 he states “The single most important reason why prosperity spread, and why it continues to spread, is the transmission of technologies and the ideas underlying them. Even more important than having specific resources in the ground, such as coal, was the ability to use modern, science-based ideas to organize production.” (Sachs Chapt 2). Syria is a country that is currently unable to achieve this, their main focus is fighting against themselves. This is no way to ever grow as country, they are only hurting themselves and the future of Syria. To develop as a country and grow, the country needs to work together and this civil war is only tearing them apart.

Syria’s hopes to rebuild its country and improve development after the wars are very small. First of all Syria as a country will have a hard time trusting a leader again when President
Assad’s rule comes to an end. This civil war started for Syria because of the betrayal of their president when he had protesters killed and imprisoned. Also the civil war has caused many citizens to flee their homes and seek shelter as refugees in other countries. While many others have been victims of the war as well. “There has been a 21 percent decrease in the population in the last five years, there will be fewer people to rebuild the country, according to the Arab Studies Institute (jadaliyya.com). The civil war has frozen Syria’s growth of development for as long as the war rages on. The effects of the war will now make it harder than ever to rebuild this country. The road to re-grow their development will be even more challenging with the loss of population that Syria has suffered.

With the amount of destruction, death, and economic loss Syria has suffered a report said “Its total economic loss, meanwhile, is equivalent to 468 per cent of 2010's GDP in constant prices, the report said. From its wealth and infrastructure to the population and economy, Syria has "almost all been obliterated", the authors noted. (telegraph.com). The civil war has really taken a toll on Syria’s hopes for their development. They have only gone backwards in hopes to grow as a country. Another report has estimated that if the war continues to go on “It is projected that at this rate Syria will all be annihilated in 5 years time. (jadaliyya.com). The civil war has obviously been the greatest challenge to Syria’s development if it is projected to completely destroy Syria.

Another factor that will cause Syria to struggle with their developmental growth is the amount of poverty that has been caused through the civil war. “The most common explanation for why countries fail to achieve economic growth often focuses on the faults of the poor: poverty is a result of corrupt leadership and retrograde cultures that impede modern
development” (Sachs chapter 3). In Syria’s case their corrupt leadership lead them to this civil war causing a sharp increase in the country’s poverty. The civil war has caused many people to lose their homes, jobs, and sense of safety. Since the war began their economy has crashed many business have gone out of business because of the destruction of cities, the loss of population, and the danger that comes with traveling to Syria to do business. Even if the war ended today, it would take Syria years to get back their workforce to full strength. Their workforce has either been killed, injured, or have fled the country in hopes of a safe haven. “With the economic and structural losses and the destruction of oil resources, agriculture, industry, trade, infrastructure and the displacement of millions of people, the total losses suffered by Syria easily exceeds 200 billion dollars,” the head of the Syrian Economic Task Force, Osama Kadi, said last year (news.com). Syria already ranked pretty low on the Human Development Indicators before their civil war. Now after with this amount of damage that they have already taken as a country, and the world still yet to be over, Syria will have to rebuild from the bottom up.

Syria’s civil war has been their greatest challenge to their development. The reason for this is because the civil war has taken away the freedoms of the citizens of Syria. As Amartya Sen says “freedom means increasing citizen’s access and opportunities to the things they have reason to value” (developmenthannahclifton.wordpress.com). The civil war has done nothing but take away citizens accesses and opportunities. The citizens no longer have the opportunities to live in peace, to work a job, or to value the things they once did. The civil war has taken everything from them to the point where they cannot even live in their home country anymore without the threat of dying. Cities have been destroyed to dust, innocent men, women and children have been killed by their own government. The war has caused a decrease in their
economic growth that will take years to recover from. The civil war has even given birth to an internationally known terrorist group that has caused much terror across the world. Their ability to receive aid from the United States has been cut off due to fear of terror groups. Additionally, the U.S. has banned their refugees from entering the country, taking caution on the terrorist group ISIS. The civil war has caused Syria to take their focuses off any opportunities to things that they may value as a country, such as their oil and agriculture. These values have helped them grow as a country in the past but since the civil war their focus as a country has been between fighting amongst each other and survival. The civil war has truly been the biggest challenge for Syria to develop as a country.
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