

Bashar's First Year: From Ophthalmology to a National Vision

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Yossi Baidatz, a lieutenant colonel in the Israel Defense Forces, was a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute from 2000-2001.



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A detailed look at the first year of Bashar al-Asad's often-unpredictable regime.

One year after Bashar al-Asad's ascendance to the presidency of Syria in June 2000, he has not proven to be the radical innovator some had hoped for, but there is no doubt that his style of leadership differs from that of his father: changes are taking place in Syria. The consequences of these changes, and when Bashar will have to face them, remain unanswered questions. It is also unclear how long Bashar will be able to continue the current slow pace of reform as he faces a society awakening from a thirty-year slumber. Realizing that he must maintain a balance between his own identity and the various forces defining the country, Bashar has chosen to concentrate first on broadening his own legitimacy and consolidating his position, first within Syria and second in the wider Arab arena.

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, Yossi Baidatz offers a detailed diagnosis of Bashar al-Asad's often-unpredictable regime. ❖

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