

# **The United States in Middle Eastern Conflicts: A Case Study of the Civil War in Syria**



A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

**MASTERS OF PHILOSOPHY**

In

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

By

**Muhammad Abdullah**

**Registration No.**

**02132111025**

**SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY**

**ISLAMABAD**

**The United States in Middle Eastern Conflicts: A Case Study of the Civil War  
in Syria**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

**Master of Philosophy**

In

**International Relations**

By

**Muhammad Abdullah**

**Reg. No: 02132111025**

Supervised by

**Dr. Nazish Mahmood**

**Signature:**

**SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY  
ISLAMABAD**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate my thesis to my parents without their prayers, support and belief in me I wouldn't have been able to complete this research work. Also, to my teachers and mentors without whose guidance and time I wouldn't have achieved the distinction of completing this work in efficient manner.

## **Abstract**

*States pursue their national interests utilizing different policy options ranging from diplomacy to war. The collapse of USSR in early 1990s cleared the path for the US to act unilaterally in international affairs without much opposition. The presence of the US military forces in Middle East were tasked to safeguard vital American interests in the region that included minimizing the role of countries hostile to the interests of the US. Russia as an emerging power with the ability to built on the experience of former Soviet Union, and its support for the Assad Regime during the Syrian crisis against the protestors who sought reforms along with a host of other issues, pushed the US to engage deeply with the local partners solely to safeguard American interests. The assertiveness of Russia primarily in eastern Europe and its deep ties with Bashar Al Assad were perceived detrimental for a borader US role in the region. Russian designs to expand its reach and establish strongholds in countries traditionally aligned with the West after the Soviet's disintegration stirred up American policy-makers. The US military intervention sought to dismantle terrorism while also seeking to counterbalance Russia and achieve parity in both political and military domains through close collaboration with anti regime elements within the Syrian political and military circles.*

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Chapter One</b>	
<b>A Brief Historical Overview of Syria</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1 The Landscape of Syria	
1.2 Political landscape and instability	
1.3 Ascent of Hafez al-Assad	
1.4 Bashar al Assad at the Center of Power	
1.5 Syria and the Arab World	
1.6 Contours of Relations with Israel	
1.7 Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
<b>The US Involvement in the Middle East</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 Post-War Presence	
2.2 Containment of Communism	
2.3 The US dealing with the Suez Crisis	
2.4 The Syrian Crisis of 1957	
2.5 Intervention in Lebanon	
2.6 Power structure in the 21st Century	
2.7 Implication for the region	
2.8 Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
<b>Crises Eruption in Syria</b>	<b>42</b>
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 The Arab Spring	
3.3 Causes of the Uprising	
3.4 State response to the uprising	
3.5 Evolution from Protest to Civil War	
3.6 Unified Opposition	
3.7 States and their Interests	
3.8 Conclusion	

## **Chapter Four**

### **Obama Syria Policy: The US Syrian Policy in the Backdrop of the Arab Spring**

**61**

- 4.1 Individual level of analysis
- 4.2 State level analysis
- 4.3 Systemic Level of Analysis
- 4.4 Globalism and Geo-political considerations
- 4.5 Conclusion

## **Chapter Five**

### **US Military Intervention in Syria: A Case Study of Offensive Realism**

**79**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Theoretical Explanation
- 5.3 Rationale for the US intervention
- 5.4 Military Presence in the Middle East
- 5.5 Objectives of Intervention
- 5.6 Modus Operandi
- 5.7 Russia as Strategic Competitor
- 5.8 Security Dilemma: Power Maximization through Alliance Formation
- 5.9 Conclusion

## **Conclusion**

**100**

## **Bibliography**

**104**

## **Introduction**

The US has had presence in the Middle East since Second World War. It has actively participated in breaking and erecting political systems to defend national interests in the region. However, its role has greatly diminished in the region due to the shift in geopolitical interests of the United States in the recent past. The emerging powers like China and Russia pose a serious threat to the “Liberal Hegemonic” character of the United States that it had played since the culmination of Cold war. To counter the rivals, the United States have to relocate resources elsewhere thus creating a vacuum in the region.

The focus has primarily shifted to the Far East, encircling China in a bid to stop its growing military capability and its ascendancy to global power status. The Syrian civil war has –besides economic and political fallout within, destabilized the whole region. The growing friction between the rising powers and the United States, coupled with the potential withdrawal of the latter from the region and the divergent interests of regional powers, have raised the likelihood of regional powers intervention in Syria and accordingly prop the belligerent party strategically and ideologically aligned with the benefactor. Consequently, it has exacerbated the impact of the crisis for the region and beyond; with no end in sight of the civil war.

## **Literature Review:**

Christopher Phillips in his book “The Battle for Syria international rivalry in the new middle east” writes in detail about the impact the Arab Spring had on Syria and the regional players. It also talks about regional and global powers' intervention in Syria in order to pursue their agenda. However, it fails to identify the influence under which the United States intervened in Syria, whether it were the primary interests of the United States that drove them to intervene militarily in Syria or the regional powers were compelling it for their protection against the spread of Arab

Spring. The Arab monarchies were particularly concerned with the devastating consequences of the Arab spring in terms of replacing monarchical rule with, albeit symbolic, democracy and the violence associated with it.<sup>1</sup>

J. K. Gani in her book “The Role of Ideology in Syrian-US Relations Conflict and Cooperation” traces the history of conflict and mutual hostilities between Syria and the United States to the Cold war period wherein a markedly insouciant policy of the United States towards Syria; in its relations with Israel, forced the latter to choose a path directly adversarial to the former. What the author misses in her book is explicating the dynamics of contemporary crisis that Syria is faced with, and the unique nature of relations between the two countries i.e the USA and Syria, in the wake of a resurgent multipolarity.<sup>2</sup>

Dania Koleilat Khatib et al. in their book “The Syrian Crisis Effects on the Regional and International Relations” have shed light on the tenuous nature of relations between Syria and the United States; however, their book lacks a definitive reflection of the need for the United States to intervene militarily in Syria. The importance of Syria, its resource-rich terrain and the religious inclination cannot be ignored in the broader picture of regional geopolitical competition that has emerged between regional and supra-regional states. Therefore, the lack of understanding the nature of domestic politics and the conduct of foreign policy can create hurdles for the US with regards to the regional aspirations of the latter especially vis-a-vis peace process between Israel and the Arabs.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Phillips, “The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East”, Yale University Press (2016).

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Gani, “The Role of Ideology in Syrian-US Relations: Conflict and Cooperation”, Palgrave Macmillan US (2014)/

<sup>3</sup> Dania Khatib, “The Syrian Crisis Effects on the Regional: Perspectives on Development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region



The article titled “The Role of Global Powers in the Prolongation of the Syrian Conflict” makes the case for the protraction of the Syrian civil wars in the event of foreign interventions. As it evades the pressing question of identifying the interests of intervening states especially the United States, and well-founded reasons behind their subsequent intervention. It, however, is evident from a bulk of literature that not only immediate neighbours of Syria but also regional powers take keen interest in the unfolding situation in Syria. Their interests steer them , sometimes, to seek alliance and undertake concerted efforts while other times, when differences emerge, they take conflicting positions; in the process, making the situation more complicated for a simple solution.<sup>4</sup>

### **Research Questions:**

1. Why did the United States choose to intervene in the support of anti-Assad regime elements in the Syrian civil war?
2. What are the pressing interests of the intervening power- the United States?
3. Whether the intervention of the United States has benefitted the US in its rivalry with Russia?

### **Hypothesis:**

The national interests of the United States and its allies together, and the increasing power and expansionist designs of Russia catalyzed the need for intervention during the Syrian civil war.

### **Theoretical framework:**

---

<sup>4</sup> Gul et.al, ‘The Role of Global Powers in the Prolongation of the Syrian Conflict’. *Global Political Review*, V(I), 29-35.

The theories of international relations offer help to understand the actions of states in a world characterized by the constant fear for survival. Historic events that potentially alter the course of world politics are worthy of explanation only if they are studied against specific and generalized phenomena that can give a certain meaning dimension and to the events that occur frequently throughout the world. In other words, a framework is required to understand the meaning and purpose of the existence of different ‘facts’. As Edward Hallet Carr, a famous historian wrote in his book, that “a fact is like a sack, it won't stand up till you've put something in it”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we require international relation theories to explain the meaning and purpose of the facts – events.

The growing interests of global and regional players, and their military build-up, to balance the military power of the United States in the ME have significantly harmed the superpower stature of the United States. The growing assertiveness of global players, like Russia and China, as well as regional players have eroded the capability of the US to take unilateral decisions in its relations with the Middle East. The US therefore, witnessing a shift in the geopolitics of the region was alerted to any potential change in the distribution and balance of power as well as a shift the existent order in the region. Theoretically speaking, a state would do anything in its capacity to maintain status quo if it is beneficial for its interests. This thesis uses the offensive realism theory of International relations to make a case for the United States' intervention in Syria. To assert its supremacy and take action in an atmosphere hostile to its interests in an anarchic world, the United States used its military forces inside Syria.

In a system characterized by anarchy, a state is forced to take steps to ensure that its security is guaranteed, given there is no centralized authority that can come to its rescue when it is

---

<sup>5</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?*, 11.

threatened or attacked by other state. In a unipolar world, no matter how cautious the powerful state behaves other less powerful states will harbor apprehensions about the future motives and behaviour of such a state. They, therefore, will strive to catch up with and balance the power of the dominant state soon.<sup>6</sup> The fear, however, further aggravates when the system is multipolar – many powerful states, because there's always a dearth of information about the capabilities and motive of other states. Therefore, states tend to believe that the power that other states hold has potential offensive utilization which is perceived as threat, giving way to modernization of military equipments to compete with the perceived hostile power, and alliance formation to balance against threat.<sup>7</sup>

### **Research methodology:**

This research aims to find out the rationale for the US intervention in Syria during the civil war. For comprehensive understanding of the subject area we have employed qualitative methodology using case study approach. This particular approach will assist us in the understanding of the reasons and conditions where a state uses force to intervene in another state experiencing internal conflict.

### **Variables:**

Change in the perception and the nature of national interests could significantly alter the course of events that unfolded in Syria. Therefore, in this thesis, we have identified the national interests of the United States as our independent variable, while the scenario resulting from the intervention in Syria forms the dependent variable.

---

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Waltz, –*Structural Realism after the Cold War*,” International Security, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer, 2000), pp. 5-41

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

**Limitations:**

This research is limited to finding only the military interests of the intervening power; it doesn't include the economic interests and/or political interests. Syria is an oil rich country situated at a critical juncture in west asia. Therefore, a number of regional states have economic interests in the country. Russia, for one, has heavily invested in a number of diverse projects. However, this research work restricts itself to exploring the military interests of the US in Syria within the broader concept of balance of power in the region.

**Sources:**

For the clarity and cohesiveness of this thesis, both primary and secondary sources have been consulted for the purpose of gathering as much relevant information as the scope of this thesis permits . Research articles, magazines, news reports, and books are the sources of our information for this thesis work.

## Chapter 1

### A Brief historical overview of Syria

#### 1.1 The landscape of Syria

Greater Syria home to the oldest civilizations that witnessed numerous ruling dynasties was ruled by the Ottomans for nearly four centuries. It encompassed modern-day Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and parts of Southern Turkey, before World War One. From Anatolia, in modern-day Turkey, to Egypt, there were no territorial boundaries or differences among the Arab people that could potentially pitch them against one another.<sup>1</sup> The victory of the Allies in the First World War, however, brought the region under the French rule. The gratuitous division cultivated a strong feeling of nationalism and pan-Arabism among Syrians which briefly saw fruition after independence when it formed the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The vulnerability of Syria in the face of manifold problems and mutual differences, notwithstanding, the Baathist elements within the Syrian military sought coalescence with the government of Nasser, who had no knack, whatsoever, to oversee Syrian affairs.<sup>3</sup>

The modern-day Syria with a population of a little over 18 million<sup>4</sup>, shares a border with Iraq to the east, while Jordan lies to the south, and Lebanon and Israel to the west. Syria is in essence a mosaic, albeit an unstable one, of contending ethnic and sectarian groups. The majority profess Islam which includes both strands: Sunni and Shiite- primarily Ismailis while Alawites, Druze, and Christianity have significant followers, especially among the middle and lower middle

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958* Oxford University Press. 1965

<sup>2</sup> Nazish Mahmood, *Military Intervention in Post-Hegemonic International System* (PhD diss., National Defense University, 2019)

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* ", University of California Press, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> ~~P~~Population, Total - Syrian Arab Republic | Data," accessed October 9, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2021&locations=SY&start=1960&view=chart>.

classes. For centuries, the Alawites served the majority i.e. Sunnis and remained impoverished during Ottoman rule.

## **1.2 Post-Independence Syria and the Assad's Rule**

The independence from France brought new challenges for Syria, which were unthinkable for its subjects before it was given in control as a mandate to the former. In the domestic arena, Syria was divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, it was isolated from the rest of the Arab countries however, most importantly, and soon it became a serious contender of the Palestinian cause.<sup>5</sup> The globally tense environment; the Cold War rivalry, and the peer Arab states vying for power further compounded the troubles of Syria. The frequent coups were a reflection of the internal divisions among the powerful military and political entities, while it also mirrored a fragile cohesion in a society deeply divided along sectarian and ethnic lines.<sup>6</sup>

The conflictual attitude within Syria had visible manifestations much before its independence from France, while it was still a province governed by Ottomans. The split among the Muslim elite was a direct result of the waning Ottoman power and subsequently, the local leaders gaining more prominence. The Syrians viewed themselves as Arabs and demanded freedom for the area inhabited by Arabs. On the other hand, the counterbalancing forces that harbored no warmth for Syria, opposed to giving in to the demands of Syrians aligned themselves with the Ottomans.<sup>7</sup>

The the division of Greater Syria and the failure to gain complete independence from the imperialist forces of France embittered Syrian nationalists. The resistance gained momentum

---

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm H. Kerr, *–Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics,*” International Journal 28, no. 4 (1973): 690, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40201173>.

<sup>6</sup> Faiza Rais. *–Syria Under Bashar Al Assad: A Profile of Power,*” Strategic Studies , Autumn 2004, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 144-168

<sup>7</sup> John Galvani. *–Syria and the Baath Party,*” Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. (MERIP) Reports Feb., 1974, No. 25 (Feb., 1974), pp. (3-16) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3011567>

after the French authorities forcefully deposed King Faysal after he sought complete Syrian independence from France –on the strong advice of Syrian nationalists<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the inability to halt the transfer of Alexandretta to Turkey led to a renewed wave of nationalism among the young generation. The political milieu, consequently, became increasingly indisposed to the imperial forces and their maneuvers of facilitating internal divisions backlashed.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3 Political landscape and instability**

The vulnerability of Syrian identity and the volatility of the political landscape spawned a multitude of political parties and movements across Syria. Many amongst them call forth to the sensitivities of the different regions which remained impoverished and sometimes, its residents, often a religious minority were persecuted for their religion. The Ba'ath party, meaning Renaissance, was founded in 1947 by two progressive political activists, Michel Aflak and Salah al-din Bitar. The party soon rose to prominence after making inroads into the rural populace; on account of the demands of anti-imperialism and Arab unity that resonated with the under-resourced communities. It took initiatives like the nationalization of industries, and land reforms to dampen the clout of the old aristocratic class which it believed was in no position to bring stability to the country or rid it of Western imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1.3.1 Military Coups**

Syrian post-independence history is fraught with political instability and social grievances that ultimately led to the first bloodless military coup. The wrangling between nationalists and the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ayse T. Fildis. –*The Troubles in Syria: spawned by French divide and rule*”. MIDDLE EAST POLICY, VOL. XVIII, NO. 4, WINTER 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Moshe Ma'oz, –*Attempts at Creating a Political Community in Modern Syria*” *Middle East Journal* 26, no. 4 (1972): 389–404.

<sup>10</sup> John Galvani. –*Syria and the Baath Party*” p.5

realists<sup>11</sup>, lack of cohesiveness among the different political establishments, and the frustration of the Arab world on account of a failed military adventure against Israel were the primary reasons that Colonel Husni Zaa'im on March 30, 1949, arrested President, Shukri al-Quwatli, along with a cohort of his associates and took charge of the government, bringing the much-needed order and stability. The sore relations, however, with King Abdullah of Jordan and his ostensible proclivity to France ultimately led to his assassination the same year by a group of military personnel under Colonel Sami Hinnawi.<sup>12</sup> Not long after, a senior Colonel Adib el Shishekli 1951 staged another coup overthrowing the nascent government after weeks of crisis that erupted with the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Al-Hakim, a pro-West<sup>13</sup>, political leader. Shishekli, an Arab loyalist and the founder of the Arab Liberation Movement, autocratically ruled Syria till 1954 when he was overthrown by civilians with the aid of the army amidst widespread opposition to his arbitrary effectuation of power.

It was during the dictatorial rule of Shishekli that the Baath party gained ground due to the frigid relations between the army and the more traditional political parties, more so, the People's Party. The army, during this period, developed a taste for civilian control and authority because of its assertiveness in political bargaining.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Baath party which had a strong base in the rural communities and their participation in the military establishment, employed political parties to further their interests.<sup>15</sup> The ouster of Shishekli paved the path for the first free elections in

---

<sup>11</sup> The nationalists called for complete independence from any outside influence, while the realists argued in favor of establishing closer ties with the regional and global powers.

<sup>12</sup> Alford Carleton. *—The Syrian Coups D'état of 1949*” Middle East Journal , Jan., 1950, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan., 1950), pp. 1-11

<sup>13</sup> *—Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V - Office of the Historian,*” accessed October 11, 2022, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/d617>.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Seale, *—The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958*”

<sup>15</sup> John Galvani. *—Syria and the Baath Party*” p.6



Syria in which Baath and Communists make substantial gains. The elections, however, took place during a time of intense Cold War competition. The introduction of the Cold War into the Middle East created divisions among the Arab countries that were advocating for Pan-Arabism at one point. Iraq, allied to the West, called for Syria to join Baghdad Pact while at the same time, Egypt under Nasser pressured Syria and pulled it away from Iraq's influence.

### **1.3.2 Regional Politics and Nationalism**

The formation of UAR further weakened Syrian polity. Nasser a pan-Arab nationalist and an anti-imperial populist, exploited the fortunes of Syria and insisted on the dissolution of Baath in Syria. The high-handedness of Nasser resulted in widespread disillusionment among politicians and the army that accelerated the end of UAR in 1961 when a group of Syrian army officers staged a coup with the support of Saudi Arabia and Jordan.<sup>16</sup> A group of Syrian military personnel, Hafez al Assad among them secretly established Military Committee. The goal of the committee was to work towards the complete control of Syria by the army –dismantling UAR.<sup>17</sup> The Committee was involved in the March 1963 coup but due to lack of an organized structure, it had to revert to the Baath party and thereby, jointly formed the government with other groups.

### **1.3.3 Period of Reforms**

The intensive program of land reforms and nationalization brought the neo-Baathist and the traditional Baath leaders into confrontations, with the former at the vanguard of the social reforms. Much of the membership of the Neo-Baathist was drawn from the rural peasantry class and the minorities who favored these reforms. The Military Committee staged a coup on

---

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Rathmell, *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961* "

<sup>17</sup> Malcolm H. Kerr, *Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics*," p. 693.

February 3, 1966, against the traditional leadership eventually the Neo Baathist took control of the government and solidified the reforms initiative.

#### **1.4 Ascent of Hafez al-Assad**

The failure in the Six Days War of 1967 put a dent between the two; Hafez Assad now a defense minister and commander of the Air Force, and Salah Jadid the head of the Party. Jadid was primarily focused on the economic reforms that inadvertently cost the military a defeat against Israel. However, it was not until the Jordanian civil war that Hafez staged a coup after he was dismissed by the Baath party controlled by Jadid, for not providing air cover to the retreating Palestinian Liberation Army from Jordan. To broaden support and seek the participation of the urban class in rejuvenating the economy of the country, moreover, foreign financing was required to rebuild the Syrian army to defend against an aggressive Israel economic liberalization that was conceived to win over the investors and merchant class.<sup>18</sup>

At home, the post “corrective movement” brought some economic stability to the country and people in return for their limited political freedom. Hafez al-Assad had formed National Progressive Front, with other political parties to form the government; however, it was largely dominated by the Baath party members loyal to Hafez al-Assad. On the global scene, Hafez showcased his shrewdness and diplomatic skills, by joining various regional and international organizations, forging closer ties to the Arab countries which Jadid had discarded, labeling them “reactionary” states. Arab-Israel conflict and the Golan Heights have throughout the political life of Hafez al-Assad dominated his foreign policy principles. The October War was fought primarily to regain the lost territory of Golan to Israel in the Six-day War. The war, however, further damaged the already ailing economy of Syria; major ports were destroyed which were

---

<sup>18</sup> David Holmstrom, in "Syria -- Unity, Liberty and Socialism," Middle East International, April, 1973. p.12

essential not only for domestic trade but a source of revenue from transit trade.<sup>19</sup> The war further weakened his position vis-a-vis a settlement with Israel. However, the opposition and various segments of the society that included Jadid's sympathizers as well dimmed any chances of a radical change in the Syrian foreign policy posture.

#### **1.4.1 Recurring Issues**

The US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, made multiple visits to Damascus to find a solution to the crisis that resulted from the October War. He was successful in engaging both Syria and Israel, thereby; alleviating the crisis and ending the stalemate at the Golan, however, a broader peace deal was still elusive. The successive US presidents have on various occasions tried to cajole, and sometimes coerced, Hafez al-Assad into an agreement to end hostility with Israel, but the latter was unflinching in his demands of the return of Golan Heights and end to the Israel-Palestinian crisis on terms favorable to Palestine for any peace deal.

Syria was opposed to any peace talks with Israel before giving the Palestinians the right to self-determination; moreover, it would render the Arab countries militarily and diplomatically weak in bargaining with Israel and the West. The Camp David Accords that Egypt and Israel signed in 1979 and that same year the US put Syria on the list of states sponsoring terrorism for aiding groups like Jibril and PKK, these moves resulted in Syria inching closer to the Soviet Union, which already provided Syria with weapons in its quest to seek parity with Israel. Syria has had warm relations with the Soviet Union, especially after the neo-Baath takeover of the government. The class struggle and socialism that it advocated brought it closer to the Soviet Union while the Communist Party played its part in bringing them ever closer. Nonetheless, successive US presidents have tried to bring peace to the Middle East but their efforts failed to bring fruition.

---

<sup>19</sup> John Galvani. –*Syria and the Baath Party*” p.14

Jimmy Carter tried his luck twice but failed to achieve anything tangible. Assad had a reputation as a champion of the Palestinian cause, and a hardliner in his dealings vis-à-vis Israel; to him, no deal is feasible unless Israel shows flexibility over the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the Golan Heights.

#### **1.4.2 Israel: The Mortal Enemy**

The Israel invasion of Lebanon in 1982 further downgraded relations between the US and Syria on account of the Syrian military troops deployed in Lebanon, furthermore, the surface-to-air missiles that Syria had installed to protect PLO elements from Israeli raids; Israel's military withdrawal was contingent on Syrian total withdrawal from Lebanon. Syria not only had a presence but also supported a Shiite militant outfit, Hezbollah, which was responsible for the US embassy bombing in Beirut. The imperative for the Syrian presence in Lebanon came from the slowdown of economic growth and the cozying up to Washington, even to the extent of, going against allies in Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

#### **1.4.3 The disintegration of the Soviet Union**

In 1990 both Syria and the US found a common ground to work jointly when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Syria committed thousands of troops to the coalition tasked with pushing the Iraqi dictator out of Kuwait, however, this transient episode of cooperation failed to deliver any long-lasting commitments that could ensure peace in the Middle East region. Nonetheless, the economic benefits worth Four billion dollars in aid from the gulf war shored up the Syrian economy and diplomatic engagements took off after a decade of hostile apprehensions.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Leonard Robinson. *“Rentierism and Foreign Policy in Syria”*. The Arab Studies Journal , Spring 1996, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1996), p.45

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.46

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, provided US President Clinton with a rare opportunity to convince Hafez al-Assad since he had lost a strong ally on the international stage and his bargaining leverage had greatly diminished after the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine and the 1994 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. Nonetheless, Damascus didn't budge from the principled position regarding the prospects of any deal with Israel.<sup>22</sup>

The period of Hafiz al-Assad at the helm of Syrian affairs that spanned from 1970 to 2000 witnessed crises that had the potential to escalate Arab-Israel hostilities into open war, and opportunities that gave hope of peace and economic prosperity. However, the uncompromising attitude and the unyielding position to Western pressure kept the prospects grim of lasting peace in the region.

## **1.5 Bashar al Assad at the Center of Power**

The ascent of Bashar to the office of the presidency marked a smooth transition of power in a quasi-republican country, like Syria. The smooth transfer of power is attributed to various factors that include: the continuation of stability, the purgation of elements from the old guard that Hafez believed was detrimental to the installation of Bashar, and the supportive role of army generals. Moreover, Bashar's regime was no threat to the status quo; therefore, the bureaucracy extended an olive branch to the new president. The regime undertook measures before the ascent of Bashar that vividly cleared his path to the presidency. Prominent individuals, who were perceived as a threat to Bashar, were deposed from their powerful positions that include but not limited to the removal of the chief of staff of the Syrian Armed Forces Hikmat al-Shihabi.

---

<sup>22</sup> Robin Wright, "The Assad Family: Nemesis of Nine U.S. Presidents," *The New Yorker*, April 11, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-assad-family-nemesis-of-nine-u-s-presidents>.

Moreover, Bashar before becoming president also campaigned against corruption, however, officials removed over corruption charges were mostly critics of Bashar.

### **1.5.1 The ‘Damascus Spring’**

The introduction of Bashar al-Assad to the presidency gave hope of change and a probable break from the past practices of his predecessor. The appointments of Western-educated technocrats to the ministerial positions reflected the seriousness of the new president regarding the reform agenda. Making use of the extensive legal powers that the constitution gives a president; members of the old guard were either made to retire or were posted away from the corridors of power, in order to make room for policymakers sympathetic to the idea of reforms<sup>23</sup>. The envisioned reforms in the economy, and the political realm during the early period of Bashar - ‘Damascus spring’, were the direct result of a weak economy and the stark economic disparity that had existed throughout the tenure of his predecessor. The changing geopolitical environment of the region further pressured Assad to seek reforms and adjust to the new emerging realities. However, this situation put him in a precarious situation; on one hand, seeking reforms could upset the allies within the old guard who had enough power to create problems for the Regime. On the other hand, the slow pace of reforms would further entrench the economic woes of Syria amidst a fast-changing environment in the region.<sup>24</sup>

### **1.5.2 The Unfolding of Realities**

The stagnant and underperforming economy that Bashar had inherited, had a negative impact on the stability and legitimacy of the Assad regime. The predecessor of Bashar al-Assad, Hafez intended on making Syria a regional power however not by attending to the core issues i.e.

---

<sup>23</sup> Carmen Becker, *Strategies of Power Consolidation in Syria Under Bashar al-Assad: Modernizing Control Over Resources*, The Arab Studies Journal, Vol. 13/14, No. 2/1 pp. 65-91

<sup>24</sup> Faiza Rais, *Syria Under Bashar Al Assad: A Profile of Power* p.3

underachieving economy and curbs on the political freedom of the subjects, but by emphasizing more on the achievements of the foreign policy. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing geopolitical environment of the region, however, left the regime with few options to avoid growing concern among the people. The unsuccessful attempts of President Bashar to revive the economy resulted in the new elites, closer to the regime, tightening their grip on the economy causing uncontrolled imports and leaving product manufacturing industries in tatters; while the revenue generated from the oil was soon depleting.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.5.3 The Shredding of Authoritarian Bargain**

A general trend common among Arab states was a major shift that occurred in the support base of the regimes from where they derived their legitimacy: the growing reliance on the urban bourgeoisie elites that developed animosity among the peasants and working class.<sup>26</sup> Dictatorships and authoritarian rulers offer the public a trade-off between freedom and social services, which effectively prolongs their rule in return for insignificant public participation in politics. The unfolding situation in the Arab world, however, and the outmoded and stagnant economy caused visible cracks in the authoritarian bargain which ultimately resulted in a charged public; demanding increased political participation and socioeconomic reforms. The clamping down on the protestors by the forces of the Bashar regime had little effect in containing the trajectory of the unfolding events in Syria.

---

<sup>25</sup> Salama Kayli, *Thawra Haqiqiya: Manzur Marksi lil- Thawra al-Suriya/Ture Revolution: A Marxist Perspective of the Syrian Revolution*, Ras al-Khaimah: Dar Nun, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Lahcen Achy, "The Breakdown Of The Arab Authoritarian Bargain", Carnegie Middle East Centre, 9 January 2012

## 1.6 Syria and the Arab World

### 1.6.1 Relations with Lebanon

Relations with neighboring Lebanon are characterized by variables that arguably support Syrian elites; through rampant corruption and informal trade. Lebanon, once part of Greater Syria, has been dominated by Syria primarily after the Ta‘af Accords of 1989; which effectively ended the civil war and paved the path for a security agreement between Lebanon and Syria. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005, however, turned the tables leading to the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon after more than twenty years of deployment after protests that sought the end of Syrian occupation. Lebanon is not only strategically important for Syria but also a source of income from direct and indirect sources that supports crony capitalism across the border.<sup>27</sup> Bashar al-Assad made his first visit to the Lebanese capital, Beirut, in 2010, the first since the 2005 incident; in an effort to mend the relations between the two states. The growing dependency on Iran and closer ties with Hezbollah, however, deprived Syria of a significant amount of aid from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which had shored up for years its rigorous program of subsidization.<sup>28</sup> The Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad managed to extricate himself from Lebanon by removing the members of the “Old Guard”; who viewed Lebanon as part of a broader strategic calculus, in order to consolidate his power at home.<sup>29</sup>

The US had accused Syria and Iran along with their proxy –Hezbollah of destabilizing the Lebanese government and jeopardizing the UN probe into the death of ex-premier Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

---

<sup>27</sup> Mona Yacoubian, “Syria’s Role In Lebanon”, United States Institute Of Peace, Usipeace Briefing, November 2006

<sup>28</sup> Hilal Khashan, “An Uprising Waiting To Happen”, World Affairs: The Journal Of International Issues , Vol. 20, No. 2 (April-June) 2016), pp. 108-123

<sup>29</sup> Scott Lasensky; Mona Yacoubian, “Syria and Political Change II”, The United States Institute of Peace. Wednesday, March 1, 2006



### **1.6.2 Al-Aqsa Intifada**

The second Intifada gave the Syrian regime a short-lived momentum bringing the Arab world to the support of Palestinians except for Egypt which had long-established relations with the Israeli state. Syria not only allowed activities that undermined Israeli authority in southern Lebanon but also actively supported<sup>30</sup> the rationale of maximum pressure on Israel. The new Syrian regime, however, faced unprecedented pressure from the US in the wake of the war against terrorism and the Iraq war. The US demands to act decisively against organizations like Hezbollah and the other Palestinian organizations were met with scorn and suspicions because the Syrian officials had perceived that the US is pressuring Syria to unilaterally defer to Israel with no concessions from Israel, moreover, unless the Syrian demands of complete Israeli withdrawal from Golan Heights and initiation of the peace process are met, it is unlikely for Syria to backtrack on supporting these organizations. The primary purpose of the stringent demands was to coerce Syria into caving into the US pressure to stop Syria from exploiting the situation in Iraq and Lebanon. The Syrian approach, however, had been that of wait and watch, and piecemeal adherence to the demands; because certain elements within the regime were aware of the undeniably important Syrian role in the stability of Iraq in the presence of occupation forces. Syria under Bashar supported United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 in order to show willingness that Syria can engage positively to avert wars in the region.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.6.3 Contours of Relations with Israel**

The bilateral relations between Syria and Israel under the leadership of Bashar follow the same trajectory as that during the Hafez al-Assad period. The former like his predecessor still pressurizes Israel with proxy elements like Hezbollah, who can hit deep inside the Israeli

---

<sup>30</sup> Radwan Ziadeh, *Power And Policy In Syria: The Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations And Democracy in the Modern Middle East*. Pp. 84

<sup>31</sup> Syria under Bashar (1): Foreign Policy Challenges', ICG Middle East Report No. 23, February 11, 2004.

territory.<sup>32</sup> In 2008, the indirect Syria-Israel peace process initiated under the mediation of Turkey brought the two countries closer to striking a deal; arousing hopes of a stable and peaceful Middle East once again. A peace deal with Israel will be regarded as a strategic and political triumph giving the regime stability and legitimacy at home, despite growing pressures on Assad himself in the wake of a UN probe into the murder of Rafiq Hariri; US presence in the otherwise unstable Iraq making Syria vulnerable to the US and Israeli aggression.

The economic and political challenges at home were further deepened by the Syrian leadership's perceived scourge of globalization. In a welcome speech to Chinese Vice President Hu Jintao, the Syrian president summed up the transgression of globalization as a threat to the "national identity" of states and aids to serve the furthering of the "cultural and economic hegemony" of certain states<sup>33</sup>. The adjustment to the unraveling international realities for Syria was hard to come by and; therefore in an interview the president emphasized that the reforms will carry themselves with the "Syrian Pace".<sup>34</sup>

#### **1.6.4 Syrian Relations with Iraq**

The once cordial relations with the takeover of the Iraq government by Baath- a formal union was envisioned after the failure of a tripartite integration with Syria and Egypt ended with the Syrian support for Iran against neighboring Iraq in the prolonged first Persian Gulf war. While Iraq was reeling from the UN-enforced sanctions, the Syrian regime also needed capital resources, due to failed peace processes, for survival. This resulted in the resumption of the oil pipeline; financially supporting the cash-strapped Iraqi economy and also giving the Syrian

---

<sup>32</sup> Paul Salem, "Syrian-Israeli Peace: A Possible Key to Regional Change" Director, Carnegie Middle East Center, December 2008.

<sup>33</sup> "President Welcomes Chinese Guest," SANA, January 11, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> New York Times, December 30, 2003

economy a stimulus in the shape of discounted oil imports. Resultantly, the relations between Syria and the US spiraled down, the latter further intensifying the verbal attacks against Syrian officials and threatening them with a potential invasion.<sup>35</sup>

The US assertiveness and the support of moderate Arab states in the wake of the war against terrorism dimmed any chance of Syrian opposition to the UNSC Resolutions aimed at isolating Iraq diplomatically. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 on the pretext of the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) was seen as a cover-up of the crimes of Israel and encirclement of intifada and resistance. The Syrian policy of Post-invasion Iraq was to bog down the US and discourage any attempts at Syrian invasion. To that effect, they not only supplied weapons but also let Islamists cross the Syrian-Iraqi porous border to fight off the US military. Moreover, it also hosted members of the Saddam Hussein regime much to the chagrin of the US. Soon after, Syria sought working relations with the Iraqi governments to stem the potential disintegration of Iraq and the secessionist movements –Kurds, gaining ground in an unstable Iraq.

## **Conclusion**

The Western-educated and liberal reformist image of Bashar al-Assad soon disappeared when he took the reins of the presidency and soon enough when was exposed to the bitter realities wherein 21<sup>st</sup>-century Syria found itself. Much of the political freedoms granted were soon renounced and the critics of the regime were labeled as traitors furthering the cause of enemy states by weakening the state from within. Not only the internal problems altered the course that Bashar otherwise might have taken but, more so, the global issues had far graver implications for Syria, especially the Bush administration in the US together with Ariel Sharon tried to pressurize Syria into a peace process paving the path for a new Middle East Order that would have left Syria weaker in the face of a stronger Israel.

---

<sup>35</sup>Raymond Hinnebusch, *–Syria-Iraq Relations State Construction And Deconstruction And The MENA States System*”, Middle East Center, 2014

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 The US Involvement in the Middle East

The US had a significant presence in the Middle East for various reasons, ranging from political to economic interests. The presence, however, didn't go without resistance as regional powers have long disliked US military presence in the Middle East. As an isolated country, with the stopping power of seas, the US has developed sufficient power projection capabilities through the establishment of various facilities across the region.

#### 2.1.1 Making the case

The United States at the vanguard of the capitalist bloc, now the largest producer and consumer of oil, had an interest in the oil of the Middle East during the 1930s when certain big oil companies invested their fortune in the region strategically important to the United States. The interest in the Middle East, however, got more pronounced only after the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> The US attitude and foreign policy towards the region till the Second World War were shaped by the nineteenth-century missionary presence in the Middle East. The interaction between the US and the Arabs was limited and the US inherited much of the perceptions about the region from Europe.<sup>37</sup>

The missionary activities did not go without resistance, however. According to the Ottoman legal system, while the missionaries could not work among the Muslims, however, there was no legal barrier for them to work among the other religious minorities. As working among minorities was not an easy task either; Syrian, Greek, and Jewish religious authorities soon recognized missionary activities as a form of “cultural imperialism” and a threat to their traditions and

---

<sup>36</sup> G. F. Gresh & T. Keskin, *US foreign policy in the Middle East: From American missionaries to the Islamic state*, Routledge Studies, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Sisman, C., *Failed proselytizers or modernizers? Protestant missionaries among the Jews and Sabbatians/Donmes in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire*. Middle Eastern Studies, vol.51 no.6, 932–949.

sacred language. Through their publications, schools, hospitals, and orphanages, they began to leave a deep impact on local people, especially on Armenians. Their activities became the source of modernization and the rise of nationalism among religious and ethnic minorities. And this very development was alarming for the Ottoman authorities, who, then, began to take measures against the growing influence of missionary activities.

The steady provision of oil to keep up the war effort had depleted the petroleum resources extracted at home. Therefore, the presence of vital natural resources; oil and gas, and the idea of the geostrategic importance of the Middle East were instrumental in convincing the US military and the oil companies for the former's presence in the region.<sup>38</sup> The United States needed Arabian oil resources to rebuild Europe after the destruction caused by the Second World War; because a weak Europe would have been prone to a powerful Soviet Union control.

In the wake of the defeat of Central powers in the First World War which brought about the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate, witnessed the entire Middle East territory came under the direct control of the victor European powers i.e. the United Kingdom and France. Moreover, the European powers were calling the shots in the Middle East before WWII eroded their global power stature.

### **2.1.2 Post-War Presence**

The purpose of this work is to understand the role of military power in the pursuit of foreign policy goals of the U.S. vis-à-vis Syria, in the Middle East. Therefore, it is imperative to gauge the readiness and efficiency of the US forces in the region likely a hotbed of competition between the various regional and global competing powers. Consequently, although, a number of policy tools are employed by states to achieve their objectives, based on their understanding of

---

<sup>38</sup>Barry Rubin, *Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945*, Journal of Contemporary Studies vol.14 no.2, 253-267, p.254.

the entities they are dealing with and the historical lessons they have drawn from similar occasions elsewhere in the past.

After the Second World War, the US emerged as the sole power tasked with defending the interests of the West collectively. Although the US had a presence in the Middle East that goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; however, their renewed interests in the region took a sharp turn after the First World War. The US, although, not a part of the wheeling and dealing over the territorial demarcations of the post-War Ottoman Empire had secured guarantees regarding the privileges of its citizens and corporations<sup>39</sup> operating in the Middle East.<sup>40</sup>

The US victory in World War Two not only shot up the morale of the country's military, but it also retained the assets i.e. Industrial potential, sufficient manpower, and sophisticated weaponry that it had deployed during the War, giving them an edge over other powers, especially the USSR. Furthermore, the Kennedy administration further accelerated the process of up-gradation of conventional weapons as well as the modernization of nuclear capabilities.

However, the glaring setback to the U.S. military forces in the South East Asian sector of Vietnam, also known as Vietnam syndrome, reversed U.S. preparations carried off during the following couple of decades of World War II. For instance, the U.S. Strike Command (STRICOM) was scaled back and transformed into Readiness Command (REDCOM). Similarly, the guiding principle of US defense was reduced from a 2-1/2 war<sup>41</sup> to a 1-1/2 war—a policy that initially required the US forces to engage in two conventional war theatres and one smaller

---

<sup>39</sup>Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, –The 1928 Red Line Agreement”

<sup>40</sup>William Stivers, *Supremacy and oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American world Order, 1918-1930*, Cornell University Press.

<sup>41</sup> Fred Kaplan, –*The Doctrine Gap*,” *Slate*, July 6, 2005, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2005/07/reality-vs-the-pentagon-s-new-strategy.html>.

action presumably a limited war. The promulgation of the Nixon Doctrine and War Powers Resolution were clear manifestations of the wariness of the US public and policymakers.<sup>42</sup>

The continued supply of oil to the West provided the US military *raison d'être* of, however, a minimal presence in the Middle Eastern region. Their presence, however, began to grow exponentially in the 1980s after the Khomeini revolution toppled the pro-West Pahlavi government in 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that the same year and a probable Soviet takeover of the Khuzestan oil fields of Iran.<sup>43</sup> Not long after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 initiation of serious efforts was invoked to aggressively restore the US intervention capabilities. A horde of treaties was concluded with multiple states that eventually gave the U.S. access to their facilities, while naval fleets already deployed were stretched across the globe.

The US presence in the region during the cold war can be attributed to three broad policy objectives: Containment of Communism, Securing Persian Gulf Oil, and Protection of Israel. Moreover, the US continued drive against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and the post 9/11 War on Terror (WoT) saw unrelenting US pressure on the region.

### **2.1.3 Containment of Communism**

Mearsheimer in his book, *‘The Tragedy of Great Power Politics’* asserts that “the US acted as an offshore balancer throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century” after establishing hegemony in the Western hemisphere<sup>44</sup>. A weak Europe in the wake of World War could no longer contain the rise of an assertive USSR from dominating Europe and beyond therefore; the presence of the US military

---

<sup>42</sup> Kevin N. Lewis, *‘Responding to Soviet Intervention in the Third world: A new approach to U.S. Defense Planning’*. In *Military Intervention in the third world* edited by John H. Maurer, and Richard H. Porth. 147-148.

<sup>43</sup> Micah Zenko, *‘US Military Policy in the Middle East,’*

<sup>44</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). 236-237

assets in continental Europe was inevitable which also reflected the apprehensions of US policymakers about the rise of a potential hegemon that could constrain its movement.

The USSR had gained an upper hand in the Middle East when it penetrated the region through opportunist diplomacy and constant provision of military equipment to the Arabs. The unending hostilities between the Arab states and Israel, and the unabating differences among the Arabs themselves provided the USSR with the rare opportunity to expand her influence. The US tried to enlist the help of states like Iran and Turkey among others to repel the overt expansion of the Soviets by pulling them out of Iran and assisting Turkey under the Marshall plans accordingly.<sup>45</sup>

John Maurer writes that the cold war competition between the two superpowers had semblance to the world before the First World War wherein the great powers vied for power and control of less developed regions to consolidate their positions and to extract resources therefrom.<sup>46</sup> The Cold War had its first manifestation in the aftermath of the Turkish strait crisis when USSR proposed a joint Turco-Soviet control of the straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus, which the Turkish authorities comprehended as renewed imperialism of the USSR. The United States was wary of the Soviet intentions of probable domination of Turkey and its repercussions for the whole region. In effect, the US, and the UK as well, didn't want Turkey to become a satellite of the USSR.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> John C. Campbell, "The Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 126–35.

<sup>46</sup> John H. Maurer, "Introduction: The strategic background to military interventions". In *Military Intervention in the Third world*, 2. Praeger Publishers.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony R. De Luca, "Soviet-American Politics and the Turkish Straits," *Political Science Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (1977): 503–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2148505>.



#### **2.1.4 The US dealing with the Suez Crisis**

The Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization enterprise of the Suez Canal had raised eyebrows in the US however; the expedition of the tripartite coalition of the UK, France, and Israel against Egypt in the wake of Egypt's assertive move was averted only after the interposition of the US president; with the knowledge that Nasser had the support of Soviet Union; evident in the arms treaty of 1955. This episode in the Middle Eastern chapter culminated in the complete collapse of the influence and prestige of Britain and France in the region. The ensuing power vacuum paved the path for the Soviet incursion into the region, which however was ineffectively thwarted by the enunciation of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The US president in his address to Congress expressed his concerns about a possible Soviet military drift toward the Middle East in no ambiguous terms.

—The reason for Russia's interest in the Middle East is solely that of power politics. Considering her announced purpose of communizing the world, it is easy to understand her hope of dominating the Middle East.”<sup>48</sup>

The Suez Canal crisis and the rising popularity of Nasser's nationalism among Arabs coupled with the growing influence of the Communist USSR in the region set the stage for increased all-encompassing US presence in the Middle East. Hence, the US president proposed:

—... Authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence. ... The Executive to

---

<sup>48</sup> —The Eisenhower Doctrine,“ accessed February 12, 2023, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-quot-eisenhower-doctrine-quot-january-1957>.

undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and co-operation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid. ... & include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.”<sup>49</sup>

### **2.1.5 The Syrian Crisis of 1957**

The government formation with the explicit support of a pro-Soviet faction – the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) in Syria raised some eyebrows within the West, especially after when the ties between the former two were consolidated. The West particularly viewed the government in Damascus as a pawn of the Soviet after Hussein, the Jordanian King, made the assertions that Syrian nationalists were behind the ‘pro-communist subversion’ of Jordan. The US ambassador to Syria informed the state department about the activities of the Syrian government about the close cooperation between Syria and the Soviets in all key areas –economic, political, and military.<sup>50</sup>

The UK together with the US proposed to install a pro-West government in Syria during their meeting at Bermuda by ‘tying Syria up’ with Iraq, where a pro-West Hashemite king Faisal II was already ruling. There was a feeling of victory within the Iraqi political circles of a probable union with Syria, given the ideological differences between the former and Egypt. A few months

---

<sup>49</sup> “The Eisenhower Doctrine”. Part VI

<sup>50</sup> Philip Anderson, “‘Summer Madness’: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 1/2 (1995): 21–42.

later the State Department was informed in explicit terms by the US embassy in KSA through a note:

“Time approaching, if indeed not already arrived, when Syria will cease to be effectively an independent nation but will have been taken over as was Czechoslovakia in 1948 and made into Soviet satellite having independence only in name and not in substance.”<sup>51</sup>

The assessment of the National Intelligence Estimate about the Syrian affair however was strikingly different from the radical position the neighboring countries took:

“We believe the dominant coalition in Syria entered its present relationship with the Soviet Bloc: (a) to obtain arms with which to build up the Syrian armed forces; (b) to build up the Syrian economy; (c) as an act of defiance and of retaliation for the West’s part in the creation of Israel and Israel’s humiliation of Syria and the other Arab states. We have no evidence that ... the actions of the Syrian coalition have been influenced by Communist ideology.”<sup>52</sup>

The increased tilt towards psychological warfare resulted in the development of the Psychological Strategy Program (PSG), right after Eisenhower was elected president. The plan which the PSG devised suggested ‘concrete political action’ and the pivotal role of ‘personal

---

<sup>51</sup> A telegram from State Department to embassy in Saudi Arabia, 27.8.1957

<sup>52</sup> “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Near East: Jordan-Yemen, Volume XIII - Office of the Historian,” accessed February 13, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v13/d383>.

relationship<sup>53</sup> in convincing the Arabs of the American role as a champion of Arab independence and social progress.<sup>53</sup> The US policy regarding Syria, in this case, had been the exact opposite; staging a failed coup, and supporting the violent narratives of Syrian neighbors.<sup>54</sup>

The US position vis-à-vis Syria was full of contradictions and uncertainties as the Iraqi Foreign Minister stated in a meeting with an officer of the British foreign office, that initially, the US was calling for quick action against Syria but somehow they are less enthusiastic now. The US defensive posture might have resulted from the vehement criticism by the Soviet Foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko after the deliveries of weapons to Amman, and a warning to Turkey, an ally of the US, to not deploy troops on the Syrian border.<sup>55</sup>

The diplomatic failure on the part of the US was primarily attributed to confounding the nationalism in the Syrian polity with communism evident in the simplistic interpretation of the Syrian crisis through the lens of international communism; which resulted in the failure of the US to mark its image as a champion of liberal values and social progress in the Middle East.<sup>56</sup>

### **2.1.6 Intervention in Lebanon**

The crises of 1958 in Lebanon erupted, in an atmosphere of Arab nationalism and anti-Western imperialism, after the mutual distrust between the Muslims and Christians due to their contrasting foreign policy posture. The regional developments had instilled doubts in the Maronite Christians had to take a pro-West tilt as opposed to the Muslims basking in the glory of

---

<sup>53</sup> —Kewin Brown - The Syrian Crisis of 1957 A Lesson for the 21st Century,” accessed February 14, 2023, [https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives\\_Paper42013\\_Syria.pdf](https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives_Paper42013_Syria.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> —Kewin Brown - The Syrian Crisis of 1957 A Lesson for the 21st Century”

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, —Summer Madness.” 31

<sup>56</sup> —Syria and the United States: Eisenhower’s Cold War in the Middle East | Foreign Affairs,” accessed February 14, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1994-11-01/syria-and-united-states-eisenhowers-cold-war-middle-east>.

Nasser and his vehement denunciation of Western imperialism and the rising tide of Arab nationalism.

The ouster of the Hashemite monarchy from Iraq in a bloody July coup raised the suspicions of the US administration about a probable ouster of the West from Middle Eastern affairs and making it a stronghold of Communism. Financial support under the Eisenhower Doctrine was extended to consolidate the position of the Lebanese president Camille Chamoun in the face of growing united opposition, United National Front<sup>57</sup>. However, the polarization after the parliamentary elections in 1957, added fuel to the fire; further drifting the opposition and Chamoun apart.

The crisis although had a potent domestic dimension, still, US President Eisenhower linked it to global communism; a dominant narrative of the cold war period. Furthermore, reports from the Department of Defense suggested that the US must offer conditional support to Chamoun, because of his pro-West credentials, to stem further encroachments on Western influence in the country.<sup>58</sup>

## **Oil and Energy**

The Free World needed oil to reinvigorate their economies after World War II was over leaving behind unprecedented devastation, poverty, and unemployment. Oil instantly became the centerpiece of policy-making both in the West and the Middle East. The Arabs used the abundant oil resources to twist the arms of the West while the latter used the same commodity to justify

---

<sup>57</sup> David Lesch, ed., *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* (Westview Press), 152-153

<sup>58</sup> 'Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Lebanon and Jordan', Volume XI - Office of the Historian,"accessed February 15, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v11/d20>.

their presence both military and political, in the region<sup>59</sup>. According to the estimates, the Middle holds the energy resources somewhere between two-thirds and three-fourths of the known reserves. The black gold indispensable for the post-war resuscitation of industries in the West, along with transportation routes needed protection not only from the rogue elements from within the Middle East but also from the USSR, which was believed to be the antithesis of capitalism, and her satellite states. The contemporary US strategy adopts the same pattern of defending the oil-rich region from potential threats emanating from states squarely opposed to US involvement in regional politics.<sup>60</sup>

## **The Gulf Wars**

Needless to say, the US supported Iraq with the belief that Saddam Hussein will overcome the Islamic revolution in Iran that posed a threat to US interests in the region. However, the watershed moment for the United States with regards to extending security to the relatively small Gulf States came during the first gulf war –Iran-Iraq war, when Kuwait asked the US in mid 1980s to assist her in the protection of oil tankers from the possible Iranian assault. The Operation Earnest Will lasted for a year when the belligerent parties agreed to a cease fire under the auspices of UN.<sup>61</sup> Eventually, it set the stage for increased presence of the US forces in the Middle East especially in the Persian Gulf.

The US has had presence in a number of gulf countries; the primary purpose is to ensure the smooth flow of oil through the Persian Gulf. At the height of Gulf war in early 1990s around Six

---

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Shwadran, "Oil in the Middle East Crisis," *International Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956): 13–23.

<sup>60</sup> Shibley Telhami, "The Persian Gulf: Understanding the American Oil Strategy," *Brookings* (blog), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-persian-gulf-understanding-the-american-oil-strategy/>.

<sup>61</sup> Michael W. Selby, "Without Clear Objectives: Operation Earnest Will.:" (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, February 7, 1997), <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA325197>.

hundred and ninety thousands<sup>62</sup> US troops were deployed in the region in a bid to defend Saudi Arabia against Iraq's Saddam Hussein potential invasion of the former. The war cost nearly 61 billion US dollar, however the bigger chunk of which was paid by the coalition partners like Saudi Arabia.<sup>63</sup>

President George Bush senior, in his address, delineated four principles that dictated US policy during the Gulf War:

—First, we seek the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace the puppet regime. And third, my administration, as has been the case with every President from President Roosevelt to President Reagan, is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. And fourth, I am determined to protect the lives of American citizens abroad.”<sup>64</sup>

At the time of Gulf crisis the US imported nearly half the oil it consumed while the percentage of oil imports for allies was even higher. The restoration of peace, therefore, in the Middle East was essential for the peaceful transportation of oil through the region and stability in the oil market.

### **US and the Middle East non-proliferation of WMDS**

The success of the Manhattan Project elevated the international stature of the United States when it became the only nuclear armed state. The US policymakers, however, were cautious because

---

<sup>62</sup> Mohammed Haddad, —Infographic: History of US Interventions in the Past 70 Years,” accessed March 24, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive>.

<sup>63</sup> —Costs of Major US Wars,” accessed March 24, 2023, <http://public2.nhhcaws.local/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/c/costs-major-us-wars.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-announcing-the-deployment-united-states-armed-forces-saudi-arabia>.

they believed the new weapon will revolutionize the international politics, and bring about significant changes to the conduct of global diplomacy. Therefore, the Atomic Development Authority, a brainchild of Acheson-Lilienthal was envisaged to control the spread of nuclear weapons through international control regime of the fissionable material which would be available to countries only for peaceful purposes.<sup>65</sup>

The correlation between regional conflict and the potential for global escalation during the cold war put particular emphasis on nuclear non-proliferation efforts in the Middle East region. The WMDs in the Middle East didn't harbor good news for the security of the West primarily because the states that sought to acquire them were always in cross-hairs with the US. More importantly, however, the presence of interstate conflicts and fault lines with prospects of escalations put higher premium for individual states on the acquisition of WMDs.

The Israeli preventive strike against the Iraqi nuclear facility –Osiraq, won admiration of the US officials, especially after the Gulf war when Iraq became an easy target for the coalition since it had no nuclear weapons to deter them.<sup>66</sup> The gulf war ended the remnants of any nuclear weapon program that Iraq might have initiated after the debacle of 1981 through inspections of IAEA officials and stringent sanctions regime. The Bush administration unearthed a nuclear program in Iraq under the Saddam regime nearing the final stage in early 1990s. However, the US seeks collective approach to address the question of non-proliferation in the Middle East because of the sensitivities attached to the region with respect to the interests of other powers.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Manpreet Sethi, –US Pursuit of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Check and Checkmate”, Strategic Analysis: September 1999 (Vol. XXIII No. 6)

<sup>66</sup> Dan Reiter, –Preventive Attacks Against Nuclear Programs And The “Success” At Osiraq”.

<sup>67</sup> Gerald Steinberg, –U.S. Responses to Proliferation of WMD in the Middle East”, Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 2 No. 3/September 1998



The US does not approve of the Iranian nuclear and the ballistic missile program since after the Islamic revolution of 1979. Conversely, the Clinton administration was reluctant when the Israeli intelligence officers demonstrated a collusion of Russians and Chinese assisting Iran in developing their ballistic missile program; Clinton got cold feet even when the Congress passed the sanctions bill. Moreover, the US is also cautious about the Iranian WMDs program due to the ramifications for the region in case of any misadventure especially if Israel is involved.<sup>68</sup>

## **2.2 Power structure in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The global war on terror after the infamous 9/11 attacks made the US completely preoccupied with the Middle Eastern region. The attack on Afghanistan soon after the collapse of twin towers, and the US invasion of Iraq derailed the tenuous balance of power in the region, paving path for regional powers to concentrate on increasing their power in order to maintain their security of borders and also influence any roadmap of political setup in the region. The uneven distribution of power among the regional rivals and consequent absence of an overarching hegemon in the post-war Middle East, the region grew immensely prone to outside interference.

## **2.3 Implication for the region**

### **2.3.1 States as rivals**

The anarchy in a destabilized region that the 2003 war unleashed in Iraq provided Iran with the rare opportunity to step up efforts to expand its sphere of influence by accelerating its nuclear program and manipulating the Shiite population of Iraq in a bid to install a pro-Iranian government in Baghdad shifting the domestic balance of power away from Sunni minority. Resultantly, Israel also tried to match the power to cancel out Iranian influence in the region, saw her influence maximized in Syria. The zero-sum game between Israel and Iran had made it

---

<sup>68</sup> Gerald Steinberg, "U.S. Responses to Proliferation of WMD in the Middle East".

exceptionally hard for the US to operate in a region filled with metaphorical mines; especially when Iran had made considerable gains in the region.

The diverse nature of relations of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia testifies to its growing political and economic influence in the region. The assumption of self-proclaimed role as a flag bearer of Arab interests and Sunni Muslims, Saudi Arabia tried to curtail the deepening of a pervasive role of Iran in the region through close cooperation with the US and potential easing up of tensions with Israel.

The chaos, a product of US presence in the region had automatically cautioned extraterritorial powers like China and Russia against the threat to their interests in the region as a whole. For one, China as an emerging power not only needs petroleum resources for its expanding economy but it also is a strong advocate of peace in the region. The growing interest of China in the region is manifest in the establishment of various forums, for instance, China- Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – that promote trade and cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Similarly, Russia would not accept the presence of a rival power in the backyard much like the days of the Cold War.<sup>69</sup> It wanted to restore the lost prestige of the cold war period by not allowing the United States a carte blanche in the region. For instance, Russia reneged on an agreement that both the US and Russia had signed in 1995 that asked Russia to cut off all sort of arms export to Iran. The Russia also had opposed the invasion of Iraq and consequently tried to dilute the impact of UN sanctions on Saddam Hussein.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, —The Middle East's New Power Dynamics”, vol.108, no.722, The Middle East (December 2009), pp. 395-401

<sup>70</sup> Robert Freedman, —Russia and the Middle East under Putin”.

### 2.3.2 Non-State Actors

The pervasive nature of conflicts in a region characterized by weak centralized regimes frustrated by persistent outside interference make Middle East a region hotbed of non-state actors. These actors draw their impetus for sophistication and operations in the region, with or without the active support of the regional states, from foreign interventions, a frequent characterization of the region. Moreover, the support that regional states extend to non-state actors also testifies to their growing importance in regional geopolitics; more so as a tactical tool of protecting their interests where confrontation is costly.

Al Qaeda that targeted the core Western states that it believed were casting their unislamic ways onto the Muslim world drew inspiration from the pan Islamism of the past; however, it was, in much part, due to the US military presence in the Arab world for much of the recent history that slung it into significance. From the attack on the World Trade Centers to the deadly train bombing in Spain Al Qaeda undertook violent steps to propagate its ideology of an Islamic order. Not long after Baghdad was sacked the remnants of Iraqi army and intelligence officers helped now ISIS –formerly AL Qaeda in Iraq, made considerable gains in the war torn country and in neighboring Syria.<sup>71</sup> The creation of ISIS is attributed primarily to the US invasion of Iraq but is also linked, as a reaction, to the growing influence of Iran through the unwavering patronage of Shiites in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>72</sup> The considerable gains that Iran made at the expense of Iraq translated into massive support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, which inflicted a decisive defeat on Israel in 2006. The Lebanese organization was actively supporting the Shiite entities against US forces in Iraq. Thus, highlighting the role these non-state actors can play in a geostrategic

---

<sup>71</sup> Isabel Coles and Ned Parker, “How Saddam’s Fighters Help Islamic State Rule,” Reuters, December 11, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-islamicstate/>.

<sup>72</sup> Shams uz Zaman, “Rise of the Non-State Actors in Middle East: Regional Dimensions” IPRI Journal XV, no. 1 (Winter 2015) p 61.

environment charged with unending wars, stagnant economies and frequent outside involvement diluting the control of regimes over their subjects.

### **Conclusion:**

The Post War Middle East emerged as a weak and a vulnerable region where frequent inter-state wars and periodic intra-state conflicts have had devastated lives of millions. The problems however are exacerbated with outside interference in order to establish their hegemonic positions over the region, the bipolar competition of Cold war especially deepened the fault lines between the member states of the region. The US attempts at offshore balancing of the Soviet Union had contributed to the prolonging of conflicts that, even in 21<sup>st</sup> century when the cold war is long over, has no end in sight; in fact, the issues now have morphed themselves into more localized challenges. The transfer of arms and sophisticated weapons has resulted in an unending arms race that has contributed to the volatility and fragility of peace. Moreover, the abundance of petroleum resources has provided the great powers with an added interest in the region.

## Chapter 3

### Crises eruption in Syria

#### 3.1 Introduction

The post-Cold War period's relative peace is attributed to close cooperation among states and the mutual economic interdependence which deemphasizes resorting to armed conflicts. However, international peace is colossally threatened by the intra-state armed conflicts that arise primarily in, still, third-world countries. Major multilateral organizations and global institutions were created to stop interstate wars or mitigate their impact on global peace; these organizations are ill-equipped to stem intra-state armed conflicts for various reasons.<sup>1</sup>

The interconnectedness of states and the widespread exposure of people to the internet have made the impact of conflicts spread beyond the epicenters without mitigating their severity. This resulted in highlighting the intensity of the conflicts and the grave threats they pose to international peace and security. Elena Saputo has shown in her article about the impact of instability in the Middle East on the global financial markets.

–Conflicts rarely affect only the country (or countries) in which they are physically present ... we have seen an increasing amount of instances of instability that also has a significant effect on the global financial markets, as recent instances of instability in the Arab world has shown.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, ‘Intra-State Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era,’ *International Journal on World Peace* 24, no. 4 (2007): 11–33.

<sup>2</sup> Elena Saputo, ‘Why People Rebel: Analyzing The Risk Of Political Instability,’ *Economic Research Department*, May 2012

### 3.2 The Arab Spring

The recent upheavals that had taken the Middle East by storm were by no means a frivolity; they have had far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. The uprisings although triggered by the self-immolation of a Tunisian man were a direct result of the failed policies of Arab regimes over the years, and the resultant discontent that was brewing for many decades among Arabs. The inability of the Arab regimes to positively respond to the growing demands of political and civil liberties ensured their collapse. As one author puts it, ‘Limited economic opportunities and increasing inequality were key drivers of the Arab spring’.

— Failure to respond to the demands expressed by Arab youth during that time could imply political and social instability over the medium term and, in some cases, the collapse of nation-states and widespread civil strife”.<sup>3</sup>

The Arab uprising didn’t happen overnight; it was a result of the constant deprivation of people from acquiring what ought to be rightfully theirs: economic equality, employment and political representation etc. The rampant corruption and the rentierism of economy resulted in the stagnation of economic growth which proved unable to facilitate people through provision of employment opportunities or poverty alleviation measures.

Some scholars have tried to compare these uprisings to the earlier demonstrations of people to rid themselves of governments they didn’t like. For instance, Anne Applebaum, a Polish-American historian believes that the uprisings are similar in their nature to the demonstrations in 1848 across Europe to get rid of corrupt monarchy and stop foreign dynasties from ruling them

---

<sup>3</sup> Hafez Ghanem , ‘Roots of the Arab Spring’, in *The Arab Spring Five Years Later* (Brookings Institution Press), 39-45

remotely.<sup>4</sup> Still many think that the Arab revolution got its name ‘Arab Spring’ because of the semblance between the 1848 uprisings which had got the name of ‘People’s spring’.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.2.1 The protests begin

The protests first started in Tunisia when a man burned himself to death after the policemen hurled his cart on the pretext of lack of permit. The apparent success of protests in Tunisia after they successfully overthrew the regime of Ben Ali; it spread across the north Africa and Arab states that hosted dictatorial regimes for decades with no solid legitimacy in the eyes of the people.<sup>6</sup>

The initial success of uprising in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya marked the turning point in the modern history of the MENA region, however, the uprisings, despite the unmatched rigor of people, failed to achieve anything substantial in Syria while in Bahrain the protestors settled for political reforms only. The objective of the protests was to overthrow the long standing regimes that have failed to meet the needs of people. People used to chant ‘Ash-sha‘b yurid isqat an-nizam’ translated as —‘The people want to bring down the regime’.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2.2 The uprisings in Syria

The anti-regime graffiti that young boys, inspired of Arab Spring, drew on walls in Daraa caused the initiation of an unexpectedly gruesome episode of armed conflict in Syria. The protests that erupted to seek the release of the boys taken in custody by police quickly morphed into anti-

---

<sup>4</sup> Anne Applebaum, “Every Revolution Is Different,” *Slate*, February 21, 2011, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2011/02/the-arab-revolutions-of-2011-are-more-like-europe-in-1848-not-1989.html>.

<sup>5</sup> “Arab Spring,” HISTORY, January 17, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>.

<sup>6</sup> “Egypt Protests: An Arab Spring as Old Order Crumbles?,” *BBC News*, February 2, 2011, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12339521>.

<sup>7</sup> “From the ‘Mirrors’ Issue: Hilal Badr’s ‘Ash-Sha‘b Yurid Isqat an-Nizam,’” ARABLIT & ARABLIT QUARTERLY, April 11, 2022, <https://arablit.org/2022/04/11/from-the-mirrors-issue-hilal-badr-ash-shab-yurid-isqat-an-nizam/>.

government protests; denouncing the regime of Bashar Al Assad and demanding –democratic reforms and the release of political prisoners.”<sup>8</sup>

The protests were met with a strict response from the government which, resulted in expanding the scope of protests against regime brutality and highhandedness, across the width and breadth of Syria. The security apparatus frequent detainment of peaceful protestors and posing a security risk to the masses, the latter armed themselves initially to protect themselves and later to fight Syrian security personnel who were unrestrained in their defense of the regime.

State ministries have regularly labeled the protestors are foreign funded, fulfilling the agenda of enemies while getting arms from neighboring Iraq and Lebanon to terrorize people. The protestors, however, denies these charges and reassert that they demand their rights through peaceful means.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.3 Causes of the uprising**

The persistent discriminatory treatment meted out to a certain section within a state based on their religion, race, or ethnicity among other things makes a solid case for the uprising against those who control the government that perpetuates such treatment or the advocates of such discriminatory policies within the powerful circles. The lack or complete absence of political representation, economic inequality and the ethnic discriminatory approaches of Arab regimes towards their subjects in general, and ethnic and religious minorities in specific, have provided the people with a valid reason to renegade on the social contract they have had with the dictators in return for a Faustian bargain. The dissatisfaction of people may strongly result in them taking

---

<sup>8</sup> Alia Chugtai, –Syria’s war: Ten years – and counting”, *AlJazeera*, March 12, 2021.

<sup>9</sup>–Syria Lifts Emergency Law, Sets New Curbs on Protests,” France 24, April 19, 2011, <https://www.france24.com/en/20110419-syria-approves-lifting-emergency-law-bashar-al-assad-demonstrations>.



up arms against the system that keeps them deprived or the individuals on whose behest the system alienates the people and their basic needs.<sup>10</sup>

### **3.3.1 Failed economy**

The deprivation of the masses as a direct result of the failed economic policies of the Arab regimes proved a necessary catalyst for the uprising. The structural adjustment programs of the international financial institutions to address the core problems of Arab economies backfired. The liberalization of the economy put immense pressure on the people who lost their jobs as a direct consequence of the introduced reforms; subsidies were revoked on essential items of daily use, food prices skyrocketed, exorbitant taxation rates on the consumers coupled with an all-time high unemployment rate, all these elements contributed to the dissatisfaction of the masses. Moreover, the growing corruption made the rich even richer while people found it hard to make ends meet.<sup>11</sup>

Although, the decade before the uprising witnessed economic growth with reasonable GDP growth and a controlled inflation rate with a stable foreign exchange reserve. It failed to distribute the advantages to the common people; instead, the capital was concentrated in the hands of a few who were close to the regime. The protests were a manifestation of class struggle as evident from the fact that they broke out on the peripheries of Syria.<sup>12</sup> A study published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) asserted that the “economic growth was not pro-poor.” The majority was left behind by the small minority who controlled every big

---

<sup>10</sup> Yilmaz, “Intra-State Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era.”

<sup>11</sup> Kamal Salih, ‘The Roots and Causes of the 2011 Arab Uprisings’, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, (Vol. 35, No. 2) pp.184-206

<sup>12</sup> “How Sectarianism Can Help Explain the Syrian War — Syria Deeply,” accessed May 14, 2023, <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/syria/articles/2018/03/06/how-sectarianism-can-help-explain-the-syrian-war>.

enterprise in the country and who reaped the benefits of the economic liberalism introduced by Assad in Syria.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the pervasive nature of corruption also disillusioned people from holding any hope in the ability of the regime to ameliorate their problems. The Syrians were outraged by their day-to-day lives of bribing their way to get education or employment. They also witnessed how the regime's close associates would get away with impunity from criminal negligence and corruption. Although economic indicators weren't as bad as those of Tunisia or Egypt still it offers a great insight as a key factor of popular revolt against the regime.

### **3.3.2 State repression and deprivation of political rights**

Authoritarian regimes employ a dual approach of “repression and cooptation as main strategies” to ensure their survival as the legitimate rulers.<sup>14</sup> They, however, find it hard to co-opt all segments of the society that are required for the regime's survival because in the absence of popular legitimacy, “social protest destabilizes authoritarian regimes and can lead to its breakdown”<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, employing “repression” not only enhances “regime survival” but also by increasing the “costs of collective action and eliminating opposition actors” diminishes the probability of a potential popular uprising.<sup>16</sup>

The Middle Eastern states are popularly known for crushing opposition actors and breaking down dissent. For one, the state of emergency in Syria was still in place since its enactment in

---

<sup>13</sup> Steven Heydemann and Jihad Yazigi, “Syrian Uprising 10-Year Anniversary: A Political Economy Perspective,” *Brookings* (blog), March 26, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/syrian-uprising-10-year-anniversary-a-political-economy-perspective/>.

<sup>14</sup> Wintrobe Ronald, “The Tinpot And The Totalitarian: An Economic Theory Of Dictatorship,” *The American Political Science Review*. pp. 849-872.

<sup>15</sup> Ulfelder Jay, “Contentious Collective Action And The Breakdown Of Authoritarian Regimes,” *International Political Science Review* Pp. 311-334.

<sup>16</sup> Escriba-Folch Abel, “Repression, Political Threats And Survival Under Autocracy,” *International Political Science Review* Pp. 543-560

1963 till it was revoked in 2011, denying people their political rights.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the rampant human rights violation that Arab regimes have committed to supposedly strengthen their rule is not a secret.

### **3.3.4 Ethnic and Sectarian fault lines**

Many of the Arab regimes are authoritarian and controlling to the point that they completely retain power and reins of the government in their hands. More so, the secular nature of the government has only helped the regime to perpetuate its rule while excluding others from sharing political or even economic power. This has been true in the case of Syria where the growing disillusionment of Sunnis with the Assad regime had influenced the general discontent of Syrians against the regime. The Assads belong to the religious minority, Alawites, who have been ruling Syria since the 1970s, denying Sunnis, who make up the majority of the Syrian population, any position of leadership with some exceptions. The close association with Iran –a Shiite majority country has been looked down upon by the Sunni majority, who sided with Saudi Arabia later on, as a consequence of ideological imperative, when the crises spiraled out and involved regional players.<sup>18</sup>

The Baathist regime has tumultuous relations with the Kurds, a major non-Arab minority who makes up about 10 percent of the Syrian population. Their struggle for autonomy has been met with strong resistance; first, they were stripped of Syrian identity in the 1962 census, and soon after they were displaced from their homelands to dilute their concentration in the north of the country where they live in high numbers.<sup>19</sup> In 2004, while Syrian Kurds were protesting the

---

<sup>17</sup>–Syria’s Assad Ends State of Emergency | Reuters,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-idUSTRE72N2MC20110421>.

<sup>18</sup> Emile Hokayem, *‘Syria’s Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant’*. London: Routledge, pp. 13.

<sup>19</sup> –Syria,” accessed May 15, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Syria.htm>.

deaths of Kurd youths, Syrian armed forces staged crackdowns killing scores of Kurds while displacing many. A local news agency terms the Kurds are treated as “second-class citizens” in Syria; the regime denies Kurds their fundamental rights, for instance, the right to vote.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.4 State response to the uprising**

The protests were largely met with strong resistance from the regime’s security forces causing the deaths and detention of thousands. The response, however, didn’t silence the growing opposition to the regime which misread the writings on the wall, instead, the non-violent protests soon snowballed into a country-wide uprising and eventually turned into a full-blown civil war.

Soon after the protests toppled the long-ruling Tunisian and Egyptian presidents, the Syrian president, Bashar Al-Assad “formed a special committee” to envisage possible responses to a similar situation if the popular uprisings threaten the survival of the Syrian oligarchy. The committee reached a conclusion that delayed responses to the protests resulted in their collapse. The regime, therefore, quickly resorted to armed counter-measures to stamp down protests in the bud.<sup>21</sup>

The state apparatus uses information to control, manipulate and shape the views; making people question the legitimacy of uprisings. The relative success of the Arab uprisings, however, is rightly attributed to the dominant role social media played in organizing, the otherwise disorganized protests. A UN report on Human rights defines the state behavior in response to

---

<sup>20</sup> “The History behind the 2004 ‘Kurdish Intifada,’” *North Press Agency* (blog), March 12, 2023, <https://npasyria.com/en/94623/>.

<sup>21</sup> Hassan Abbas, “The Dynamics of the Uprising in Syria,” Arab Reform Initiative, Arab Reform Brief No.51, October 2011.

peaceful protests as whimsical in that states often attempt to suppress protests through violent means by labeling accusations against them<sup>22</sup>.

The accusatory attitude not only results in people avoiding to join protests but also justifies the repression of the protestors. The authoritarian regimes attempt to buy loyalists by extending patronage while those who oppose them, individually or collectively, are suppressed to punish them for questioning their legitimacy and to tame them into loyalty; since regimes equate protests with efforts meant to undermine their rule.<sup>23</sup>

Some elements within the Assad regime resorted to violence from the very onset; when the young boys from the city of Deraa were detained for drawing graffiti on school wall and were tortured which resulted in the death of one teenager. The protests that sought justice for the children clashed with police causing the eruption of widespread protests against the regimes for its high-handedness. The army soon laid siege of Deraa, the epicenter of the Syrian chapter of Arab Spring, by transporting tanks and deploying heavy force. The reports suggest that the injured were denied getting medical assistance while the towns under sieged were completely cut-off resulting in shortage of basic items.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after the uprising began, the law overseeing the creation of political parties was radically changed; stipulating conditions that were difficult to fulfill given the deepened ethnic and religious divisions, especially, in the aftermath of the disputatious attitude of the regime vis-à-vis

---

<sup>22</sup> –“Militarised Approach to Policing Peaceful Protests Increasing Risk of Violence: UN Expert,” OHCHR, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/militarised-approach-policing-peaceful-protests-increasing-risk-violence-un>>.

<sup>23</sup> Guillermo Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies: Religion, Repression, and Indigenous Collective Action in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> –“We’ve Never Seen Such Horror,” *Human Rights Watch*, June 1, 2011, <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/06/01/weve-never-seen-such-horror/crimes-against-humanity-syrian-security-forces>>.

protestors. The expatriates could no longer form political associations within the Syrian mainstream political landscape because the law specified that only resident Syrians above the age of twenty-five can form a political party, barring Syrian citizens who were living abroad.<sup>25</sup>

A report published by an independent observatory group ‘Syrian Network for Human Rights’ in 2021, estimates the total number of deaths caused by the prolonged war to be around more than 239,413. The situation is further aggravated by the disappearance of 150000+ Syrians. While the woes of migrants, who crossed the borders into neighboring countries and Europe in millions, seem not to abate anytime soon.<sup>26</sup>

The regime, despite the pressures from the outside world and a destructive civil war going on for more than a decade now, has not collapsed as it has happened in other Arab countries like Egypt and Tunisia. It however has learnt a meaningful lesson in keeping the regime alive while dealing with the ethnically and religiously fragmented armed rebellion. Some scholars believe that the post-civil war regimes when the uprisings fail to topple them, will become a more atrocious and lethal image of the pre-civil war setup.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.5 Evolution from Protest to Civil War

The brutal use of force against protestors causing widespread deaths and damage to properties resulted in the continuation of the protests however with the introduction of weapons and other deadly arms. Ostensibly, to protect against the brutality of state forces and the *mukhabarat* groups who continuously harassed and intimidated protestors often resorting to indiscriminate

---

<sup>25</sup>—‘Constitutional Law - Syrian Law Journal’, < <https://www.syria.law/index.php/main-legislation/constitutional-law/>>.

<sup>26</sup> ‘On the 12th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising’ *Syrian Network for Human Rights*, March 15, 2023, <https://snhr.org/blog/2023/03/15/on-the-12th-anniversary-of-the-popular-uprising-a-total-of-230224-civilians-documented-as-dead-including-15275-who-died-due-to-torture-154871-arrested-and-or-forcibly-disappeared-and-roughly-14/>.

<sup>27</sup> Steven Heydemann, ‘Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism,’ *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 59–73.

firing. In autocracies, therefore, like Syria the opposition finds it comparatively productive to ramp up their struggle in the face of intimidation and threats instead of backing down against a repressive regime. More so, if the state is divided along ethnic and religious lines making it is harder for the top leader to consolidate power and hold the unity of the state longer in the face of burgeoning opposition.<sup>28</sup>

The protestors who had joined from all walks of life and belonged to a wide spectrum of religious sects were labeled, especially the latter, as “Islamist extremists”. These accusations were leveled with the intent to justify the violent suppression of the protests. The violent suppression, therefore, of the peaceful protestors led the latter to take up arms; causing the state security apparatus to also disproportionately intensify their violent crackdowns and confrontations across the country.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.6 Unified Opposition**

The fragmentation of opposition groups and lack of cooperation constrained the effectiveness and any meaningful coordination among the groups in their response to the state aggression. To provide Syrian with an inclusive and cooperative political platform, Riad Seif, a long-time regime dissident, proposed a plan to provide a platform for all opposition groups and individuals aspiring to achieve freedom and democracy for their country; to coordinate their activities, and cooperate to make sure the post-Assad Syria is stable, resilient and responsive to the aspiration of Syrians.

---

<sup>28</sup> —From Bad to Worse? How Protest Can Foster Armed Conflict in Autocracies,” *Political Geography* 103, May 1 2023: 102891.

<sup>29</sup> Heydemann, Steven. “Tracking the „Arab Spring”: Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism”. *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 4, Oct. 2013, pp. 59-73.

### **3.6.1 Syrian National Council**

SNC was a preliminary representative body of the disparate opposition forces. It was formed in Istanbul, Turkey as a legitimate representative of the people of Syria and coordinates the activities of the opposition factions who act on their own with no credible leadership. US, however, didn't consider it as legitimate representative because of the internal squabble of the council members; therefore it called for another all-inclusive framework. It was less exclusive because it drew its members from the outside supporters of the Syrian opposition groups instead of the on-ground groups who were engaged in open hostilities with the regime.

### **3.6.2 National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces**

Also known as, Syrian Opposition Coalition was formed in Doha, Qatar. The coalition's draws its members from the opposition groups active in both "within Syria and abroad". It superseded the SNC because not only does it include the members of the SNC which comprised of expatriate Syrians mostly, but also the groups which were active within Syria. The extended constituency not only helps in channeling foreign support to the groups and in drawing legitimacy but also, can prove catalytic in pressurizing the regime to give up. It comprises of sixty members, of which twenty two is occupied by Syrian National Council.

The objective of the coalition is to disengage dialogue with the regime and get rid of it, and its "pillars and symbols". To dismantle the security apparatus that has a reputation of killing and detaining innocent people for decades and to create a "Syrian National Legal Committee" with the objective to frame a new constitution for Syria. Its members groups include Free Syrian Army, Syrian National Council, Syrian chapter of Muslim Brotherhood and Local Coordination



Committees etc.<sup>30</sup> However, the coalition is mired by internal rifts and divisions, in one such controversy the president of the Coalition resigned apparently because the financial donors were placing too many conditions and were increasingly interfering in the internal matters of Syria.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.6.3 Supreme Joint Military Command**

The Command's purpose is to unite all armed opposition parties in their struggle to fight the state army and security apparatus. It works as a military wing of the SOC, yet it is independent in its actions. Its primary function was to regulate the operational conduct of the armed groups and control them so that extremist elements could not penetrate the landscape and turn the tables.

The command receives funds from different countries because of the trust they had in, and the extensive expertise in relations with foreign states of, the leadership and command's objective. The council has 30 seats reserved for the members, which it draws from different armed groups active against the state forces in all five fronts.<sup>32</sup>

### **3.6.4 Free Syrian Army**

The heavy bombardment and nearly a week long siege of the southwestern city of Deraa by the Syrian Arab Army laid the seeds of desertion within the army. In the following days the regime's aggression escalated leaving no other option for the resistant forces to take up arms and defend themselves against the regime's onslaught. Alongside Deraa, Homs and Hama were targeted followed by Idlib where in a town Jisr al-Shagour Syrian army personnel were put to death in large numbers.

---

<sup>30</sup> –Guide to the Syrian Opposition,” *BBC News*, November 19, 2011, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218>; –The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition,” *Center for American Progress*, May 14, 2013, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/>.

<sup>31</sup> –Guide to the Syrian Opposition.”

<sup>32</sup> –The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition.”

Giving a new perspective to the armed resistance; the frequency of defections increased as a lieutenant colonel of the Syrian army Hussein Harmoush defected along with his one hundred and fifty men, who were stationed in the town of Idlib. Soon after, Colonel Riyadh Al-Assad along with his men defected and formed Free Syrian Army on 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2011.<sup>33</sup>

The objective of the FSA includes defending peaceful protests against the regime brutality while also, targeting those elements of the government who attack the civilians. A commander of the FSA stated: –To put it simply, we carry out military operations against anyone who targets the peaceful protesters”.<sup>34</sup>

It was part of the SNC but soon it detached, forming its own political front, Syrian Support Group (SSG). The US government gave it the license to collect money and/or purchase weapons for the armed opposition members of the Free Syrian Army active against Assad.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.6.5 Islamist groups**

The political vacuum created as a result of fierce battle between the opposition and the Assad government was exploited by the religious fundamentalist. Syria has always been a hotbed for Islamist groups, although the government has had tried to coopt them on number of occasions, there presence in the political landscape has always been critical. For instance, the 1980s failed uprising of the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama, which oversaw the deaths of thousands Brotherhood workers and alleged affiliates. The Syrian demography makes a perfect case for the role radical Islam plays in the society. For one, although two third of the population is Sunni

---

<sup>33</sup> Charles Lister, –The Free Syrian Army: A Decentralized Insurgent Brand,” *Brookings* (blog), November 22, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-free-syrian-army-a-decentralized-insurgent-brand/>.

<sup>34</sup> Basma Atassi, –Profile: Free Syrian Army,” accessed May 19, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2011/11/16/free-syrian-army-grows-in-influence>.

<sup>35</sup> –U.S. Eases Arms Purchases for Syrian Rebels | McClatchy,” August 2, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120802185316/http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/08/01/159311/us-eases-arms-purchases-for-syrian.html>.

Muslim, however, they are being ruled by a minority Alawite, a heretic sect of Shiism. The discontent among the Sunni Muslims against the minority rulers is often exploited by the radical groups.

Muslim Brotherhood is a moderate centrist group active in Syrian politics since 1950s. It, however, had been in exile since 1980s was pulled into the crisis because it was losing ground to radical groups like ISIS and Nusra Front, active in Syria. It wasn't easy for the leadership to reinvigorate the Brotherhood in Syria after nearly three decades of absence. Therefore, first, it established a charity wing called '*Ataa Relief*' along the Turkish-Syrian border aiding the migrants. Initially, a group to assist the rebels and provide humanitarian was formed which was called '*Himayat al-Madaniyan*'; it was the individual efforts of Brotherhood members. However, the growing intensity of the conflict forced the leadership to not only allow regional office bearers to raise arms and join armed resistance but they also formed an umbrella organization to attract likeminded groups and coordinate their activities, '*Hay'at duro' al-Thawra*'.<sup>36</sup>

### **3.6.6 Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham**

Popularly known as Al-Nusra Front, a splinter group of al-Qaeda, is also active in Syria. It comprises of foreign fighters who were also active in Iraq against the US occupation forces. The sophisticated weaponry and trained fighters, and ideologically Sunni orientation have made it a significant player against the regime. This group owed allegiance to al-Qaeda which caused friction between the two groups laying claiming affiliation of the front –al-Qaeda in Iraq, later

---

<sup>36</sup> –Muslim Brotherhood Establishes Militia inside Syria,” accessed May 20, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9450587/Muslim-Brotherhood-establishes-militia-inside-Syria.html>.

ISIS and the precursor al-Qaeda. The aim of the Front is to topple Assad and put in place an Islamic Emirate.

### **3.6.7. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**

Islamic State (IS) or Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was another radical salafist group active in the north east of Syria. It was found in Iraq after differences surfaced over operational objectives and tactical approaches between the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi and the parent organization Al-Qaeda's head Aiman al-Zawahri. The objective was to establish caliphate in the all of the Muslim world after dismantling the pro-Western puppet regimes. IS differs from the other opposition groups in that the moderate opposition groups strove to establish a democratic government in Syria through elections and democratic constitution while IS was a reactionary radical group aiming for caliphate, declaring Baghdadi as the caliph of all Muslims.<sup>37</sup>

### **3.7. States and their Interests**

Regional states are active in Syria to defend their interests in a war-torn Syria. The neighboring states are concerned with their security as well the refugee problems because they are ill-prepared for such a monumental contingency. The refugee problems put burden on their social, economic and health infrastructure especially more concerning is the problem when the international organization are unable to stop the fighting while also nearly fail to help the host countries deal the refugees problem. Moreover, numerous states share long porous borders with Syria, therefore instability and war raises concerns for their security.

---

<sup>37</sup> Daniel L. Byman, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets," *Brookings*, November 30, 1AD, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/>.

### 3.7.1. Iran

Iran's interest in Syria is motivated by two reasons; limit the US influence in the region, and a safe conduit of arms to Hezbollah which operates in Lebanon and is active against Israel. The two countries share the common goals, ~~to~~ check Israeli advances in Lebanon; and to prevent any American attempts to enter the Middle East.”<sup>38</sup> Iran had cordial bilateral relations with the US before the Islamic revolution turned the tables upside down in 1979, more so during the hostage crisis.

Furthermore, Iranian nuclear program and terrorism are two contentious issues for the two states that have pulled both farther apart. During the Syrian crisis, Iran actively supported Assad who belongs to the Alawite minority, an offshoot of Shiism. Iran engaged the Quds Force a branch within Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Hezbollah and fighters from Afghanistan and Iraq to fight against the opposition who were primarily from the Sunni Majority.<sup>39</sup> Iran supported the regime with provisions of arms and money worth billions of dollars.<sup>40</sup> Iranian deep penetration in Syria is perceived differently in powerful quarters. Kofi Annan, a joint Arab league and UN envoy saw it as ~~Part~~ “part of the solution” while, contrarily, Susan Rice a US representative at UN called Iran ~~part~~ “part of the problem”.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.7.2. Russia

Russian intervention in Syria on the side of Assad helped the latter regain his control over much of Syrian territory lost to rebels after Russian airpower decisively defeated rebels. The

---

<sup>38</sup> ~~Iran~~ and Syria: Alliance of Shared Enemies and Goals,” *BBC News*, June 8, 2012, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18369380>.

<sup>39</sup> Sherlock, Ruth, et al. ~~Syria's~~ Syria's Civil War Started A Decade Ago. Here's Where It Stands.” NPR, 15, Mar. 2021, <<https://www.npr.org/2021/03/15/976352794/syrias-civil-war-started-a-decade-ago-heres-where-it-stands>>.

<sup>40</sup> McLoughlin, Paul. ~~Investing~~ Investing in Death: How Iran Funded Assad's War at the Expense of Its Own Citizens.” Alaraby, *The New Arab*, 18 Feb. 2020

<sup>41</sup> ~~Iran~~ and Syria.” June 8, 2012.

motivation to intervene in Syria came from the strategic interests of bolstering its position as a competitive regional player in the Middle East and minimizing US role in the region.<sup>42</sup> In a unipolar world, where the US is the most powerful state is detrimental to the prestige and a cross on the Russian power projection capabilities. Therefore, Russia must strive for a multipolar world where the US power is counterbalanced by numerous other powers. It is evident from the ground situation in Syria where the US power is offset by Iran and Russia while Turkey is also concerned regarding potential autonomy if given to Kurds in the north.<sup>43</sup>

Russia has provided to Syria more than five thousands personnel in training and advisory capacity including Special Forces. The troops and fighter aircrafts were stationed in the Khmeimim Air Base in Latakia province. The pressure, notwithstanding, Russia vetoed UNSC resolutions on placing embargo on arms delivery to Russia; moreover, arms delivery to Syria continued with Russian arms accounting for nearly 85 percent of arms import during 2009-2013 period.<sup>44</sup>

### **3.7.3. Turkey**

Turkey is concerned with the growing free movement of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Syria after it was banned under the Adana Protocol in 1998 and its leader Abdullah Ocalan was expelled and subsequently apprehended by Turkish security personnel. The differences emerge after the Erdogan demanded Assad to stop crackdowns on Syrians; this was followed by hosting

---

<sup>42</sup>—What Is Russia's Endgame in Syria?,” United States Institute of Peace, <<https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/what-russias-endgame-syria>>.

<sup>43</sup> Eugene Rumer, —The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/05/primakov-not-gerasimov-doctrine-in-action-pub-79254>>.

<sup>44</sup>Alexandra Kuimova, *Russia's Arms Exports to the Mena Region: Trends And Drivers*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

Syrian National Council in Turkey.<sup>45</sup> Tayyab Erdogan, then Prime Minister called for Assad resignation.

—Without spilling any more blood, without causing any more injustice, for the sake of peace for the people, the country and the region, finally step down.”<sup>46</sup>

Armed Kurds who were later engaged by the US forces against ISIS were a threat because Turkish authorities believed that the Kurds were affiliated to PKK. Besides, Turkey was also concerned with the large number of fleeing refugees from the war torn Syria after Bashar al Assad didn't stop cracking down on them.

## Conclusion

The change that people sought to bring about in Syria was an expensive bargain. The regime which was ruling Syria for more than four decades was not ready for transition. People had in their minds the earlier image of Bashar al Assad as a reformer, were soon faced with the bitter reality when their demands were resisted violently. The escalation in conflict resulted in casualties on both sides while also encouraging other states to intervene to defend their interests internationalized a domestic issue. Soon Syria became a battlefield for regional and global powers that had no qualms in pounding Syrians for their narrow strategic gains. Syrian crises also manifested the outright failure of the international organizations like Security Council whose clear mandate is ensuring peace and stability for nations to progress.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> —Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension,” The Washington Institute, accessed June 10, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syria-and-turkey-pkk-dimension>.

<sup>46</sup> —Turkey Tells Syria's Assad: Step Down!,” *Reuters*, November 22, 2011,<<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-idUSL5E7MD0GZ20111122>>.

<sup>47</sup> —What Is the Security Council?, United Nations Security Council,” <<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council>>.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Obama Syria policy: The US Syrian policy in the backdrop of the Arab Spring**

It is difficult to gauge the success of a foreign policy in a frequently changing environment characterized by complex web of inter-state relationships; one where states compete for their interests using proxies within a state. The inadequate knowledge about the situation on ground, the parties to the infighting and their interests makes it particularly hard for policy-makers to come up with a perfect policy that not only helps achieve the objective through successful realization of state interests but also minimizes the risks involved.

In order to understand the implications of the US foreign policy for the US and the world, it is imperative to understand the US foreign policy through the three levels of analysis involved in its formulation. It is not merely the realization of interests and the means to get to them in fact, it also involves input of plethora of different elements that, both directly and indirectly, affect foreign policy of a state.

#### **4.1 Individual level of analysis**

##### **4.1.1 Obama doctrine**

For much of the decades during the Cold war and the period afterwards, the US increased engagement and involvement with both the allies and adversaries was crucial for the maintenance of order and stability required for global development and the unfolding challenges. However, calls for disengagement, particularly from the advocates of retrenchment, were demanding a retrenchment of the US and abdicating the role of maintaining regional order and security to regional actors –allies, sans US involvement.

In principle, he was opposed to the Bush administration's initiation of war in Iraq. In his opinion, 21<sup>st</sup> century problems are complex therefore they demand a leadership, not with the conventional



traits of the past century wherein the military prowess would solve intricate issues, but with a commitment to resolve issues through diplomacy and multilateralism. As in the case of Iraq, Obama expounded the limitations of the US military supremacy when he asked for a political settlement rather than twisting the arms of the factions fanning sectarianism in Iraq. Therefore, the US must employ a mix of diplomacy and pressure to bring about change in the behavior of Syria and dissociate it from radicalism.<sup>1</sup>

The same attitude continued to mark the behavior of the President to the crisis when it erupted in Syria. In his words, “the US cannot and will not impose this [democratic] transition on Syria”. Despite the calling for a more rigorous approach the president instead pressed the regime to step aside, and sought increased role of the international community to find a political solution. The economic sanctions that both the US and EU put on Syria to isolate it didn’t prove consequential in pressurizing Assad regime to budge.<sup>2</sup> However, he maintained that taking a unilateral military action against Syria won’t solve the problems in fact it will create more hurdles for peace in the region. Furthermore, he opined that Syria situation is “much more complicated” than Libya therefore caution was advised.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.2. State level analysis

Foreign policy is not made in a vacuum. It is a rigorous process that involves give and take between the differing stake-holders; it also, sometimes, looks at the general mood of the public and other informal groups who might have a particular interest in the subject matter. Therefore,

---

<sup>1</sup> Obama, Barack. *Renewing American Leadership*. Foreign Affairs, vol. 86, no. 4, 2007, pp. 2–16.

<sup>2</sup> “President Obama: ‘The Future of Syria Must Be Determined by Its People, but President Bashar al-Assad Is Standing in Their Way.’” whitehouse.gov, August 18, 2011, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/08/18/President-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-President-bashar-al-assad>>.

<sup>3</sup> Neil MacFarquhar, “More Violence in Syria as Forces Scramble to Scrub Signs of Assault on Homs,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 2012, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/world/middleeast/united-nations-resolution-on-syria.html>>.

in any given state a foreign policy is the sum total of the interests of the formal and informal elements.

#### **4.2.1. Domestic imperatives**

The Syrian crisis came at a time when the US forces were already engaged in another costly Middle Eastern war –Iraq War, which Obama administration would wind up in months to come. The loss of lives to the war and the financial burden it accrued will ultimately decide against another intervention in a highly volatile region where new rivalries and relationships are made and broken in, rather short period of time. The war in Iraq, and in Afghanistan –another war waged on the pretext of War on Terror since 2001, has cost the US exchequer trillions of dollars and with death of the security personnel numbering in thousands and civilian casualties in millions in both theaters.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, the two wars failed to meet the policy objectives. Iraq was engulfed in massive sectarian conflict after Shiite majority took control of the capital while in Afghanistan, the US failed to neutralize Taliban and dampen their ambition to regain Kabul in a prolong war ultimately paved path for their return to rule after the February 2021 deal. The impact the two wars had on the minds of Americans would ultimately dissuade the administration from deploying armed forces in a country which is a hotbed of contestation among regional powers.

There was considerable opposition to US military involvement; however there was also bipartisan support for a more active US involvement in Syria. Not only members of the Congress –both Senate and House, but also individual prominent figures, pressure groups and public opinion shaped the approach of the president towards Syria. Although, there was considerable

---

<sup>4</sup> Simon Rogers, *War in Iraq: The Cost in American Lives and Dollars*, The Guardian, December 15, 2011, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/dec/15/war-iraq-costs-us-lives>>. Neta C. Crawford, *Blood and Treasure: United States Budgetary Costs and Human Costs of 20 Years of War in Iraq and Syria, 2003-2023*, March 15, 2023

support for the president to act decisively in Syria and stop the situation from further escalation and a possible spillover to the allies in the region, still, the pacifist doves trumped, albeit for some time, the narrative of exploring different options like diplomacy and dialogue to achieve long-lasting peace.

#### **4.2.2. Congressional Supervision of Foreign Policy**

The US constitution has obscurely demarcated the division of power between the Congress and the executive relating to foreign policy especially with respect to the subject of military involvement in foreign territories. There always has been a tug of war going on especially during critical times that involves troop deployment abroad. For instance, the War Powers Resolution was aimed to curb the exclusionary powers of the president to deploy the US armed forces outside of the US border. Similarly during the presidential term of Obama the congress was assertive in controlling what the executive may or may not do in the foreign policy realm, especially during the Arab spring.<sup>5</sup>

##### **4.2.2.1. Favors a Peaceful Resolution**

The Congress, already grappling with the consequence of the two wars previous administration started, opposed a third war in Libya –MENA region. They believed this war if started won't end soon like the other two wars –Iraq and Afghanistan. For instance, Congressmen from across the isle - Dennis Kucinich, John Conyers and Raul Paul among others sought the Congress to disapprove the administration from joining the coalition to wage war in Libya because it violated the US the constitution.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Masters, *U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President*, Council on Foreign Relations,, <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president>>.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Koff, –Dennis Kucinich Files Lawsuit against President Obama, Says Libya War Violates the Law,” June 15, 2011,< [https://www.cleveland.com/open/2011/06/dennis\\_kucinich\\_files\\_lawsuit.html](https://www.cleveland.com/open/2011/06/dennis_kucinich_files_lawsuit.html)>.

Members of the Senate also pressed Obama for a diplomatic and peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis instead of taking a more contentious position. Bernie Sanders, a senator from Vermont, praised the administration decision of placing the “Chemical weapons” that Syria allegedly possessed under the “international control”.<sup>7</sup> While Ted Cruz –a senator from Texas, believed that the US had lost a vital opportunity to decisively influence the situation in Syria when it didn’t act while it could. Moreover, he also opposed arming the rebels because in his opinion the “enemy’s enemy” may not be our friend.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, a group of senators introduced a bill which was aimed at limiting the powers of the president to use funds to support any group or party engaged in the Syrian civil war. Notable among the group are Senator Mike Lee – a Republican senator from Utah, and Chris Murphy –a Democrat senator from Connecticut, who were critical of any US involvement and saw no clear security interest of the US in Syria.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.2.2.2. Aggression the Only Way Forward**

On the contrary, many in the Congress believed that the president should pursue a “more aggressive and interventionist” posture in Syria. They were concerned that if the Assad regime is given a blank check and left unhindered then, the situation will soon spiral out of control causing unprecedented level of humanitarian crisis and the instability could spillover across the region. Moreover, they wanted to topple Assad at any cost because, in their belief, he was supporting terrorism by aligning himself with Iran and Hezbollah. However, Obama took a cautious and

---

<sup>7</sup>Senator Bernie Sanders, 'Sanders Statement on Syria » Senator Bernie Sanders,' <<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/sanders-statement-on-syria-7/>>.

<sup>8</sup>Senator Ted Cruz, 'Sen. Cruz Opposes Arming Syrian Rebels, Calls for Securing Syrian Chemical Weapons,' June 20, 2013, <<https://www.cruz.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sen-cruz-opposes-arming-syrian-rebels-calls-for-securing-syrian-chemical-weapons>>.

<sup>9</sup> Jordain Carney, 'Senators Try to Rein in Obama on Syria,' *The Hill* November 6, 2015, <<https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/259393-senators-try-to-rein-in-obama-on-syria/>>.

restrained position using diplomatic channels to deescalate the situation on ground. He relied on international organizations to take lead and ascertain the situation on ground instead of leading another expedition, whose cost would have outweighed the benefits.

#### 4.2.3. Public Opinion and Media

The differences in the public opinion have consequences for political parties which, in turn, have often resulted in the “politicization of foreign policy”.<sup>10</sup> Public opinion may be defined as the beliefs of “private persons” that the state apparatus finds them important enough, and “prudent to heed”.<sup>11</sup> In democratic countries like the US, public opinion must act as a moderating power on “elite choices” which are, sometimes, quite distant from the realities that the country faces.<sup>12</sup> For instance, the range of policy options for the US officials towards China till late 1970s was limited because of a probable “public reaction” and election considerations.<sup>13</sup> The policy-makers while formulating foreign policy rarely ignore robustness of public consensus even though they reach a decision through objectivity and rationality. As the authors have noted that “no foreign policy undertaking ... can succeed without domestic political support”. The national mood of the public could be understood through “public opinion polls” and “media analyses”.<sup>14</sup>

It is also pertinent to mention that the beliefs of the decision-maker are also central to idea of the importance of public opinion. Some leaders shove the opinion of public under the carpet on the

---

<sup>10</sup> D. S. Hamilton and T. Tiilikainen, *Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States*, Introduction *Domestic Drivers of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States* pp. XII

<sup>11</sup> Valdimer O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. (New York, 1961) pp.14

<sup>12</sup> Miroslav Nincic, *Democracy and Foreign Policy: The Fallacy of Political Realism*, (New York: Columbia University Press 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Leonard Kusnitz, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> Scot Thomson and Andrew Walmorth, ‘Domestic Political Constraints on U.S. Military Intervention’ in *Military Intervention In the Third World: Threats, Constraints and Options*, ed. John Maurer and Richard Porth (Praeger Special Studies 1984), 87.

pretext of it being emotional or unrealistic, while still some will find them rational and objective such beliefs are labeled as “normative beliefs” associated with a particular decision-maker. However, when the success of a foreign policy relies on the approval of public policy leading the decision-maker to seek the support of public then such a belief come under the rubric of “practical beliefs”.<sup>15</sup>

Post-WW II period was dominated by the concept of “Almond-Lippmann Consensus” –the realist perspective on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy which demonstrates that the policy makers either ignore or manipulate the preferences of public.<sup>16</sup> Contrarily, the liberals were of the view that public opinion consistently shapes the foreign policy, and that changes in the foreign policy are correspondent to changes in the opinion of people.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4.2.4. Public Figures**

Public figures, like former vice president Dick Cheney, have also taken a dig at the US president for his inaction in Syria and consequently losing ground to not only the regional competitive powers like Iran and Russia but also to non-state violent actors like al-Qaida and ISIS. Not only did it reduce the image of US from a strong global power but also jeopardized relations with regional allies who have started questioning the role of the US as their security guarantor.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Douglas C. Foyle, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Elite Beliefs as a Mediating Variable*, (International Studies Quarterly 1997) 145.

<sup>16</sup> R. Holsti. *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus*. (International Studies Quarter, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Dick Cheney, Liz Cheney, and Dick Cheney, “Dick Cheney and Liz Cheney: The Collapsing Obama Doctrine,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2014, <<http://online.wsj.com/articles/dick-cheney-and-liz-cheney-the-collapsing-obama-doctrine-1403046522>>.

#### **4.2.5. Survey**

A survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2012 seeking the opinion of people strongly opposed to the military intervention in Syria. A staggering figure of 64% of the participants responded in negative to the question of whether US have the responsibility to do intervene in the Syrian conflict while only 24 % believed the US have responsibility to respond to the crisis in Syria.

In short, primarily, the public opinion matters for the decision-makers from the perspective of elections. In a democratic state, a political party running government has to contest elections after the expiry of their term in office, causing them to pay to heed to the opinions public hold about a particular policy option.

#### **4.2.6. Pressure groups**

Pressure groups are a useful linkage between the policy-makers and the subjects of the policies. They keep them updated on the sentiments, observations and ideas of people with a keen interest in the subject area. —Pressure groups have been recognized as influential in policy-making”.<sup>19</sup> In the US context, pressure groups take advantage of the schism arising out the discreteness of the three pillars of state to which powers are delegated in such a manner as to provide an atmosphere of check and balance among each other. The implementation, therefore, of a policy becomes an uphill task for decision-makers; the occasion of numerous checks and balances provided by the constitutionally mandated separation of power give ample of space for pressure groups to influence not only the whole process but also individual decision-makers.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Donald C. Blaisdell, *Pressure Groups, Foreign Policies, and International Politics*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (1958) 153.

<sup>20</sup> Donald C. Blaisdell, *Pressure Groups, Foreign Policies, and International Politics*, 149–57.

### **4.3. Systemic Level of Analysis**

A state exists in a system wherein its behavior is influenced and shaped by actions of other states. The same is true for the United States as it has bilateral and multilateral relations with peer states, also, it is a member of various international organizations whose decisions are binding on states. Therefore, the policy choices that the US might adopt vis-a-vis a third state should be considerate of the interests of other states, as it wouldn't like to harm vital interests of other states especially allies, given the volatility of situation in certain circumstances.

Moreover, the United States enjoys the formidable position of a global power, giving it edge over other states in terms of power projection and decision-making. However, it also has a responsibility towards the establishment and maintenance of a just and humane order otherwise the disillusionment of states would likely erode its distinguished position as a global hegemon. Therefore, it is imperative for thorough understanding of the US position on Syria in view of the global constraints.

#### **4.3.1. Global determinants of the US Approach to Syria**

The Syrian crisis marked an unusual episode in the US foreign policy-making circles. Taken for granted, the relations between the US and Syria were at an all-time low in the preceding decade when the revolutionary wave hit Syria. As decades ago Kissinger popularly had said that “there can be no peace in the middle east without Syria”. Syria, therefore, was central to the US efforts on an overarching peace deal in the Middle East, however, its proximity to Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia soon made it a part of the ‘axis of evil’ after President Bush invoked popular sentiments against terrorism and declared ‘war on terror’. Soon after, the US ambassador to Syria was summoned back by the Bush administration after the former Lebanese prime minister was assassinated marking the lowest ebb in bilateral relations between the two countries.



The Democrats however, were optimistic about the future normalcy in bilateral relations because they still believed in Assad as a reformist, different from his father, Hafez; moreover, some members of the US Congress believed that the doors of diplomacy shouldn't be shut for Syria. The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton had to say about Bashar that ~~many~~ "many of the members of Congress ... believe he [Bashar] is a reformer."<sup>21</sup>

#### **4.3.2. Globalism and Geo-political considerations**

The specter of unilateralism that Bush had unleashed on the world was finally reined in with the election of Obama to the Oval Office. The draw-down of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, to make their respective governments capable of defending themselves against locally generated threats was received well by Americans albeit with some reservations in the policy-making circles. Some believed that the foreign policy of Obama was redundant with ~~hesitation~~ "hesitation, delay and indecision" and that he prefers multilateralism over unilateralism in the domain of foreign policy. The ~~leading from behind~~ "leading from behind" approach, denounced by many ~~as~~ "diminishing America's global standing and assertiveness", aimed at empowering states to fend for themselves against threats; however, it grew the suspicions of many that the US has grown weary of the prolonged wars it has waged in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>22</sup> The foreign policy approach of Obama is succinctly summed up in ~~blend~~ "to blend together a combination of the types of hard military and economic power

---

<sup>21</sup> Glenn Kessler, ~~"Hillary Clinton's Uncredible Statement on Syria,"~~ *Washington Post*, April 4, 2011, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/hillary-clintons-uncredible-statement-on-syria/2011/04/01/AFWPEYnC\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/hillary-clintons-uncredible-statement-on-syria/2011/04/01/AFWPEYnC_blog.html)>.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Krauthammer, *The Obama Doctrine: Leading from Behind*, (*Washington Post*, April 28, 2011) <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/sopinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sopinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html)>.

employed by previous US administrations with a greater appreciation of the utility of soft power in an increasingly networked era”.<sup>23</sup>

### 4.3.3. Precepts of the Foreign policy during the Arab Spring

The realization of strategizing the interests of the US instead of “proselytizing of democracy” is vital in an “uncertain world”. In effect, moving away from the idealism “that sought to Americanize the world through the process of liberal democratization, towards realism “that seeks to defend the interests of the US while also, only, cherishing the freedom and independence of other states.”<sup>24</sup> Obama was criticized for his inaction vis-a-vis Bashar al-Assad and his regime that targeted civilians and protestors alike. However, when the ISIS, which was initially dismissed as JV team, posed serious threats to the US national interest only then, the administration woke from a deep slumber and put together a plan to tackle the terrorist outfit.

The May 19 speech at the state department outlined the specifics of Obama’s approach to Syrian uprising and the repression that followed it. He warned Bashar al-Assad to either “lead [the] transition [to democracy], or get out of the way” and allow the Syrians to choose their destiny, instead of using brutal force and illegal detentions. He further went on to prescribe, unlike elsewhere, to hold a “serious dialogue” to ensure a smooth “democratic transition”. Here, Obama also made a remark about a possible collusion between the Syrian government and her long-time ally Iran in suppressing the protestors, even though, Iran had sympathized with protestors urging Assad to talk to protestors.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Robert Singh, *Barack Obama’s post-American foreign policy: The limits of Engagements*, (Bloomsbury 2012), pp.40.

<sup>24</sup> “Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy” *The New Yorker*, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/02/the-consequentialist>>.

<sup>25</sup> “Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa,” whitehouse.gov, May 19, 2011, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa%20>>; “Iran Calls on Assad to Enter Talks with Opposition,” (*Reuters*,

The administration tried to squeeze the Syrian regime through sanctions and diplomatic isolation. The US invoked sanctions on Assad, his close aides and also forbidding anyone within the US jurisdiction to deal with Syrian companies. Moreover, it introduced resolutions in the United Nation to exert pressure on the regime to either introduce reforms or step aside paving path for regime change. The resolutions which aimed at the regime change in Syria were outright opposed by Russia and China, vetoing such resolutions. However, it was not until the reports emerged of Syrian authorities using chemical weapons on population that both Russia and the US through joint efforts vowed to dispossess Syria of the remaining chemical weapons stockpile.<sup>26</sup>

The lack of enthusiasm however, turned nightmarish for the US when the radical Islamist groups made considerable inroads into the vast northern territory of Syria and exploited the vacuum the infighting had created. After lingering for some time, the administration soon realized the gravity of the situation. Thereafter, President Obama in a speech to the nation declared his plan about ISIS: to “degrade, and ultimately destroy, ISIL through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy.” The president in his address reasserted his commitment to curb terrorism if they threaten America and “will not hesitate to take action against ISIL in Syria”. In the same speech, the president also asked for supplementary resources for the Syrian opposition groups who were fighting against Bashar al-Assad for more than three years.<sup>27</sup>

---

September 9, 2011), <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-syria-ahmadinejad-idUKTRE7884I420110909>>.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Singh, *Barack Obama's post-American foreign policy* pp.132; “US and European Sanctions on Syria”, <[https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict\\_resolution/syria-conflict/us-and-european-sanctions-on-syria-091620](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/us-and-european-sanctions-on-syria-091620)>; O. Eminue & M. Dickson, *The United Nations Resolutions on Syria: Exploration of Motivation from Russia and China*, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> “Statement by the President on ISIL,” whitehouse.gov, September 10, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-Isil-1>.

In essence, the policy approach of the Obama administration to the Middle East has oscillated between three extremes. The democratization of the region as against the repressive regimes coercing dissidents into cooptation presents the first approach amongst the various tools readily available for the foreign policy vis-à-vis Middle East. The second approach calls for a case-by-case study of the region as the region is marked by clear distinctiveness therefore each country offers unique set of challenges. While the third approach of the US administration presents the Arab-Israeli peace process as mandatory not only for the long-term stability but also for the leadership role the US might carve for itself in the region.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.3.4. United Nation Security Council**

The UNSC resolutions on Syria failed to successfully get through the voting process because of the lack of consensus among the permanent members. The Security Council was deeply divided over the issue of the introduction of a strong worded statement directed at the Assad regime on the alleged brutality, by the US and European Union member states. In theory, although the US and her allies were trying to use the platform to not only oust Assad from power but, practically, they were determined to break the Iran-Syria nexus which was instrumental in the supply of arms from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon and, thereby, exerted deep influence on the later.

In essence, the UNSC had the function of moderating the attitude of the US; when Russia and China vetoed the resolutions directed at the Syrian regime. The US didn't want to get involved directly without garnering the support of partners and developing a broad consensus. However, the US failed to build a consensus on the means to tackle the crisis at the Security Council

---

<sup>28</sup> Robert Singh, *Barack Obama's post-American foreign policy*, pp.114-115.

except, that actions related to humanitarian efforts and calls for ceased fire only attracted substantial support at the UNSC.<sup>29</sup>

The UN adopted resolutions based on the assessment of the Joint special envoy Kofi Anan who had presented a six point draft that included demanding parties to the conflict in Syria to cease their operations, let access to humanitarian assistance” and release of the arbitrarily detained persons” among others. The draft didn’t reveal for the need of armed intervention in Syria which many Middle Eastern hawks in the US administration believed was required.<sup>30</sup>

#### **4.3.5. European Union**

The EU member countries had no intention of sending their armed forces to Syria to help the opposition topple a regime that had the support of not only a considerable population within Syria but also the assistance of Russia and Iran. Russia hold considerable leverage against EU because of the latter’s dependency on Russian energy exports. The EU was in no way in favor of a prolong conflict in Syria for multiple reasons including mass migration and energy crunch that could potentially stoke the EU economy. It therefore, demanded from the warring parties to peacefully resolve all outstanding issues and the transition must take place albeit through political means –not necessarily war. The strategy for Syria incorporated the principles of non-interventionism and sovereignty of Syria as it believed that no military solution” exist without jeopardizing peace amidst the unfolding realities of the region.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Associated Press, “UN Fails to Agree on Condemning Syria,” *The Guardian*, April 28, 2011, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/28/un-security-council-fails-condemn-syria-violence>>.

<sup>30</sup> Kofi Anan, Joint Special Envoy of the UN and League of Arab Nations, his assessment of the situation in Syria and consequent draft that consisted of six points as potentially important document on Syria which the UN adopted.

<sup>31</sup> “Syria: EU Response to the Crisis,” April 11, 2023, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>>.

Angela Merkel, German chancellor, ruled out the possibility of military intervention in Syria, in fact, she clearly stated that Assad must be part of any negotiations on the future of Syria. Furthermore, she held that Russia is an important player in the region; therefore, it is in the best interest of the region to reach a compromise with her on the situation on ground.<sup>32</sup> However, France and UK were closely following the US position especially on the calls for sea-borne strikes against the regime if it crossed the “red-line”. Assad had replied with a pledge to retaliate, if a war is imposed on Syria, with “all means available”. They were planning to bypass the UNSC resolutions because Russia already had strongly opposed to armed intervention in Syria.<sup>33</sup>

#### **4.3.6. League of Arab Nations**

The powerful states within the Arab league that had strong relations with the US, were already critical of Bashar al-Assad for his close relations with Iran. In November 2011, the Arab league revoked membership of Syria after reports emerged of regime brutality on protesting civilians and soon after economic sanctions were implemented as well. The revocation had the impact of accelerating armed struggle against regime; soldiers defected in large numbers after the disbarment of Syria from the League. The said decision not only endorsed the position “asking Assad to step down after he failed to concede to the demands of protesters that Turkey had taken but also provided the west and US in particular to exhibit a more active policy which otherwise was constrained for the fear of being cancelled as “Imperialist””.<sup>34</sup>

A report submitted by the sixty men (later increased to well over a hundred) observers committee revealed divisions within the League over the means to solve the political fiasco that had

---

<sup>32</sup> “Merkel: ‘Syria Talks Must Involve Assad’ – DW – 09/24/2015,” dw.com, <<https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-says-assad-must-have-role-in-syria-talks/a-18736427>>.

<sup>33</sup> “US, France and Britain Gear up for Cruise Missile Strike on Syria,” *Financial Times*, August 27, 2013, sec. Syrian crisis, <https://www.ft.com/content/4aba4736-0ef3-11e3-ae66-00144feabdc0>.

<sup>34</sup> Müjge Küçükkeleş, “Arab League’s Syrian Policy,” n.d.

intensified after the regime failed to abide by the peace plan signed in Cairo. Subsequently, Qatar made calls for Arab military intervention in Syria as the war ravaged the country while Saudi Arabia, in a summit in Tunis, also called for arming the Syrian opposition group –Free Syrian Army, after the conflict escalated.<sup>35</sup> However, it was met with strong resistance from Syria and member states of the League as well. The Syrian foreign ministry stated that such a move will not only invite other states to intervene for their narrow national interests but will also aggravate the crisis with the potential of a spill over across the region.<sup>36</sup>

The League pursued an aggressive approach towards Syria in order to help the protestors topple a regime practically an ally of Iran –which was engaged in competition for hegemony over the region with kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, the US response to the League measures like revocation of membership and economic sanctions was admirable; it nonetheless vouched for a diplomatic and political solution.

#### **4.3.7. Regional Allies**

The US was wary of the spillover of the crises –because too many factions were involved in the conflict in Syria to the neighboring countries who were strong allies and reliable partners of the US in the region. The refugee crises and the potential for creating grave political, social and economic problems for the regional allies was a nightmare. Moreover, the US was also concerned about the destabilization of the region making it not only a hotbed for terrorist outfits but also their increased ability to acquire weapons of mass destruction and their potential horizontal proliferation.

---

<sup>35</sup> Martin Chulov and Matthew Weaver, –Saudi Arabia Backs Arming Syrian Opposition,” *The Guardian*, February 24, 2012, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/24/saudi-arabia-backs-arming-syrian-opposition>.

<sup>36</sup> –Syria Rejects Qatar Call for Arab Military Intervention,” *BBC News*, January 17, 2012, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16597015>.

For instance, aware of the potentially unfolding situation in the event of the spillover of violence across the border, Jordan initially was reluctant to take a decisive position however, later it joined the Arab league in the condemnation of the Syrian government and, therefore, asked for military intervention in order to stop the annihilation of people and establish order determined to assist Syria in transitioning towards democracy. The US sent troops to Jordan in order to assist Jordanian forces to efficiently erect a bulwark against the spillover of violence from the northern neighbor Syria.<sup>37</sup>

Jordan not only allowed Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to transfer arms to “moderate rebels” but also CIA to filter out rebels to arm them against the regime. A former assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs Anne Patterson, is quoted to have said that Jordan wanted a “more aggressive” approach from Obama with regards to the crisis in Syria. Furthermore, Jordan was shocked more than any other state when Syria crossed the “red-line” and the US failed to follow through with the threats of striking Syria.<sup>38</sup>

Israel is another long-time ally of the US that, although, favors regime change in Syria; however, the uncertainty that revolves around the potential heir of Syria is making their approach passive and cautious. Furthermore, old rivalry that exists between the Arab world and Israel since the latter’s creation cast them in negative light if they play even a miniscule role in installing a secular pro-West regime. The increased presence of Iran in Syria with an important role of protecting Assad bothered Israeli intelligence and security apparatus. Furthermore, it is also

---

<sup>37</sup> “US Sends Troops to Jordan to Help Deal with Syria Crisis,” The Guardian, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/10/us-troops-jordan-syria-crisis>>.

<sup>38</sup> Sabine Baiou, “Jordan’s Diplomacy in Syria, Part 1”, New Lines Institute, November 10, 2021, <<https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/jordans-diplomacy-in-syria-part-1/>>.



important to mention that an unstable neighbor with considerable stockpile of deadly weapons could end up in the in the armory of Hezbollah –a mortal enemy of Israel.<sup>39</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The US policy is although consistent with the demands of the other rational actors however, its role of non-interventionism falls short of a hegemonic state. Obama administration has long looked at the international organization to take lead, instead of taking unilateral decisions like his predecessor. Crisis in the Syrian theatre offered a different view because it had strong allies like Iran and Russia whose active military and financial assistance provided Assad with a chance to defeat the opposition factions and consolidate his power in Syria. Solely relying on the international organizations to find a workable solution couple with the stated US policy of non-interventionism failed to achieve any concrete objective; instead Russia and Iran emerged as powerful state actors taking full advantage of the US absence from the country. A major shift, however, in the US policy occurred when later in 2013 it decided to arm certain groups within the opposition groups to defend –Syrian people from attacks by the Syrian regime”<sup>40</sup>. Still, the US failed to turn the tables around. Before the terrorist outfit –ISIS unleashed the reign of terror; the US policy was marked with ambiguity and uncertainty.

---

<sup>39</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, *Israel's View of the Syrian Crisis*, The Saban Centre for Middle East Policy, November 2012.

<sup>40</sup> *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, Congressional Research Service, 08 November 2022.

## Chapter 5

### US Military Intervention in Syria: A Case Study of Offensive Realism

#### 5.1. Introduction

‘Military intervention continues to be the central feature of post-Cold War American foreign policy and International relations’.<sup>1</sup> The targeted airstrikes by US and its allies in September 2014 marked the first instance of direct military intervention in Syria albeit against ISIS also known as ISIL and Daesh, a transnational terrorist organization. The US president in his June 2014 address on Iraq mentioned the gains the ISIL has made in both Iraq and Syria and how the former’s security apparatus has failed to contain the ISIL advances. Therefore, Obama re-entered US forces into Iraq to assist Iraqi and Kurdish ground forces to check the advances of the ISIL, aided by US airstrikes on facilities that the organization controlled for their operational purposes.<sup>2</sup>

The US administration had assisted opposition groups in Syria, initially to defend against the aggression of the Assad regime; however, with the increasing attacks of ISIL and subsequent territorial expansion, they were increasingly used and trained against the terrorists who were present in large numbers in the north and eastern regions of Syria. Moreover, to wean people especially Muslims away from the ideology purported by the group, and to make the coalition especially with Arab countries work smoothly towards destroying and decisively defeating the

---

<sup>1</sup>Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Brookings Institution Press 1999). 157

<sup>2</sup>*Statement by the President on Iraq*, June 13, 2014. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/13/statement-president-iraq>>; *Statement by the President on ISIL*, September 10, 2014. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-Isil-1>>.

outfit, Obama called the group “not Islamic”; that it kills “innocents” and are “unique in their brutality”.<sup>3</sup>

## 5.2. Theoretical Explanation

Understanding the strategic imperative for the US to bomb the shelters of ISIS in Syria and Iraq and their subsequent defeat, despite no direct security threat to the US mainland as Obama hinted in his statement, lies in understanding the US position in the region from the standpoint of offensive realism. States are perennially fearful for their security in a world perpetually characterized by anarchy, therefore, in order to ensure security states increasingly strive to maximize their power which eventually leads towards establishing a truly hegemonic order. However, no state has thus far become a global hegemon given all states are continually preoccupied with power maximization leaving little room for increased relative power disparity; which is, in essence, the essential ingredient of global hegemony.<sup>4</sup>

The US has been a hegemon in the Western hemisphere for more than a century now after it defeated the European powers in both North and South America. Moreover, it has acted as an “offshore balancer” in Europe and Asia; and to that end fought two World Wars there, ostensibly to prevent the rise of competitor hegemons in both continents. To ensure its quasi-hegemonic position it has vigorously pursued a policy of deep involvement in the affairs of the Middle East, more so after World War II. The Middle East was, and still is, strategically important for the US for its vast oil and gas deposits, and as a bulwark against Communism.<sup>5</sup>

States are inherently fearful for their security in the absence of an overarching body that would look after their interests and security; and a potential arbitrator in case of a conflict or war.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Statement by the President on ISIL*. September 10, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, to ensure their survival against potential threats states are inclined to maximize their relative power, often at the expense of other states. To this end, a state may also attempt a preemptive strike within the territorial jurisdiction of other sovereign states; if it believes that there is concrete evidence of a potential capability that may lead the rogue elements to attack targets of vital national interests. The United States was fearful for its own and its allies' security in the absence of any such body that can check the territorial expansion, and with it, growth in the material power of ISIL. Although, there was no direct threat to the territorial security of the US, however, officials within the administration were certain that once ISIL consolidate its position in the Middle East, nothing will stop it from carrying out attacks on the US territory – like its predecessor organization, al-Qaida.<sup>6</sup>

In Syria, the US was not only concerned about the growing influence of ISIS but also the growing imbalance of power with Russia gaining more power at the expense of alienating the US from the country altogether. Even before its disintegration, the Soviet Union –now Russia had a keen interest in Syria because it provided the former with access not only to the Arab world but also to the Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup>

The anarchical international system puts a higher premium on power maximization as a necessary condition for survival. States that do not seek to maximize their relative power ultimately become weak and subjugated to other powerful states. For the US, the Syrian crisis provided a window of opportunity to restore its image as a great power broker in the region after an allegedly failed attempt at introducing a durable and self-sustaining democratic government in

---

<sup>6</sup>*Obama Has Officially Adopted Bush's Iraq Doctrine*, Time, April 6, 2016, <<https://time.com/4283865/obama-adopted-bushs-iraq-doctrine/>>.

<sup>7</sup> Garfinkle, Frederic C. Hof, et all. "Russian Motives In Syria And The Implications For Us Policy." *The Kremlin's Actions In Syria: Origins, Timing, And Prospects*. Atlantic Council, 2016. <http://Www.jstor.Org/Stable/Resrep03647.7>.

Iraq. However, the war fatigue and the failure to build consensus, at home and abroad, on early intervention deprived the US of gaining an upper hand in Syria. Resultantly, Russia scrambled to decisively support Assad in the absence of an ostensibly deep US footprint and, in the process, considerably altered the balance of power to her favor.

### **5.3. Rationale for the US intervention**

National interests alone, their defense or advancing them, must serve as the answer to the question of intervention. The identification of the national interest, albeit, is subject to continuous debate among scholars of foreign policy. But as Morgenthau had articulated decades ago, for a “rational foreign policy” prioritizing an order of all the possible objectives must take precedence.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a consensus is desirable, and which exists in principle, on establishing an order wherein strategic and political interests take an important and foremost position, followed by humanitarian and economic interests.<sup>9</sup>

The preventive war logic was incorporated in the war against ISIS which was finally waged in both Iraq and Syria, after years of inaction.<sup>10</sup> The fall of Mosul to ISIS in Iraq alarmed policymakers in the Obama administration; earlier Obama in an interview had declared them a “JV team” motivated by domestic politics of sectarian division. However, the brutal tactics and the establishment of the so-called caliphate changed the scenario from inactivity to hyper-activity. The dictum of non-interventionism was shrouded by the sense of urgency, in the words of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, “to contain, eventually disrupt

---

<sup>8</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy: A Critical Examination* (London: Methuen and Co., 1952) 117.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Brookings Institution Press 1999), 69.

<sup>10</sup> Manzoor Afridi, and Ali Jibran. —“Russian Response to Syrian Crisis: A Neorealist Perspective.” *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 2 (2018): 56–70.

and finally defeat ISIL over time”<sup>11</sup>. Initially, a cohort of three hundred soldiers was dispatched to Iraq to train Iraqi soldiers and gather intelligence on the movements of ISIS, primarily, because the US had withdrawn from Iraq already and they couldn’t ensure their safety of the remaining personnel in Baghdad.<sup>12</sup>

The rationale for the US to fight against ISIS didn’t rise from threats to the security of US territory but from the “regional instability”, “extraterritorial” security of the US citizens and humanitarian crisis.<sup>13</sup> ISIS was not yet a direct threat like Al Qaeda was during the 1990s when it carried out the bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania while it also planned to bomb World Trade Centre which it later targeted again in 2001.

### **5.3.1. Regional Stability**

Regional stability is vital for the US interests because of the strategic importance of the region, supply of oil, and the economic boom in the region while the consequences of an unstable Middle East will result in the slowdown of the economy, exponential rise in petrol prices and a threat to regional and global peace. Moreover, the security of allies is also important for the US from the power projection perspective as the allies are home to numerous naval and air force bases of the US.

Regional stability can be achieved through two means; firstly, through the establishment of hegemony, when one state acquires enough power to dictate terms on other states on political economic, and military nature. Secondly, through the balance of power, when power is equally distributed among the states, the states, therefore, have no incentive to upset the balance of

---

<sup>11</sup> General Martin E. Dempsey, “Gen. Dempsey Remarks at the Aspen Security Forum 2014”

<sup>12</sup> Joshua Geltzer, deputy homeland security advisor, in interview with David Sterman, September 5, 2019

<sup>13</sup> “Decision-Making in the Counter-ISIS War,” New America, <<http://newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/>>.

power as it will create instability which is undesirable.<sup>14</sup> In the Middle East, the continually elusive stability can be achieved through –support for international peace and security through helping avoid destabilizing competition and conflict within the region” and –support for prevention of development and proliferation of WMD in the region”.<sup>15</sup>

### **5.3.2. Humanitarian Intervention**

The US policy on intervention is perennially subject to contending debates on legitimacy and scope. However, few raises a question about the ability of the US to intervene in an environment where the government of a sovereign state has committed gross human rights violations against her subjects. The roots of humanitarian intervention can be traced to John Stuart Mill who believed that –intervention by one state against another was permissible to help the people of a state throw off a foreign yoke”. In the contemporary world, states are increasingly intervening in other states whose government policies render their subjects deprived of fundamental rights and/or leave their population vulnerable to repression and brutal exploitation.<sup>16</sup>

In a globalized world, the deepening interconnectivity leaves a state apprehensive about its security if a neighboring state is unstable. Moreover, the doctrine of responsibility to protect (R2P) empowers outside powers under the auspices of the United Nations to intervene in a sovereign state if it fails to protect its citizens.<sup>17</sup> However, the doctrine is increasingly questioned

---

<sup>14</sup> Professor Sten Rynning, *Regional Stability And Lesson Learned In Regional Peace Building*, National Defence University Islamabad, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> *Regional Stability And Strategic Issues*, Department Of Foreign Affairs And Trade, Australia.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War*, 1999, 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> –The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect,” World101 from the Council on Foreign Relations, accessed June 9, 2023, <https://world101.cfr.org/how-world-works-and-sometimes-doesnt/building-blocks/rise-and-fall-responsibility-protect>.

after the Western-led coalition ousted Qaddafi from power, leading Russia to state that the doctrine was ostensibly used to enact regime change in Libya.<sup>18</sup>

### **5.3.3. US Power Projection in the Middle East**

The twenty-first century brought US power in the Middle East to experience “coercive gradualism” from states like Russia and China for their ambitious foreign policy postures in the region. Fueled by the radical change in the priorities of the US objectives from “today’s to future issues” and “pivot to Asia”, emboldened states and non-state actors alike to expand their reach and influence in the region. The region, however, is still important from the perspective of preserving national and allied security, while maintaining the smooth flow of oil to the energy market for the smooth functioning of economies; therefore the US has maintained a considerable security presence in the form of the naval, air force and forward bases in the region.<sup>19</sup>

## **5.4. Military Presence in the Middle East**

The US has maintained a large force in the Middle East since the beginning of the Cold War. The impetus for presence in the Middle East was necessary for boosting power projection capabilities in a far-off land as it has helped the US militarily by saving time of the transportation, between the US and target sites, of heavy sophisticated weapons and personnel. Historically, the purpose of the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), and their subsequent deployment in the Persian Gulf was to offer a quick response to threats emanating from the adversarial elements in the region or beyond –the Soviet Union or proxies, to the US

---

<sup>18</sup> “The Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed June 9, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/dilemma-humanitarian-intervention>.

<sup>19</sup>David J. Katz, *Multidimensionality: Rethinking Power Projection for the 21st Century*, Volume 48 Number 4 Parameters Winter 2018-2019



national interests. The presence during the Cold War was attributed to repelling Soviet forces or assisting the allies to defend themselves against Soviet intrusion.<sup>20</sup>

#### **5.4.1 Military bases in the region**

The military presence in the region is a coordinated response to the perceived threats to the national interests of the US.<sup>21</sup> The US has maintained a naval facility in Bahrain since 1948 through various bilateral treaties and pacts. The presence of Naval Central Forces Command and the headquarters of the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet, which overlooks the operations of the Navy in the area that falls under the Central Command (CENTCOM), have unquestionably supported the offensive military posture of the US in the region.<sup>22</sup>

The region also hosts several air force bases which have been used in the gulf war and the Second Iraq War. The air bases include the Sheikh Isa Air force base located in Bahrain and the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, this facility was extensively used in operations against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria.<sup>23</sup> The Prince Sultan air base in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the al-Assad air base in Iraq hosts a large number of military personnel, aircraft, and other equipment while the latter is extensively used in operations against ISIL. The US also maintains an army base in Kuwait known as Camp Patriot which was used in Iraq war in 2003 and another one at Qatar called Camp Asyiah.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Norman Friedman, 'Intervention: Technical and Logistical Constraints' in *Military Intervention In the Third World: Threats, Constraints and Options*, ed. John Maurer and Richard Porth (Praeger Special Studies 1984), 125-126

<sup>21</sup> Davis, Lynn E., et al. "Introduction." In *U.S. Overseas Military Presence: What Are the Strategic Choices?*, 1–6. RAND Corporation, 2012. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1211af.9>>.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew Wallin, "U.S. Military Bases and Facilities in the Middle East", American Security Project, June 2018

<sup>23</sup>Brad Lendon, "Qatar Hosts Largest US Military Base in Mideast," CNN, June 5, 2017, <<https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/05/middleeast/qatar-us-largest-base-in-mideast/index.html>>.

<sup>24</sup>Matthew Wallin, "U.S. Military Bases and Facilities in the Middle East",

These bases help the US military with the prepositioning of necessary equipment and weapons saving critical time and resources in the event of a contingency, as the Middle East is a highly volatile and conflict-ridden region. Therefore, in the absence of forward bases, it would be highly unlikely for the US to maintain stability and create an atmosphere of peace and cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

## **5.5. Objectives of Intervention**

The understanding of the national interests of the US in Syria will help us understand the imperative of US intervention. The two countries do not share a cordial relationship since the cold war owing to close relations between the then Soviet Union and Syria. The relations remained warm and intense despite the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Syria is a major ally of Russia in the region with political as well as economic interests in the vast oil and gas deposits.

### **5.5.1 Counter-terrorism operations**

The US was wary of the progress of the ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The administration viewed ISIS as a potential threat for the US which has already created instability in the region and fear among the people. After the UN observers, who were there to investigate the alleged chemical attacks on civilians, left Syria in August 2014, the US-led coalition started “Operation Inherent Resolve” pounding on the terrorist-held facilities, disrupting their logistic lines and safe havens. The US-led coalition was assisted on the ground by the Coalition’s domestic partners primarily Kurds and Arabs. The search for domestic partners was the direct result of the Iraq war as the US administration didn’t want to get involved in another Middle Eastern state.

---

<sup>25</sup>Norman Friedman, ‘Intervention: Technical and Logistical Constraints’ pp.137.

### 5.5.2 Training Opposition Members

The Obama administration came up with the proposal of training the Syrian opposition. The initial scrutiny that the Pentagon conducted, decided to train 3000 “moderate rebels” in the first year and 5400 each subsequent year.<sup>26</sup> The program was meant to assist the opposition against ISIS as well as the Assad regime.<sup>27</sup> However, defense secretary Ash Carter revealed to the Senate that so far only 60 candidates are successful after being thoroughly vetted for training and equipping.<sup>28</sup> The US then worked closely with Free Syrian Army mainly under the command of Kurds (YPG) to liberate areas held by ISIL.

### 5.6. Modus Operandi

For the US, deploying a large ground force in Syria was out of the question for various reasons. For one, the war in Iraq and the subsequent failure to overcome chaos, and stop non-state actors from exploiting the power vacuum constituted a fair point to not send ground troops. A large force would prove only to be a burden on the US taxes.

The Department of Defense after careful deliberations upon the President's strategic directive for security needs of the 21st century came up with a new security strategy of creating Joint Forces; “smaller and leaner” as defense secretary Leon Panetta noted. The objective was to rely much less on ground forces for the fear of public and congress backlashes and avoid creating difficult

---

<sup>26</sup> “Train and Equip Program for Syria: Authorities, Funding, and Issues for Congress,” accessed June 9, 2023, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43727.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Matt Winesett, “Pushing Back on Iran, Part 3: The Syrian Civil War,” *American Enterprise Institute - AEI* (blog), February 14, 2018, <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/middle-east/pushing-back-on-iran-part-3-the-syrian-civil-war/>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/abwrig>, —Carter’s Unwelcome News: Only 60 Syrian Rebels Fit for Training,” POLITICO, July 7, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/07/ash-carter-syrian-rebel-training-119812>.

situations on the ground from where exit is near impossible as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, important for a successful military expedition is the realization of clear political goals and an exit strategy before deploying troops in large numbers. Therefore, to have fewer feet on the ground, the Allies adopted a strategy wherein the primary tool of intervention was airstrikes which targeted the key terrorist-held outposts while Special Forces and local allies were used on the ground against the targets.

### **5.6.1. Operation Inherent Resolve**

The decision to rule out the possibility of sending ground troops led to the formation of an alliance after the UNSC resolution 2170 that condemned the widespread human rights abuses by extremist groups including but not limited to ISIL and al-Nusra Front in both Syria and Iraq. The Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) was established by the US Department of Defense to defeat the growing threat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The aerial bombing of targets, with the ground support from local partners to assist the Coalition on the ground proved successful against ISIS and other extremist groups.

The coalition will target and defeat ISIS “in conjunction with partner forces”. In Syria, the partner forces were the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian Arab Coalition who were already engaged against ISIS in northern and eastern Syria.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, —Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” Washington, D.C., January 2012

<sup>30</sup> Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve –Fact Sheet, <<https://www.inherentresolve.mil/Portals/14/Documents/Mission/20170717-%20Updated%20Mission%20Statement%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf?ver=2017-07-17-093803-770#:~:text=defeats%20ISIS%20%E2%80%A6%E2%80%9D%20The%20Coalition%20mission,equipment%2C%20and%20kill%20their%20fighters>>.

Initially, the US had welcomed Russian support against ISIS however, the Department of Defense officials including defense secretary Ash Carter were critical of any cooperation with Russia over the military expedition against ISIS because in their opinion the blatant disregard for collateral damage could hurt the cohesion of the alliance and their operational capabilities by creating an atmosphere of widespread opposition over human right violations.<sup>31</sup>

## **5.7. Russia as Strategic Competitor**

The Tartus naval port on the Eastern Mediterranean Sea in Syria provides Russia with logistical and power projection capabilities. Bashar al-Assad is a close ally of Russia, like his father Hafez al-Assad before him. Similarly, Putin, a former intelligence officer, waged a “zero-sum” competition with the West upon assuming the presidency of Russia presumably to restore the lost prestige of the bygone Soviet Union. The two countries had signed various defense pacts giving Syria access to more advanced and sophisticated weapons systems. Russia exported \$1 billion worth of weapons in 2011 which included an advanced anti-missile air defense system.<sup>32</sup>

### **5.7.1. Russian Concerns**

The skepticism of Russia about the UN-sanctioned NATO operation that toppled the Qaddafi regime in Libya was not misplaced, because Russia not only lost an ally and arms importer but, was also deprived of access to its vast economic interests there. Therefore, Russia didn’t want to lose another ally to the shenanigans of the West, who might as well install a pro-West president in Syria.

Furthermore, the growing threat of ISIS was also concerning for Russia because it is home to a large number of Muslims and a strong terrorist organization in the backyard could disrupt social

---

<sup>31</sup> Weiss and Ng, *Collision Avoidance: Lessons From U.S. and Russian Operations in Syria*. pp. 7

<sup>32</sup>—Russian Arms Exporter Says Supplies to Syria Will Go On,” *Reuters*, February 13, 2013, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-russia-idUSBRE91C0KH20130213>>.

cohesion, and the economic well-being of Russia. A report which quoted the head of the Russian secret service, that around seventeen hundred Russians had joined ISIS in both Syria and Iraq, which could potentially create problems at home for Russia.<sup>33</sup> ISIS claimed responsibility for downing a Russian civil airliner over Egypt speaks a lot about the disruptive capabilities of ISIS and is a harbinger of what may come for Russia if it consolidates its position in the Middle East.<sup>34</sup>

Russia also had economic interests in Syria; as the latter relied heavily on imported Russian arms. Exports of arms to Syria constitute nearly ten percent of total Russian exports before the Arab Spring began.<sup>35</sup> The Syrian Demand for Russian weaponry has increased by a whopping 580 percent in four years since 2007.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Russia has invested billions in Syria in different energy projects<sup>37</sup>.

One of the cornerstones of Russian foreign policy is its strict interpretation of state sovereignty. It didn't want the US and the West to push for Assad to "step down" or enforce harsh measures i.e. economic and diplomatic sanctions. As one radio commentator had to about the Russian principles of state sovereignty;

---

<sup>33</sup> Damien Sharkov, "Up to 1,700 Russians Fighting for ISIS, Says Head of Secret Service," *Newsweek*, 20 February 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Starr and Shoichet Catherine E., "Russian Plane Crash: U.S. Intel Suggests ISIS Bomb Brought down Jet," *CNN*, November 4, 2015, <<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/04/africa/russian-plane-crash-egypt-sinai/index.html>>.

<sup>35</sup> "What Drives Russia's Unrelenting Position on Syria?" *Center for American Progress*, August 13, 2012, <<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/what-drives-russias-unrelenting-position-on-syria/>>.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Kosturos, "What Drives Russia's Unrelenting Position on Syria?" *Center for American Progress*, August 13, 2013, <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/08/13/12027/whatdrives-russias-unrelenting-position-on-syria>>

<sup>37</sup> Indrani Talukdar, "Russia's Strategic Interest in Syria," *Indian Council Of World Affairs* (2016): 1-15.

–The Kremlin’s deeply held view of sovereignty as an unlimited right for political regimes to do as they please inside their states and it has been especially dominant since the war in Libya.”<sup>38</sup>

### **5.7.2. Russian Intervention**

Therefore, the Russian bombing in Syria propped Assad against rebels when the US president and multiple Western states, on various occasions, chided him for human rights violations and repeatedly asked him to “step aside”. The Russian intervention in Syria changed the course for the US; the risks were manifold and the stakes were now higher than the US “could not match”. There were reports of Assad buying oil from the terrorists as they control the large swathe of territory at their peak which include much of the oilfields within Syria. For the Russian air bombing, the targets were not only the terrorist groups but also moderate opposition groups that were assisted by the US militarily against the regime. The areas that Russia eventually liberated from ISIS and the so-called moderate rebels consolidated the position of Assad that helped Russia to strengthen its position there, leaving the US out of the equation with minimal presence in eastern Syria.

Russia has been successful in Syria and the intervention has paid off in establishing much closer ties with the Assad regime, which it protected against popular rebellion. At one point the regime has shown no qualms over the Russian military presence in the region; moreover, the strategic port of Tartus where the Russian naval facility is operational was extended in scope which further gives Russia leverage over Europe. The Russian Vice-Admiral Viktor Chirkov had said

---

<sup>38</sup> –What Drives Russia’s Unrelenting Position on Syria?”

“The base is essential to us, it has been operated and will continue to operate” highlighting the importance of the facility.<sup>39</sup>

### 5.7.3. US- Russia Cooperation

The US sought a joint operational alliance with Russia against ISIS and other terrorist outfits that were hostile to the declared interests of both states. There were serious considerations of cooperation on both sides when Secretary of State John Kerry consulted Whitehouse about the Russian proposals. The proposals although meant to enforce deconfliction –to avoid conflict between the Russian and US aircraft, as both states oppose IS in Syria. Kerry told reporters that the Russian proposition suggests that there be military-to-military contact ~~to~~ discuss what precisely what will be done to deconflict with respect to any potential risks that might be run and to have a complete and clear understanding as to the road ahead and what the intentions are,” Kerry told reporters.<sup>40</sup>

The communication between US and Russia was essential to avoid escalation in a region where both militaries were vigorously engaged to defend their interests. The US commander Lloyd Austin shared the same concerns that there was a constant risk of escalation because there was a high probability of the Russian military targeting a Coalition aircraft as ~~both~~ sides [are] operating in the same space”.<sup>41</sup>

The Obama administration had proposed an agreement wherein the two countries will extend cooperation in Syria to defeat ISIS and al-Nusra while allowing Russian aircraft to operate in the ~~designated~~ places”. The agreement was subject to severe criticism from American security

---

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas Kosturos, “What Drives Russia’s Unrelenting,”

<sup>40</sup> “Kerry Says Russia Proposes Military Talks on Syria,” *Reuters*, September 16, 2015, sec. World News, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-crisis-kerry-talks-idUKKCN0RG2CR20150916>>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



analysts because; according to them the agreement had the loophole of “designated places” which corresponds to the rebel-held regions that the Russian military may bomb instead of the extremists<sup>42</sup>.

The cooperation, however, seemed more like a marriage of convenience as Russia failed to up the ante against states like Turkey and Israel that were targeting the regime’s assets and the Iranian –an ally, facilities. However, soon the alliance betrayed the real intentions of both parties. The US was determined to remove Assad and limit the role of Iran in the country while Russia was engaged consistently in targeting moderate rebels, who posed an acute existential threat to the regime, instead of ISIS.<sup>43</sup> The US defense secretary Ash Carter said about the objectives of Russia when they later informed their American counterparts about their intervention in Syria:

“What they did isn’t what they said they were going to do. What they said they were going to do is come in and find ISIL, and help to use their influence to move [Bashar al-Assad] aside and thereby end the civil war in Syria. They didn’t do either of those things.”<sup>44</sup>

On the contrary, the Russian President complained about the lack of cooperation as the US was withholding key information about the targets where terrorists were concentrated or the areas which the Russian jets shouldn’t bomb. The US, however, response was cold and non-cooperative.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Natasha Bertrand, “The US Is about to Embark on ‘a Very Questionable Operation’ with Russia in Syria,” Business Insider, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-military-coordination-with-russia-in-syria-2016-7>.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Weiss and Nicole Ng, *Collision Avoidance: Lessons From U.S. and Russian Operations in Syria*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2019. pp. 3

<sup>44</sup> Weiss and Ng, *Collision Avoidance: Lessons From U.S. and Russian Operations in Syria*. pp. 4

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

#### 5.7.4. Reminiscence of Cold War Hostilities

The former defense secretary of the Obama administration had, in an interview, compared the contemporary rivalry with Russia in Syria to the cold war period.

—There's no question we're in a new chapter of the Cold War with Russia. There are an awful lot of steps that the Russians are taking to be very aggressive; part of it is because they've read weakness into the United States, as well as our allies.”<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, in the same interview, Panetta argued that dialogue with Russian President Putin is only possible from the position of power and not weakness because nothing else can deter him.<sup>47</sup>

Ash Carter was also highly critical of the Russian unprofessional behavior over the airstrikes and launching of cruise missiles over the Caspian Sea without informing regional states. He also alleged Russians targeting secular rebels in the northwestern region where the Syrian army under the command of Gen Ali Abdullah Ayub was advancing to recover.

—They have initiated a joint ground offensive with the Syrian regime, shattering the facade that they are there to fight ISIL.”<sup>48</sup>

He further warned Russia that the ISIL will target Russia if it isn't destroyed. —This will have consequences for Russia itself, which is rightly fearful of attacks.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Michelle Fox, —We're in New Chapter of Cold War with Russia: Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta,” CNBC, April 17, 2018, <<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/17/were-in-new-chapter-of-cold-war-with-russia-former-defense-secretary-leon-panetta.html>>.

<sup>47</sup> 'Leon Panetta Pushes Back on Calls for Military Intervention in Syria', US Foreign Policy, The Guardian, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/07/leon-panetta-pushes-back-syria-strike>>.

<sup>48</sup> Julian Borger, Ian Black, and Kareem Shaheen, 'Russia Will Pay Price for Syrian Airstrikes, Says US Defense Secretary,’ *The Guardian*, October 8, 2015, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/08/russia-pay-price-syrian-airstrikes-ashton-carter-us-defence-secretary>>.

Similarly, Secretary of State John Kerry said at a conference in Brussels that "Russia has turned a blind eye to [Assad's] deplorable use of the weapons of war that he has chosen against his people." He hinted at a possible collusion between Putin and Assad when he said "The Syrian regime and Russia seemed to have rejected diplomacy in furtherance of trying to pursue a military victory."<sup>50</sup>

### **5.8. Security Dilemma: Power Maximization through Alliance Formation**

The deterioration of bilateral relations and the disputatious nature of interests have led the two countries to increase their relative power; which, however, has resulted in a security dilemma. In his article, Charles Ziegler explained the bilateral relations in terms of "contrasting geopolitical perspectives" wherein "each side is fearful of the other's intentions, neither understands the security imperatives of their rival, and both engage in behavior that undermines the security of the other."<sup>51</sup> One state, fearful of continued attempts of another at maximization of power, tries to ramp up its security; henceforth, leaving both sides stuck in a loop while also destabilizing the region. Scholars have pinpointed both countries responsible for the free fall in the bilateral relationship as both are powerful countries therefore; their policies and decisions have a great impact on the overall atmosphere of global politics.

Soon after the end of the Cold War, the US upended the "spirit of the Cold War Settlement" when it allowed the eastward expansion of NATO, intervention in Serbia, and withdrew from ABM among other things that Russia believed were tantamount to US aggression in the former's

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "Kerry Says Russia 'Knows What It Needs To Do' To Reach Truce In Syria", October 04, 2016 <<https://www.rferl.org/a/syria-kerry-not-abandoning-peace-efforts/28031581.html>>

<sup>51</sup> Charles Ziegler, "A Crisis Of Diverging Perspectives: U.S.-Russian Relations and the Security Dilemma," Texas National Security Review: Volume 4, Issue 1, (Winter 2020/2021).

–sphere of influence”.<sup>52</sup> Mearshemier in his article blamed the west for the Russian aggression in Ukraine that resulted in the annexation of crimea; in his view, the West shouldn’t have considered –integration” of Ukraine with the West through NATO and EU expansion up to the backyard of Russia.<sup>53</sup>

Historically, Russia and Syria maintained close relations before the outbreak of civil war when protestors failed to topple the Assad regime. Syria for its strong anti-Israel credentials found Russia receptive to its demands for cooperation in the military and economic realm. Therefore, when Assad was close to losing his seat in Damascus, Russia chose to intervene on his behalf and saved the day. On the other hand, for the West, Assad was part of the –axis of evil” for its close association with Iran and by extension pro-Palestinian organizations. The US had put sanctions on the regime, even before the Arab spring had erupted, to push it for a change in its position vis-a-vis Iran and Israel. Despite the massive funding and arms delivery to the rebels, Assad survived with the help of Russian aid, paving relations further stronger and deeper.

Moreover, Iran had substantial influence in Syria because of the presence of a significant Shiite population in the country; as sectarian tensions have always played out in the Middle East given the deep-rooted rivalry between Saudi Arabia –leading the Sunni block, and Iran which leads the Shiites for regional hegemony. Syria has acted as a conduit of arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon, which is active against Israel in southern Lebanon. Given the hostile nature of relations between Iran and the US over the alleged possession of nuclear weapons manufacturing technology, Iran is engaged to push the US out of the region. With the US out, Iran will face little to no resistance

---

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, –The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement,” *Survival* 51, no. 6 (2009): 39–62, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330903461666>>.

<sup>53</sup> John J. Mearsheimer , \_Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin’.

as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is heavily reliant on US security cover. Equally important is the impact of Hezbollah as a junior partner of the triple alliance, it sent thousands of troops to Syria to fight alongside Assad forces.<sup>54</sup>

The US strategy to counter the alliance forged among Syria, Iran, and Russia was to seek the support of allies. The war fatigue and public opposition to opening a new front in the Middle East had the effect of the US stopping short of sending a large number of troops. It, however, maintained a section of the rebels who were directly engaged in the war against Assad. The CIA operatives vetted moderate rebels in a facility in Jordan after which they were given training and arms under a law that Congress had passed which gave the administration the power to utilize a considerable amount of money to train rebels and deploy them against the regime. Moreover, the GCC member states were also vigorously pursuing their agenda to topple the regime for its alleged alliance with Iran – a Persian, non-Arab state.<sup>55</sup>

In effect, the US tried to balance against the Russian-Syrian-Iran alliance by partnering with regional and European states; however, it failed to make the necessary difference that the US had intended; that the Assad regime must go, and reduce Iranian influence. What happened in Syria was contrary to the expectations of the US and its allies, as Assad emerged stronger than he was during the early days of the mayhem.

## **Conclusion**

States militarily intervene when their interests are threatened often after exhausting other options that had the potential to avoid the ensuing chaos and unnecessary bloodletting. For the US, the

---

<sup>54</sup> –Syria's Axis of Evil Cannot Be Trusted,” Arab News, April 15, 2018, <<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1285056>>.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,' *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3–43, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540>>.

Syrian regime was a threat because it not only threatened her allies but also played an active role in destabilizing the region by aligning with Iran. Arab Spring provided the US administration with the opportunity to exert monumental pressure on Assad to let democracy bud in Syria. However, he didn't consider stepping aside and the confrontation with the opposition soon escalated into civil war, allowing regional states to weigh in on the unfolding situation in Syria.

Prior to the Arab Spring, the US had already wrapped a war that in the opinion of Obama was a flawed and unnecessary war that the US should not have fought in the first place.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the administration was overly conscious of the decision to intervene again in the Middle East on the pretext of chemical weapons. This gave Russia the much-needed opportunity to exploit the void that the absence of the US in Syria has left. Russian intervention not only bolstered Assad's grip on power but also elevated its position as a global power fully committed to defending its allies, as it also didn't stop the transfer of arms despite huge international pressure.

The US not only failed in its attempts to force Assad to go and to reduce Iranian influence in Syria but in effect, it also embolden the revisionist Russia after it faced isolation due to the Ukraine crisis when it annexed Crimea in 2014.<sup>57</sup> However, the US and the allies succeeded in rendering a crushing defeat to ISIS and other terrorist groups which had become a more pressing problem for not only the US and the West but also Russia. The common threat had pushed for albeit a transient cooperation between the rivals which lasted soon when the realities unfolded, as some American officials had alleged that Russia was targeting rebels instead of terrorists.

---

<sup>56</sup> "Ending War In Iraq - Bring Home Troops", Washington Post, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/ending-war-in-iraq.html>>.

<sup>57</sup> "Ukraine Crisis: Joe Biden Warns Russia Faces 'isolation'", BBC News, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30141772>>.

## **Conclusion**

Syria offers a unique case of a battlefield for centuries of prolonged superpower rivalry. From ancient times to the Middle Ages up until now, it has seldom witnessed a period of tranquility and peace. Its recent history is replete with anarchy, revolts, and insurrections against the established order; there were numerous revolts against the French who had the mandate of Syria after the First World War when the Ottoman Caliphate was disintegrated. However, its post-independence history lacks no incidents of revolts and coups as one after another governments were ousted from office with the aid of the military and Baathists – a prominent socialist party still in rule. The continued political instability coincided with the peak of the Cold War, thus making Syria a hotbed of superpower rivalry.

The search for alliance in the Middle East was highly rewarding for the superpowers owing to the prominence of oil and access to the Arab world. However, the policy orientation of the Syrian Baath party directed against Israel, a close US ally, resulted in leaving the former in alliance with Iran. It is also pertinent to say that the Baath party that had been ruling since 1973 comprised Alawites –a minority in a Sunni-dominated country, therefore, the alliance between Iran and Syria was natural. The Soviet Union and Syria developed the common interest of countering the growing American influence in the region, which the Soviets perceived as threatening to her survival. Henceforth, Syria relied heavily on Soviet assistance both in material and diplomacy; Syria was given arms and financial help while also supporting the Syrian position in Golan Heights.

For the US, Syria was probably the only country that it failed to break from the Soviet Union's influence throughout the Cold War. The US had attempted to dampen the anti-Israel policy

posture of Syria by dissociating Egypt away through Camp David Accords that established cordial relations between Egypt and Israel. Still, it failed to coerce Syria to bring about a massive change in its foreign policy posture vis-à-vis Israel and the Soviet Union. The US government imposed economic sanctions for its perceived role in sponsoring terrorism while it continued to lend support to Hezbollah –a designated terrorist group. However, with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the loss of a patron, Syria cooperated with the US during the 1990s when the latter led a coalition against Saddam Hussein when he attacked Kuwait and there was considerable intelligence that he might attack Saudi Arabia as well.

The two countries also cooperated in the domain of intelligence sharing during the earlier days of the US declared “War on Terror”. However, this brief episode of cooperation soon died an unnatural death when the US invaded Iraq, thereby, Syria opened its border for cross-border movements of independent armed personnel and Hezbollah fighters in their bid to fight the imperialist US. Close to the end of the Iraq war, the Obama administration’s renewed efforts at negotiating a peace deal in the Middle East raised hopes of Syrian cooperation and leniency, however, the start of the Arab Spring dashed hopes of any well-intended gesture of stability and peace in the region.

The 21st century brought new challenges for Syria; from the war against terror to the US invasion of Iraq, Syria found itself in a complex web of crises that reduced its maneuvering capability and limited its foreign policy options. The peace in the Arab world, which comprised authoritarian regimes ruling for decades, was jeopardized by the massive wave of popular agitation against the regimes that denied people their fundamental rights.

In Syria, the protests soon evolved into a full-blown civil war when the Assad regime resorted to violence against the protestors; starting in Deraa where teens were incarcerated for drawing



graffiti and demanding President Assad to step down. Initially, the US resisted any temptation to put boots on the ground despite many veteran politicians and retired military personnel urging Obama to send ground troops and save Syrians from the bloodbath that the Syrian regime had undertaken, to the contrary, he decided to sit on the fence and assess the unfolding situation on the ground. The limited help that the US extended to certain factions within the broader group of opposition did not achieve the key objective while it further deteriorated the law and order situation, plunging Syria down into a full-blown civil war. Assad regime regained control of the various parts of the country that the rebels had taken a while back with the support of the Russian air force and the thousands of ground forces provided by Iran and Hezbollah.

The world was concerned at the decision of the US at non-intervention to tip the balance in favor of the protestors because the assistance the US provided was too little and too late. However, the US decision to not intervene was informed by many factors that included not only the resultant fatigue of the Iraq war and the chaos that ensued after the Libyan strongman was routed but also domestic considerations and international pressures that pushed for diplomatic means rather than involving militarily. The Syrian crisis proved challenging for the US in that it was a complex issue, unlike Libya. Syria had no organized opposition while there were also extremist elements involved against Bashar al-Assad, therefore, the US didn't want Syria to become another Iraq or Afghanistan where terrorists had found safe havens after the US routed the established orders.

The growing threat of transnational terrorism from ISIS and Al Qaeda whose presence in Syria had multiplied after the civil war created an atmosphere of lawlessness and anarchy. The brutal tactics of ISIS and the immediate threat to the security of allies change the perception among the principal decision-makers in Washington. The US still sought international support and the assistance of allies rather than embarking unilaterally on a mission to defeat the terror outfits in

the most complicated environment. The majority of Arab states that were aligned with the US demanded a more intrusive US role in Syria with the desirable objective of toppling the Assad regime. The formation of the Coalition was a watershed moment for the US intervention in Syria wherein it targeted ISIS and the Assad regime, the latter for his alleged usage of chemical weapons on civilians. Prior to the US bombing ISIS controlled large swathes of territory in Syria where it declared a Caliphate, however soon the territory was liberated after the unrelenting aerial bombing of the coalition forces.

The gains the US had made after defeating ISIS were offset by Russian intervention to stop Assad from falling back. Russian jets targeted ISIS hideouts while also bombing rebels who waged war against Assad. The imperative for Russian intervention lies in her interest in elevating its status as a global power, second to none but the US. There were economic interests involved in Syria that Russia could have lost if Assad was removed from power; however, security concerns for Russia were of paramount importance and everything else was secondary.

It is evident from the forgoing paragraphs that the US and Russia played their cards in order to secure their interests; although the war is far from over, still, there are clear indications of a potential US failure in Syria. The regime is still there, liberating one after another territory that ISIS and rebels had taken; Russia has penetrated itself more in Syria decreasing any US role in local affairs, while regional powers are slowly accepting Syria back into the fold of the Arab League from where it was dispelled by member states when the civil war broke out.

## Bibliography

- \_\_Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia', *The American Presidency Project*, <<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-announcing-the-deployment-united-states-armed-forces-saudi-arabia>>.
- Alexandra Kuimova, Russia's Arms Exports to the Mena Region: Trends and Drivers, 1st April 2019.
- Alford Carleton. \_\_The Syrian Coups D'état of 1949' *Middle East Journal* , Jan., 1950, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan., 1950), pp. 1-11.
- Alia Chughtai, \_\_Syria's war: Ten years – and counting', *Al-Jazeera*, March 12, 2021.
- Andrew Rathmell, \_\_Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-1961'.
- Andrew Weiss and Nicole Ng, \_\_Collision Avoidance: Lessons From U.S. and Russian Operations in Syria', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2019.
- Anne Applebaum, \_\_Every Revolution Is Different', *Slate*, February 21, 2011, <<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2011/02/the-arab-revolutions-of-2011-are-more-like-europe-in-1848-not-1989.html>>.
- Anoushiravan Ehteshami, \_\_The Middle East's New Power Dynamics', vol.108, no.722, *The Middle East* (December 2009), pp. 395-401
- Anthony R. De Luca, \_\_Soviet-American Politics and the Turkish Straits', *Political Science Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (1977): 503–24.
- \_\_Arab Spring', *History*, January 17, 2020, <<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>>.
- Associated Press, \_\_UN Fails to Agree on Condemning Syria', *The Guardian*, April 28, 2011, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/28/un-security-council-fails-condemn-syria-violence>>.
- Ayşe T. Fildis. \_\_The Troubles in Syria: spawned by French divide and rule'. *Middle East Policy*, vol. xviii, No. 4, winter 2011.
- \_\_Barack Obama's Foreign Policy, *The New Yorker*, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/02/the-consequentialist>>.
- Barack Obama. \_\_Renewing American Leadership'. *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 4, 2007, pp. 2–16.
- Barry Rubin, \_\_Anglo-American Relations in Saudi Arabia, 1941-1945', *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, vol.14 no.2, 253-267, p.254.

- Barbara Starr and Shoichet Catherine E., 'Russian Plane Crash: U.S. Intel Suggests ISIS Bomb Brought down Jet,' CNN, November 4, 2015, <<https://www.cnn.com/2015/11/04/africa/russian-plane-crash-egypt-sinai/index.html>>.
- Basma Atassi, 'Profile: Free Syrian Army,' <<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2011/11/16/free-syrian-army-grows-in-influence>>.
- Benjamin Shwadran, 'Oil in the Middle East Crisis,' *International Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956): 13–23.
- Brad Lendon, 'Qatar Hosts Largest US Military Base in Mideast,' CNN, June 5, 2017.
- Carmen Becker, 'Strategies of Power Consolidation in Syria Under Bashar al-Asad: Modernizing Control Over Resources,' *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 13/14, No. 2/1 pp. 65-91.
- 'Carter's Unwelcome News: Only 60 Syrian Rebels Fit for Training,' POLITICO, July 7, 2015, <<https://www.politico.com/story/2015/07/ash-carter-syrian-rebel-training-119812>>.
- Charles Lister, 'The Free Syrian Army: A Decentralized Insurgent Brand,' Brookings (blog), November 22, 2016, <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-free-syrian-army-a-decentralized-insurgent-brand/>>.
- Charles Krauthammer, 'The Obama Doctrine: Leading from Behind,' (Washington Post, April 28, 2011) <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/sopinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sopinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html)>.
- Charles Ziegler, 'A Crisis Of Diverging Perspectives: U.S.-Russian Relations and the Security Dilemma,' *Texas National Security Review: Volume 4, Issue 1*, (Winter 2020/2021).
- Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve –Fact Sheet, <<https://www.inherentresolve.mil/Portals/14/Documents/Mission/20170717-%20Updated%20Mission%20Statement%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf?ver=2017-07-17-093803-770#:~:text=defeats%20ISIS%20%E2%80%A6%E2%80%9D%20The%20Coalition%20mission,equipment%2C%20and%20kill%20their%20fighters>>.
- 'Constitutional Law - Syrian Law Journal', <<https://www.syria.law/index.php/main-legislation/constitutional-law/>>.
- 'Costs of Major US Wars,' accessed March 24, 2023, <<http://public2.nhhcaws.local/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/c/costs-major-us-wars.html>>.
- Damien Sharkov, 'Up to 1,700 Russians Fighting for ISIS, Says Head of Secret Service,' *Newsweek*, 20 February 2015.
- Dan Reiter, 'Preventive Attacks Against Nuclear Programs And The "Success" At Osiraq'.

- Daniel L. Byman, 'Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets,' Brookings, November 30, 2014, <<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/>>.
- Daniel Deudney and John Ikenberry, 'The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement,' *Survival* 51, no. 6 (2009): 39–62.
- David Holmstrom, in 'Syria -- Unity, Liberty and Socialism,' *Middle East International*, April, 1973. p.12
- David Lesch, ed., *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment* (Westview Press), 152-153
- David J. Katz, 'Multidimensionality: Rethinking Power Projection for the 21st Century', Volume 48. Number 4, *Parameters* Winter 2018-2019
- Davis, Lynn E., et al. *U.S. Overseas Military Presence: What Are the Strategic Choices?* RAND Corporation, 2012.
- 'Decision-Making in the Counter-ISIS War,' *New America*, <<http://newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decision-making-counter-isis-war/>>.
- Dick Cheney, Liz Cheney, and Dick Cheney, 'Dick Cheney and Liz Cheney: The Collapsing Obama Doctrine,' *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2014, <<http://online.wsj.com/articles/dick-cheney-and-liz-cheney-the-collapsing-obama-doctrine-1403046522>>.
- Donald C. Blaisdell, *Pressure Groups, Foreign Policies, and International Politics*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (1958)
- Douglas Foyle, 'Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Elite Beliefs as a Mediating Variable,' *International Studies Quarterly* 1997) 145.
- 'Egypt Protests: An Arab Spring as Old Order Crumbles?,' *BBC News*, February 2, 2011, sec. Middle East, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12339521>>.
- Elena Saputo, 'Why People Rebel: Analyzing The Risk Of Political Instability', Economic Research Department, May 2012.
- Emile Hokayem, 'Syria's Uprising and the Fracturing of the Levant'. London: Routledge, pp. 13.
- Eminue and Dickson, 'The United Nations Resolutions on Syria: Exploration of Motivation from Russia and China', 2013.
- 'Ending War In Iraq - Bring Home Troops', *Washington Post*,
- Escriba-Folch Abel, 'Repression, Political Threats And Survival Under Autocracy', *International Political Science Review* pp. 543-560
- Eugene Rumer, 'The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action,' *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, <<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/06/05/primakov-not-gerasimov-doctrine-in-action-pub-79254>>.

- Faiza Rais. 'Syria Under Bashar Al Assad: A Profile of Power', *Strategic Studies*, Autumn 2004, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Autumn 2004), pp. 144-168
- Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, *The Near East and Africa*, Volume V - Office of the Historian.
- 'Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Near East: Jordan-Yemen, Volume XIII - Office of the Historian,' accessed February 13, 2023, <<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v13/d383>>.
- 'Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Lebanon and Jordan', Volume XI - Office of the Historian,' accessed February 15, 2023, <<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v11/d20>>.
- Fred Kaplan, 'The Doctrine Gap', *Slate*, July 6, 2005.
- 'From Bad to Worse? How Protest Can Foster Armed Conflict in Autocracies,' *Political Geography* 103, May 1 2023: 102891.
- 'From the 'Mirrors' Issue: Hilal Badr's 'Ash-Sha'b Yurid Isqat an-Nizam,' ARABLIT & ARABLIT QUARTERLY, April 11, 2022, <<https://arablit.org/2022/04/11/from-the-mirrors-issue-hilal-badrs-ash-shab-yurid-isqat-an-nizam/>>.
- Garfinkle, Frederic C. Hof, et al. 'Russian Motives In Syria And The Implications For Us Policy.' *The Kremlin's Actions In Syria: Origins, Timing, And Prospects*. Atlantic Council, 2016.
- General Martin E. Dempsey, 'Gen. Dempsey Remarks at the Aspen Security Forum 2014'
- Gerald Steinberg, 'U.S. Responses to Proliferation of WMD in the Middle East', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2 No. 3/September 1998
- Glenn Kessler, 'Hillary Clinton's Uncredible Statement on Syria,' *Washington Post*, April 4, 2011, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/hillary-clintons-uncredible-statement-on-syria/2011/04/01/AFWPEYAC\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/hillary-clintons-uncredible-statement-on-syria/2011/04/01/AFWPEYAC_blog.html)>.
- Gresh and Keskin, *US foreign policy in the Middle East: From American missionaries to the Islamic State*, Routledge Studies, 1.
- 'Guide to the Syrian Opposition,' *BBC News*, November 19, 2011, Middle East, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15798218>>
- Guillermo Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies: Religion, Repression, and Indigenous Collective Action in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Hafez Ghanem , 'Roots of the Arab Spring', in *The Arab Spring Five Years Later* (Brookings Institution Press), 39-45.
- Hamilton D. S. and Tiilikainen T., 'Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States', *Introduction 'Domestic Drivers of Foreign Policy in the European Union and the United States'* pp. XII
- Hans Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy: A Critical Examination* (London: Methuen and Co., 1952).

- Hassan Abbas, 'The Dynamics of the Uprising in Syria,' Arab Reform Initiative, Arab Reform Brief No.51, October 2011.
- Hilal Khashan, 'An Uprising Waiting To Happen', *World Affairs: The Journal Of International Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (April-June) 2016), pp. 108-123.
- 'How Sectarianism Can Help Explain the Syrian War — Syria Deeply,' accessed May 14, 2023, <<https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/syria/articles/2018/03/06/how-sectarianism-can-help-explain-the-syrian-war>>.
- Indrani Talukdar, 'Russia's Strategic Interest in Syria,' Indian Council Of World Affairs (2016).
- 'Iran and Syria: Alliance of Shared Enemies and Goals,' BBC News, June 8, 2012, Middle East, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18369380>>.
- 'Iran Calls on Assad to Enter Talks with Opposition,' (Reuters, September 9, 2011), <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-syria-ahmadinejad-idUKTRE7884I420110909>>.
- Isabel Coles and Ned Parker, 'How Saddam's Fighters Help Islamic State Rule,' Reuters, December 11, 2015, <<http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/mideast-crisis-iraq-islamicstate/>>.
- Itamar Rabinovich, 'Israel's View of the Syrian Crisis', *The Saban Centre for Middle East Policy*, November 2012.
- John C. Campbell, 'The Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East,' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 126–35.
- John Galvani. 'Syria and the Baath Party' *Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc.*
- John H. Maurer, 'Introduction: The strategic background to military interventions'. In *Military Intervention in the Third world*, Praeger Publishers. 2.
- John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).
- John J. Mearsheimer , 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin'.
- Jonathan Masters, 'U.S. Foreign Policy Powers: Congress and the President', Council on Foreign Relations, <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/us-foreign-policy-powers-congress-and-president>>.
- Jordain Carney, 'Senators Try to Rein in Obama on Syria,' The Hill November 6, 2015, <<https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/259393-senators-try-to-rein-in-obama-on-syria/>>.
- Joshua Geltzer, deputy homeland security advisor, in interview with David Sterman, September 5, 2019
- Julian Borger, Ian Black, and Kareem Shaheen, 'Russia Will Pay Price for Syrian Airstrikes, Says US Defense Secretary,' The Guardian, October 8, 2015.
- Kamal Salih, 'The Roots and Causes of the 2011 Arab Uprisings', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, (Vol. 35, No. 2) pp.184-206

- \_\_Kerry Says Russia Proposes Military Talks on Syria,‘ Reuters, World News, September 16, 2015.
- \_\_Kerry Says Russia 'Knows What It Needs To Do To Reach Truce In Syria‘, October 04, 2016.
- Kewin Brown, \_\_The Syrian Crisis of 1957 A Lesson for the 21st Century,‘  
<[https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives\\_Paper42013\\_Syria.pdf](https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/legacy/publications/perspectives/CPDPerspectives_Paper42013_Syria.pdf)>.
- Kevin N. Lewis, \_\_Responding to Soviet Intervention in the Third world: A new approach to U.S. Defense Planning‘. In *Military Intervention in the third world* edited by John H. Maurer, and Richard H. Porth. 147-148.
- Lahcen Achy, \_\_The Breakdown of the Arab Authoritarian Bargain‘, Carnegie Middle East Centre, 9 January 2012.
- \_\_Leon Panetta Pushes Back on Calls for Military Intervention in Syria‘, US Foreign Policy, The Guardian, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/07/leon-panetta-pushes-back-syria-strike>>
- Leonard Kusnitz, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).
- Leonard Robinson. \_\_Rentierism and Foreign Policy in Syria‘. The Arab Studies Journal, Spring 1996, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1996), p.45
- Malcolm H. Kerr, \_\_Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics,‘ International Journal 28, no. 4 (1973): 690.
- Manpreet Sethi, \_\_US Pursuit of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Check and Checkmate‘, *Strategic Analysis*: September 1999 (Vol. XXIII No. 6)
- Manzoor Afridi, and Ali Jibran. \_\_Russian Response to Syrian Crisis: A Neorealist Perspective.‘ Strategic Studies 38, no. 2 (2018).
- Martin Chulov and Matthew Weaver, \_\_Saudi Arabia Backs Arming Syrian Opposition,‘ The Guardian, February 24, 2012, sec. World news, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/24/saudi-arabia-backs-arming-syrian-opposition>>.
- Matt Winesett, \_\_Pushing Back on Iran, Part 3: The Syrian Civil War,‘ American Enterprise Institute.
- Matthew Wallin, \_\_U.S. Military Bases and Facilities in the Middle East‘, American Security Project, June 2018.
- McClatchy, \_\_U.S. Eases Arms Purchases for Syrian Rebels‘ August 2, 2012, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20120802185316/http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/08/01/159311/us-eases-arms-purchases-for-syrian.html>>.
- McLoughlin, Paul. \_\_Investing in Death: How Iran Funded Assad's War at the Expense of Its Own Citizens.‘ Alaraby, The New Arab, 18 Feb. 2020



- \_\_Merkel: \_\_Syria Talks Must Involve Assad‘ – DW – 09/24/2015,‘ dw.com, <<https://www.dw.com/en/merkel-says-assad-must-have-role-in-syria-talks/a-18736427>>.
- Micah Zenko, \_\_US Military Policy in the Middle East,‘
- Michael W. Selby, \_\_Without Clear Objectives: Operation Earnest Will‘. (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, February 7, 1997).
- \_\_Militarised Approach to Policing Peaceful Protests Increasing Risk of Violence: UN Expert,‘ OHCHR, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/militarised-approach-policing-peaceful-protests-increasing-risk-violence-un>>.
- Miroslav Nincic, *Democracy and Foreign Policy: The Fallacy of Political Realism*, (New York: Columbia University Press 1992).
- Michelle Fox, \_\_We’re in New Chapter of Cold War with Russia: Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta,‘ CNBC, April 17, 2018.
- Mohammed Haddad, \_\_Infographic: History of US Interventions in the Past 70 Years,‘ accessed March 24, 2023, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive>>.
- Mona Yacoubian, \_\_Syria’s Role In Lebanon‘, United States Institute Of Peace, Usipeace Briefing, November 2006.
- Moshe Ma’oz, \_\_Attempts at Creating a Political Community in Modern Syria‘ *Middle East Journal* 26, no. 4 (1972): 389–404.
- Müjge Küçükkeleş, \_\_Arab League’s Syrian Policy,‘ n.d.
- \_\_Muslim Brotherhood Establishes Militia inside Syria,‘ accessed May 20, 2023, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9450587/Muslim-Brotherhood-establishes-militia-inside-Syria.html>>.
- Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, \_\_Intra-State Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era,‘ *International Journal on World Peace* 24, no. 4 (2007): 11–33.
- Natasha Bertrand, \_\_The US Is about to Embark on \_\_a Very Questionable Operation‘ with Russia in Syria,‘ *Business Insider*, <<https://www.businessinsider.com/us-military-coordination-with-russia-in-syria-2016-7>>.
- Nazish Mahmood, \_\_Military Intervention in Post-Hegemonic International System‘ (PhD diss., National Defense University, 2019)
- Neil MacFarquhar, \_\_More Violence in Syria as Forces Scramble to Scrub Signs of Assault on Homs,‘ *The New York Times*, March 6, 2012, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/world/middleeast/united-nations-resolution-on-syria.html>>.
- Neta Crawford, *Blood and Treasure: United States Budgetary Costs and Human Costs of 20 Years of War in Iraq and Syria, 2003-2023*, March 15, 2023
- Nicholas Kosturos, \_\_What Drives Russia’s Unrelenting Position on Syria?‘ *Center for American Progress*, August 13, 2013,

<<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/08/13/12027/whatdrives-russias-unrelenting-position-on-syria>>.

Norman Friedman, *Intervention: Technical and Logistical Constraints' in Military Intervention In the Third World: Threats, Constraints and Options*, (Praeger Special Studies 1984).

Obama Has Officially Adopted Bush's Iraq Doctrine, Time, April 6, 2016, <<https://time.com/4283865/obama-adopted-bushs-iraq-doctrine/>>.

\_\_On the 12th Anniversary of the Popular Uprising' Syrian Network for Human Rights', March 15, 2023, <<https://snhr.org/blog/2023/03/15/on-the-12th-anniversary-of-the-popular-uprising-a-total-of-230224-civilians-documented-as-dead-including-15275-who-died-due-to-torture-154871-arrested-and-or-forcibly-disappeared-and-roughly-14/>>.

Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Patrick Seale, \_\_The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958' Oxford University Press. 1965

Paul Salem, \_\_Syrian-Israeli Peace: A Possible Key to Regional Change' Director, Carnegie Middle East Center, December 2008.

Philip Anderson, \_\_Summer Madness': The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957,' British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 22, no. 1/2 (1995): 21-42.

\_\_President Obama: \_\_The Future of Syria Must Be Determined by Its People, but President Bashar al-Assad Is Standing in Their Way.,' whitehouse.gov, August 18, 2011, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/08/18/President-obama-future-syria-must-be-determined-its-people-President-bashar-al-assad>>.

\_\_President Welcomes Chinese Guest', *SANA*, January 11, 2001.

R. Holsti. *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus*. (International Studies Quarter, 1992).

Radwan Ziadeh, \_\_Power and Policy in Syria: The Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations And Democracy in the Modern Middle East'.

Raymond Hinnebusch, \_\_Syria-Iraq Relations State Construction and Deconstruction And The MENA States System', Middle East Center, 2014

Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Brookings Institution Press 1999).

Robert Freedman, \_\_Russia and the Middle East under Putin'.

Robert Singh, *Barack Obama's post-American foreign policy: The limits of Engagements*, (Bloomsbury 2012), pp.40.

Robert Singh, *Barack Obama's post-American foreign policy* pp.132; \_\_US and European Sanctions on Syria', <[https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict\\_resolution/syria-conflict/us-and-european-sanctions-on-syria-091620](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/us-and-european-sanctions-on-syria-091620)>;

- Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa,' whitehouse.gov, May 19, 2011, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa%20>>;
- Robin Wright, 'The Assad Family: Nemesis of Nine U.S. Presidents,' The New Yorker, April 11, 2017.
- Russian Arms Exporter Says Supplies to Syria Will Go On,' Reuters, February 13, 2013, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-russia-idUSBRE91C0KH20130213>>.
- Sabrine Baiou, 'Jordan's Diplomacy in Syria, Part 1', New Lines Institute, November 10, 2021, <<https://newlinesinstitute.org/syria/jordans-diplomacy-in-syria-part-1/>>.
- Salama Kayli, *Thawra Haqiqiya: Manzur Marksi lil- Thawra al-Suriya/Ture Revolution: A Marxist Perspective of the Syrian Revolution*, Ras al-Khaimah: Dar Nun, 2014.
- Scot Thomson and Andrew Walmorth, 'Domestic Political Constraints on U.S. Military Intervention' in *Military Intervention In the Third World: Threats, Constraints and Options*, ed. John Maurer and Richard Porth (Praeger Special Studies 1984).
- Scott Lasensky and Mona Yacoubian, 'Syria and Political Change II', The United States Institute of Peace. Wednesday, March 1, 2006
- Senator Bernie Sanders, 'Sanders Statement on Syria' Senator Bernie Sanders,' <<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/sanders-statement-on-syria-7/>>.
- Senator Ted Cruz, 'Sen. Cruz Opposes Arming Syrian Rebels, Calls for Securing Syrian Chemical Weapons,' June 20, 2013, <<https://www.cruz.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sen-cruz-opposes-arming-syrian-rebels-calls-for-securing-syrian-chemical-weapons>>.
- Steven Heydemann. 'Tracking the Arab Spring: Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism'. Journal of Democracy, vol. 24, no. 4, Oct. 2013.
- Shams uz Zaman, 'Rise of the Non-State Actors in Middle East: Regional Dimensions' IPRI Journal XV, no. 1 (Winter 2015).
- Sherlock, Ruth, et al. 'Syria's Civil War Started A Decade Ago. Here's Where It Stands.' NPR, 15, Mar. 2021, <<https://www.npr.org/2021/03/15/976352794/syrias-civil-war-started-a-decade-ago-heres-where-it-stands>>.
- Shibley Telhami, 'The Persian Gulf: Understanding the American Oil Strategy,' Brookings (blog), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-persian-gulf-understanding-the-american-oil-strategy/>.
- Simon Rogers, War in Iraq: The Cost in American Lives and Dollars, The Guardian, December 15, 2011, <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/dec/15/war-iraq-costs-us-lives>>.

- Sisman, C, 'Failed proselytizers or modernizers? Protestant missionaries among the Jews and Sabbatians/Donmes in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.51 no.6, 932–949.
- Statement by the President on Iraq, June 13, 2014. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/13/statement-president-iraq>>;
- 'Statement by the President on ISIL,' [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov), September 10, 2014, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-Isil-1>>.
- Sten Rynning, 'Regional Stability And Lesson Learned In Regional Peace Building', National Defence University Islamabad, 2014.
- Stephen Koff, 'Dennis Kucinich Files Lawsuit against President Obama, Says Libya War Violates the Law,' June 15, 2011, <[https://www.cleveland.com/open/2011/06/dennis\\_kucinich\\_files\\_lawsuit.html](https://www.cleveland.com/open/2011/06/dennis_kucinich_files_lawsuit.html)>.
- Stephen Walt, 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,' *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3–43.
- Steven Heydemann and Jihad Yazigi, 'Syrian Uprising 10-Year Anniversary: A Political Economy Perspective,' *Brookings* (blog), March 26, 2021, <<https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/syrian-uprising-10-year-anniversary-a-political-economy-perspective/>>.
- Steven Heydemann, 'Syria and the Future of Authoritarianism,' *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 4 (2013): 59–73.
- 'Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension,' The Washington Institute, accessed June 10, 2023, <<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/syria-and-turkey-pkk-dimension>>.
- 'Syria: EU Response to the Crisis,' April 11, 2023, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>>.
- 'Syria and the United States: Eisenhower's Cold War in the Middle East | Foreign Affairs,' accessed February 14, 2023, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1994-11-01/syria-and-united-states-eisenhowers-cold-war-middle-east>>.
- 'Syria's Axis of Evil Cannot Be Trusted,' *Arab News*, April 15, 2018,
- 'Syria Lifts Emergency Law, Sets New Curbs on Protests', *France 24*, April 19, 2011, <<https://www.france24.com/en/20110419-syria-approves-lifting-emergency-law-bashar-al-assad-demonstrations>>.
- 'Syria Rejects Qatar Call for Arab Military Intervention,' *BBC News*, January 17, 2012, sec. Middle East, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16597015>>.
- Syria under Bashar (1): Foreign Policy Challenges', *ICG Middle East Report No. 23*, February 11, 2004.

- \_Syria's Assad Ends State of Emergency' *Reuters*, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-idUSTRE72N2MC20110421>>.
- \_The History behind the 2004 \_Kurdish Intifada,' North Press Agency (blog), March 12, 2023, <<https://npasyria.com/en/94623/>>.
- \_The 1928 Red Line Agreement', *Bureau of Public Affairs Department of State*. The Office of Electronic Information.
- \_The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect', Council on Foreign Relations.
- \_The Structure and Organization of the Syrian Opposition,' Center for American Progress, May 14, 2013, <<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-structure-and-organization-of-the-syrian-opposition/>>.
- \_Turkey Tells Syria's Assad: Step Down!', *Reuters*, November 22, 2011, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-idUSL5E7MD0GZ20111122>>.
- \_Ukraine Crisis: Joe Biden Warns Russia Faces \_isolation'', *BBC News*,
- Ulfelder Jay, \_Contentious Collective Action And The Breakdown Of Authoritarian Regimes.' *International Political Science Review* Pp. 311-334.
- U.S. Department of Defense, \_Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,' Washington, D.C., January 2012
- \_US, France and Britain Gear up for Cruise Missile Strike on Syria,' *Financial Times*, August 27, 2013, sec. Syrian crisis, <<https://www.ft.com/content/4aba4736-0ef3-11e3-ae66-00144feabdc0>>.
- \_US Sends Troops to Jordan to Help Deal with Syria Crisis,' *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/10/us-troops-jordan-syria-crisis>>.
- Valdimer O. Key, \_Public Opinion and American Democracy'.( New York, 1961).
- \_We've Never Seen Such Horror,' Human Rights Watch, June 1, 2011, <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/06/01/weve-never-seen-such-horror/crimes-against-humanity-syrian-security-forces>>.
- \_What Drives Russia's Unrelenting Position on Syria?' Center for American Progress, August 13, 2012, <<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/what-drives-russias-unrelenting-position-on-syria/>>.
- \_What Is Russia's Endgame in Syria?', *United States Institute of Peace*, <<https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/what-russias-endgame-syria>>.
- \_What Is the Security Council?, *United Nations Security Council*, <<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council>>.
- William Stivers, *Supremacy and oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American world Order, 1918-1930*, Cornell University Press.
- Wintrobe Ronald, \_The Tinpot And The Totalitarian: An Economic Theory Of Dictatorship.' *The American Political Science Review*.

