An Appraisal of Russia and United States of America Involvement in Syrian Civil War, 2011 – 2018

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
  	State sovereignty continues to be more abstract in the face of competing powers for national interests. Since the end of WWII, the proliferation of super powers involvements in the domestic affairs of warring nations have become a quandary as the implications of these intrusions become more conspicuous than ever. The study thus interrogates the involvement of Russia and US in the Syrian civil war. The study employed case study research design to interrogate into the phenomenon of Arab spring and used secondary data such as books, research articles, newspapers and government publications in Nigeria. The data collected was content analyzed while the frustration-aggression theory provided the framework of analysis. The study concludes that the Syrian war is a major problem that has altered the course of history for generations to come. The nation has joined a long list of countries that have been ravaged by civil wars and foreign involvements, and no involving nation (Russia and the United States of America) or party have been held accountable for the death, destruction and misery that has plagued Syria and by extension the international community at large. The study thus recommends withdrawal of foreign militias and stopping external support to armed groups opposed to a peaceful, political solution: The withdrawal of foreign militias and financial support for the regime and rebel forces is also an important aspect that requires the cooperation of Russia and the United States of America. Such move should be negotiated under the auspices of the UN.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab world witnessed an unusual phenomenon in 2011, known as "The Arab Spring". Waves of massive revolutionary upheaval occurred in many Arab capitals and major cities with the public demanding freedom, justice, and equality. These revolutionary waves of demonstrations encouraged people to fight for their rights. The protests which began in Tunisia were ignited by the self immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in late December 2010. However, the success of Tunisia's revolution ignited rapid progression of similar actions in countries such as Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria, as well as smaller scale demonstrations in countries like Jordan and Morocco (Emadi, 2011). Although the demand for change was the consistent goal for the different national publics within the Arab Spring, the outcome has been different in each country. In Tunisia the massive demonstration achieved its goal successfully by ending the rule of Zine El Abidine Bin Ali. Bin Ali had been the president of Tunisia since 1987 when he came to power by military coup against the former president Habib Bourguiba. On 14th January 2011, after approximately twenty-nine years in power, the Arab uprising overthrew Bin Ali and forced him to flee the country. The protests which began in December 18th 2010 lasted for about 3weeks and 6 days (Heydemann 2013).

The success of Tunisia's protests inspired demonstrations in Egypt and gradually removed the barrier of fear. Egyptians took to the streets in the capital, Cairo, as well as in other major cities such as Alexandria, to demand the removal of President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak and the need for a new government. The regime of Mohammad Hosni Mubarak had ruled since 1981, after the assassination of former president Mohammed Anwar El Sadat. Mubarak was the fourth president of Egypt and he ruled Egypt for about thirty years. The outcome of the Arab spring in Egypt manifested on 11th February 2011 which forced the president to resign and hand over power to the supreme council of the Armed Forces. The protests had lasted for 2weeks, 3days. This became a chain reactions, encouraging other Arab countries to follow suit. On 27th of January 2011 the people of Yemen took to the streets and ordered for the same demands: freedom, justice, and equality. The regime of Yemen under Ali Abdullah Saleh responded more aggressively than the regimes of Tunisia and Egypt. Confrontations between the forces of the regime and the demonstrators occurred in the capital city of Sinai; leading to an unexpected division within the military. The peaceful revolution had turned into an unexpected armed tension within the military institution itself. A section was still loyal to president Saleh while the other section of the military decided to stand in favor of public rights. Saleh was attacked and barely survived. He finally agreed to turn over power to his vice president on the 27th of February 2012, ending his thirty-three years rule of the Yemen Arab Republic. The protest lasted for one year and one month (Emadi 2011; Heydemann 2013).

The Arab Spring continued to spread to Libya, first appearing in the country's Eastern region in the city of Benghazi. The same demands were chanted there as they had been during the rest of the Arab uprising. The president of Libya, Muammar Al-Gaddafi, was considered one of the oldest, if

not actually the oldest, dictators in the world, coming to power after a military coup against the Libyan monarchy in 1969. Because of the actions of Gaddafi to maintain power, the demonstrations of the Libyan people quickly turned into a bloody civil war, costing tens of thousands of Libyan lives. With the involvement of NATO, the revolutionary forces gained the control and Gaddafi was killed by a group of rebels in August 2011 after forty-two years of holding power. The protests which began on February 15th 2011 to 23rd October 2011 lasted for 8months, one week and 1 day (Heydemann 2013).

The people of Syria were inspired by the successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt to begin their own protests. By March 2011, the Arab Spring swept the streets of Syrian cities with people amassing in numbers to inspire political change. The masses of protestors against Bashar Al-Assad's regime started to make their voices heard in the Syrian capital of Damascus and other major cities. The demands of the people were the same as elsewhere: freedom, justice, and equality. Initially, demonstrators were small and demanded reforms rather than resignation from the president but the Pro democracy protest was escalated in Deraa where teenagers were arrested for painting revolutionary slogan on the school war and security forces brutally mal-handled them. This was the start of an uprising in Syria that rapidly spread across the country. Syrian president Bashar al Assad tried to end the demonstrations by using extreme aggression against protestors which only agitated the protestors even more. The cruelty of the Assad regime against his own people further radicalized them to demand resignation of President Bashar al- Assad in July 2011. (Emadi 2011; Heydemann 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Since the early 1990s, the meaning and scope of the United Nations non intervention principles have constantly been breached by the emanation of various norms and practices designed to protect civilian rights and counter terrorism. State sovereignty continue to be more abstract in the face of competing powers for national interests. Since the end of WWII, the proliferation of super powers involvements in the domestic affairs of warring nations have become a quandary as the implications of these intrusions become more conspicuous than ever. Out of about 100 civil wars fought between 1944 - 1999, roughly two third (2/3) of these civil wars have seen the involvements of foreign countries or international organizations (Regan 2000). More prominent is the countless situations in which veto powers have taken the lead and continue to maneuver their way into the affairs of other well established and recognized states. According to Regan, the United States of America alone have being involved in almost half of these civil wars (Regan 2002). Although the United Nations charter prohibits the interference of foreign actors in domestic state affairs, veto powers like the United State of America and Russia continues to do so at the detriment of the warring states even though the same interference is considered illegal in their respective countries.

There are many controversies about superpowers involvement in civil wars especially with respect to its role in contributing to the betterment of the

warring state. According to Regan, even though there has been about 30% success rate of the total number of foreign involvement in civil wars, unsolicited involvement in state domestic affairs usually protracts the duration of such war which in turn increases the loss of lives and properties, refuge crisis emanating from the displacement of individuals from their homes etc (Regan 2002). It also cripples the state structure, deflates the economy of the warring state, incur debt, increase crime rates and in most cases, such countries take years to regain stability while others may never recover.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Latin term bellum civile was first used of the ancient Roman civil wars that began in late second century BC. The term civilis specifically pertains to citizen, public or civil. The English term 'civil war' was first used in 1651 to refer to the English war. Since the 17th century, 'civil war' has also been used retroactively to historical conflicts where at least one fraction claims to represent the country's civil society rather than the government or imperial power (Armitage, 2017). However, literature on civil wars seems to be enormous but not very much has been written as it relates to the war in Syria. With this in mind, we continue what was started in the previous chapter by looking more closely at what scholars have done in the area of this study's subject matter. The aim of this chapter is to focus on identifying relevant contributions already made on Syria civil war and those closely related to it. This will then offer the researcher the opportunity to identify gaps in existing literature. Therefore, taking cognizance of our research objectives and research questions, this study's literature review will be thematically organized under the following headings:

1. Causes of Syria civil war
2. Russia's involvement in Syria civil war
3. United States involvement in Syria civil war

Causes of Syria Civil War

The causes of the Syrian civil war are as complex as the players in it. The much publicized key issue has been a demand for regime change and an end to structural violence and inequality within Syria. A lot has been written about the war in Syria, and most of it seems to be focused on explaining the war's outbreak and the magnitude of its impact. Yet there is much literature that tells us important things about events leading to the war and why the war has been particularly long and violent. In summary, several factors have contributed immensely to the present civil war in Syria and these factors are identified as: political repression, bad economy, marginalization, climate change, social media, corruption, state violence, minority rule, etc.

Russia's involvement in Syrian Civil War

Russia's involvement in Syria war especially in the context of its military expansion in Syria came as a result of strenuous attempts to modernize and maximize its military capabilities (Alsaadi, 2017). In 2008, Russia's then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin lunched a massive military reform in order to

strengthen Russia's military capabilities. The program's primary objective was to replace 70% of Soviet-Era military hardware by the year 2020(Standish 2015). Prior to its military involvement in Syria, Russia had amended its naval military doctrine, prioritizing confronting NATO's expansion, and establishing it permanent fleet in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean (Bodner, 2015).

Starting from the revolutionary year of 2011 thereafter, Russia defines the movement of the Assad's resistance as to be inspired by 'a worldwide conspiracy theory' led by the United States of America, supporting movements to gain control over Syria. Russia has regardless maintained that the United States of America should not exert an influence on the Syrian opposition forces, and views its attempts at removing an incumbent government as deeply concerning (Gordon &Schmitt, 2015). Upon this regards, Russian televisions continues to view and support the Assad administration as lawful and just. This event is to be in consistent with the news given by the Assad's government that instigates the people to come together and fight against the "external threat" (Shumilin, 2016). Whether one thinks that Russia is rescuing Assad or fighting ISIS, first of all, Syria is considered Russia's ally in the Middle East and President Assad asked Moscow for help, and Russia has stood by its ally in very difficult circumstances during the cold war (Pakhomov, 2015). Accordingly, Alexander Fomin, chief staff of the federal service for military-technical co-operation of Russia, stated that; 'Syria is our friend, and we fulfil all our obligations to our friends'(Elder, 2012). Apart from preserving the long friendship tie between Russia and Syria, the need to stop the growing Sunni terrorism in the world and curbing America's agenda of regime changes especially in countries friendly with Russia was uppermost to Russia, (Dmitri 2017). Based on the foregoing, Russia's involvement in Syria civil war is seen to have so significantly manifested in two ways; Russia's Military support for the Assad government and Russia's diplomatic support in the United Nations Security Council.

Russia's Diplomatic Support within the United Nations Security Council

In the beginning of the conflicts which later led to the Syria civil war in 2011, Russia assumed the role of diplomatic shield for the Assad regime within the United Nations Security Council framework, which was to stand against the UN direct interference into Syria (Allison 2013). This source explains that Russia has helped the Assad regime oppose pro-western powers in Syria, and those trying to aid in the crises as well. Allison asserts that the Assad and Putin regimes have a shared outlook on 'territorial sovereignty and rejection of the normative basis of the human–focused agenda of many western states' (Allison, 2013). Russia has also had reason to prevent the United States of America intended actions within Syria, as they are uncomfortable with the precedent such action sets. Russia usually rely upon the comparison with Libya, stating that by issuing the UNSC Resolution, it then justified NATO's actions which eventually led to the fight against the Gaddafi government, resulting in the devastating state of Libya ever since (Solberg, 2015). Thus, Russia's uneasiness

with allowing a United Nations Security Council-approved removal of an allied sitting government, coupled with their resistance to allow American influence in their own backyard curb the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), has resulted in their extreme unwillingness to allow for United Nations intervention in Syria (Solberg 2015).

However, the role of Russia within the UNSC has been running under great diplomatic skills and not presenting itself as overtly supporting the Assad's government. This is true with the case of its role upon reconstructing facts towards the phenomenon by showing off its condemnation against the violence and asking all relevant parties to cease any form of violence so as to enter a creative dialogue that seeks to peacefully resolve the conflicts. Yet, Russia also stands its ground not to oppose against the issuing of the UNSC Resolution as long as the resolutions would stay within the content not exceeding to any sanction or other forms of pressure (Mckirdy 2017). Russia with the backing of China has also provided Syria with diplomatic cover by vetoing UN Security Council sanctions. Russia has been using its veto power against the drafted UNSC Resolution amounting to the total number of 8 times as concluded in the table listed below. This has led to a pause and a slowdown within the UNSC.

Table 1. The use of Veto power by Russia against the drafted UNSC Resolution regarding Syria during 2011-2017

Date	Veto Nation	Issues Presented in The Draft
14 Oct 2011	Russia ,China	Showing of grave concern over the situation in Syria and stressing that the only solution is to bring about a political measure led by Syrian under the ultimate goal of achieving an effective insurance of justifiable forces by the Syrian people.
24 Feb 2012	Russia, China	UN draft Expressing 'grave concern' over the downfall in Syria and even greater concern over the loss of thousands of lives, including a call for a swift end of all violence.
19 Jul 2012	Russia, China	UN draft "Condemning" state authority upon its use of heavy weapon and the violence of all sorts of weapon including the armed anti-forces, whilst also 'condemning' the violation of human rights that has been continuously expanded on parts of both sides.
22 May 2014	Russia, China	UN draft Insisting that the violence initiators including the crimes against humanity must be accountable to their actions, as well as condemning the violation of human rights that has been continuously extended by both perpetrators

8 Oct 2016	Russia	After the Assad's army attacked the resistant's stronghold in the town of Aleppo, the drafted UNSC resolution was proposed to be registered against the outrage abolition, in which its loss proved to be colossal as a result of the elevation of violence and air strikes upon Aleppo. Upon such regards, only Russia had vetoed to the matter, whereas China exempted its vote.
5 Dec 2016	Russia, China	The humanitarian crisis within the town of Aleppo tends to get worse; the draft purports to call all relevant parties within the conflicts to cease fire for duration of 7 days so as to allow sending in necessary humanitarian supports.
28 Feb2017	Russia, China	Although the UNSC was able to pass the agreement asking to run an investigation and a destruction of chemical weapons owned by Syria in September 2013, Russia and China later vetoed the February 2017 drafted resolutions which calls for an immediate sanction against all relevant parties.
12 Apr 2017	Russia	After the chemical strike that hit Idlib, the UNSC came up with a drafted resolution that calls for an international investigation so as to find the perpetrators, upon this incident, only Russia had vetoed, whilst China had opted out from the voting.

Source: McKirdy (2017)

The roles of Russia within the UNSC framework reflect one of the underlining factors for the protraction of the war in Syrian. The patterns used by both Russia and the USA signify that the veto power is a significant method used by powerful nations to balance the status quo (Ekwonna, 2014).

United States of America's Involvement in Syria Civil War

The United States of America embraced the idea of a political transformation and supported the yearnings of the revolutionary forces seeking true democracy, freedom, and better living standards in Syria. Although Syria is not an exception, the United States of America's involvement in the war is by far a more complicated matter. This is as a result of the deteriorated relations between Washington and Damascus in the past years, given Syria's foreign policy towards Iran, its support for Hezbollah and its alleged possession of chemical weapons (Anthony, 2008). In addition to this is the worsening situation in Iraq grounded by the United States of America military's withdrawal from Iraq and the threatening 'rapprochement' concerning Iraq-Iranian which were to be perceived as a political blow to United States of America's strategic position on the Middle East region. Iran's regional power was based on the Iraq and Assad's Alawi regime in Syria, backed by its clienteles Hama in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Therefore, the need to

decrease and limit the Iranian influence and its hegemonic claims in the region and avoiding the spillover effects of the Syrian war that might lead to a dramatic destabilization of the whole region is amongst America's numerous interests in removing Assad from power (Sterner, 2014). In May 2011, the United States of America ordered sanctions against the Syrian government for human rights violations, but Assad continued to attack the protesters. As early as July 2011, USA has demanded that Assad be replaced and has persistently maintained, despite doubts by some political analysts, that legitimate peace talks must list the removal of Assad as a prerequisite for the intended transitional government. In order to substantiate these demands, the United States of America has supported the Syrian opposition through a number of primarily fiscal services, Intricate systems designed to funnel aid to moderate rebel organizations have been employed throughout the United States' Gulf States allies, especially Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and to a lesser extent Jordan and Qatar (Hunter 2015).

Political Realism (Power Model) Theory

The theory of political realism has a long history being evident in Thucydides' Peloponnesian war. It was influenced on by Reinhold Niebuhr, Machiavelli in The Prince, and others such as Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza and Jean-jacques Rousseau but it is often associated with Hans Joachim Morgenthau (1904–1980) in his major books Scientific Man Vs Power Politics and Politics among Nations. He developed political realism into a comprehensive international relations theory. The theory places selfishness and power-lust at the center of international politics. The insatiable human lust for power, timeless and universal, which is identified with Animus Dominandi, 'the desire to dominate', is the main cause of conflict. Morgenthau (1948) asserts that "international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power".

The theory of political realism is an off-shoot of the classical theory of international relations. The theory takes as its assumption that power is the primary end of any political action. Power defined as interest is the central concept that makes politics an autonomous discipline. Political realism in essence reduces to the political- ethical principle that 'might is right' and interest are to be maintained through the exercise of power and that the world is characterized by competing power bases. Morgenthau regards political realism as a way of thinking about international relations and a useful tool for devising policies. International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power because of the basic human lust for power. He reinforces the belief in the human drive for power by introducing a normative aspect of his theory, which is rationality. A rational foreign policy is considered "to be a good foreign policy". But he defines rationality as a process of calculating the costs and benefits of all alternative policies in order to determine their relative utility, i.e. their ability to maximize power. Statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power. Morgenthau emphasizes the pursuit of power and the rationality of this pursuit, and sets it up as a norm. To the realists, interstates relations are often explained in context of power. Accordingly, Eze buttress that

the realist believes that once you have power, every other thing shall be added unto you (Eze 2017). Kissinger inter alia asserts that power dictates how states interact with one another and because power relations are central to a realist understanding of the international arena, states are often skeptical to trust one another. As such, rather than trust, states choose their alliances based on one another's strategic value in the so-called 'self-interest'. This "self interest" (national interest) usually create a necessary condition for international conflict as it increases the chances for different states interests to run at cross-purposes. To be a classic realist is in general to perceive politics as a conflict of interest and a struggle for power, and to seek peace by recognizing common interests and trying to satisfy them, rather than by moralizing (Kissinger1975). The actions and inactions of Russia and United States of America in the Syria war can otherwise be seen as their respective state's foreign policy. In the political realist view, foreign policy is the struggle for power and security, a struggle in which the exertion of force or the threat thereof, is the primary means of achieving the said power and security. Even though foreign policy is not the focus of this study, political realism (power model) as a theory of international relations can aptly provide explanations for Russia and United States of America involvement in Syria. This is because, International politics carries a lot of weight when it comes to the war in Syria, considering Syria's strategic geographical location (being at the center of oil producing giants), and what a successful hegemony in Syria will do to the status of the hegemonic. In his book 'Revolution and War', Stephen M. Waltz (1996) posit that 'revolution tend to open up opportunities for states to either improve their relative positions, curb the positions of other states or both'. All of these encompass the basic tenets of political realism (power model) theory which are needed to extensively appraise Russia and United States of America involvements in the protracted Syria war.

Hypotheses

Taking into cognizance the objectives and research questions earlier raised in the previous chapter, this study is grounded on the following qualitative hypotheses:

a. The relationship between the Arab spring and the Syria civil war emanates from internal problems such as accumulated political grievances (rising unemployment, extreme poverty, restriction of democracy, human rights violations, wide spread corruption, rising food prices) as well as political alienation of people outside large cities.

b. The reasons for Russia and United States of America involvement in Syria civil war were ignited by the desire to secure their respective national interests.

c. The protraction of the war, continuing destruction of lives and properties, escalating internal and external refugee crisis as well as increasing Syria war related international terrorism were the effect of Russia and United States of America involvement in Syria war.

Syria is the geo-political entity of this study. Syria, officially known as the Syrian Arab Republic, is a country in Western Asia, bordering Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest.

Table 2. Syria Country Data

Geography	Size: 185,180 sq km
General Demographics	Population: 19.5 million (July 2018 est.) Religions: Muslim 87% (Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%), Christian 10%, Druze 3% Ethnic Groups: Arab 90.3%, Kurdish, Armenian, and other 9.7%
Indicators of Humanitarian Need	People in need of humanitarian assistance: 13 million Internally displaced persons: 5.7 million Syrian refugees: 5.6 million Unemployment rate: 50% (2017 est.) Population living in extreme poverty: 69% (2018 est., UNOCHA)

Figure 1. Syria Map
Sources: CRS using data from U.S. State Department; Esri; CIA, The World Factbook; and the United Nations.

Syria has one of the most ancient civilizations on earth, dating back to 2500 BC. For centuries, Syria was invaded and afterwards controlled by

different fractions, including the Ottoman Empire, the Roman Empire and Egypt. After WW1, the Ottoman Empire 400 years rule in Syria came to an end and then the French took over control of Syria (1920-1946) until it finally gained independence in 1946 (Alan 2003). Following her independence in 1946, Syria suffered years of political instability leading to series of military coup and counter coup d'états. In 1958, Syria Aligned with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (UAR) which was headed by the then Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Egyptian president was able to dissolve all Syrian political parties including the historic Ba'ath party but this was however short lived when the two countries separated as a result of the 1961 coup in Damascus that led to the secession of Syria and the establishment of the Syria Arab republic. This invariably paved way for a new phase of political instabilities and changes in Syria. From 1963, Syria began living under 'Emergency Law' as a result of an ongoing conflict with Israel. This led to the Arab-Israeli war that saw the transfer of Golan height to Israel in 1967(Geneva international center for justice, 2017). These political instabilities brought about series of political movements seeking for political reforms in Syria. An example of such movements was the 'Corrective Movement' also referred to as the 'Corrective Revolution' initiated by a coup d'état, led by General Hafez al-Assad on 13 November 1970. This movement was aimed at sustaining and improving the 'Nationalist Socialist line' of the state and the Ba'ath party (GICJ, 2017). In March 1971, Hafez al-Assad, an Alawite declared him-self president and soon established an iron fist regime built around the lines of sectarian rule. He strengthened the ties between the military and the government and also gave primacy to the Alawites. The regime of Hafez al-Assad did not however go well with the opposition especially with the January, 1973 implementation of a new constitution that did not require the president of Syria to be a Muslim unlike other constitutions, prompting a fierce demonstration organized by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ulama. (Alan 2003) After the passing of Hafez al-Assad in 2000, the constitution was amended in favour of the late president's son, Bashar al-Assad, allowing the minimum age of the president from 40 to 34 which automatically qualified him to run for president. On July 10, with about 97% of the vote Bashar al-Assad was elected the next president of the Syria Arab republic (Ayse, 2014). Afterwards, Syria had rough experiences during its intervention on behalf of the Palestinians liberation organization (PLO) in Jordan and was also demonized for opposing United States of America's invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, Syria's state of emergency law continued for about fifty (50) years during which most of the constitutional rights of the citizens were refuted and was only lifted in 2011 by president Bashar al-Assad. Also, in 2012, Syria had its first multi party election to the people's council of Syria (GICJ, 2017). Consequently, Syria is run by Alawites, a minority sect of Islam whose members include President Bashar al-Assad and other top ranking Shi'a Muslims. It should be noted that orthodox Sunnis consider Alawites, like other Shi'a Muslims, to be heretics because of their recognition of Ali, the prophet's nephew, as his successor. It is therefore safe to say that in a Sunni dominated Syria, the Alawites and similar communities may not be accorded

the full rights they are entitled to as Syrians (Ayse 2014). This is extremely relevant due to more extremist rebels being funded by Sunni nations like Saudi Arabia. The Alawites are therefore understandably for the regime, forming its last line of defense in the coastal areas around Damascus as Sunnis Join the rebels and Kurds attempt to secede from the Republic (Ayse, 2014).

METHODS

This study relied on secondary source of data collection whereby documentary instrument for data generation was utilized. Based on this choice of data collection, information for this study was generated from reports, memos, textbooks, internet, academic journals, articles, official news releases, media scripts such as television, newspapers etc.

Data Analysis

The study also adopted the content analysis. The use of content analysis as the method of analyzing this study became imperative because of the qualitative nature of our documentary oriented data.

Causes of the Syria Civil War

There is a pathway that embodies a comprehensive understanding of the context that fueled the war in Syria. This pathway can be categorized into two factors: the internal and external factors. The prevalence of both internal and external factors such as accumulated political grievances arising from all facets of marginalization and the Arab spring spillover effects are the two main conditions that influence the entire pathway of the Syria war. Both factors will be subdivided into themes for further clarification.

Internal Factors that Led to the War in Syria

The progression from peaceful protests to a full blown sectarian war that is spilling over Syria's boarders requires an analysis of the socio-economic and political conditions inside Syria prior to the initiation of the civil unrest. There is compelling evidence that the cause of the Syrian civil war underscores all facets of marginalization from the Assad government and the domination of the Bath party at large. Its origins lay primarily in the ruling policies and practices of the Syrian regime, which have left a legacy of marginalization, grievances and extreme violence manifested through: Sunni and Shia's sectarianism, Stateless Kurds, Alawites predominance, Assad's Neo-liberalism policies , State weakness, The presence of Manipulative leaders and corruption, ultimately making sectarianism the prominent product of its political behavior (Ayub, 2013). Marginalization has been viewed by many scholars as a huge internal factor causing the war in Syria. Marginalization can be political and economic in nature. Political marginalization can mean disenfranchisement, loss of political rights, lack of access to state institutions, no protection of minority rights, and the capture of the state by a rival ethnic group . On the other hand, economic marginalization is the most salient under conditions of corruption and injustice (Ayub, 2013). Under these conditions, one group has privileged access to the best jobs and opportunities in an economy which leads individuals

and groups to predict a future of greater marginalization. For instance, despite Syria's abundant resources, its revenue allocation is known to be marginally distributed. This breeds corruption and ultimately poverty which go hand in hand to aggravate the conditions necessary for the initiation of civil war. Under these circumstances, it is not unusual for economic gains to go primarily to one ethnic group, especially if that group has played a key role in the existence and survival of the ruling elites. These conditions exacerbated social inequalities and plunged a significant portion of the Syrian population into grinding discontent, which essentially increased negative sectarian sentiment by creating a feeling of communal injury Hence, the lines dividing rebels from loyalists follow a thread that links sectarian and ethnic affiliation. (Koubi&Bohmelt, 2013).

Once the regime was seriously challenged, it served as a tool for mobilization for both sides and as a fuel for violent conflict. Divisions sprung up within sectarian groups that had been affected differently by social change, setting the deprived against profiteers pitting impoverished rural masses and migrants, disenfranchised urban-middle and lower-middle class against an abusive authoritarian regime and its clientele of parasitic enforcers. Analysis of these factors illuminates the conditions under which relative deprivation theory plays a key role in the understanding of the causes of the war in Syria.

Sunnis and Shiaschism

One of the most important social factors causing the war in Syria is the country's diverse population. The majority of Syria's population is Sunni Muslim. There are also numerous ethnic minorities that include Shias (Alawite), Kurds, Druze, Christians, Turkomen, and Ismailis. However, the state is ruled by the minority Alawite sect under the Assad regime.

Sunnis and Shia are the two major denominations of Islam. Sunnis make up approximately 85% of the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world. Shias make up the remaining 15%. Syria borders Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Iraq and as a result, all of the larger religious groups have ethnic allies in bordering states. Shias are a majority in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain and have a plurality in Lebanon while Sunnis are the majority in more than 40 states (Council on Foreign Relations, 2014). The root of the split between the two sects is over the rightful leadership of Islam. The Shias believe that the cousin of Mohammed, Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants are part of a divine genealogy and should lead the Islamic community while Sunnis reject succession based on Mohammed's bloodline and instead favor electing a caliph. There has been a long history of Sunnis persecuting the Shia minority, which has resulted in many scholars asserting that the contemporary sectarian conflict is a result of 'Ancient Rivalry.' As a result, communities remember past grievances and conflicts, and ultimately attack traditional enemies due to old resentments (Gonzalez, 2009). However, most scholars view the 'Ancient Rivalry' argument as too simplistic, and instead focus on political and economic factors to explain sectarian the Syria civil war. For example, when a single sect controls the state that sect generally has almost exclusive access to the state's

resources, further economically marginalizing the rival sect. These situations are exemplified by Iraq under Saddam's rule and now Syria under Bashar Al-assad's rule, where the Alawite minority: an offshoot of Shia controls the government. Negative sectarian sentiments are not created on the spot, instead they exist dormant and are informed by the histories, stories, and conflicting ideologies of the two sects, until sectarian identity becomes politically relevant (Kfir, 2014).

Syrian Kurds

In Syria, the Kurds are the largest ethnic minority who today make up an estimated 10% of the total population, approximately two (2) million people (Shoup, 2018) while there are smaller communities of Kurds in several cities, particularly Aleppo and Damascus, the majority of them reside in the North of Syria near the border with Turkey. Under the French mandate rule of Syria, There were no substantial indications of tensions between the Kurds and the non-Kurds. The Kurds were present in many areas of political life. They were seen to be treated equally and were often recruited by the French to influential positions (Shoup, 2018). However, in 1944 after Syria was recognized as a Republic, independent from France, there began a gradual move away from the relative harmony that had previously been present between the different ethnic communities. This was largely due to a new pan-Arab ideology that was sweeping across the whole region, as well as the lasting anger at the perceived preferential treatment of minorities under the previous colonial power.

This first assertion of Syria as an Arab state in its 1973 constitution marks the starting-point of tensions between the Syrian state and the Kurdish community. The Kurds were suddenly regarded as an obstacle in the 'Arabization' of the region (Zahra, 2013). Syria's character is stated to be Arab, Democratic and a Republic, in line with pan-Arab ideology. It goes on to present the country as a region of the wider Arab. For instance, Article 143 states that "the Law secures the organization of the Syrian Arab nationality and guarantees special facilities for the expatriate Syrians and their children and for the citizens of the Arab countries."Since then the Kurdish community has been plagued by discrimination and persecution from both State policy and practice. For decades, they were not allowed to use their language officially, celebrate their festivities, wear their traditional clothes and there was often a refusal to register children with Kurdish names. Policies by the Syrian government were clearly aimed at suppressing the ethnic identity of this community (Zahra, 2013).

Alongside direct discrimination in many areas of their lives, a significant proportion of Syria's Kurds have suffered for decades under a tailored policy implemented in the 1960s that formalized their marginalization and rendered them stateless. In 1962,the Syrian government ordered that a census be carried out solely in the al-Hasakah province, a region inhabited predominantly by Kurds. This decision was taken during the transitional period between the fall of the UAR and the coming into power of the Baath regime. The decision, Decree No. 93,is believed to have been adopted by an unstable and

dysfunctional government that resigned very soon thereafter, yet the impact of the census was lasting (KurdWatch, 2010). Consequently, some 120,000 Kurds lost their Syrian citizenship approximately 20% of the whole Kurdish community. The size of the stateless Kurdish population has since grown significantly with time. Moreover, some of the flaws in Syrian nationality legislation, particularly the inability of Syrian women to pass their nationality to their children, have also contributed to the increase in the number of Syria Kurds non-citizenship individuals. There are no official statistics of how many each group consists of due to the controversial nature of this topic in Syria. Also, in May 2010, the Syrian regime stripped 287 Kurds from al-Hassaka Province of their Syrian citizenship, who were at the time residing outside Syria. They were prohibited from receiving any identification papers or other documents due to accusations of 'crimes against the state (Kurdwatch,2010).

Since then, the Kurds have been agitating for state autonomy which has often led to detention and the death of many activists. However, the 2011 Arab spring awakened the hopes of the Syrian Kurds to change history. Hence, following series of large scale popular uprising that swept across the country with groups taking to the streets demanding fundamental freedoms, the Assad regime, fearing that a significant proportion of the protestors would come from the Kurdish population due to the discrimination they had faced under the regime for decades, in an attempt at appeasement, the government finally adopted decree 49 that could significantly change the discourse of this situation. This Presidential Decree was passed stating that the authorities will grant "Syrian Arab nationality" to people registered as "foreigners" in the province of al-Hasaka (Zahra, 2013). But it was a stitch made too late because of the current volatile situation that had created millions of refugees and internally displaced persons and has left many areas outside of the rule of law.

State Violence and the Alawite Predominance in Syria

Syria is commonly described as having a "minority regime", that is, a society where the minority Alawite (an offshoot of Shia Islam) sect which constitutes about 10% of the population rules over the Sunni Arab majority that accounts for approximately two-thirds of the Syrian population. However, it can be argued that the regime exploited kinship and tribal solidarity to revamp and maintain the loyalty of the Alawite sect which also contributed in exacerbating Syria's socio-economic situation prior to 2011 uprising.

The rise of Syria's Alawites, from a marginalized rural community to one that found advancement through institutions especially the armed forces has been extensively documented and analyzed (John, 2013). One typical interpretation of the Alawite trajectory is that "Bashar al Assad and his late father's regimes exploited state resources in order to reinforce Alawites solidarity, ensuring that public sector employment was concentrated in the hands of the Alawi sect and the regime's supporters were rewarded for their commitment to the state" (Heiko, 2016).In this case, the urge to secure the regime by stacking the security agencies and high-ranking officers with family relations of the ruling clan and its Alawite tribal allies were equally important.

These preferences at the top level were reproduced among the rank and file. The armed forces institutions represented desirable career opportunities that were especially attractive to hitherto marginalized segments of the society, among all sects in Syria. The recruitment and advancement were to a large extent dependent on connections to higher officials, ideally through blood relations. Thus, Alawites related to those sections of the community that dominated the upper ranks were at a significant advantage for higher social mobility, while those with less privileged access still had an advantage when it came to filling the lower ranks (Heiko, 2016).

Consequently, employment in the security and intelligence services became a primary vehicle for upward social mobility and was inextricably linked into the fabric of Alawite community. Particularly, after the conflict of the 1980s against the Muslim Brotherhood, the significant sway these institutions enjoyed meant that a career in the security institutions came with considerable social benefits, further benefiting the larger Alawite society. Statistically, the Alawites were much more likely to have a relative or close friend serving as a senior officer in the armed forces or security services than members of other communities and such relative or friend was, in turn, is likely to wield more influence than counterparts from other sects. A strong position in the security sector helped provide access to professional and material advantages, first and foremost public employment and to the benefits of systemic corruption in the public sector. Whether it was a license to drive, open a small shop or a car registration, well placed payments by those at the top worked wonders in Syria. Those without contacts or money fomented powerful grievances against the state. For many Syrians, their perceptions of Alawites were inextricably linked to experiences of unfair privilege and quite frequently to abusive practices, such as the extortion of bribes for access to public services. This conspicuous discrimination in access to labor and life opportunities effectively lead to a deeper identification with the sect or other particular category on which this discrimination is based (Ratib, 2013).

Bashar Al-Assad's Neo-Liberal Economic Policies

After Bashar al-Assad replaced his father as the Syrian president in 2000, he pursued various neoliberal economic policies aimed at restructuring Syria's economy. These reforms were supposed to liberalize trade, expand the banking sector, increase foreign investment by decreasing trade barriers, reduce tariffs, and lead to higher rates of private investment by getting the state out of the market. However, the state's withdrawal as a provider served to accentuate existing communal grievances. The post 2000 period of economic liberalization, which initiated more competition over dwindling public resources and increased social inequality, only exacerbated these tensions. By the middle of the first decade of the 21stcentury, shrinking opportunities for ordinary citizens of all communities contrasted with increasingly ostentatious displays of wealth by a small stratum of extremely wealthy businessmen and their entourage (Ratib, 2013) Connections to those at the center of power, like the protection of

high-ranking individuals in the society, were essential to flourish in this environment.

The failure of these neoliberal polices can be partially blamed for Syria's poverty in recent years. Although these neoliberal reforms created some economic gains which were harnessed almost entirely by Assad's closer allies, it wasn't without repercussion asit resulted in public investment falling from 13% of GDP in 2005 to 8% of GDP in 2008, while private investment stagnated and the overall rate of investment in the country fell from 25% of GDP to 20% of GDP (Achcar, 2013). This effect had a direct impact on the Syrian masses in terms of rising unemployment and housing price, decreased tariffs that left domestic manufacturing unable to compete with foreign imports, creating an impoverished Syrian economy. While poverty is barely seen as the main determinant behind the revolution, it is still widely considered to increase the likelihood of civil war and sectarian conflict.

Syria's Manipulative Leaders

The presence of manipulative leaders in Syria contributed greatly to the cause of the war. These leaders are individuals who obtain public office by appealing to a specific ethnic constituency, and by playing on citizens' fears of an ethic 'other'. Once the regime was seriously challenged, sectarianism served as a tool for mobilization for both sides and as a fuel for violent conflict. The result is that these leaders legitimize ethnic violence, advocate for mobilization, and exaggerate the risk and hostility of the 'other' in order to build a constituency. In practice this fuels the pathway to rivalry by increasing sectarian polarization which largely exacerbates small conflicts. For example, in Syria, the family of Bashal Al Assad has over the years played on the vulnerability of the Shia minority by maintaining the loyalty of many Alawites and other minority groups with rhetoric predicting their marginalization and slaughter under a non-secular Sunni regime. Assad has used this rhetoric to convince minority groups to fight against rebel forces thus legitimizing and directing sectarian violence by controlling perceptions of fear in order to remain and maintain political power. To further aggravate the hatred these minorities have been favored above the Sunnis majority both in terms of allocating political offices and state resources (Heiko, 2016).

State Weakness

The loss of public services created fear among Syrians. Fear can spiral in many different ways but the most direct way is a situation where individuals come to fear for their physical safety and livelihoods. This was the situation in the face of Syria "emerging anarchy" which ushered in the perception that such loss will decrease economic security, property rights, contract enforcement, social services, utilities such as electricity, water, infrastructure maintenance and even created a scenario where individuals and groups came to the sudden realization that they were practically responsible for their own safety. In a situation of emerging anarchy, the state is unable or unwilling to provide for the security of certain individuals and groups. Emerging anarchy is common in

cases of disrupted, weak or failed states like Syria (Manfreda, 2017). Loss of services can increase the perception that one is being marginalized or discriminated against. The breakdown of government machinery and rule of law creates an environment that is favorable to terrorists, smugglers and criminals and creates a secure base for them to thrive and pursue their trans-national activities.

External Factors that Led to the War in Syria

When we talk about the external factor, we are looking at those factors that were not inherent in the Syrian states prior to the war. For example, the domino effect of the Arab spring that swept across Middle East can be seen as an external factor that contributed to the cause of the Syrian war. For further clarification, the Arab spring spillover effect will be examined under two themes: Tunisia's effect and Social Media effect.

Tunisia's Effect

But for Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisia street vendor whose self-Immolation on 18th December, 2010 triggered a wave of anti-government uprising, the walls of Syria fears would still be up at this particular time in history (Manfreda, 2017). The success of the revolutionary uprising in Tunisia and even Egypt gave hopes to Syrians. Watching the fall of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes in early 2011 being broadcast live on the satellite channel Aljazeera made millions in Syria believe that they could lead their own uprising and challenge their authoritarian regime.

Social Media Effect

Although the state media was tightly controlled, the proliferation of satellite TV, mobile phones, and the internet meant that any attempt by the Assad government to insulate the youth from the outside world was doomed to fail. The use of social media became critical to the activists networks that underpinned the uprising in Syria (Manfreda, 2017). Syrian activists began trying to mobilize international and domestic support for protests against the regime of Bashar al Assad even before the outbreak of serious mobilization in the middle of March 2011. The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt that transformed the Arab world in January 2011 also inspired Syrian activists, who drew on the same tools and methods used by other Arab activists across the region. they posted videos to YouTube, adopted similar slogans "the people want to overthrow the regime", created Twitter hash tags (#mar15), and attempted to portray an image of a rising nonviolent Syrian protest wave through online media. Small protests in Damascus and elsewhere were filmed and uploaded to YouTube to create the impression of Arab Spring style mobilization. Social media create a dangerous illusion of unmediated information for those who follow YouTube videos, Syrian Twitter accounts, or Facebook postings may believe that they are receiving an accurate and comprehensive account of the conflict but these were carefully curetted by networks of activists and designed to craft particular narratives. This impression did not necessarily reflect the reality on the ground at the time, where protest remained dangerous and rare.

However, it did set in place a number of key activist nodes and networks that was pivotal in gearing the March (Marc et al, 2014).

2011
Mar: Anti-government protests trigger violent state response.
Aug: President Obama calls for Syrian President Asad to step down.
Nov: Members of the Al Qaeda affiliated Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) form the Nusra Front in Syria.

2012
May: U.S. begins nonlethal aid to Syrian rebels under emergency and contingency authorities.
Aug: President Obama describes chemical weapon use as a "red line."

2013
April: ISI leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi announces the merger of ISI and the Nusra Front into the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS/ISIL).
Aug: Sarin gas attack in Damascus suburbs kills 1400. President Obama requests congressional approval for a limited authorization for the use of military force to respond.
Sept: Syria agrees to give up its chemical weapons stockpile.

2014
Jan: ISIS captures Raqqah. Congress authorizes nonlethal aid in Syria for select purposes notwithstanding other provisions of law.
June: ISIS declares establishment of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq with a capital at Raqqah, and changes its name to the Islamic State (IS).
Sept: U.S. begins strikes inside Syria. Congress authorizes Syria Train and Equip program.
Oct: Defense Department establishes Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF – OIR) to coordinate U.S. and Coalition counter-IS operations in Syria and Iraq.

2015
Sept: Russia begins airstrikes in Syria.
Oct: U.S. modifies Syria T&E program to focus on equipping existing units. Kurdish YPG fighters merge with other groups to form the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which become a key U.S. partner in the counter-IS campaign. DoD announces first deployment of Special Operations Forces to Syria.

2016
Aug: Turkey begins operations in northern Syria against IS and YPG forces.
Dec: Syrian government and allied forces recapture Aleppo, Syria's largest city, from opposition forces.

2017
April: Sarin gas attack on Khan Sheikhoun kills 80-100. U.S. fires 59 Tomahawk missiles at Al Shayrat airfield in Homs province in response.
May: Trump Administration authorizes arming Kurdish elements of the SDF. Russia, Iran, and Turkey announce formation of de-escalation areas in Syria.
July: U.S., Russia, and Jordan establish ceasefire area in southwest Syria.
Oct: SDF recaptures IS capital at Raqqah.

Figure 2. Summary of Syria War 2011-2017
Source: CRS In Focus IF11080, Syria Conflict Overview: 2011-2018, by Carla E. Humud.
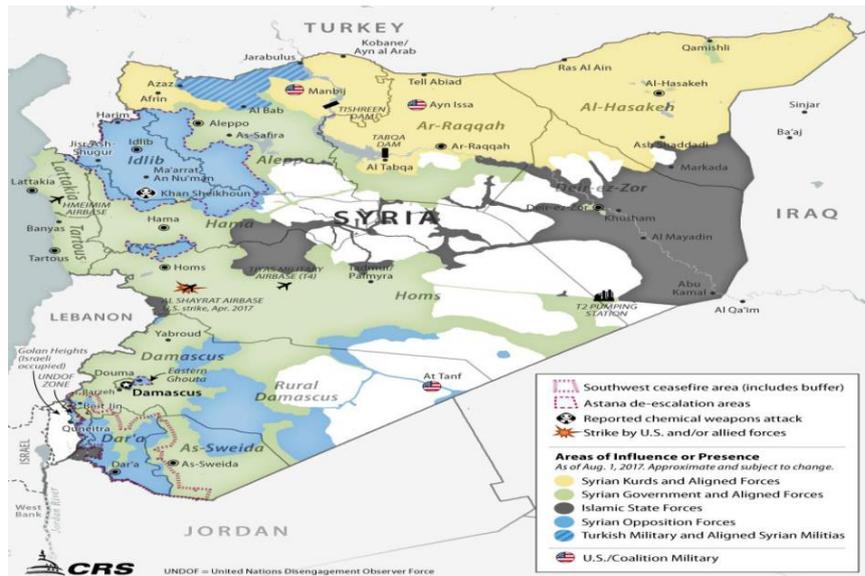
Figure 3. Syria Area of Influence by Various Actors in the War 2017
Source: CRS using area of influence data from IHS Conflict Monitor, as of
August 1, 2017. All areas of influence approximate.

Russia and United States of America Involvement in Syria Civil War

There are three main forms that foreign involvements can take, which are Military involvements through the transfer of funds, weapons and fighters, Economic involvements either through aids or sanctions and Diplomatic involvements through negotiations and dialogs. The first which is military involvement readily comes to mind when describing the term foreign involvement, however, military involvement can either be supportive or hostile. If the involvement is supportive it is generally intended to prop up a weak regime that is having difficulties securing access to weapons, funding, and soldiers. A good example is evident in the way Russia has consistently shown support to the Assad's government through the supply of weapons and fighters to withstand the United States of America backed rebels in Syria. When the involvement is hostile, weapons and fighters unaffiliated with the sender state's government aid the rebels. In this context, the United States of America's involvement in Syria can be considered Hostile as it has in more ways than one aided the rebels with weapons, fighters and financial resources. Rebel forces often need financial resources to initiate and persist in a conflict (Pickering & Kisangani, 2006). Arguing on the hostile contributions of the United States of America towards Syria rebels, Schmitt posit that the United States of America has continually expanded the degree of involvement it is willing to undertake in Syria. Initially, the United States of America limited itself to economic involvement via sanctions, later adding non-lethal aid to rebels, and then started engaging in covert programs to train rebel forces outside of Syria. Eventually, the United States of America expanded its involvement to transfers of weapons to moderate rebel groups, although this is thought to be done through a third party, qualifying it as a permissive transfer (Schmitt, 2013).

Economic aids or sanctions as a form of involvement refers to a way of intervening in the affairs of a target state, and do not consider violence to be

effective. Economic aids are involvement rendered in form of finance and relief materials to help alleviate the hardship of the warring state due to a civil war while Economic sanctions are a form of coercive involvement where a sender state attempts to lower the overall economic welfare of a target state in order to coerce the target state's regime to change its political behavior (Pickering & Kisangani, 2006). Despite a lower probability of success, the historical rationale is that sanctions are a viable policy tool because they are cost effective and less violent when compared to direct military intervention. In theory, sanctions work by reducing the available resources in the targeted state until the population is so deprived that they pressure their leaders to change their behavior (Allen &Lektzian, 2013). For example, the United States of America have succeeded in championing some imposed sanctions on Syria from the Office of Financial Asset Control (OFAC), Her Majesty (HM) Treasury, European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). The sanctions include travel bans, trade restrictions, a ban on Syrian investments by persons from the United States of America as well as asset freezing of some Syria officials. However, sanctions have been widely criticized because the act of reducing the aggregate level of wealth and resources in a state ultimately affects the less privileged, instead of the elites who are practically responsible for the behavior that incurred the sanctions in the first place.

United States of America's Principal National Interests and Its Involvement in Syria Civil War
Preventing the Use and Slowing the Spread of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, Securing Nuclear Weapons and Materials and Preventing Proliferation of Intermediate and Long Range Delivery System of Nuclear Weapons

Former President George W. Bush and President Barrack Obama each identified nuclear terrorism as the number one threat to American national security, hence, the United States of America led international efforts initiatives to inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons and combat nuclear terrorism. However, the Syria civil war raised the United States of America's concerns on the use of chemical weapons. On August 2012, the Obama's administration drew a 'red line' on the use of chemical weapons by Assad on its people, stating that any use of such weapon may result in military involvement from the united states of America. Following the allege use of chemical weapon by Assad government on its citizen, the US got involved by allowing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to support the opposition with weapons, giving birth to Operation Sycamore (Mazzetti&Younes, 2016).

Maintaining a Balance of Power in Asia and Europe that Promotes Peace and Stability With a Continuing United States of America Leadership Role

To the United States of America, balance of power connotes a world where the US permanently assumes a leadership role. To this end, regardless of the United Nations non-intervention principles and the prohibition of the use of force in settling dispute, the United States of America have engaged in

countless foreign adventurism to secure this objective (Ensuring a leadership role). For example, the US have masterminded pro-US regime change in countries like Panama, Haiti, Iraq, and Libya because at one time or the other, these countries policies were not favourable to the interests of the United States of America. The civil war in Syria presented an opportunity for the US to yet again orchestrate a pro-US regime change, considering the fact that the past years have witness deteriorated relations between Damascus and Washington owing to Syria's foreign policy towards Iran, its alleged possession of chemical weapons and support for Lebanon Hezbollah (Anthony, 2008). Simply put, the worsening situation in Iraq as a result of the United States of America's military withdrawal from Iraq and the threatening Iraq-Iran 'rapprochement' which has been perceived as a drastic blow to US strategic interests in the Middle East region. Also, with Iran's regional hegemony, backed by Lebanon's Hezbollah and Gaza's Hama clientele, is based on Assad and Iraq's Alawites regime support in Syria (Sterner, 2014). Therefore, the need to limit Iran's influence and its regional status which is fronted by Assad's regime in the Middle East triggered the need for a US involvement in Syria.

Ensuring Energy Security

Historically, the united states of relations with the middle East have been driven by her desire to ensure the free flow of its much needed natural resources at very little or no cost. Accordingly, Eze (2015) argues that contrary to US orchestrated democratization mission and the likes, the quest to ensure steady access to the supply of its highly needed oil and at affordable prices is the main determinant of US foreign policies in the Middle East region (Eze, 2015). More so, the question of "who controls whose natural gas flow via whose territory?" is at the center of Russia and the United States of America's struggle in Syria. Many claim the world's richest natural gas field, possessed by Qatar and Iran (the South Pars/North Dome in the Persian Gulf) to be the source of the massacres, human rights violations, massacres, refugee crisis and bloody battles sweeping across Syria (William 2016; Rob, 2014) in this argument, we look at two monumental points of the United States of America and Russia involvement in Syria.

Point one; the US wants Assad out of power, point two; the US does not mind aiding the Kurds in its quest for autonomy as long as it benefits America. Either or both outcome will ensure that United States of America's interest (its needed oil at very affordable price) is secured. However, with regards to ousting Assad; the relationship shared between Russia and the United States of America and by extension Eurasia, while not amicable, has a lot at stake (Eurasia's energy supply). A quarter of the United States of America gas comes from Russia, giving Russia an advantage in any confrontation or breakdown in relations. Syria represents an area that could begin such breakdown. Therefore, to reduce Russia's advantage, the United States of America would need another competitive gas supplier. A prime candidate for this role is Qatar since it shares the world largest natural oil gas field with Iran. In 1989, Qatar and Iran began to develop the field and proposed a plan to connect it to the European gas market

via two alternative pipelines. One pipeline, generally called the Qatar pipeline, is expected to run from Qatar through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. The second, pipeline would connect the Iranian part of the field to Europe via Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. It is of vital importance that both pipelines pass through Syrian territory.Although Qatar attempted to build this pipeline, President Assad blocked the plan in lieu of Syria's long standing energy commitment to Russia. As a result, Qatar has had to move its gas through sea via the Iran controlled straits of Hormuz making its gas more expensive. The fall of President Assad's government to a Sunni regime would create a Syria that is friendlier to Qatar and by extension the United States of America and Eurasia. Moreover, a Sunni lead Syria would isolate Iran even more and therefore remove another competitor from the European gas market.

Second, the United States of America sees the prospect of an independent Kurdish state in northern Syria and Iraq, controlling the flow of natural gas and oil to its advantage. Following the 1991 Gulf War, the Kurds of Iraq obtained de facto autonomy. Saddam Hussein's removal from power further strengthened the Kurds. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) was formed, which included their own Kurdish security forces and control of the natural resources under their autonomy(Zanotti&Katzman, 2014). The Syrian Kurds, however, have not been able to achieve the same degree of autonomy as their Iraqi counterparts. Nevertheless, if they succeed in unifying the Kurds and forming an independent Kurdish state, a new actor would gain control of the gas pipelines and oil in its territory. Were such a state to be established along the border to Turkey, a large part of Turkish territory could possibly be seized as well, creating an even greater Kurdistan.However, the friction rests on the incompatible geopolitical aims of the United States of America and Russia. The core interest of the United States of America is to prevent a single state from becoming hegemony in Europe. The diversification of energy supplies is a concern due to European dependency on Russian energy resources. Therefore, the goal of the United States of America is to end Europe's dependence on Russian energy resources. Thus, the United States of America and Russia have diametrically opposed interests with regard to energy in the region. A hegemonic or near-hegemonic Russian power in Eurasia would be a geopolitical setback for the United States of America. The United States of America would therefore prefer a loyal ally which would secure a bargaining power through its control of energy traversing from its territory to Europe to reduce its dependence on Russia. This can be realized if Qatar's pipeline is allowed to pass through Syria's territory which Assad has constantly rejected(William, 2016). Syria therefore is a focal point in this struggle for the United States of America and Russia.

Preventing Large Scale or Sustained Terrorist Attacks on United States Of America Homeland

The 9/11 attack on US soil encouraged the US to be extremely vigilant when it comes to issues of terrorist activities especially those that has the potential of threatening or reaching US territories. The civil war in Syria

provided a breeding ground for the rapid growth of Sunni/Shia extremism in Syria. Worried for the security of US homeland and its allies, the United States of America decided that ISIS had to be defeated as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the start of the Syria civil war was interestingly in parallel to the withdrawal of the United States of America troops from Iraq. The Iraq War had given rise to an anti-war sentiment that inspired the policy mantra of President Barack Obama's administration: "don't do stupid shit" (Jeffery, 2016). This informed the United States of America's polices like leading from behind, No-direct involvement and No-boots on the grounds, generally in global politics and particularly in the Middle East. This new policy strategy of the United States of America includes indirect involvement without direct presence in the field but through local allies on the ground. To achieve this, the United States of America chose PartiyaYekîtiyaDemokrat in Kurdish meaning Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and YekîneyênParastina Gel in Kurdish meaning The People's Protection Units (YPG) as its local allies in Syria and followed a policy to legitimize it (Lund, 2015).

However, since the Assad regime had no intention of stalling its war effort, this meant the rebels were besieged by Assad's military and ISIS even as the United States of America attention shifted away from them. In an effort to save its revolution, Syrian opposition leadership opined in 2014 at the United Nations that confronting Sunni radicalism in Syria without supporting efforts to overthrow the Assad regime would address the proximate cause of a more profound problem. Sunni radicals would continue to come into Syria to fight the Assad regime, just as, by this time,Shia militants were being recruited from Iraq and Afghanistan and flown into the country by Iran (UN General Assembly, 2014).

Consequently, the complete focus of the United States of America on its counterterrorism strategy was ultimately harmful to Syria's broader-warLaunched in 2014, the campaign against ISIS overlapped with another key development in the United States of America's foreign policy that influenced the United States of America's thinking on Syria. This has to do with the secret back-channel meetings between the United States of America and Iran, which began in July 2012 and continued in earnest in 2013. This back-channel had made enough progress by the time the counter-ISIS coalition was announced and the Obama administration did not want to jeopardize a potential nuclear deal with a more aggressive Syria strategy. This is in tandem with President Obama's letter to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (Iranian supreme leader) that the United States of America administration saw the counter-ISIS fight as an opportunity to establish common ground with Iran (Jay & Carol,2014). Moreover, there were fears that an aggressive United States of America military posture against the regime in Syria would trigger a reprisal against American troops in Iraq. But the fear for United States of America troop safety in Iraq and the eagerness to establish rapport with Iran tipped the United States of America's hand: it was clear they would not let Syria jeopardize the de-nuclearization talks. However the case may be, the United States of America was eager to wage the anti-ISIS war in a compartment, downplaying the link

between the effects of the catastrophic Syria war and the rise of Sunni extremists. Then when it came to counterterrorism operations against Sunni jihadists, the United States of America did not mind putting "boots on the ground," which was previously a policy taboo.

Russia's Principal National Interests and Its Involvement in Syria Civil War
Russia's Nuclear Deterrent Capability As Guarantor of Russia's Sovereignty and Great Power Status

This is a major reason for Russia's involvement in Syria. Since the cold war era, the Russia naval facility at the Tartus Port of Syria was the only base of Russia in the Mediterranean and Syria was the only state in the Middle East where Russia had a military base. In contrast, the United States of America had several bases in many of the Middle Eastern countries. These bases served to the military protection of the United States of America influence in the Middle East. However, the Syria civil war laid bare the opportunity Russia has been strenuously seeking for, to enhance, modernize, expand and maximize its military capabilities. In 2008, Russia's then prime minister, Vladimir Putin lunched a massive military reform in order to strengthen Russia's military capabilities. the program's primary objective was to replace 70% of soviet military hardware by the year 2020 (Alsaadi, 2017). Prior to its military involvement in Syria, Russia had amended its naval doctrine, prioritizing confronting and weakening NATO's expansion and establishing its permanent fleet in the Mediterranean sea and Atlantic ocean (Bonder, 2015). In line with its military reform objectives, Russia's naval base in Tartus was upgraded in 2015 from one that only provide basic maintenance to one that allows Russia ships passing through the Mediterranean to permanent military deployment naval base (Bonder, 2015). Russia has also been using its military involvement in Syria as a testing ground for new weaponry, to improve its military capabilities. It has tested aircraft that includes ship based cruise missiles, advance 400 surface to air defense system and Sukhoi Su-34 strike fighter, all of which have never been used in war before (Gordon and Schmitt, 2015). Russia did not just confine itself to the Tartus military base in Syria but rather contrasted the large Hmeimim base in Latakia governorate to increase deployment in Syria (Pavel, 2015),

Sustaining Russia's Influence in the Post Soviet Space and Denying Competing Powers or Alliances the Ability To Dominate Russia's Space

The United States of America's attempt to introduce intervention law into the international system through Western leadership by using the united nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and finally its attempt for responsibility to protect (R2P) in Libya 2011 NATO invasion, received resistance from Russia in Syria at last. Other than preventing the growth of Sunni/Shia sectarianism, the need to curb the us agenda of regime change especially in countries friendly with Russia was uppermost to Russia (Dimitry, 2017).

Allison conceptualized Russia policy against the United States of America as a case of balancing. Russia consequently,, Russia stopped being silent to the intervention policies that has been adopted by the united states of America for the past 20years and started to manifest resistance after the intervention in Libya to prevent reoccurrence of the Libya experience in Syria, a country Russia considers a long time ally (Allison, 2013). The Russia-Syria alliance is rooted in s very strong political and economic relations that have served both countries well since the 1950's. The friendship between these two countries rest upon their military cooperation, with Russia accounting for 90% of all Syrian's military imports in the 1970's. Russia defines the decision to sustain Assad's resistance as being ignited by "a world-wide conspiracy theory" led by the United States of America, supporting movements to gain control and influence over the post soviet space. Russia maintains that the us should not exert any form of control or influence over the Syria opposition forces and views its attempt at removing a sitting government as deeply concerning. Thus russia's uneasiness with allowing America influence in her backyard and the desire to curb NATO has resulted in its unwillingness to approve UN intervention in Syria (Solberg, 2015).

Ensuring Continued Revenue Flow From Russia's Energy Export and Ensuring That Other States Are Not Able To Exercise Leverage Over Russia Energy Exports

Russia is one of the world's leading energy producers and is the top holder of natural gas reserves. Thus, Russia has substantial role in maintaining and expanding energy supplies that keeps the global economy stable and enable economic growth in the US and around the world. Russia possesses huge amount of bargaining power due to its control over energy flowing from its territory to Europe and other parts of the world. This has however been a problem to the United States of America. The realization of another pipeline like Qatar's pipeline would decrease Eurasia dependence on Russia gas exports of which Assad has played a considerable role in ensuring that Qatar's pipeline traverse its territory because of the long standing energy commitment to Russia. Therefore, removing Assad from power will ensure a favourable outcome for the US which is detrimental to Russia hegemony on energy export and therefore unacceptable to Russia (William, 2016) hence, Russia's involvement.

Russia's Middle East Power Politics

After the failed attempt in the 1980s to contain Afghanistan and retain it as a satellite state of the Soviet Union, followed by the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Syrian intervention was Russia's first major foray outside its self-delineated 'near abroad'. Hence, from the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Russia has articulated the need for the survival of the Assad regime to enable the country's peaceful political transition (Mozes&Terdiman, 2016). By early 2015, a controlled regime transition, albeit only in the medium term, had become the steadfast aim of Russian political, diplomatic and military initiatives. The Russian initiative is meant to protect its own national interests: first, although Assad is being supported, in all likelihood his position will later

be used as a bargaining tool when the inevitable regime change occurs. By protecting the Assad regime from the current onslaught, Russia is also ensuring that it plays a decisive role in determining the future of Syria, with or without Assad at the helm, and thereby becoming the most influential power broker in the broader Middle-East region (Suchkov, 2016). Furthermore, Russia took advantage of the Syria war to challenge the United States of America's hegemony in the region. In this framework, Russia did not confine itself to the Tartus base in Syria and constructed the large Hmeymim (Khmeimim) base in Latakia governorate to increase its military deployment in the country (Pavel, 2015). Thus, Russia took over the leadership of war in Syria and even managed to win the support of Turkey, a United States of America ally. Particularly, the two countries were on the brink of war with the downing of the Russian fighter jet by Turkey on 24 November 2015. After that, the two countries became closer with the Erdoğan-Putin meeting in St. Petersburg in 2016 and the Astana process that begun in the beginning of 2017 initiated the process of harmonization of the interests of the two countries in the Syria war (Mozes&Terdiman, 2016). With the Astana process, Turkey made a change in its Syria policy and turned into the policy of balance with Russia against the United States of America. Therefore, its involvement in Syria is purely a calculated strategy to protect and advance its interests which is derived from a well considered foreign policy aiming to enhance Russia's status and role in the Middle East and the world at large.

Additionally, Ideological solidarity can also motivate governments to intervene because of the perception that protecting and affirming an ideology abroad protects and affirms it at home (Walt, 1985). This is evident in the way Russia stood for its long time ally, Syria, sending the message that Russia never abandons its own. Accordingly, Alexander Fomin, chief staff of the federal service for military-technical co-operation of Russia, stated that "Syria is our friend, and we fulfil all our obligations to our friends." (The Guardian, 2012). This should however not be mistaken for the fact that Russia's involvement in Syria was only to help an ally in need because it has already been established that there are many things Russia stands to lose if the Assad regime is toppled. Moreover, the United States of America had the opportunity to uphold its long time orchestrated 'democratic mission" policy in Syria but choose to take a back seat on this one because even though the US have important interests in Syria, with the exception of curbing terrorism and the possible establishment of a Kurdish state that will ensure access to its required oil, those interests are not so vital as to compel US action as would an Iranian attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz or a major threat to Israel's survival.

The Economic Consequences of the War in Syria

The war in Syria has also affected the Syrian economy and by extension, the Middle East region. The loss of lives and displacements seriously erodes human capital in Syria. The spreading of poverty in connection with warfare is significant and as employment declines, negative social consequences are disseminating even outside the directly involved geographic areas.

The Syrian GDP has declined dramatically since the start of the war in 2011. Trade between Syria and its neighbors and even within the Middle East has reduced significantly. According to Phil de Imus et al (2017), key economic organizations and institutions attached to the Syrian economy have been hurt severely. For instance important economic institutions (tax authorities, banks, relevant ministries,) have witnessed how their performance have deteriorated because the normal rapid flow of communication between them and their financial partners has declined seriously as a result of the increasing violence of the war. Consequently, a significant and decreasing absence of foreign direct investment has become a reality because of the poor performance of financial organizations and institutions. In some cases, buildings, facilities and infrastructure are damaged or destroyed. These can be production facilities relating to extraction of oil or natural gas, in other cases, roads, bridges, water supply facilities are becoming ruined or degraded. It is claimed that more than a quarter of the housing stock has been destroyed or damaged since the civil war started. The Syrian Centre for Policy Research has estimated that the costs of lost physical capital amount to 230% of the pre-war GDP (Phil de Imus et al 2017).However, the non-physical organization and institutions have also become ruined as well. The consequences are "higher transportation costs, reduced connectivity and disruptions in supply chains.

Syria's Refugee Crisis and Its Global Implications

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees describes a refugee as any person with the fear of being harassed for reason of race, religion or nationality of a particular social group or political opinion beyond the protection of that country (Dearden, 2017). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), migration is voluntary and relocations can either be deliberate or constrained, especially for individuals escaping outfitted clashes or oppression, those for whom the refusal of asylum will conceivably have destructive outcomes are refugees. And when crossing a national border to seek safety abroad, such people should be internationally recognized as refugees with access to assistance from states and other humanitarian organizations because Refugees are defined and protected in international law, first and foremost by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (Ninna, 2017). The concept of migration have turned out to be key to economic, political and social discussion since the start of the 21st century mainly because it has to deal with global issues of security and humanitarian concerns. Migration can be perceived as a threat by government of either population of sending or receiving state. Threats of armed refugees can pose as a challenge to both a country's political stability and its social values in the receiving state, while for sending state, this can cause brain drain and economic losses (Weiner, 2011).

The Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian War and Its Implication on World Peace and Security

The term chemical weapon is connected to any dangerous synthetic or its antecedent that can cause damage, brief debilitation or tactile bothering

through its compound activity, munitions or other conveyance gadgets intended to deliver chemical weapons, regardless of whether filled or unfilled, are additionally thought about as weapons themselves. Chemical weapons may require a low investment, yet they can cause severe psychological and physical effects and are agents of disruption (Esfandiary, 2014).

During the period of World War I, the extensive use of poisonous gases resulted in many casualties, over 90,000 of which were fatal. The extreme sufferings from the use of harmful chemicals and with the damage they caused reinforced popular demands for a ban on this method of welfare. This led to the signing in Geneva, on 17th June 1925, of the protocol for the prohibition of the use Asphyxiating poisonous or other gases in war, and of Bacteriological methods of warfare (Goldblat, 2002). Threat to the use of chemical weapon and the stockpiling of destructive chemicals was the games played among the bi-polar powers (United States of America and the Soviet Union) before the end of cold war. During the conference on disarmament in order to strengthening mutual assured destruction between the super powers both the United States of America and the Soviet Union in September 1992 finalize the text of a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling, the use of Chemical weapon and their destruction (Goldblat, 2002).

Research Design

This study adopted the qualitative research design. The research was carried out on the basis of access to current published and unpublished materials. Data collection for this study will be bases on secondary sources such as books, journals, periodicals, articles, newspapers, seminar papers, internet sources, etc. however, to enable the researcher objectively examine and analyze related documents concerned with the subject matter, the content analysis method was employed extensively in this study.

Area of the Study

Syria is the geo-political entity of this study. Syria, officially known as the Syrian Arab Republic, is a country in Western Asia, bordering Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Terrorism is a controversial and ambiguous concept that till date has eluded a universally accepted definition. Most scholars in their definition have pinned a huge number of signs and thought processes which everyone can relate with. For instance, According to Hoffman (2006), terrorism embodies certain characteristics that are as follows:

1. Ineluctably political in aims and motives.
2. Violent in nature
3. Designed to have far reaching psychological repercussion beyond the immediate victim or target

4. Conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) and

5. And perpetrated by a sub-national group or non state entity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Syrian war is a major problem that has altered the course of history for generations to come. The nation has joined a long list of countries that have been ravaged by civil wars and foreign involvements, and no involving nation (Russia and the United States of America) or party have been held accountable for the death, destruction and misery that has plagued Syria and by extension the international community at large.

The war has wounded, killed and displaced millions of Syrians, generated the worst refugee crisis since World War II, worsened sectarian conflict in the region, created a new and more pernicious wave of violent terrorists and raised the risk of war between Iran and Israel. Its effects extend beyond the Middle East, shaping the outcome of international politics in such a way that interferes with the balance of power both in the Middle East and globally.

Since the beginning of the war in Syria, a strategy to de-escalate and settle the rift between all parties involved has eluded the international community for years, but recent developments on ground have created an opportunity to move toward a viable and sustainable end to the catastrophic war. The fact that Syria has fragmented into several zones of control with each governed by distinct local players heavily influenced by Russia and the United States of America, have provided the foundations for a tentative cease-fire brokered by Russia and its supporting blocs (Turkey, and Iran) which has at least reduced violence in some areas. However, with skilful diplomacy, the United States of America may be able to leverage its growing influence in formerly ISIS-controlled territory to broker a broader national cease-fire and eventually a negotiated political solution. This option would largely rely on the cooperation of Russia and the United States of America assisted by other international community channels. Based on the above, the following recommendations have been considered imperative:

1. Withdrawing foreign militias and stopping external support to armed groups opposed to a peaceful, political solution: The withdrawal of foreign militias and underground financial support for the regime and rebel forces is also an important aspect that requires the cooperation of Russia and the United States of America. Such move should be negotiated under the auspices of the UN. A draft resolution on this topic by the Security Council could discreetly enter into discussions held by a small circle of the involved parties.

2. Under the auspices of the UN, United States of America in collaboration with Russia should push for a nationwide cease fire negotiation that involves Assad: The Astana talks have demonstrated progress but also their limits. A new approach, based on the Astana process, but enlarging the

number of participants and extending the ceasefire to other zones covered by the negotiations should be topmost. To this end, in collaboration with Russia, the United States of America should offer to provide the technology for a reconnaissance mission (satellites, ground sensors, etc.) and perhaps a sanction mechanism towards the regime or rebel forces that choose to breach the ceasefire.

3. Put an end to impunity: over the course of the prolonged Syrian war, the world had witnessed a number of massacres of civilians performed by various armed actors and while the violence continues, the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry had put together an array of reports collecting events of such crimes, of which could be used to prosecute the perpetrators. The information can then be transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) immediately if the process is requested upon so as to allow it the opportunity to prosecute all parties found guilty of crimes against humanity within the ambit of the law.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so it is still necessary to carry out further research on the topic "An Appraisal Of Russia and United States of America Involvement In Syrian Civil War, 2011 – 2018."

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