

Syria- A Never Ending War and Conflict of Religion and Global Powers

¹Naveen Yadav

¹Department of Political Science
¹Swami Vivekanand Subharti University

Abstract: This Paper investigates the mechanics of the Syrian conflict—the currents that flow underneath the baffling headlines. It seeks to provide a sense of the situation without making any claims that it can fill in the many gaps in what is known about the actual situation. In the Syrian crisis, uncertainty is more than just a warning; it casts an overshadow every analysis and influences every choice of course. Recent conversations with policymakers and experts in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States have influenced the insights stated here. The study is still a personal evaluation based on my own experience and years of research; however, I have befittingly received the constructive criticism of university colleagues and others. To be fair threader, I'll mark remarks that are based on my conjecture or intuition.

Index Terms: ISIS, the Syrian crisis, middle east

INTRODUCTION

The Civil War in Syria which started in March 2011 is an ongoing armed conflict, which started after a series of protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government. These protests were part of the much larger Arab Spring uprising that range across North Africa and the Middle East. The government of Syria responded to the protests with a violent crackdown, leading to a full-scale armed conflict between government forces and various opposition groups. The conflict has since escalated into a complex multi-sided war involving regional and international powers, with different factions fighting for control of territory. The war has caused immense human suffering, including the displacement of millions of people, widespread destruction of infrastructure, and a humanitarian crisis. It has also become a major geopolitical battleground, with Iran, Russia, and the Syrian government supported by Hezbollah, and the United States of America, Turkey, and Gulf Arab states supporting various opposition groups.

OVERVIEW OF SYRIA

Syria, a Middle East Country shares its neighborhood with countries like Turkey in its north, Jordan in the south, and Iraq in the east while Israel and Lebanon share the southwest border and some part lies along the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The city of Damascus holds the title of capital and the largest city of Syria.

Syria has a rich history and cultural heritage, with archaeological sites dating back to the Neolithic era. It has been ruled by various empires and dynasties throughout history, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans [1].

In 2011, a civil war broke out in Syria following protests against the government of President Bashar al-Assad. The war has caused the movement of a huge population of Syrian people from their native places and this has led to a humanitarian crisis. The war involves various groups, including the Syrian government, rebel groups, extremist groups, and international actors.

The war has resulted in a crucial loss to the infrastructure and economy of Syria and caused the loss of civilian lives. Efforts to end the war and find a lasting peace have so far been unsuccessful, and the situation in Syria remains complex and volatile.

The conflict is ongoing, with no clear end in sight. Various ceasefire agreements and diplomatic initiatives have been attempted, but none have resulted in lasting peace.

WHO IS BASHAR AL-ASSAD?

Bashar al-Assad is the current President of Syria and has been in power since 2000. He was born on September 11, 1965, in Damascus, Syria, and is the son of former Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.

Bashar al-Assad was trained as a doctor and worked as an ophthalmologist in London before returning to Syria in 1994 after the death of his brother Bassel, who had been groomed to succeed his father as president [2].

Following the death of his father in 2000, Bashar al-Assad was elected President of Syria in a referendum, in which he was the only candidate. He was re-elected in 2007 and 2014 in similar referendums, which were criticized by the international community for lack of transparency and fairness.

During his time in power, Bashar al-Assad faced significant challenges, including the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011. He has been accused of human rights abuses and war crimes by the international community for his handling of the conflict, including the use of chemical weapons against civilians.

Bashar al-Assad has also been accused of corruption and nepotism, with his family and close associates controlling much of Syria's economy and political system. Despite these challenges and criticisms, he has maintained a strong grip on power in Syria and continues to lead the country [3].

SYRIA'S ECONOMIC CONDITION

The occurring civil war, which started around 2011 exerted a high influence on the economic conditions in Syria. The war has various negative impacts on the country which include the extensive wrecking of the infrastructure, movement of people from native places and many other drastic humane problems.

Prior to the ongoing crisis in Syria, the country had wide-ranging diversity in the economy with a sturdy sector of agriculture, vast reserves of gas and oil and a private sector growing at a good rate. However, the dispute drastically obstructed the ongoing economic and financial activity, with GDP declining by an estimated 62% since 2010. The unemployment rate is estimated to be as high as 50%, and poverty and food insecurity are widespread. The war has also disrupted trade and investment, and international sanctions have further limited Syria's access to financial resources and markets. The Syrian currency has devalued significantly, making imports more expensive and contributing to high inflation. The reconstruction of Syria's economy and infrastructure will require significant investment and international support. However, ongoing violence and political instability continue to present significant obstacles to economic recovery [4].

WHY IS RUSSIA FIGHTING IN SYRIA?

1. Supporting its ally, the Syrian government: Russia has a long-standing military and political alliance with the Syrian government. It supports President Bashar al-Assad's regime and has been providing military and diplomatic assistance to the Syrian government since the beginning of the conflict.
2. To protect its strategic interest: The only military base of Russia outside the former Soviet Union lies in the Syrian Port city of Tartus. This base gives Russia reach to the Mediterranean Sea, and thus the Middle East and North Africa, which are important regions for Russia's economic and geopolitical interests.
3. Combating terrorism: Russia has framed its intervention in Syria as a fight against terrorism, particularly against extremist groups such as the Islamic State (ISIL). Russia has argued that the Syrian government is the most effective force in fighting terrorism in the country and that supporting the government is necessary to stabilize Syria and prevent the spread of extremism.
4. Asserting its influence in the region: Russia's intervention in Syria has allowed it to assert its influence in the Middle East and position itself as a major player in regional conflicts. It has also provided Russia with an opportunity to demonstrate its military capabilities and showcase its weapons and technology to potential customers.

Overall, the engagement of Russia in Syria is inspired by the collection of political, economic and strategic interests, as well as the aspiration to demonstrate its power and exert its influence in the region [5].

How United States involved in Syria?

The United States has been involved in the Syrian civil war in several ways.

1. Military intervention: The U.S. has conducted airstrikes against targets in Syria, particularly against the Islamic State (ISIL) and other extremist groups. The U.S. has also provided training and equipment to Syrian opposition groups.
2. Diplomatic efforts: The U.S. has been involved in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict, including supporting the UN-led Geneva peace talks and working with other countries to broker ceasefires and humanitarian aid.
3. Humanitarian assistance: The U.S. has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons, including food, shelter, and medical aid.
4. Sanctions: The U.S. has imposed economic sanctions on the Syrian government and individuals associated with the regime, as well as on Russia and Iran for their support of the Syrian government.

Overall, the U.S. has been involved in the Syrian conflict primarily to combat terrorism, support Syrian opposition groups, and promote stability in the region. However, U.S. involvement has been limited compared to other actors such as Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

Groups involved in the Syrian war: -

1. Free Syrian Army (FSA)
2. Kurdish Rebel Fighters
3. Jabhat Fath al-Sham
4. Hezbollah and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

Free Syrian Army (FSA)

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) is a loosely organized coalition of Syrian rebel groups that was formed in 2011 during the Syrian Civil War. The group's primary goal is to overthrow the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and establish a democratic government in its place.

The FSA initially consisted of Syrian military defectors and civilians who took up arms against the government. It was supported by several countries, including the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. However, over time, the FSA has become increasingly fragmented, with different factions operating independently and often in conflict with one another.

The FSA has been involved in many of the major battles of the Syrian Civil War, including the battle for Aleppo and the battle for Damascus. It has also been accused of committing human rights abuses and war crimes, and some factions within the group have been linked to extremist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS.

Today, the FSA is no longer a major force in the Syrian conflict, and many of its members have joined other rebel groups or have been co-opted by the Syrian government. However, the legacy of the FSA and its role in the early days of the Syrian Civil War is still remembered by many Syrians.

Kurdish Rebel Fighters: -

Kurdish rebel fighters are members of various armed Kurdish groups that have been involved in conflicts with the governments of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. The Kurds are an ethnic group who have been seeking greater autonomy and independence for their communities, which are spread across these countries.

Some of the most prominent Kurdish rebel groups include the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, the People's Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (WPJ) in Syria, the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDP-I) and the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) in Iran, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Iraq.

These groups have used a variety of tactics, including guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks, to advance their goals. They have also been accused of committing human rights abuses, including against civilians.

The conflict between Kurdish rebel fighters and the governments of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq has been ongoing for decades and has resulted in significant loss of life and displacement of populations. The situation is complex and often intertwined with regional and international politics.

Jabhat Fath al-Sham, the so-called Islamic State

Jabhat Fath al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, is a jihadist militant group that was active in the Syrian Civil War. It was formed in 2012 as a branch of al-Qaeda in Syria, and its primary goal was to overthrow the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and establish an Islamic state.

Jabhat al-Nusra was one of the most powerful and effective rebel groups in the Syrian conflict, and it was known for its military capabilities and its close ties to al-Qaeda. However, in 2016, the group announced that it was cutting ties with al-Qaeda and changing its name to Jabhat Fath al-Sham.

The name change was seen as an attempt to distance itself from al-Qaeda and present itself as a more moderate and mainstream rebel group. However, the move was widely criticized by Western countries and other regional powers, who viewed it as a tactical rebranding rather than a genuine shift in ideology.

Jabhat Fath al-Sham continued to fight in the Syrian Civil War, but it faced significant opposition from both the Syrian government and other rebel groups. In 2017, the group was largely defeated in the Syrian province of Idlib and was forced to merge with other jihadist groups to form a new organization called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

Hezbollah and the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces)

Hezbollah is a Lebanese political and military organization, established in the early 1980s with the support of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The group's ideology is based on the principles of Shia Islam and it seeks to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon.

Hezbollah has been involved in many conflicts and terrorist activities over the years, both inside Lebanon and beyond its borders. It is considered a terrorist organization by many countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Hezbollah has played a major role in Lebanese politics since the 1990s and has held seats in the Lebanese parliament since 1992. The group's armed wing has also been involved in the Syrian Civil War, fighting alongside the Syrian government against rebel forces.

Hezbollah is known for its strong anti-Israel stance and has engaged in several conflicts with Israel, including the 2006 Lebanon War. The group has also been accused of carrying out terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets around the world.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are a multi-ethnic, multi-religious coalition of militias that was formed in 2015 to fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria. The SDF is primarily composed of Kurdish fighters from the People's Protection Units (YPG), but also includes Arab and Assyrian fighters.

The SDF was formed with the support of the United States of America (USA) and various Western countries as a way to combat ISIS without relying on the Syrian government, which is led by President Bashar al-Assad. The SDF has been successful in driving ISIS out of large portions of northern and eastern Syria, including the city of Raqqa, which was the group's self-proclaimed capital.

The SDF has also been involved in conflicts with Turkish forces, which see the Kurdish elements of the group as a threat to their security. The Turkish government has launched several military operations against Kurdish forces in northern Syria, including the Afrin offensive in 2018.

The involvement of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with the government of Syria and various other groups in opposition to the negotiation happened since the defeat of ISIS as a part of efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian dispute. The SDF has also been accused of human rights abuses, particularly against Arab residents of areas under its control.

Will this war lead to the partition of Syria?

The partition of Syria is a controversial topic that has been discussed by various stakeholders since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011. There have been several proposals for partitioning Syria, with different groups advocating for different territorial arrangements.

One of the most widely discussed proposals for partitioning Syria is the creation of a Kurdish autonomous region in the north of the country, which would be linked to the Kurdish regions in Iraq and Turkey. This proposal has been supported by many Kurdish groups in Syria, as well as by some Western governments.

However, the creation of a Kurdish autonomous region is opposed by the Syrian government, which considers it a threat to the country's territorial integrity. Russia and Iran, which are key allies of the Syrian government, have also expressed opposition to the idea of partitioning Syria.

Another proposal for partitioning Syria is the creation of a Sunni Arab state in the east of the country, which would be linked to Sunni Arab regions in Iraq and Jordan. This proposal has been supported by some Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, which has been a major supporter of the Syrian opposition.

However, the creation of a Sunni Arab state is opposed by the Syrian government and its allies, who argue that it would lead to the fragmentation of the country and the creation of a New Haven for terrorism.

In general, the partition of Syria is a complex issue that involves competing interests and visions for the future of the country. While some groups see partition as a way to address long-standing grievances and conflicts, others see it as a threat to Syria's sovereignty and unity. Ultimately, any decision regarding the partition of Syria would have to be negotiated and agreed upon by all relevant stakeholders, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and regional and international actors[6].

Can we end the Syrian civil war?

I am a human hence I cannot predict the future or provide a definitive answer to whether the Syrian war can be ended. However, finding a political solution to the conflict is the best way to bring about lasting peace.

Efforts have been made to find a political solution, including the Geneva and Astana peace talks, and there have been some positive developments, such as the establishment of de-escalation zones. However, the conflict remains complex and many challenges remain, including disagreements among the various parties and the involvement of foreign powers.

A sustainable resolution to the conflict will require the cooperation and involvement of all parties involved, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and external actors. It will also require addressing the root causes of the conflict, including political, economic, and social grievances.

Despite the involvement of the UN (United Nation) in various rounds of negotiations between the government of Syria and the groups in opposition, an all-inclusive and broad resolution has yet to be achieved. In addition, various international actors, including the United States and Russia, have been involved in efforts to de-escalate the conflict and facilitate peace talks.

Ending the Syrian war will require a comprehensive and sustained effort by all parties involved, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, and international actors. It will likely require significant compromises on all sides, as well as a commitment to addressing the underlying grievances and issues that have fueled the conflict. While it may be a difficult and challenging process, finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria remains a crucial priority for the international community.

Ultimately, the Syrian people themselves must be the ones to determine the future of their country. It will require a commitment to dialogue, compromise, and reconciliation to build a peaceful and stable future for Syria

Outcomes of the Syrian war

The Syrian war, which began in 2011, has had far-reaching consequences both for Syria and the wider Middle East region. Some of the key outcomes of the war include:

Humanitarian crisis: The Syrian war has caused one of the worst humanitarian crises of modern times, with over 500,000 people killed and more than 12 million people displaced from their homes. The war has also created a significant refugee crisis, with millions of Syrians fleeing to neighbouring countries and beyond.

Fragmentation of Syria: The war has resulted in the fragmentation of Syria, with various groups controlling different parts of the country. The Syrian government controls the western part of the country, while Kurdish groups control the north, and various opposition groups control pockets of territory in other parts of the country.

Rise of extremist groups: The Syrian war has created a breeding ground for extremist groups, such as ISIS and Al Qaeda, who have taken advantage of the chaos and instability to gain a foothold in Syria and Iraq. These groups have carried out numerous atrocities, including mass executions and bombings, and have posed a significant threat to regional and global security.

Intervention by external powers: The Syrian war has attracted the intervention of numerous external powers, including Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States. These external powers have provided military and logistical support to various groups, further complicating the conflict and increasing the risk of regional escalation.

Political instability: The war has led to significant political instability in the region, with neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan struggling to cope with the influx of refugees and the spillover effects of the conflict. The war has also strained regional alliances and contributed to the breakdown of diplomatic relations between various countries.

Overall, the Syrian war has had significant and far-reaching consequences for the region, with no clear end in sight. It will likely take years, if not decades, for Syria to recover from the devastation caused by the conflict.

Conclusion

The war in Syria is a complex dispute which started in 2011 and still going on. The various factions have been involved in it including the government of Syria, different groups in opposition, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and outside power centres like Iran, Russia and the USA (United States of America). The war has caused significant human suffering and displacement, with millions of Syrians forced to flee their homes.

As per the understanding of the facts and relatable events till September 2021, the dispute has not been fully settled, the government of Syria has reclaimed the power of most of the country with the support of its allies.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also remain in control of some areas in northern and eastern Syria, and fighting continues in some parts of the country.

Various attempts and endeavours have been done to find the political solution to the dispute which involves the peace talks in Geneva and Astana, but the appropriate resolution has yet to be achieved. The unceasing dispute has had consequential global and regional ramifications which encompasses the displacement of refugees, the destabilization of neighbouring countries and the upsurge of the extremist group.

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