RESPONSES TO INTERNATIONAL CHANGES:
A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST ANALYSIS OF
SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY, 1990-2005

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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This work aims to analyze the responses of Syria to two international changes comparatively. After the end of the Cold War, US initiated a foreign policy doctrine based on American hegemony. This policy was firstly manifested in the war on Iraq as a response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on January 17, 1991. It was noteworthy to see Syria aligning with the US during the Gulf War (1990-1991), as the country had been allied against the US during the Cold War period. Syria was also the first state accepting US proposal for a peace conference known as Madrid Peace Conference. All these developments reveal that Syria had been cooperated with the US in the aftermath of the Cold War. The second international change analyzed within the framework of this study is the September 11 events. Following the September 11 attacks, the US declared a "war on terror" to recover its superpower position and intervened in Afghanistan and then Iraq. In that process, Syria opted for countering the US and became the leading critique of the invasion of Iraq. This study examines the different responses of Syria to the end of the Cold War and the post-September 11 period through using neoclassical realism as a model.

Keywords: Syria, Neoclassical Realism, Foreign Policy, Cold War, September 11

ÖZ

ULUSLARARASI DEĞİŞİME YÖNELİK TEPKİLER:
SURİYE DIŞ POLİTİKASININ NEOKLASİK REALİST ANALİZİ,
1990-2005

Dersan, Duygu

Doktora, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu çalışma Suriye'nin uluslararası sistemde meydana gelen iki değişime verdiği tepkinin karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmesini amaçlamaktadır. Bu değişimlerden ilki Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesidir. Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından ABD, uluslararası sistemde Amerikan hegemonyasını pekiştirici bir dış politika doktrini ortaya koymuştur. Bu politikanın ilk ürünü Irak'ın Kuveyt'i işgaline karşı ABD'nin Irak'a müdahale etme kararıdır. Suriye, Irak krizine, ABD'nin önderliğinde oluşturulan Irak karşıtı koalisyona katılarak cevap vermiştir. Soğuk Savaş süresince ABD'nin karşı kampında yer alan Suriye'yi bu koalisyon içerisinde görmek dikkat çekici olmuştur. Suriye aynı zamanda, ABD'nin Madrid Barış Konferansı olarak bilinen girişimine olumlu yanıt veren ilk ülkelerden birisidir. Tüm bu gelişmeler, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında aldığı dış politika kararları ile ABD'yle işbirliği içerisinde olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında incelenen ikinci uluslararası değişim 11 Eylül olaylarıdır. 11 Eylül saldırılarından sonra, süpergüç pozisyonunu yeniden ortaya koymak adına "teröre karşı savaş" başlatan ABD, önce Afganistan'a daha sonra da Irak'a müdahale etmiştir. Suriye bu süreçte ABD'nin Irak'a müdahalesine karşı çıkmış ve ABD'nin izlediği politikaların en büyük muhalifi olmuştur. Bu çalışma, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesine ve 11 Eylül

sonrasındaki gelişmelere verdiği farklı tepkileri neoklasik realist modeli kullanarak incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriye, Neoklasik Realizm, Dış Politika, Soğuk Savaş, 11 Eylül

To Kenan...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
FPC	Foreign Policy Change
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ISI	Import Substitute Industrialization
IDF	Israeli Defense Force
LACD	Lebanese-American Council for Democracy
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
RSS	Regime Survival Strategy
SCIRI	Supreme Council of Islamic Institution in Iraq
SALSRA	Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNIIIC	United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, two international changes have affected Middle Eastern politics to a very important extent. The first is the end of the Cold War, which had altered the political landscape of the Middle East. The end of the Cold War offered a historic opportunity to examine how states respond to large-scale international change. Syria, as an ally of the Soviet Union and a country that had successfully exploited the Cold War rivalry, has been significantly affected by change in the international system. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States (US) initiated a foreign policy doctrine based on American hegemony. The first expression of this policy was manifested in the war on Iraq, which was initiated in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on January 17, 1991. The crisis was an opportunity for the US to display the rules of its "new world order". Syria's response to the Iraqi crisis was to join the anti-Iraq coalition alongside the US. This was a significant shift in Syria's foreign policy, as the country had been allied against the US during the Cold War period. The Madrid Peace Conference, initiated by the US, had been another opportunity for it to assert this new order. Syria was the first state to accept the US proposal of a peace conference. The decision of Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad, who had previously tried to obstruct any bilateral, direct and unconditional peace initiatives, to participate in the Madrid conference, marked a significant and radical change in Syria's strategy for peace in the Middle East.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the world was shaken by the September 11, 2001 attacks. Following these attacks on New York and Washington by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization, the US declared a "war on terror" in an effort to reassert its superpower position, invading Iraq in 2003. Syria opted to counter the US and became the leading critic of the invasion of Iraq. It also objected to the US

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demand for the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Relations were further aggravated by the US labeling of Syria as part of the "axis of evil", and by Syria's relations with Hezbollah and Hamas, which had similarly been labeled "terrorist organizations".

In both of these time frames, we see a change at the international level. The end of the Cold War witnessed systemic transformation resulting from changes in system polarity. The subsequent September 11 attacks, which were the first direct, large-scale attack on the US homeland since the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, had strategic significance for all actors and for the international system. The resultant US military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq had serious impacts on the dynamics of the international system that had been emerging since the end of the Cold War. The US-led war on terror and "mission" of regime change forced all significant actors to respond to the American policies. Both changes were the result of assertive action on the part of the US to maintain a unipolar international structure. Some scholars argue the attacks shifted this structure towards instability and great power balancing. This study accepts the argument of Lieber and Alexander that the major powers did not engage in a traditional balancing of power against the US during the post-9/11 era. It is possible to discuss continuing American dominance in the international system during both epochs.[1] This makes it feasible to draw a comparison between Syrian foreign policy responses at the end of the Cold War and in the post-9/11 period, given that the international system is hegemonic in both periods. While the end of the Cold War brought a much more profound change than September 11, both placed enormous pressure on small powers to bandwagon with the US in the absence of another great power to balance it, especially in the Middle East. However, faced with similar external constraints, Syria's response to each situation was quite different. In the former situation, Syria chose to bandwagon with the US, while in the latter it tried to balance through its alliance with Iran and sub-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah.[2] This discussion pursues the question: "Why

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[1] Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing", *International Security*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, (2005), pp. 109-139.

[2] Here, what is meant by "balancing" is not traditional balancing behavior. It is about "asymmetrical balancing" between great powers and non-great powers. Given their limited means of engaging in

did Syria respond differently to the end of the Cold War and the "war on terror" processes initiated by the US after September 11 even though the external constraints (US hegemony, pressures on bandwagoning) were similar?" The answer to that question tried to be given through testing neoclassical realist foreign policy model. In this model, international change is taken as the independent variable, and Syria's responses to the changes in the international system are analyzed through domestic intervening variables which are leader's perceptions about the international system, domestic constraints and domestic motivations. Finally, the foreign policy outcomes of Syria during international changes are regarded as the dependent variable.

The aim of the thesis is to analyze and explain this variation in Syria's foreign policy behaviors. The argument is that, while accepting that the international system structures and constrains policy choices, Syrian leaders' beliefs about the international system, domestic constraints and domestic motivations are determining factors shaping foreign policy during periods of international flux. US perceptions of and approaches to Syria during these periods also affected Syria's alignment preferences. While the George Bush the father offered certain incentives to Hafiz al-Assad in 1991 to bandwagon with the US, his son George W. Bush presented sticks, but no carrots, to President Bashar al-Assad in 2003.

This work will study Syrian foreign policy-making during periods of international change using a neoclassical realist framework. The periods studied within the framework of this work are the end of the Cold War and the post-September 11 eras. The argument of neoclassical realism is that, although the international system determines the boundaries of a state's foreign policy, it is also necessary to analyze how systemic pressures are translated by states. In that sense, this work is aimed at reconciling realist power political arguments with domestic concerns.

What has directed me to the analysis of Syria's responses to international changes relates to its initial foreign policy decisions in the aftermath of the Cold War. Its actions seemed to prove the neo-realist argument that a change in the international

traditional balancing, small states and substate groups' support violence against US targets, and their offensive rhetoric is named "asymmetrical balancing" (Lieber and Alexander, op. cit p. 138).

system leads to a change in the foreign policies of states. At the beginning of the 1990s, right after the end of the Cold War, Syria seemed to enter a period of foreign policy change, positioning itself on the right side of the "new world order". Within this framework, it acted to improve its relations with the US and to support the start of an Arab-Israeli peace process. These strategic decisions also created hopes for the beginning of some political and economic reforms in Syria. However, these predictable initial foreign policy decisions did not persist. In the 2000s, Syria responded to the international developments after September 11 through balancing, seeking to prevent the effects of American hegemony in the region by maximizing links to other powers, including China, North Korea and Russia. Syria also preserved its Iranian alliance as a counter to US dominance in the Gulf, and partnered with it in the development of an arms industry. Syria is now perceived as a member of a "radical camp", along with Iran, and is entangled in a number of important US policy issues in the Middle East. These include the war on terror, involvement in Lebanon, the Arab-Israeli conflict and efforts to curtail the spread of weapons of mass destruction. In spite of some partial reforms, there is an apparent discrepancy between widespread expectations of political and economic change in Syria at the beginning of the 1990s and in the current situation.

Middle Eastern studies has been rich in foreign policy analysis but poor in contributions to the theoretical development of International Relations. This is related to the general perception that the Middle East is immune to the generalizations and findings of International Relations due to its particularities. According to one scholar, "Middle Eastern political processes defy observation, discourage generalization and resist explanation".[3] Scholars studying the Middle East focus on this tendency. Rex Brynen asserts that 77% of articles on the Middle East include no theoretical content.[4] Fawaz Gerges describes an "anti-theoretical

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[3] James A. Bill, "The Study of Middle East Politics 1946–1996: A Stocktaking", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Autumn 1996), p. 503.

[4] Rex Brynen, "The State of the Art in Middle Eastern Studies: A Research Note on Inquiry and the American Empire", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, (Fall 1986), Vol. 8, p. 408.

tendency" in the Middle Eastern studies.[5] This understanding has begun to change with the recent works of scholars that link two subject areas: International Relations and Middle East politics. The works of Fawcett, Gause, Hinnebusch and Halliday can be cited as examples of these.[6] As Fawcett asserts, despite the advances of the recent years, relatively little has been done to bring Middle East Studies and International Relations together.[7] In that sense, a theoretically-informed account in this work is aimed at filling a gap in the literature on Syrian foreign policy. It also aims to contribute to neoclassical realist literature. Neoclassical realism is a relatively new attempt in International Relations theory mainly interested in the political rise and fall of Great Powers. In reality, this is a general trend in International Relations theory. Small states have been portrayed as having little to offer in terms of International Relations theory. Thus, this work also aims to contribute to neoclassical realist theory through analysis of the foreign policy of a small state through this framework. Briefly, this work will serve a double objective: first, to explain and analyze Syrian foreign policy jointly through International Relations and Middle Eastern studies, and second, to contribute to the development of neoclassical realism.

Following this introduction chapter, within which the general framework of the study and initial remarks on the conceptual framework are set forth, the second chapter deals with the theoretical framework, providing a detailed account of neoclassical realist theory. The main arguments of the neoclassical theory and its foreign policy formulation are introduced. The main differences between neoclassical realism, classical realism and neorealism are discussed, and the reasons for the application of neoclassical theory to the Syrian case are explained. Since Syria's alignment

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[5] Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Study of Middle East International Relations: A Critique", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 18, (1991), p. 211.

[6] Louise Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Gregory Gause, "Systemic Approaches to Middle East International Relations", *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Spring 1999), pp. 11–31, Raymond Hinnebush, *The International Politics of the Middle East,* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press); Fred Halliday, The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11–31.

[7] Louise Fawcett, "Introduction", in Louise Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 42–58.

behavior in response to changes in the international environment is at the center of this research, a theoretical analysis of alliance-making is offered. Kenneth Waltz's balance of power and Stephen Walt's balance of threat theories, as well as their findings on states' bandwagoning and balancing behaviors are analyzed. Neoclassical realist Randall Schweller's balance of interest theory is examined and it is put forward why Schweller's theory is more appropriate for explaining Syria's foreign policy behavior in the post-Cold War period and post-September 11 era. Finally, neoclassical realist theory is applied to the Syrian case, and the way in which the international structure is mediated through domestic variables in the Syrian context is elaborated. The analysis at the international level focuses on structural considerations and constraints shaping Syrian foreign policy. These factors include Syria's formation as a result of Western imperialism, its position in the international system and changes in the balance of power. The analysis at the domestic level will put forward how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level variables. By arguing that there is a need for close examination of the contexts within which foreign policies are formulated and implemented, three domestic intervening variables are introduced. The first of these is the leader's perceptions. This analysis is centered on Hafiz and Bashar, their policies and perceptions regarding the international system. The second domestic intervening variable is made up of domestic constraints, including state formation, ideology/identity and public support. The third domestic intervening variable is composed of domestic motivations.

The third chapter deals with foreign policy-making in Syria. Since the primary objective of this study is to analyze Syrian foreign policy outcomes in the face of international change, a theoretical analysis of foreign policy-making is crucial. In this section, the process of foreign policy formulation, the actors influencing foreign policy decisions, foreign policy change and impediments to foreign policy change are analyzed. The chapter starts by defining and analyzing foreign policy, including the process of foreign policy formulation. The last issue studied in this section is foreign policy change. How this change is studied within International Relations literature and the contributions of certain studies to it are examined. It is asserted that there is no consensus on the concept of foreign policy change, and the ways various

scholars define the term are examined. Factors stimulating foreign policy change are laid out and impediments to foreign policy change are analyzed.

The fourth chapter provides a historical background to Syrian foreign policy during the Cold War years, which is necessary for identifying its responses to changes in the international context. This chapter begins with a short account of Syrian foreign policy during the post-independence period, 1946–1970, and then focuses on the period beginning with Hafiz's rise to power in 1970, introducing the international and domestic structures shaping foreign policy. It is argued that Hafiz's leadership marked a new era in Syrian foreign policy, a rationalist foreign policy pursuing realist and limited goals. For example, he exploited the Cold War rivalry and the dynamics of Syria's alliance with the Soviet Union. Syrian foreign policy in this period is examined through analysis of its policies regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq War and involvement in Lebanon. This historical background will make it possible to identify the parameters of Syrian foreign policy during the Cold War era in order to better understand its responses in the post-Cold War and September 11 environments.

The focus of the fifth chapter is the impact of the end of the Cold War in the Middle East, particularly in Syria. The implications of the end of the Cold War for the international system and for Syria are analyzed. It is argued that changes in the international system explain changes in Syrian foreign policy to a certain extent; however, they are not their sole determinant. Although Hafiz's strategic decisions in this period seemed clear-cut and spontaneous, in reality they were the result of a long process. A change of direction had been observed in Syrian foreign policy during the second half of the 1980s, stimulated by both external and internal dynamics. Syria's responses to the end of the Cold War are examined through two case studies. The first case is Syria's participation to the anti-Iraq coalition led by the US in the Gulf War. The factors directing Syria to bandwagon with the US are discussed. It is argued that Syria was not only pushed to bandwagon with the US due to a threat perception. In addition to these structural conditions, internal and regional dynamics, as well as Hafiz's perceptions, played a role in Syria's participation in the Gulf War.

As Schweller's balance of interest theory suggests, the benefits of participation in the coalition were an important factor in the regime's involvement, and also helped to legitimize the decision in the eyes of the public. The second case examined is Syria's participation in the Madrid Peace Conference initiated by the US in 1991. The international and the domestic reasons behind this decision by Hafiz, who had previously attempted to obstruct bilateral, direct and unconditional peace initiatives with Israel, are discussed. It is suggested that Syria realized that rejecting the peace process would no longer be a realistic option in the newly emerging international order. As a result, the Syrian regime modified its position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The methods used by the regime to justify its decision to participate are also analyzed.

The sixth chapter deals with the post-September 11 period, during which Syria's disenchantment with the West has begun. It is argued that Syria's cooperation with the US in the 1990s was discontinued in this period. In the 2000s, Syria's relations with both the US and Israel were transformed. It is suggested that several factors contributed to this process, including the death of Hafiz and the rise to power of his inexperienced son Bashar, the presidential transition in the US from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, the election of "hawkish" politician Ariel Sharon in Israel and the beginning of al-Aqsa Intifada. In any case, the September 11 attacks are seen as a turning point in Syrian-US relations. Although it cooperated with the US by providing information about the al-Qaeda organization and its members, efforts by the Syrian regime were not appreciated by the US administration, which criticized Syria for its continuing support for terrorist groups. The tension between the two countries peaked with the US military intervention in Iraq, which began on March 19, 2003. US accusations against Syria during this period are analyzed, and a comparison is made between its actions in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War. The analysis of Syrian foreign policy, which is performed through an examination of international imperatives and the internal factors involving Bashar's perceptions, domestic constraints and motivations follow a neoclassical realist line of thought. Schweller's balance of interest theory is also useful for understanding Syria's balancing behavior during this period. In the next section of this chapter, Syria's involvement in Lebanon is analyzed. The factors forcing it to withdraw from the

country and the consequences of that withdrawal are discussed. The impact of its Lebanon policy on its relations with the Western world is examined. Finally, Syria's relations with Iran and Hamas and Hezbollah are analyzed to show how Syria used these relations as a balancer against the US. The work concludes with a summary of the theoretical framework, a final argument and the presentation of findings from the case studies.

These case studies cover the period between 1990 and 2005, and are examined in two parts. The first part, titled "The End of the Cold War and Syria: Engagement with the new world order", is an examination of Syria's decision to cooperate with the West through analysis of two scenarios: Syria's support for the Gulf War and its participation in the Madrid Peace Conference. In that part, the reasons pushing Syria to cooperate with the West, mainly the US is examined. The question is asked whether or not the change in Syria's foreign policy behavior can be attributed to the systemic change resulting from the end of the Cold War. The second part, titled "The Post-September 11 Period: Syria's Detachment from the New World Order", is an analysis of Syria's foreign policy decisions from the September 11 attacks through its opposition to the 2003 Iraq War, as well as its involvement in Lebanon. In this section, the question is why Syria did not maintain its cooperative attitude towards the US, instead choosing to defy the hegemon, against the expectations of the realist analysis.

I had planned to conduct field research in Syria; however, realizing this objective became improbable following the uprising that broke out in March 2011. The closed and secretive decision-making processes in Syria precluded engaging in discussions with relevant governmental figures, who could provide first-hand testimony.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Neoclassical Realist Theory

This work suggests a theory of Syrian foreign policy-making of Syria in periods of international change that **tests** neoclassical realist theory. Gideon Rose coined the term "neoclassical realism" in a 1998 *World Politics* article, specifically in reference to books by Thomas Christensen, Randall Schweller, William Wohlforth and Fareed Zakaria, as well as an anthology of articles previously published in the journal *International Security*. Rose notes neoclassical realism "explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought".[8]

According to Rose, in order to understand the responses of states to the external environment, it is necessary to analyze how systemic pressures are translated through intervening unit-level variables. Beginning with the fundamental assumption of neorealism that the international system structures and constrains the foreign policies of states, it is argued that power distribution and structural constraints alone are not enough to explain foreign policy behavior. Rose asserts that this falls under realism because it accepts that "a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities". On the other hand, it is neoclassical because the adherents of this theory argue that "the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is direct and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening

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[8] Gideon Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, (October 1998), p. 152.

variables at the unit level".[9] Neoclassical realism is therefore both an extension and a response to Waltzian neorealism. This response is maintained through neoclassical realism's addition of "domestic politics, internal extraction capacity and processes, state power and intentions, and leaders' perceptions of capabilities and relative power" in the analysis of the foreign policies of states.[10] In that sense neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive framework for analysis of the foreign policy behavior of states.

The starting point and independent variable in the neoclassical realist model is relative power. According to neoclassical realists, the anarchic international system and power distribution are the primary determinants of a state's interests and behaviors. They generally agree with Wohlforth's definition of "power", which refers to "the capabilities or resources…with which states can influence each other".[11] At this stage, the ways in which relative power establishes the fundamental parameters of a state's foreign policy are analyzed. This is where neoclassical realists converge with neo-realists. Neoclassical realists believe that "over the long run, a state's foreign policy cannot transcend the limits and opportunities thrown by the international environment".[12] They distinguish between power resources and a country's foreign policy interests.

While accepting that states seek security, neoclassical realists argue that states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by controlling and shaping their internal environments. They suggest analyzing how systemic pressures are translated by states in order to understand the ways in which they interpret and respond to their external environment. Neoclassical realists argue that systemic pressures are translated through unit-level intervening variables, such as decision-makers'

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[9] Ibid, p.146.

[10] Randall Schweller, "The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism", in *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field*, Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (eds.), (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 317.

[11] William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance, Power and Perceptions during the Cold War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 4.

[12] Rose, op. cit, p. 151.

perceptions and the domestic state structure.[13] Domestic intervening variables are among the most central and important innovations of neoclassical realism.

The first intervening variable is decision-makers' perceptions, through which systemic pressures must be translated. Neoclassical realists believe that the perceptions of leaders and elites on relative power must be analyzed because "statesmen, not states, are the primary actors in international affairs".[14] Neoclassical realists found neorealists' conception of a black-box corresponding to the state problematic. According to Wohlforth, good theories of foreign policy must deal with the details of statesmen's perceptions of the distribution of power.[15] State foreign policy is the product of leaders' perceptions of their place in the international system, and of domestic considerations like regime survival, risks, rewards and ideological beliefs. Taliaferro et al. describe the two-level game that leaders play: "on the one hand they must respond to the external environment but on the other they must extract and mobilize resources from domestic society, work through domestic institutions and maintain the support of key stakeholders".[16]

The second intervening variable is domestic state power, which constrains leaders' perceptions. Leaders are thought to define "national interests" and to conduct foreign policy according to their perceptions of relative power; however, they are constrained by the domestic environment. According to Zakaria, "state power is that portion of national power the government can extract for its purpose and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends".[17] Schweller observes four domestic variables constraining leaders: elite consensus, elite cohesion,

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[13] Rose, op. cit, p.151–152.

[14] Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 42.

[15] Wohlforth (1993), op. cit.

[16] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state and foreign policy", in *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy* Steven E. Lobell and Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (eds.), (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 7.

[17] Zakaria (1999), op. cit, p. 9.

social cohesion and regime vulnerability.[18] Taliaferro, meanwhile, describes the domestic variables that constrain each state's response as: state institutions, state sponsored nationalism and statist or anti-statist ideology.[19]

In this causal chain, foreign policy outcome is the dependent variable. According to defensive realists, the dominant pattern of state behavior is security maximization, while for offensive and classical realists, it is power maximization. Here, neoclassical realists offer some insights. Rose argues, for example, that neoclassical realism predicts that increased capabilities lead to an expansion of a country's foreign policy activity, and that a decrease leads to a contraction. This process is described as not depending only on objective material trends but also on how political leaders subjectively perceive them. It is thought to take a longer time for weak powers to translate their increasing capabilities into foreign policy activity. While Rose has ventured predictions, he has also asserted that "neoclassical realism has a decidedly non-mechanistic feel [and] does not claim that power-related factors will drive all aspects of a state's foreign policy, only that they will affect its broad contours".[20]

Foreign policy does not necessarily coincide with the systemic imperatives. Neoclassical realism, through incorporating domestic constraints in the analysis, explains why states cannot respond properly to the systemic constraints and consequences of that action. Rathbun asserts that "[w]hen states do not respond ideally to their structural situations, neoclassical realism tells us we should find evidence of domestic politics and ideas distorting the decision-making process".[21]

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[18] Randall L. Schweller, *Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 128.

[19] Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", in *Security Studies*, Vol. 15. No. 3, (July–September 2006), p. 468.

[20] Rose, op. cit, p. 167.

[21] Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism", in *Security Studies*, (1998), Vol. 17, p. 296

Independent Variable	Intervening Variable I	Intervening Variable II	Dependent Variable

| Anarchic International System | Leader's Perceptions about the International System | Domestic State Power | Foreign Policy |
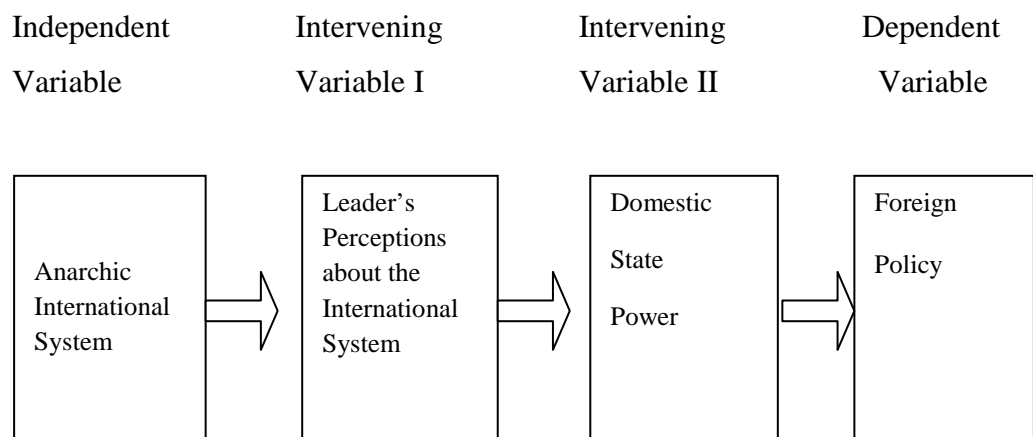
Figure 2.1. The Neoclassical Realist Model of Foreign Policy Analysis

2.1.1. Classical Realism, Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism

Lobell et al. state that "neoclassical realism builds upon the complex relationship between the state and society found in classical realism without sacrificing the central insight of neorealism about the constraints of the international system".[22] So, where does neoclassical realism stand? What is its relationship with classical realism and neorealism?

According to classical realism, the nature of man is the fundamental driving force that pushes states and individuals to act in a way that places interests over ideologies. Classical realism is defined as the "drive for power and the will to dominate [that are] held to be fundamental aspects of human nature".[23] Its roots are in the writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hamilton and Clausewitz, while Hans Morgenthau is considered the founder of the classical realist tradition within International Relations theory. Classical realists emphasize the similarities, not the differences, between domestic and international politics, and on the role of ethics and community in

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[22] Lobell et al., op. cit, p. 13.

[23] John Baylis, Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 95.

promoting stability in both domains.[24] It deals with the sources and uses of national power in international politics, and with the problems that leaders face in conducting foreign policy. Classical realists focus both on power distributions among states, and on their relations with domestic society.

Rose accepts that there are many similarities between classical realism and neoclassical realism. Both analyze international and domestic environments and foreign policy with a focus on state, leader and perceptions, causing him to wonder why these authors were not just labeled "classical" realists. He points out that classical realism was never a coherent research program and had failed to develop a generalizable theory of foreign policy. What we call classical realism is a vast repository of texts written by different authors for various purposes over 2500 years. However, neoclassical realism is an attempt to develop an explicit and generalizable foreign policy with a distinct methodology. Secondly, classical realists look only at the role of domestic intervening variables, and discuss the constraints of the international system. On the other hand, neoclassical realists take these constraints as a starting point in their analysis of the relationship between the international and domestic environments.

Neorealist theory was presented in Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, which was published in 1979. Neorealism is based on the same assumptions as realism,[25] but rather than locating human behavior at the centre of its analysis, neorealism places emphasis on the structure of the international political system. Neorealism, which is also identified as "structural realism", identifies anarchy as the main determinant of state behavior. Survival is the main motivation of states and behavior is governed by self-help in state systems. Waltz provides a structural analysis essential to the analysis of international politics, which was analyzed as a system comprising units (states) and a structure. Waltz's contribution is "the system-

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[24] Richard Ned Lebow, "Classical Realism", in *International Relations Theories*, T. Dunne, M. Kurki and S. Smith (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 53.

[25] Four assumptions of realism can be summarized as a) the state is the principal actor in international relations, b) the state is unitary, c) the state is a rational actor, d) the state is preoccupied with national security.

wide component that makes it possible to think of the system as a whole".[26] Waltz defines political structures by three properties: first are the ordering principles; within international relations this is the decentralized structure of anarchy between states. Anarchy refers to the lack of an authority with a monopoly on power. Second is the character of the units; this refers to the functions performed by differentiated units (states). Waltz argues that states that are units of international political systems not formally differentiated by the functions they perform. Any unit has to maintain its position under conditions of anarchy. As long as anarchy persists, states remain similarly functioning units. All states function according to the determinants of the international political system. Third is the distribution of capabilities; units of an anarchic system are considered functionally undifferentiated. States differ significantly only in regard to their greatly varying capabilities. The state units of an international system are distinguished primarily by their greater or lesser capacity to perform similar tasks. The structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities across the system's units. Structural variations occur with the rise and fall of great cultures, and the balance of power shifts accordingly. Structural variations create expectations on how system units will behave and about the outcomes their interactions will produce. Neorealists argue that in order to understand why a state behaves in a particular way, it is necessary to examine its relative capabilities and its external environment.

What, then, is the relationship between neorealism and neoclassical realism? Similarities between the two exist in their assumptions about the conflictual nature of politics, the centrality of group conflict and importance of relative power distribution. In addition, both give primacy to independent systemic variables. Both attempt to generate testable and probabilistic hypotheses. Neorealism and neoclassical realism differ on the basis of the dependent variable. While neoclassical realism seeks to explain the foreign policy behavior of a state as an outcome, neorealism aims to explain recurrent patterns in international outcomes.[27] In addition, neorealism does not take the domestic level into account, whereas

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[26] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: Mac Graw Hill, 1979), p. 79.

[27] Lobell et al., op. cit, p. 19.

neoclassical realism does. According to neo-realists, domestic differences between countries are unimportant because pressures from the international system are strong and straightforward enough to cause similarly situated states to behave alike, regardless of their internal characteristics. In contrast, neoclassical realists incorporate the domestic level into their analysis as an intervening variable.

Table 2.1. Classical Realism, Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism[28]

Theory	View of the International System	View of the Units	Dependent Variable	Causal Logic
Classical Realism	Somewhat important	Differentiated	Foreign policies of states	Power distributions→ foreign policy
Neorealism	Very Important	Undifferentiated	International political outcomes	Relative power distributions→ international outcomes
Neoclassical Realism	Important	Differentiated	Foreign policies of states	Relative power distributions→ internal factors→ foreign policy

In this thesis, Syria's responses to important international changes are the main subject of analysis. International change is seen as the subject of neorealist theory, giving priority to the systemic level. However, neorealist theory does not fully correspond to the framework and the outcomes of this study. Firstly, this work analyzes the foreign policy responses of a particular state to systemic imperatives. However, Waltz himself argued that the theories must deal with the "autonomous

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[28] Lobell et al., op. cit p. 20.

realms". He states that since foreign policy is not an autonomous realm driven by both external and internal factors, it does not require an explanation.[29] In that sense, what neorealism presents us are the systemic consequences of states' responses, rather than the foreign policy responses of particular states to systemic imperatives. In contrast, many neoclassical realists examine how states respond to changes in their relative positions of power.[30] Neoclassical realism explicitly theorizes state behavior. Taliafferro argues that while neorealist theory lacks a theory of the state, "neoclassical realism provides a fuller conception of the state by specifying how systemic imperatives will likely translate, through the medium of state power, into actual foreign and security policies".[31]

Secondly, although the neorealist argument that the international system puts pressure on states to respond according to its constraints over time is borrowed for this dissertation, it is also argued that the international system cannot explain all policy choices made by states. It is also necessary to examine how international imperatives have filtered through the medium of state structure. As Zakaria argues, "a good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic and other influences, specifying what aspects of policy can be explained by what factors".[32] Both the imperatives of the international system resulting from system changes and how these changes were identified and assessed by the regime are included in the analysis of Syria's responses to the end of the Cold War and the post-September 11 environment. The work thus incorporates both system and sub-systemic factors like state-governance structure and individual perceptions. This approach corresponds to the framework of neoclassical realist theory. As pointed out by Rose and Schweller,[33] neoclassical realism brings statesmen back into the picture. The neoclassical realist analysis, by examining the perceptions of political elites

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[29] Kenneth Waltz, "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy", *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, (Autumn 1996), cited in Rose, op. cit, p. 145.

[30] Rose, op. cit, p. 154.

[31] Taliaferro, (2006), op. cit, p. 468.

[32] Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay", *International Security*, Vol. 17, (1992), p. 198.

[33] Rose, op. cit, Schweller, (2003), op. cit.

regarding the international system and domestic considerations, takes agency into account.

2.1.2. The Theoretical Debate on Alliance Making

> What causes states to support another country? How do statesmen choose among potential threats when seeking external support? How do the great powers choose which states to protect, and how do weaker states decide whose protection to accept? In short, how do states choose their friends?[34]

In order to understand the fundamental question of this work: "Why did Syria bandwagon with the US in the aftermath of the Cold War, while it choose to balance the US in the post-September 11 environment?", we need to look at the theoretical debate around alliance formation and the responses to it by the weak to the preponderant powers. When do states tend to balance or to bandwagon? Answering this question is particularly important for an understanding of Syria's foreign policy.

The term "bandwagoning" first appeared as a detailed theoretical concept in Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* as a description of alliance formation behavior. In his work, Waltz credits Stephen van Eraa with originating the term.[35] Schweller, on the other hand, asserts that the term was actually coined by Quincy Wright.[36]

Waltz uses "bandwagoning" as the opposite of "balancing", wherein "bandwagoning refers to joining the stronger coalition, balancing means allying with the weaker side".[37] In his structural model of the balance of power theory, he perceives

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[34] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 1.

[35] Waltz (1979), op. cit, p. 126.

[36] Randall L. Schweller, "Rise of Great Power: History and Theory", in *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power*, Alastair Iain Johnson and Robers S. Ross (eds.) (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 28.

[37] Waltz (1979), op. cit, p. 126.

balancing as a recurrent phenomenon in international politics, asserting, "one predicts that states will engage in balancing behavior whether or not balanced power is the end of their acts".[38] He goes on to draw an important distinction between internal and external balancing. Relying on states' own capabilities means internal balancing. Waltz defines external balancing as relying on the capabilities of allies, and maintains that internal balancing is a more reliable and precise method of balancing.

Waltz mainly examines the theoretical aspects of strong state behavior in the system. Neorealism is often criticized for treating small states like great powers "writ small" and for stressing the functional similarity of states. In fact, this deficiency cannot be attributed solely to neorealism. The discipline of International Relations has historically focused on the behavior and activities of the Great Powers. On the alignment behavior of small states, as a classical realist, Hans Morgenthau asserts that "small nations have always viewed their independence either to the balance of power or to their lack of attractiveness for imperialistic aspirations".[39]

Stephen Walt, in his famous work *Origins of Alliances*, modifies Waltz's balance of power theory by adding the factor of states' threat perceptions in determining behavior. With his balance of threat theory, Walt argues that states tend to balance against threats and not necessarily against power. Balancing is defined as allying with the others against a prevailing threat, bandwagoning refers to alignment with the source of danger.[40] Walt asserts that states usually balance and rarely bandwagon. He contributed to the literature through an analysis of the alignment behavior of weaker states, testing his theory on alliance formation in the Middle East. According to Walt, the factors that determine balancing or bandwagoning are aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and the offensive intentions of a powerful actor. Weak states can be expected to balance when threatened by states with roughly equal

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[38] Ibid, p. 128.
[39] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 133.

[40] Walt (1987), op. cit, p. 17.

capabilities, and in fact this is the more common tactic, but are inclined to bandwagon when threatened by a great power. Walt, like Waltz, perceives balancing and bandwagoning as opposites. He regards balancing as the safer act because, as he sees it, bandwagoning is an unequal exchange; the state that aligns itself with a dominant power makes some asymmetrical concessions and accepts a subordinate role. He also examines the influence of ideology and instruments of foreign aid on the alliance choices of states, and he notes that they do not have any influence in explaining states' international behavior.[41]

Walt's theory cannot, however, explain Syria's alignment behavior in the periods that are studied in this work. Syria had indeed bandwagoned with the US in the aftermath of the Cold War, but for Walt, bandwagoning is a costly activity for the weaker state. In Walt's terms:

> Bandwagoning involves unequal exchange; the vulnerable state makes asymmetrical concessions to the dominant power and accepts a subordinate role… Bandwagoning is an accommodation to pressure (either latent or manifest)… Most important of all, bandwagoning suggests a willingness to support or tolerate illegitimate actions by the dominant ally.[42]

Although, security was a driving force behind Syria's inclination towards allying with the US after the Cold War, it was not the only motivation. In addition, this alignment did not force Syria to support or tolerate illegitimate actions by the dominant ally, as Walt suggests. Although he perceives bandwagoning to be an unequal exchange between a dominant power and a weaker state, the US offered Syria some positive incentives, such as an end to its isolation, its removal from US lists of states sponsoring terrorism, and the promise of a US peace effort in reward for its participation in the anti-Iraq coalition during the 1991 Gulf War. In contrast,

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[41] Ibid, p. 180.

[42] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation in Southwest Asia: Balancing and Bandwagoning in Cold War Competition", in *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Euroasian Rimland*, Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 55, cited in Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Summer 1994), p. 80.

Syria's balancing behavior in the context of the US invasion of 2003 remains unexplained by Walt's theory, which can be outlined as such:

1. General form: States facing an external threat will ally with the most threatening power.
2. The greater a state's aggregate capabilities, the greater the tendency for others to align with it.
3. The nearer a powerful state, the greater the tendency for those nearby to align with it.
4. The greater a state's offensive capabilities, the greater the tendency for others to align with it.
5. The more aggressive a state's perceived intentions, the less likely other states are to align against it.
6. Alliances formed to oppose a threat will disintegrate when the threat becomes serious. [43]

When these hypotheses are adapted to the case of Syria in the post-September 11 environment, while it should have bandwagoned with the US, the most threatening power. The US had become Syria's neighbor through its intervention in Iraq; it had offensive capabilities and had exhibited aggression, sending signals to Syria that it would be the next target. Yet, rather than bandwagoning, Syria opted to balance the US. How can this be explained? Contrary to this theory's prediction, why do similarly situated states—or in this case the same state in two different periods—respond differently to similar external circumstances?

The answer to these questions lies within neoclassical realism. While states respond to systemic constraints by aligning with some states and balancing others, these alignment behaviors are also affected by domestic and ideological factors. For a more satisfactory explanation, rather than just focusing on the state alignment behaviors through the lenses of balancing and bandwagoning, it is also necessary to examine the processes within which alignment decisions are made.

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[43] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning" in International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues, 6th edition, eds. Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, (New York: Longman, 2003), p.16.

As a neoclassical realist, Randall Schweller, in his critique of Walt, questions the balance of threat theory. He begins his critique with Walt's definition of the terms balancing and bandwagoning, noting that by his definition, Walt creates a bias, wherein by "defining bandwagoning as a form of capitulation, and thus examining only those alliances formed as a response to significant external threats, Walt not surprisingly finds that balancing is more common than bandwagoning".[44]

Schweller finds three problems with Walt's definition of bandwagoning. First, he states that Walt departs from conventional usage of the term, which defines bandwagoning "as a candidate, side, or movement that attracts adherents or amasses power by its momentum".[45] In that sense, he suggests that Waltz's characterization of "joining the stronger coalition" is more appropriate than Walt's of "aligning with the source of danger". Secondly, Schweller asserts that Walt's definition excludes common forms of bandwagoning for profit rather than security. Finally, Walt's theory only tests for balancing and bandwagoning among threatened states, while it ignores the behavior of unthreatened revisionist powers.[46]

Schweller broadens the parameters of what causes of alignment and argues that alliances are motivated by opportunities for gain as well as by danger and fear. He offers a balance of interest theory, which analyzes alliances driven by profit, since "bandwagon gains momentum through the promise of rewards, not the threat of punishment".[47] On the fundamental difference between bandwagoning and balancing, he observes, "balancing is an extremely costly activity that most states would rather not engage in, but sometimes must to survive and protect their values. Bandwagoning rarely involves cost and is typically done in the expectation of gain. This is why bandwagoning is more common… than Walt and Waltz suggest".[48]

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[44] Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Summer 1994), p. 79.

[45] Ibid, p. 81.

[46] Ibid, p. 83.

[47] Ibid, p. 79.

[48] Ibid, p. 93.

Schweller assumes that all states in the anarchic international system are forced to maximize their influence and improve their position within the system. The systemic environment creates possibilities and fears for states. However, systemic assumptions are not enough to correctly evaluate foreign policy decisions because states have other motivations that make it necessary to examine state motivations and unit-level variables. Schweller's theory attempts to grasp both systemic and unit-level variables. According to the balance of interest theory, state interest refers to the costs a state is willing to pay to defend its values (status quo) relative to the costs it is willing to pay to extend its values (revisionist).[49] He then groups states into two categories based on their interests: *status quo* and *revisionist* states, and delineates the distinct state behaviors *lions* (strong status quo state), *lambs* (weak status quo state), *jackals* (weak revisionist state) and *wolves* (strong revisionist state), based on their interests and according to their relative power.

Within Schweller's analytical framework, since Syria is a weak power[50], we need to analyze the behaviors of *lambs* and *jackals*. *Lambs* are weak states that will pay only low costs to defend and extend their values, and they are unwilling to sacrifice their values. They do not employ military means and do not join coalitions. *Lamb* foreign policy is not driven by irredentist claims. *Lambs* engage in *self-abnegation*, in which self-sacrifice becomes a foreign policy goal. *Jackals*, on the other hand, are states willing to pay high costs to defend their possessions but even higher costs to extend their values. *Jackals* are dissatisfied powers, but they value their possessions; they

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[49] Ibid, p. 90.

[50] In the literature, some scholars call Syria as a "small state", while others as a "weak state". These two terms could be used interchangeably. However, some scholars made a distinction between the two. Some scholars favoring term "small state" intentionally take the size as a way to categorize state behavior. It would indicate territory, population, GDP and military capability. On the other hand, "weak state" proceeds from a state's position in the international distribution of power. Prominent scholars studying on the small/weak state literature like Annette Baker Fox and Robert Rothstein prefer "small state" while Michael Handel uses "weak state". Here, the term "weak" is used in order to be in consistency with Schweller's classification. In the work, the term "small state" is preferred and the "small state" and the "weak state" used as synonms. Syria is considered as a weak/small state in terms of its vulnerable position in the international system. There is no single definition of the weak/small state but most of the literature accept that the range of interests and influence of weak/small states is relatively limited. (Michael Handel, *Weak States in International System*, (London: Frank Cass, 1990).

are risk-averse and opportunistic, and they bandwagon for profit.[51] *Limited aims self-extension* is a foreign policy goal, and these states are motivated towards self-extension and the expectation of making gains.

Syria would be regarded as a *jackal* according to Schweller's classification. A profound irredentism has become rooted in Syria since the state detached itself from the rest of historic Syria ("Greater Syria", including Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) in 1917. The Israeli invasion and then annexation of the Golan Heights made Syria an unsatisfied power. Syria persists in its claims to the Golan Heights and has been engaged in a continuous legal state of war with Israel. Syria's decision to join the American-led coalition during the 1990–1991 Gulf War and its subsequent participation in the US-led peace initiative could be called "jackal bandwagoning". As an unsatisfied power, Syria was motivated to self-extension and had the expectation of making gains by joining the American-led coalition. The incentives offered by the hegemon increased Syria's motivation. It hoped to gain international and regional credibility, to acquire economic benefits and to recover the Golan Heights. All of these expectations were realized through this coalition, with the exception of the recapture of the Golan Heights. In contrast, although harshly threatened by the US in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Syria chose to defy the hegemon. This scenario differed from the previous one, however, in that it received no incentives from the US for its bandwagoning, threatening it instead with the stick of imminent attack.

Schweller's contribution to alliance formation literature is valuable. Since balance of threat theory only considers the cases in which the goal of alignment is security, it cannot explain why some states' behaviors run contrary to its predictions. This work contends that the balance of interest approach is also helpful in understanding Syria's alignment behavior in the immediate post-Cold War period, as well as in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks.

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[51] Ibid, pp. 93–95.

2.2. Adaptation of Neoclassical Realist Theory to the Syrian Case

According to neorealist thinking, shifts in the external balance of power lead to foreign policy changes. When we adapt this argument to the foreign policy of Syria following the Cold War, it is expected that Syria would have come under severe pressure to bandwagon with the US. In this way it could divert the greater threat from Israel with the collapse of bipolarity. Syria's entry into the Gulf War coalition and its participation to the Madrid Peace Conference can be interpreted in this way. However, the weak and dependent Syrian state did not become a client of the West in the subsequent years, as structuralist thinking proposes.[52] The extent to which Syria is dependent on external powers, and to what extent we can apply *balance of power* theory to the analysis of its foreign policy behavior is called into question. Theoretically, strong states are identified as the promoters of alliance-building processes, mainly motivated by self-interest in order to maximize security and power, while states lacking security are expected to construct alliances with stronger states in order to maintain their survival. Syria could thus be interpreted as a small state lacking security from the standpoint of material capacity. Therefore, Syria might be expected to pursue more conciliatory relations with the US. Such moves may have generated economic and political advantages for the current regime and may have brought with them the realization of its strategic and territorial goals. Egypt, Jordan and Libya, for example, had followed this path and gained financially through reconciliation with the US, but Syria did not do so. Its foreign policy behavior, which was not in conformity with the unitary actor and the objective premises of neorealism, can be considered through neoclassical realism. Rathbun asserts that neoclassical realism "begins with the premise that an ideal state behavior is that which conforms to the unitary actor and objectivity premises of neorealism but shows that when these conditions are not met empirically, domestic politics and ideas are culprits".[53]

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[52] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Globalization and Generational Change: Syrian Foreign Policy between Regional Conflict and European Partnership", *The Review of International Affairs,* Vol. 3, No. 2, (Winter 2003), p. 206.

[53] Rathbun, op. cit, p. 312.

Although Syria has been profoundly affected by systemic forces in its history, as seen in the period following the end of the Cold War, its responses to these forces haven't been fully determined by the systemic structures. Rather, Syria challenged these systemic structures. Foreign policy behavior can then be adequately explained as an outcome of the interaction between the international level at which the state operates and its domestic concerns. Syria at least attempts to be an independent agent in the international arena, and systemic factors cannot be seen as the sole determinant of its foreign policy.

In this work, the theoretical framework of neoclassical theory is adapted. International change is the independent variable and Syrian foreign policy is the dependent variable. The first intervening variable is Syrian leaders' perceptions about the international system; that is, it centers on the political leader. The second variable is made up of domestic constraints that put pressure on this leader, like state institution formation, ideology/identity and the need for public support. The third is made up of domestic motivations which is proposed by Schweller as "state interests and motivations".[54]

If structural constraints were sufficient to explain foreign policy behavior, Syria would not have been expected to take a foreign policy stand in defiance of the US in the post-September environment. Thus, both systemic and internal factors must be incorporated into the analysis of its foreign policy behavior with regard to the two periods in question in this work. This analysis asks whether changes at the level of the international system also brought changes in Syria's alignments and self-help condition, and why it did not maintain its cooperative attitude towards the US in the 2000s. It is argued that, although states are subjected to systemic factors and can adapt to systemic changes, they can also challenge the systemic structures that

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[54] It is preferred to use "domestic motivations" rather than the original usage of the term "state interests and motivations" proposed by Randall Schweller with the intention that the term "state" would lead to ambiguity. Since the first intervening variable in this study is the leader's perceptions, it would be hard to distinguish the leader from the state if the term is used in its original version of "state interests and motivations". Here "domestic motivations" used as the opposite of "domestic constraints" which is the second domestic intervening variable of this study. It signifies the factors like security gains, economic benefits, regional and international credibility motivating a state to take certain foreign policy actions.

constrain them. Neorealist theory's neglect of state autonomy from the structural determinants of the international political system is criticized.

In addition, an examination of Syrian foreign policy decisions from a historical perspective reveals that it is cooperative when its interests are taken into account, as was the case with the Gulf War and Madrid Peace Conference, but destructive when they are not, as with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Thus, adapting Schweller's *balance of interest* theory is useful in the analysis here, since Syria was arguably was cooperative with the West after the Cold War not just because of the systemic imperatives, but also because of that satisfied its national interests both politically and economically.

These problems can be explored in two ways: 1) by looking at different levels of analysis, 2) by looking at various case studies in order to examine Syrian foreign policy in the period examined in this dissertation. Accepting that the internal and external dynamics are connected, this study adopts two different levels of analysis aimed at reconciling realist power-political arguments with domestic concerns.

2.2.1. The International Level

In line with neoclassical realist understandings, it is accepted that that the position of the state in the international system defines the boundaries of the policies it can adopt in the long run.[55] States' relative power determines what they can do. It is also argued that during periods of change in the international system, states try to adapt to the newly emerging structure.

It is accepted that Syria's foreign policy has been shaped by the international political system and the regional state sub-system of the Middle East. Imperialism is one of the international forces that has profoundly shaped the Syrian state. It is the product of Western imperialism's imposition of a Western-style regional states

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[55] Rose, op. cit, p. 144.

system after the First World War. Imperialism had direct consequences for the Syrian state system and identity. The partition of historic Syria (*bilad al-sham*) by Western imperialism and the creation of Israel on the territory of southern Syria led to frustration and irredentism.

Syria's relative power and geopolitical position have also determined its ability to pursue its policies. Syria's small geographical size, small population and limited labor base have positioned it as "a small state" in the international system. Its relatively weak position vis-à-vis its main enemy Israel, which enjoys permanent military superiority, has created security concerns. This disadvantaged positioning against Israel has forced it accept its existence and take steps to contain the Israeli threat. American support for Israel also weakened Syria's position in this struggle. On the whole, Syria's geopolitical positioning has been both a liability and an asset. Situated in the heart of the Middle East, Syria enjoys "exceptional strategic importance".[56] This positioning has made it an important participant in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, its unprotected boundaries with surrounding countries Iraq, Turkey and its main enemy Israel, have created exceptional vulnerability.

Wars have also shaped Syrian foreign policy behavior. The Arab defeat in 1967 war brought a new era of revisionism. The 1967 disaster was interpreted as being a consequence of its failure to adapt to realist rules of survival in the state system.[57] Hinnebusch argues that "this defeat generated intense new security fears in Syria, gave new roots to revisionism, and further locked Syria into the conflict with Israel and its backers… and provoked the rise to power of Hafiz".[58] According to Quilliam, with the defeat in 1967, the role of ideology was relegated and the main determinant

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[56] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Foreign Policy of Syria", in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States,* R. Hinnebusch, A. Ehteshami (eds.) (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), p. 144.

[57] Raymond Hinnebusch, *Revolution from Above*, (London, NY: Routledge, 2002), p. 164.

[58] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Revisionist Dreams, Realistic Strategies: The Foreign Policy of Syria", in Bahgat Korany and Ali al-Din (eds.), *The Foreign Policy of Arab States: The Challenge of Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 375.

of foreign policy became the international political system.[59] Hafiz replaced Syria's historic ambitions with the more realistic goals of recovering occupied lands, defending Palestinian rights and defense of the Syrian state, as well as general enhancement of its stature in the Arab world. In 1973, Syria and Egypt went to war to liberate the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Although the Golan Heights were not recovered, the war resulted in a moral and psychological victory for the Arab states through its challenge of Israeli supremacy. At first, Syria accepted Henry Kissinger's mediation of Golan Heights disengagement negotiations, which was seen as a first step to an Israeli withdrawal. However, Sadat's separate peace agreement with Israel undermined Syrian diplomatic leverage, and Syria refused to negotiate a second Disengagement Plan with Israel. Rather, it pursued a policy of bringing Levant states (Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) into its orbit and preventing them from signing separate peace deals with Israel.[60] Israeli-Syrian disengagement negotiations were also important in the sense that they set up diplomatic relations with the US after 15 years. Despite its alliance with the Soviet Union, with the realization that the US could not be ignored in Arab-Israeli negotiations, Hafiz restored US relations in 1974. The first diplomatic visit came when Henry Kissinger received Syrian Foreign Minister Abd al-Halim Khaddam at the White House. [61]

Change in the international balance of power is another element of foreign policy behavior. During the Cold War, Syria had sided with the Soviet Union. Hafiz maintained this close alliance in order to secure arms, which had been a key to its relative success in the 1973 war and to its policy of strategic parity with Israel. The alliance with the Soviet Union also had a psychological impact, granting it the confidence to challenge the United States and Israel. Syria manipulated the superpower rivalry successfully in its need for a superpower patron in its confrontation with Israel until the withdrawal of the Soviet Union as its protector and

[59] Neil Quilliam, *Syria and the New World Order*, (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1999), p. 2.

[60] Hinnebusch (2002), op. cit, p. 154.

[61] Geoffroy Ponte, "Adapting Syria's Foreign Policy to an Increasingly Multipolar World", in *Policy Matters Journal*, (Fall 2009), p. 4.

arms supplier. The subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union exacerbated Syria's geopolitical isolation, which led to changes in its foreign policy strategy. Its initial move to improve relations with the US after the Cold War can be interpreted as a result of this changing international environment, although the international system alone is inadequate for explaining its other foreign policy choices and alignments.

A system-oriented model has some difficulties in general, and in the Middle Eastern context in particular. Regarding difficulties at the system level, Singer asserts firstly that the international system exaggerates the impact of the system on national actors, and conversely ignores the impact of actors on the system. Secondly, the system-oriented model requires a high degree of uniformity in the foreign policy of national actors. A focus on the system does not allow room for maneuver in the behavior of states. The international system approach tends to produce a "black box" or "billiard ball" model by denying differences among nations.[62]

The international system level as a determinant of foreign policy behavior also has some difficulties in the Middle Eastern context. Hinnebusch suggests the realist argument that tsystemic insecurity leads to uniform patterns of behavior is valid to the extent that the system of sovereign states is consolidated. However, in the Middle East, the state system is still in the process of consolidation.[63] Another approach, challenging the international system as a sole level of analysis in the Third World context is representative of Steven David's concept of "omnibalancing" as a mode of explaining the alignment behavior of Third World states. Omnibalancing attempts to bridge the gap between the international perspective and domestic analysis of state behavior. While classic balance of power theory focuses on the state's need to counter threats from other states, omnibalancing considers internal and external threats to the leadership. The reason to focus on internal threats in the Third World regarding alignment behavior related to the colonial past of many of these. Since most were consolidated through external imposition, Third world states are more an

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[62] J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", *World Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (Oct. 1961), pp. 80–81.

[63] Hinnebusch, 2002, op. cit, p. 1.

"artificial construct than a coherent unit".[64] Similarly, the often arbitrary nature of borders and the ill fit of states on national identities lead to friction between states and sub-state and supra-state identities.[65]

2.2.2. The Domestic Level

The other level of analysis to be considered in this dissertation is made up of the domestic intervening variables. Here, the emphasis is on how decisions by and perceptions of leaders influence foreign policy behavior. In order to understand Syria's attempts to operate as an independent agent at the global level rather than merely responding to systemic structures, it is necessary to examine Syria's internal attributes.

In neoclassical realist theory, Rose lists leaders' perceptions and the domestic state structure as the domestic intervening variables. However, other scholars of neoclassical realist thought have proposed additional intervening variables. In addition to his detailed analysis of four domestic variables constraining leaders, those being elite consensus, elite cohesion, social cohesion and regime vulnerability,[66] Schweller also proposes a third intervening variable, which he refers to as "state interests and motivations". He is challenging neorealism's assumption that states with similar positions in the international system respond similarly to systemic pressures, irrespective of interests and motivations.[67] In this work, inspired by Schweller, "domestic motivations" are taken as the third domestic intervening variable.

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[64] Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment", *World Politics*, Vol. 43, (January 1991), p. 239.

[65] Hinnebusch (2002), op. cit.

[66] Schweller (2006), op. cit, p. 128.

[67] Ibid.

In most analyses of Syrian foreign policy, "domestic politics" is a non-issue. The role of domestic politics as an area of foreign policy analysis has seldom been addressed in scholarly literature. In the Syrian case, this relates to the centralization of power by the strong leadership which, it is claimed, makes internal dynamics such as the roles of civil society and the public opinion, irrelevant.[68] Quilliam asserts that although domestic politics may apply in many Third World states, its suitability in the Syrian case is limited due to three factors, namely, "the durability of the Assad regime, the intensity of the Syrian-Israeli conflict, and its consistency in foreign policy".[69] Although some scholars perceive the explanatory power of domestic politics as far more limited and indirect than at the international system level, internal politics cannot be unlinked from Syrian foreign policy. In analysis of the determinants influencing its foreign policy, it would be inaccurate to ignore the internal dynamics within the Syrian state.

Pipes, Lawson and Kedar apply the state level to their analyses. Pipes and Kedar both argue that Syrian foreign policy serves as a tool for legitimizing an unpopular regime, and that the war with Israel, for example, was used as a tool to divert attention from the repressive minority rule of Alawis over the Sunni majority.[70] Lawson applies a model wherein foreign policy is instrumental in managing class cleavages. Lawson tries to link domestic economic crises to the conflicts within the ruling coalition, and suggests that Syria goes to war whenever the government is faced with a domestic threat stemming from economic crisis.[71] This approach dismisses initiatives by the Syrian regime to reach a peace settlement with Israel. Nevertheless, it is safe to argue that to link the continuing war with Israel to domestic ethnic-sectarian strife or economic crisis is inadequate, and that the relationship between the international and the domestic is more complicated. It is known, for

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[68] Jasmine Gani, "Pan-Arabism vs. US Exceptionalism: Ideology in US-Syrian relations", paper presented at the Political Studies Association, 58th Annual Conference, 1–3 April 2008, University of Swansea. http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2008/Gani.pdf (accessed on 03/03/2011)

[69] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 115.

[70] Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 175; Mordechai Kedar, *Asad in Search of Legitimacy*, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005).

[71] Fred Lawson, *Why Syria Goes to War* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

example, that Syria put Arab aid at risk to ally with Iran in the Iran-Iraq War, and by interfering in Lebanon. As Hinnebusch suggests, although the ongoing confrontation with Israel provided some external rent to regime, the argument that it sold its foreign policy for economic purposes ignores the fact that "Hafiz often sacrificed economic to strategic goals".[72]

2.2.2.1. Domestic Intervening Variable I: The Leader's Perceptions

Neoclassical realism argues that the link between the systemic variables and foreign policy behavior is translated through a leader's perceptions and domestic state power. Foreign policy activity is executed by actual people, and this is why some foreign policy decisions may not be in conformity with the imperatives of the international system. On the other hand, as Schweller argues that a rapid shift in the foreign policy behavior of a state would be explainable through a leader's perceptions, which may shift more quickly than a change in capabilities.[73] Neoclassical realism also provides a perspective on explaining foreign policy shifts between the two leaders. This helps to explain foreign policy variations in Syria between Hafiz's and Bashar's leadership.

In order to analyze a leader's perceptions about the international system as a factor influencing foreign policy decisions, it is necessary to provide a brief account of Syrian leaders Hafiz and Bashar, their rise to power, belief systems and personal characteristics.

Hafiz was a military officer in the Ba'athist Military Committee. He seized power through a *coup d'état* in November 1970 and ruled for nearly 30 years, until his death in June 2000. He consolidated the Syrian regime and provided political stability. His regime is perceived as a "personalistic" regime, dependent on "the

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[72] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Modern Syrian Politics", *History Compass*, 6/1, (2008), pp. 263–285.

[73] Schweller (2003), op.cit, p.39.

personality and the image of the man who created it", as Zisser suggests.[74] This is why for years many analysts have identified Syrian foreign policy as being a reflection of Hafiz's personal decision-making tendencies.[75] Hafiz established his regime on the dominance of the Alawi minority.

The Syrian people welcomed Hafiz's rise to power. The main reason for this was a strong hatred among the Syrian public towards Salah Jadid's regime, which Hafiz displaced. According to Seale, Hafiz was more liberal than Jadid, and a "political honeymoon" ensued with his accession.[76] Hafiz's liberal reforms included curbing and purging the hated security services, lifting the restrictions on travel and trade with Lebanon and providing assurances to the private sector. However, he did not permit any challenge to his rule and seemed not to have any ambition to create a pluralistic society. He wanted to achieve national unity through authoritarianism rather than democracy, pursuing "a national consensus cemented by his leadership".[77] Hafiz created a state-sponsored cult of personality, which included the hanging of portraits of him in every public space. He described himself as "a man of institutions", giving primacy to formal institutions while keeping power in his own hands.[78] The main institution of Hafiz's state was the Ba'ath Party, and he had an unchallenged control over the party as its Secretary-General. He secured the existing institutions, including the Regional and National Commands, the People's Assembly and the Central Committee, and formed new institutions like the National Progressive Front, within which political groups other than the Ba'ath became involved, as well as local councils representing Syria's fourteen governorates.[79]

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[74] Eyal Zisser, "What Does the Future Hold For Syria?", *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Article 6, (June 2006).

[75] Jubin Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: Diplomatic Alliance and Power Politics in the Middle East*, (Tauris Academic Studies, 2006).

[76] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, (London: I.B. Tauris&Co. Ltd, 1988) , p. 169.

[77] Ibid, p. 172.

[78] Ibid, p. 173.

[79] Ibid, p. 176.

Hafiz's inner circle also played a key role during his reign. This group was composed of family members, colleagues and tribesmen. They served in key positions and were loyal to Hafiz. His brother Ri'fat was the exception; he had been the right hand of the president, but turned on Hafiz, when he was ill in 1983.[80]

In an "authoritarian populist state" radicalized by the conflict with Israel since 1948, Hafiz al-Assad formalized a realist foreign policy. Under his leadership, foreign policy decisions began to be guided by rational considerations. This rationality can be observed in the decision to replace the ambition of "Greater Syria" with the more realistic goals of recovering the occupied territories and supporting Palestinian rights. The main concern of Hafiz's regime was to maintain its survival and to secure its national interests. As Seale argues, "Hafiz was not an impulsive man… his habit was to weigh his moves carefully, to study the ground, to brood over possible consequences, before venturing forward".[81] His rationality and foresight differentiated him from other authoritarian leaders in the Middle East. Pipes argues, for example, that Hafiz and Saddam Hussein share many similarities: both leaders were about the same age, come from impoverished rural areas, and represent minority groups in their countries. Both tended towards brinkmanship, imposed extreme centralization, relied on Ba'ath Party control, used force routinely and allied with Moscow during the Cold War. Despite the similarities, however, Pipes believes the two leaders also differ significantly. First, Saddam relied on force for its own sake; for Hafiz force was an instrument of power. Second, while Saddam had unrealistic goals that distorted his decision-making, Hafiz knew his limits. Third, Saddam's overt aggression made him enemies; Hafiz avoided trouble. Finally, while Saddam was impatient and had poor timing, Hafiz's sense of timing was refined.[82]

It is also necessary to examine how Hafiz maintained public approval. Force and authoritarianism alone could not explain his power. Seale argues that most Syrians

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[80] Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar Al-Asad and the First Years in Power*, (London: IB Tauris, 2007), p. 9.

[81] Ibid, p. 169.

[82] Daniel Pipes, "Is Damascus Ready for Peace?", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991.

believe that Hafiz came to heal the wounds of Syrian society caused by the policies of previous administrations.[83] His efforts to end Syria's political isolation in the Arab world and towards reconciliation and national unity were welcomed by the people. It is also important to note that he gained certain autonomy from domestic constraints through the formation of a cross-sectarian coalition. In order to prevent domestic opposition in a country ruled by an Alawi minority, Hafiz satisfied ethnic and sectarian groups. He appeased the Sunni bourgeoisie through limited liberalization and created a new bourgeoisie dependent on the state. In order to realize his ambitious economic and military strategies, he needed allies. He tried to win the support of businessmen, artisans and shopkeepers. These efforts proved to be successful, and he managed to keep most of the Syrians behind him. Sadowski suggests that most Syrians believed that joining the Gulf War coalition was profitable for the country, and in a similar fashion, they perceived Syria's decision to sit at the table with Israel as "brave".[84]

Hafiz's popularity extended beyond Syria, and he became an important figure in the Arab world. As Seale suggests, he became the symbol of Arabs' ambition to become "masters of their own destiny in their region".[85] After Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel and Iraq became engaged in battle with Iran in 1980, Hafiz perceived his country as the only challenge to the Israeli threat. He sought to add Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestine to his sphere of influence. He strongly rejected the notion of an Israeli-dominated Middle East. He insisted on a comprehensive peace on all Arab fronts and strongly criticized bilateral peace initiatives. Although Hafiz did not realize his aspirations relating to regional settlement, Syria became a challenge for Israel and the struggle for the Middle East became associated with a rivalry between the two states.[86]

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[83] Seale (1988), op. cit, p. 178.

[84] Yahya Sadowski, "The Evolution of Political Identity in Syria", in Telhami, Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 137–154.

[85] Seale (1988), op. cit, p. 492.

[86] Ibid, p. 493.

Upon Hafiz's death in June 2000, his son Bashar succeeded him, following a constitutional amendment lowering the age requirement for the presidency from 40 to his age of 34. In reality, Bashar's brother Basil had been groomed for the presidency, and Bashar had been studying ophthalmology in London. After Basil died in a car accident in 1994, Bashar returned from London and his rise to power began with his appointment as an officer in the Republican Guard. After 1998, he became responsible for Syria's Lebanese policy and a general campaign against corruption.[87]

Bashar's rise to power prompted a range of reactions. On the one hand, his presidency was the subject of criticism in various circles. There was an understanding that he lacked experience, charisma and leadership ability. The answer to the emerging question of whether or not he had the necessary skills to rule was, "There is no one else".[88] In the world press, and even in the Arab media, Bashar's succession of his father was interpreted as Syria's transition to a "family dynasty".[89]

On the other hand, Bashar's regime, which represents "change within continuity,[90] successfully took the reins of power. This can be explained by many factors. Since the Syrian regime had become highly personalized, Hafiz's death brought a great feeling of uncertainty about the future of the country. The public supported Bashar's succession in the sense that, as Lesch asserts, "he represented the next generation, yet he was still as Assad".[91] The feeling that Hafiz's regime would continue granted Bashar a certain amount of legitimacy, at least for a time.

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[87] Najib Ghadbian, "The New Asad: Dynamics of Continuity and Change in Syria", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (Autumn 2001), p. 625.

[88] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 44.

[89] Ibid.

[90] David W. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 69.

[91] Ibid, p. 79.

Bashar's presidency also created expectations of political and economic liberalization among those who had been awaiting change in Syria. While Hafiz had insisted there was no need for reform, Bashar appeared to understand this need. He was portrayed in the media as a dynamic young man determined to foster modernization and democratization. He was touted as "Mr. Clean"—untainted and determined to fight corruption—to the Syrian public and the world.[92]

His first speech was delivered at the People's Assembly on July 17, 2000, titled, "Change in the Shadow of Continuity and Stability" ". In his speech, while promising commitment to his father's legacy, he emphasized the imperative of introducing changes, including economic and political reform, and asserted that democracy was obligatory.[93] An atmosphere of political openness characterized the eight months after Bashar took office, called the "Damascus Spring". The period was marked by general amnesties for political prisoners, an increase in political forums and salons, a civil society movement, and the licensing of private newspapers. On February 8, 2001, however, Bashar's comment in an interview that Syria's intellectuals were small elite that was not representative of the people at large brought the "Damascus spring" to an abrupt halt. A crackdown on civil society elements followed, with the explanation that national stability issues and foreign agent activity had necessitated such action. According to Lesch, this was representative of paranoia, whether genuine or artificial, that often exists in the Arab world.[94]

Hinnebusch argues that despite expectations, over the course of time, Bashar choose to follow in his father's footsteps and thus, "continuity more than change, therefore, seemed to be order of the day".[95] In the first years of his presidency, those who oriented him in his position were members of the Old Guard—close associates of

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[92] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 32.

[93] Ibid, p. 41.

[94] Lesch, op. cit, p. 93.

[95] Raymond Hinnebusch (2002b), op. cit, p. 144.

Hafiz—and determined to maintain the status quo. Bashar gradually established his own inner circle, and some differences began to emerge in their perceptions, which were reflected in the foreign policy choices of each. Two external factors also need to be taken into account. Relations with the West could be cited as an example. Relations with the Western world had worsened under Hafiz, and despite his efforts, Bashar was unable to improve them, perhaps due to his inexperience, characteristics and perceptions. It is also necessary, however, to take external factors into account in the analysis of this and other issues, such as the rise of "neo-cons" in the US, the events of September 11, the 2003 Iraq War, the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, and the breakdown of the peace process.

2.2.2.2. Domestic Intervening Variable II: Domestic Constraints

Domestic political constraints can "constrain or enhance the ability of states to build arms and form alliances".[96] Domestic constraints are directly linked with the calculations of Syria's rulers regarding regime survival. In this study, state formation, identity/ideology and the need for public support are seen as important constraints in Syrian foreign policy-making. In the cases analyzed within the framework of this study, it is observed that the regime has been constrained by these domestic structures. For example, in the decision to become involved in the anti-Iraq coalition or to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference, the regime followed policies intended to help it overcome certain domestic constraints.

Several features of state formation are important for explaining foreign policy. According to Hinnebusch, three factors are pivotal in determining states' international behaviors. First is the composition of a state, which leads it to either follow the status quo or pursue revisionist policies. If the state-building process is indigenous, its foreign policy is generally oriented towards preserving the status quo. These types of states are labeled "satisfied powers". If the state's boundaries were

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[96] Schweller (2003), op. cit, p. 341.

drawn by external powers, they tend to follow irredentist policies and are labeled "non-satisfied powers". According to this classification, Syria is a non-satisfied power. It has no history of prior statehood, having been born out of an anti-imperialist and pan-Arab revolution. The Syrian state became detached from the rest of historic Syria (*bilad al-sham*) by the French mandate, which resulted in a sense of dissatisfaction with the placement of the borders. The creation of Israel and its capture of the disputed Golan Heights profoundly frustrated Syria's aspirations. The second factor is the level of state consolidation, which forms the rationality and effectiveness of states' foreign policy. The degree of state consolidation depends on the incorporation of mobilized social forces into the state structure. These conditions create four types of states: traditional states (landed oligarchies and tribal monarchies) with low levels of political mobilization and institutionalization, consolidated states enjoying high levels of mobilization and domestic support, praetorian regimes with insufficient institutionalization to mobilize, and neo-patrimonial states in which the state is "over-developed" and its leader is dominant. According to this classification, Syria after Hafiz would be regarded as a mixture between the "neo-patrimonial" and "semi-consolidated" state models. The third factor is the type of state structure; that is, whether it is democratic or authoritarian.[97] Limited political liberalization in Syria empowered its leader with broad authority while also establishing loyal support bases and creating legitimacy problems.

Arab national identity and the historical grievances rooted in that identity are the direct result of state formation. Arabism became the dominant identity integrating Syria's Sunni Muslims, Christian and Islamic minorities like Alawis, Druze and Ismailis. Profound irredentism led to an attachment to Arab nationalism rather than Syrian national identity, regarded as an artificial creation of imperialism. Arab nationalism thus became the cornerstone of Syrian foreign policy. Most analysts accept that with its defeat in the 1967 war and the rise of Hafiz al-Assad in 1970, the Syrian state became consolidated and state sovereignty gained supremacy over pan-Arabism. The struggle with Israel began to be focused on the recovery of the Golan Heights. In spite of the changes in identity, Syria continued to follow an ambitious

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[97] Hinnebusch (2003a), op. cit, pp. 73–89.

view of Arab nationalism, albeit with a Syrio-centric dimension. After, Egypt's signing of a bilateral peace treaty with Israel in 1979, Syria began to perceive as the leader of Arab nationalism and to act as a "patron" in its relations with other Arab states, in particular towards Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. However, Syrian foreign policy is full of ambiguities that make it hard to label its foreign policy decisions. Certain decisions violated Arab norms: namely, the intervention in Lebanon in 1976, the Iranian alliance during the Iran-Iraq war and joining the Gulf War coalition in 1991. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to view the pan-Arab elements in Syrian national identity as "a mere fiction".[98] It is hard to understand why Syria did not sign a peace treaty with Israel, as Egypt had done in 1979, without reference to its political identity. The trend has been towards the development of a Syrian character at the expense of Arab identity, as Sadowski demonstrates with evidence.[99] This newly emerging Syrian identity, which contains the atom of historical frustration that set Syria on the part to a revisionist agenda, caused it to reject the notion of being a passive actor in the international system. Identity shapes perceptions of interest, and identity itself can also be a point of interest, as suggested within constructivist theory.[100] However, material interests like state survival and interests stemming from identity—that being Arab identity in the Syrian case—shapes national interest.

In authoritarian regimes like the one in Syria, the leadership is focused on the retention of power and the survival of the state. Public support is thus a crucial element of political survival. In order to ensure domestic political stability and political survival, a considerable degree of public support is needed for the state. The common perception is that unelected regimes are not compelled to take domestic public opinion into consideration, but scholars of Syria have pointed out that its foreign policy is immune to bureaucratic politics and public opinion. They base their arguments on the autonomy of the authoritarian and personalistic Syrian state from domestic constraints, and the legitimacy it enjoys. On the other hand, the argument

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[98] Hinnebusch (2002b), op. cit, p. 143.

[99] Sadowski, op. cit.

[100] Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, "Introduction: Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East", in Telhami, Barnett (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 1–25.

does exist that authoritarian regimes have to mobilize all social forces in order to ensure their survival, as Brumberg suggests.[101]

There is a general acceptance that the foreign policy declarations of the Syrian presidency make an appeal to public opinion. However, it is debated in the literature whether the concern for public opinion is genuine or merely a diplomacy tactic. In his memoirs, James Baker asserts that Hafiz had attached great importance to Syrian public opinion during the Middle East Peace Process negotiations. He had insisted on the return of the Golan Heights, for example, saying that "[t]he land is important… It connotes dignity and honor… We don't want anyone to say we have given up what we have been talking about for twenty years".[102] However, Baker, believing the president to be the sole power in Syria, played down Hafiz's appeals to public opinion, perceiving them as a "mere negotiating tactic".[103] Henry Kissinger, like Baker, shared his memories relating to Hafiz with respect to the disengagement negotiations on the Golan Heights following the 1973 war. Unlike Baker, Kissinger holds that Hafiz's concern over ensuring public support was genuine.[104] According to Zisser, the difference in the opinions of Baker and Kissinger relates to the timing of their meetings with Hafiz. Zisser asserts that Kissinger met with Hafiz three years after his rise to power when he was inexperienced and insecure. However, by the time Baker met with him, he had consolidated power and accrued personal and political experience.[105]

In their theoretical work, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and his colleagues assert that all political leaders (not just autocrats) focus predominantly on maintaining their

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[101] Daniel Brumberg, "Authoritarian Legacies and Reform Strategies in the Arab World" in *Political Liberalization and Democratization in the Arab World*. Vol. I, Theoretical Perspectives, Rex Brynen, Bahgat Korany and Paul Noble (eds.), (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), pp. 248–250.

[102] Eyal Zisser, "Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decision Making Structure", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (May 1998).

[103] Ibid.

[104] Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), cited in Zisser (1998), op. cit.

[105] Zisser (1998), op. cit.

survival and adopting Regime Survival Strategies (RSSs). According to the theory advanced by Bueno de Mesquita et al., political leaders try to keep the support of their selectorate, or those who have a say in choosing the rulers, labeled the "winning coalition". According to this theory, the central concern of a political leader is to preserve the support of the winning coalition, which in turn keeps him/her in power.[106]

Shulman, in her analysis of the regime survival strategies of the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Syria during the two Gulf Wars, utilizes the concepts of "RSS" and the "winning coalition". However, she asserts that the concept of the selectorate from Bueno de Mesquita et al. is problematic in non-democratic states. In democracies, it is easy to identify the selectorate as being composed of "all individuals enfranchised to vote in national elections". In authoritarian political systems, however, identifying the selectorate is more complex. In these systems, elections are just held for show, but the electorate has no real say. Shulman identifies three categories of actor that make up the selectorate and thus influence foreign policy decisions in non-democratic states. These are the mass public, elites and foreign nations. Shulman examines Syria's foreign policy decisions during the First (1990–1991) and Second (2003) Gulf Wars. While it had joined the anti-Iraq coalition along with the US under Hafiz, despite its own hostile relations with the United States, it reversed its stance relative to the US under Bashar, condemning the US-led invasion. Shulman argues that Syria's RSS during the First Gulf War was external and that the coalition was formed between the elites and foreign nations. Syria was also particularly vulnerable at this time due to the collapse of it main backer, the Soviet Union. Its needs for economic assistance and to bring an end to its international isolation rendered the US alliance a viable regime survival strategy. On the other hand, during the Second Gulf War, its RSS lay internally, and the coalition formed was between the public masses and the elites. In that case, an appeal for hostility towards the US was a way to acquire the support of the masses.[107]

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[106] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

[107] Debra Shulman, "Regime Strategies and Foreign Policy of Non-Democratic States: The Case of Arab States in the Gulf Wars", paper presented at the APSA 2008 Annual Meeting, Hynes Convention

I agree with Shulman that regime survival strategy may include taking public opinion into account, although this could also be interpreted as a national interest. Syrian public opinion is politicized around Arab nationalism and the struggle with Israel. As suggested in constructivist theory, national interest is not just shaped by material security interests but also by a state's identity. In the Syrian case, Arab identity can be considered a national interest as well. The Syrian state seems to be attempting to reconcile Arab identity with its power position and survival interests. However, I do not agree with Shulman that domestic public opinion was ignored during the First Gulf War. In that case, domestic public opinion and the requirements of the external environment were reconciled. The state had legitimized its involvement in the US-led coalition against Iraq as the defense of Kuwait from the aggression of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. There was no such legitimizing force in the Second Gulf War, so to support the US-led coalition would have damaged domestic legitimacy. In the First Gulf War, Iraq was the aggressor; in the Second Gulf War it was the subject of the aggression of the global hegemon.

2.2.2.3. Domestic Intervening Variable III: Domestic Motivations

The analysis of interests and motivations as domestic intervening variables in the causal chain of foreign policy analysis is the contribution of Randall Schweller to neoclassical realist literature. He rejects the tendency towards oversimplification of neorealism, which suggests that states with comparable positions in the international system will respond similarly to systemic pressures. He asserts that neorealism's suggestion that states predominantly balance against greater powers has been proven wrong by the bandwagoning inclinations of limited-aims revisionist states, which he in turn argues would likely to bandwagon with unlimited-aims revisionist great powers, especially to share in the spoils that come with eventual changes in the international order.[108] His balance of interest approach, which argues that alliance

Center, Boston, Massachusetts, Aug 28, 2008, http://research.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/7/9/0/4/p279048_index.html?phpsessid=427166daba5fbe3f71d7100990957608 (accessed on 18.12.2010).
[108] Schweller (1994), op. cit.

choices are often motivated by opportunities for gain, rather than simply by danger, is helpful in understanding the divergent responses of similarly situated states to similar external constraints.

Following the end of the Cold War, Syria became vulnerable to security concerns, as its main backer, the Soviet Union, collapsed. It had two options in the "new world order" that had emerged: to ally with the remaining superpower or balance it. The second option would have been risky, since Syria did not have the capability to counter US power, and thus saw the US intervention in Iraq as an opportunity to come out on one side. Until Syria joined with the US-led coalition, its alignment behavior could have been explainable with Walt's hypotheses that weak states tended to bandwagon when threatened by a great power. However, Syria's alignment could not be viewed exclusively through the analytical prism of security and the international system. In fact, as will be shown in the following sections, domestic factors like its economic problems and regional isolation were major determining factors as well, and the US offered it economic incentives in exchange for its loyalty, which addressed its domestic needs. Additionally, it also benefited from the rise in oil prices, and its participation in the coalition alleviated its international and regional isolation. In that sense, Schweller's balance of interest theory is helpful for understanding Syria's motivations. Still, the benefits of participation could be regarded as contrary to Syrian and Arab nationalist norms. In that sense, it would be more appropriate to view the relationship between the US and Syria during this period as bargaining rather than as an unequal exchange, keeping in mind the asymmetrical positions of the two countries.

When we look at the post-September 11 period, here the threat to Syria's security was again the US. After al-Qaeda attacked its targets, the US began a campaign it called its "war on terror", first Afghanistan and then Iraq. Syria also became a target of US aggression in the form of accusations that it had links with terrorist organizations and possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In fact, Syria cooperated with the US in its fight against al-Qaeda by obtaining information about the organization's membership and networks, but positioned itself with the "radical

camp" of the Middle East—Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas—when the US made the decision to invade Iraq. This prompts the question: "Why Syria did not cooperate with the US in the 2003 invasion of Iraq as it had in 1991 Gulf War?" The answer to this question will be elaborated in detail in the following sections, but it can be said that some domestic conditions, such as the illegitimacy of the US invasion in the eyes of the Syrian public and the differences between Bashar and his father Hafiz in terms of experience and legitimacy, played roles. However, the US approach to Syria was also an important factor determining the evolution of relations in that period, since the US used threats as opposed to incentives, as it had in the post-Cold War era. In this scenario, Walt's theory regarding the bandwagoning behavior of small states did not work. Although threatened by an aggressive and great power that had also become its neighbor, Syria did not bandwagon with the US. This conforms to Schweller's *balance of interest* theory; in order to survive and to protect its values, Syria engaged in balancing even though it was a costly activity move.

Domestic Intervening Variable I	Domestic Intervening Variable II	Domestic Intervening Variable III
Leader's Perceptions about the International System	Domestic Constraints	Domestic Motivations
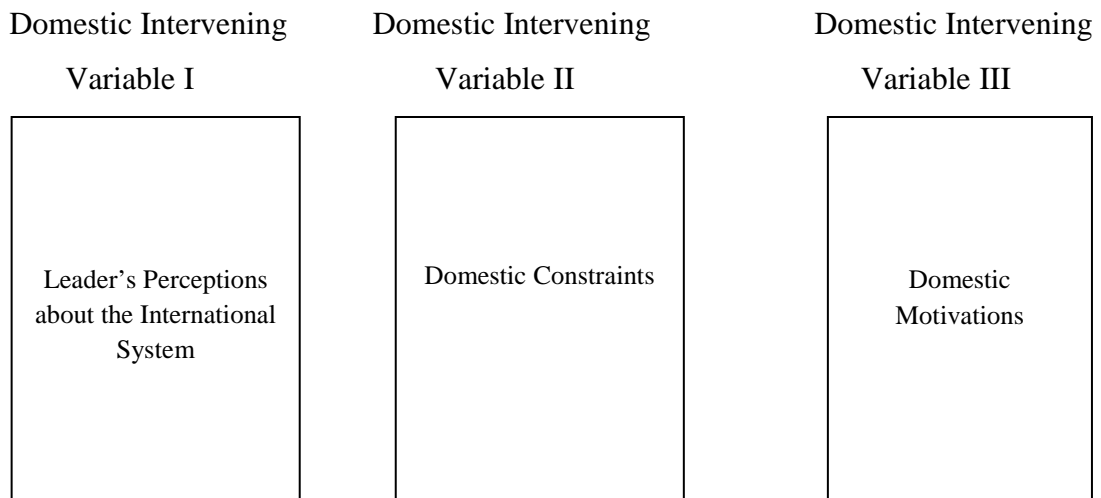
Figure 2.2. Domestic Intervening Variables in the Analysis of Syrian Foreign Policy

CHAPTER 3

FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION IN SYRIA

This chapter deals with the process of foreign policy formulation in Syria. The conceptual framework set forth in the previous section guides this one. Since this dissertation deals with Syrian foreign policy outcomes, as well as its main alignments after the end of the Cold War and the post-September 11 era, a theoretical analysis of foreign policy is crucial. Moreover, due to the objective of analyzing the issue of "change" in Syrian foreign policy, a theoretical analysis of "foreign policy change" will be studied in this section.

3.1. Defining and Analyzing Foreign Policy

Foreign policy often refers to a sub-discipline of International Relations or political science rather than the "object of the study".[109] In this study, "foreign policy" is treated as the "object of the study". There is no precise definition of foreign policy in the literature. Definitions of foreign policy vary from the very narrow "relations between states" through the broader "governmental activity" and to the very broad notion of "external relations".[110] The purpose of foreign policy is generally perceived as an attempt to influence events outside the country's control.[111] However, foreign policy can be used to attain domestic goals such as "to maintain political stability or

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[109] Thomas Niklasson, Regime *Stability and Foreign Policy Change: Interaction between Domestic and Foreign Policy in Hungary 1956–1994*, (Lund: Lund Political Studies, 2006).

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ian Manners, Richard Whitman, 'Introduction', in Ian Manners, Richard G Whitman (eds.), *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States*, (Manchester: ManchesterUniversity Press, 2000), p. 2.

to enhance the prestige of, or to help to consolidate the regime".[112] On the other hand, domestic decisions can have an effect abroad. Hence, it is hard to maintain a clear distinction between the "domestic" and the "foreign". Foreign policy has become broader in its scope, and the boundary between foreign and domestic policy is not always clear. There are three elements of foreign policy according to Papadakis and Starr; these are the *process*, *output* (i.e. a decision) and *behavior* (i.e. implementation of a decision).[113] Rose adds *consequences* as an element of foreign policy.[114]

3.2. Foreign Policy Structures

Discussion of who makes foreign policy pushes the analysis towards the "agent and structure" problem. Carlsnaes, adopting Wendt's agent-structure problematic in the International Relations theory of foreign policy analysis, states that individualism (agency) holds that "social scientific explanations should be reducible to the properties of interactions of independently existing individuals", whereas holism (structuralism) focuses on the belief that "the effects of social structures cannot be reduced to independently existing agents and their interactions".[115] In this thesis, foreign policy is accepted as a dynamic process in which both agents and structures become conditional on each other over time.

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[112] Niklasson, op. cit, p. 24.

[113], Maria Papadakis, Harvey Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness, and Small States: The Relationship Between Environment and Foreign Policy.", in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*. C. F. Hermann, C. W. Kegley, J. Rosenau, (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 413.

[114] Richard Rose, "Comparing Public Policy: An Overview", *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 1, (April 1973), pp. 67–94.

[115] Walter Carlsnaes, "Foreign Policy", in *Handbook of International Relations*, Walter Carlsnaes (ed.), (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 335.

3.2.1. Foreign Policy: The Job of the President?

Foreign policy is described as "the complex interplay of several actors" within the state, including the military, the foreign ministry, the parliament and the political parties. According to structuralism, foreign policy is a response to the external environment, and the main behavioral unit in foreign policy is the state. Foreign policy is seen as an arena in which decision-makers act more freely than in domestic policy, responding less to other political institutions and mass publics, as Niklasson suggests.[116] The state freely adapts to the external power balance since the domestic arena is a non-issue for foreign policy. It is believed that states have a strong influence on foreign policy and may be even stronger in non-democratic societies.

Syria under Hafiz is generally perceived as fitting this model because of the concentration of power, wherein foreign policy is seen as the job of the president. As a result, many analysts have identified its foreign policy as reflection of his personal decision-making until his death. It is regarded as an authoritarian leadership structure enjoying substantial autonomy from the domestic environment. According to Hinnebusch, there is a "virtual presidential monopoly over foreign policy making" in Syria.[117] The structure of the presidential system even deprived the Ba'ath party of much of its influence.

From the beginning of his leadership, Hafiz's main preoccupation was foreign affairs, which was seen as a presidential *domaine réservé.*[118] The Syrian constitution, with its 1973 amendments, gave the president special powers especially in the field of foreign policy. Institutions like the military and the foreign ministry became "little

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[116] Niklasson, op.cit, p. 29.

[117] Hinnebusch (1996), op. cit, p. 44.

[118] Seale (1988), op. cit, p.182.

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more than a display of a modern state apparatus",[119] and "sensitive issues such as defense and foreign affairs are exclusively within the president's domain".[120]

There is a common understanding that foreign policy-making in the Middle East should be viewed as the product of their authoritarian leaders. In fact, multiple factors have played a role in foreign policy-making. As discussed in the theoretical analysis, this study perceives foreign policy as an interaction between the domestic and international environments. Firstly, states' positions in the international system define the boundaries of their foreign policy. For instance, small states are more likely to search for the protection of greater powers, while greater powers, to maintain spheres of influence. Secondly, neoclassical realism tells us that leaders' perceptions and domestic politics also have causal significance. While engaging in foreign policy decision-making, a leader is constrained by domestic factors and actors, as well as by the international system.

3.2.2. Bureaucratic Politics and the Elites in Foreign Policy-making

The existence of a "bureaucratic politics" in a state gives the elites in the ruling party, army, intelligence services, foreign ministry, financial institutions, etc. opportunities to influence foreign policy-making.[121] Although the scope of bureaucratic politics is limited in authoritarian regimes, leaders may also wish to consult the elites in order to create consensus on risky decisions.[122] Although he adopted a centralized decision-making structure, Hafiz tried to maintain intra-elite consensus and take the interests Ba'ath party ideologues into consideration.

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[119] William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Boulder: Westview, 2003), p. 400.

[120] Alfred B. Prados and Jeremy M. Sharp, "Syria: Political Conditions and Relations with the United States after the Iraq War", *Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress* (January 2005), http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/rl32727.pdf (accesed on 20.12.2010).

[121] Hinnebusch (2003a), op. cit, p. 110.

[122] Ibid.

It is argued that with Bashar's succession of power, the power of the presidency was much reduced. Contrary to the Hafiz era, in which the regime was dependent on the personality of the leader, Bashar is surrounded by political institutions like the party, cabinet, the army high command and the security forces dominated by the old guard to a much greater extent.[123] Due to his inexperience, Bashar's position vis-à-vis the elite was quite different than that of his father, especially in the first years of his presidency. Zisser argues that Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa interrupted Bashar or even corrected him on several occasions.[124] There is also a belief that the measures Bashar sought to introduce with regard to political and economic liberalization were prevented by the political elite. The expectations related to political and economic liberalization are said not to have been realized because associates of the "old guard" opted for the preservation of the *status quo*. In the first years of his rule, Bashar was surrounded by his father's close associates and did not create an inner circle on whom he could rely. In recent years, with the retirement of some members of this old guard, Bashar created his inner circle.

Elites are a set of individuals with particular skills or special access to resources, who can have an impact on the foreign policies of states. The impact of the three types of elites—the military elite, the political elite and the financial elite-on Syrian foreign policy are discussed.

The military elite are the foundation block of the Syrian regime. Following the *coup d'état* of 1970, Hafiz appointed loyal officers to the most sensitive positions. However, the army is not exclusively an Alawi one; while Alawi security barons in the president's inner core play a substantial role, a cross-sectarian coalition has been maintained. The military in Syria has been subordinated to the presidency since 1970. However, it is still a powerful actor; it has the ability to shape the outcomes, particularly in times of crisis. The military in Syria is not monolithic; it is composed of the Alawi security barons, Ba'athist officers, and professional officers.[125] The

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[123] Hinnebusch (2003a), op. cit., p. 197.

[124] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 51.

[125] Hinnebusch (2002a), op. cit, p. 73.

military in Syria is politicized; it sends delegates to Ba'ath Party congresses, and military members sit on the central committee and the Regional Command. The military is also commercialized; ex-officers are appointed to public companies and military enterprises, and they have a stake in the economy by entering the civilian market.[126] When discussing the role of the military elites, the main issue is the continuing state of war with Israel. The military first and foremost acts as the protector of the regime from external threats; in order to confront the perceived enemy—primarily Israel—the military pushes for expansive budgets.[127]

It is argued that the Syrian military is opposed to the peace initiatives with Israel. This is related with the fact that a peace agreement would result in the military being diminished in size, equipment and deployment. The army fears that its societal role as a protector would be shaken by peace. It is known that Alawi security barons felt threatened during the peace process in the 1990s, concerned that peace talks would result in political liberalization and alignment with the West.[128] However, it is also argued that the military cannot obstruct peace initiatives as long as the president is decisive on reaching an agreement.

Lebanon is another foreign policy issue on which the military is said to have taken a key interest until Syrian forces withdrew following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005. By intervening in Lebanese the civil war, Syria acquired a sphere of influence and became a power broker in the region. The Ta'if Accord of October 1989 affirmed its dominance in Lebanon, which was also accepted by the US. Syria stationed nearly 30,000 troops in Lebanon. It has been suggested that the Syrian army officers in the Biqa Valley engaged in drug trafficking. The Biqa Valley, which had been an agriculturally rich region responsible for Lebanon's pre-war prosperity, was turned into a hashish and opium

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[126] Ibid, p. 75.

[127] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Authoriatrian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria. Army, Party, and Peasant* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press,1990), p. 162.

[128] Hinnebusch, (1996), op. cit, p. 45.

plantation area. Fred Lawson estimated that profits taken by the Syrian military and security forces from the narcotics trade in Lebanon could be valued at nearly $2 billion a year.[129] This has been identified as one of the reasons behind the resistance of the Syrian army to withdraw from Lebanon in spite of calls of the United Nations (UN).

The political and the bureaucratic elite is another group whose impact on Syrian foreign policy is discussed. The Syrian bureaucratic system centers on the People's Council (the parliament), the Ba'ath Party and the Council of Ministers (Cabinet). The People's Council, which has 250 members, has insufficient sufficient power. It does not have the right to legislate without the permission of the president. The Ba'ath Party is the state's principal source of power. The supreme policy-making bodies in the party are the Regional and National Commands. The Regional Command, which has the highest governing authority, nominates the president and appoints the cabinet through the president. The National Command is responsible for party doctrine and for relations with foreign and Arab political parties. The Council of Ministers (cabinet or government), headed by the prime minister, is another political institution. The cabinet is appointed by the president on the recommendation of the Regional Command. The Council of Ministers makes decisions on the implementation of high policy, as defined by the president.

In principle, foreign ministries maintain information and diplomatic skills when conducting foreign policy, but in Syria, they became the shadow of the president. The Hafiz regime's first Foreign Minister Abd al-Halim Khaddam was a close friend of Hafiz from their school days. According to Seale, he had served as an effective instrument representing Hafiz's will. In 1984, Khaddam became vice president, while Farouk al-Sharaa served as the Syrian Foreign Minister until 2006. In an interview, Sharaa asserted that he represents the "thoughts and policy of President al-Assad".[130] Walid Muallem was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on 11

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[129] Lawson, op. cit, pp. 145–146.

[130] Hazem Kandil, "The Challenge of Restructuring: Syrian Foreign Policy", in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization,* Bahgat Korany, Ali E. Hilal Dessouki (eds.) (Cairo, The American University Press, 2008), p. 432.

February 2006 during a cabinet change. Like his predecessors, Walid Muallem stated that "[h]e [Bashar al-Assad] is the leader, I am expressing his ideas".[131]

The last elite type with private and public resources is the financial elites, who possess capital that can be used to support or oppose the regime. The Ba'athists who took power in 1963 represented the left wing of the party and followed a socialist economic program. This program was based on the nationalization of industrial plants, agrarian reform, state control over trade and a state monopoly over finance.[132] It threatened the urban Sunni bourgeoisie who hold the private capital, as well as the Alawi political elite. After Hafiz took power in 1970, he subordinated socialist ideology to economic pragmatism[133]. In the face of external enemies, economic liberalization policies followed. An alliance was forged between the political and economic elite, called a "military-mercantile complex". This alliance provided important benefits to the regime, including suppressing the violence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had reached its peak in 1982 in Hama. The Sunni business class did not support the Muslim Brotherhood and the financial crisis in the 1980s resulting from the loss of revenue from Arab oil and Soviet subsidies caused the Sunni bourgeoisie and the regime to become further incorporated. The regime was forced to initiate a series of reforms, creating joint ventures between the state and the private sector.[134] In Bashar's period, with the economic pressures to liberalize, members of the chambers of commerce and of industry and businessmen became involved in the decision-making processes and were recruited to parliament.[135]

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[131] Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moaellem, Interview in *Washington Post*, December 15, 2006.

[132] Sadowski, op. cit.

[133] Hinnebusch, (2002a), op. cit, p. 89.
[134] Christopher Bergen, *Omnibalancing in Syria: Prospects for Foreign Policy*, Thesis submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, (December 2000), p. 45, http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/scholarly/theses/2000/Dec/00Dec_Bergen.pdf (Accessed on 07.12.2010).

[135] Hinnebusch, (1996), op. cit, p. 46.

From the perspective of foreign policy, it is frequently argued that economic pressures forced Syria to enter into the peace process. It is known that the financial crisis of the 1980s was one factor forcing the regime to abandon its policy of "tactical rejectionism". This trend continued with Syria's participation in the Gulf War and the peace process initiated in 1991. On the issue of how much influence the financial elites can exert, the regime is ambivalent. One argument is that as the urban business class was incorporated into the system, Syrian foreign policy towards Israel moved from hostility to reconciliation.[136] On the other hand, Hinnebusch argues that the capitalist class does not exert pressure on the Syrian regime for a peace settlement. Rather, some of them fear not being able to compete with Israel both in the internal market and in the Saudi and Gulf markets.[137]

Consequently, the question of if the elites have an impact on foreign policy formulation in Syria is polemical. This is why elites are not regarded as a direct domestic intervening variable in its foreign policy-making. Syrian leaders have been little constrained by formal checks and balances. However, the need to establish the support of the elites is an important source of governmental legitimization in Syria. In that sense, to satisfy their demands to a certain extent and to maintain consensus with them is crucial. Hinnebusch argues that Hafiz tried to achieve intra-elite consensus on sensitive issues like the peace initiative. In contrast to Egyptian President Sadat's unilateralism, he consulted the elites on the disengagement negotiations of the 1973 war. In a similar fashion, Hafiz tried to convince Alawi security barons to accept the invitation made by the US to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. However, he asserts that although Hafiz tried to consult with and convince the bureaucratic elites, in the end he did what he wanted.[138] In his memoirs, James Baker states that although Hafiz insisted on the need to consult with party institutions and the National Progressive Front upon US calls to participate in

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[136] Bergen, op. cit, p. 37.

[137] Hinnebusch, (1996), op. cit, p. 46.

[138] Hinnebusch, (1996), op. cit, p. 45.

the peace talks during the 1990s, he believes no one in the Syrian Arab Republic could have prevented Hafiz's decision.[139]

3.3. Foreign Policy Change

Until the end of the Cold War, Foreign Policy Change (FPC) remained a neglected topic within the discipline of international relations. This was related with the fact that international International Relations was a young discipline that firstly analyzes order and had not yet learnt how to deal with change; it was also related to the 'stability bias' of the Cold War.[140] Early efforts in FPC can be found in the works of Robert Gilpin (*War and Change in World Politics,* 1981), James Rosenau (*The Study of Political Adaptation*, 1981), Kal Holsti (*Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, 1982), Kjell Goldmann (*Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, 1988) and Charles F. Hermann (*Changing Course: Why Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy*, 1990). In the post-Cold War period, studies related to FPC became more frequent. As a result of changes in superpower relations and radical changes in the international politics of Eastern and Central Europe, as well as changes in the regions of conflict like the Middle East and Southern Africa,[141] the need arose to analyze the issue of change on a theoretical level.

In the literature, there is no consensus on the concept and definition of foreign policy change. Rosenau uses it in terms of political adaptation, Holsti refers to the concept of foreign policy restructuring as different from change, Goldmann examines foreign policy stabilization and destabilization, and Hermann uses the term in the context of

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[139] Zisser (1998), op. cit.

[140] Niklasson, op. cit, p. 37.
[141] Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: Why Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy", *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 34, Issue 3, (1990), p. 3.

international redirection.[142] Holsti's concept of 'restructuring' is more appropriate for the framework of this analysis. Holsti defines 'foreign policy restructuring' as "the dramatic, wholesale alteration of a nation's pattern of external relations".[143]

In the analysis of FPC, scholars deal with the factors stimulating change in the foreign policies of states. Foreign policy is affected by both domestic and external factors. Since this study is interested in shifts in Syrian foreign policy due to changes in the international system, the "external factor" dimension is analyzed. However, it is accepted that responses to the external environment are shaped by domestic factors.

The sources of FPC in the literature are analyzed under different headings, such as Holsti's 'independent variables' that contribute to foreign policy restructuring, Goldmann's three 'disturbances' and Hermann's 'primary change agents'. External factors promoting FPC can be summarized as change in regional structures (e.g. regional integration), change in global structures and external threats and shocks.[144] Change in global structures as an external factor promoting FPC fit within the framework of this analysis. Hermann asserts that an external shock, which is defined as a major international event, may foster major FPC.[145] In a similar direction, Hagan and Rosati suggest that 'change in global structures and international position of the state' can trigger change.[146]

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[142] Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, "The Study of Change in Foreign Policy", in, *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes*, Rosati, Hagan, Sampson (eds.) (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 17.

[143] Kal J. Holsti, *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, (London: Allen, Unwin, 1982) p. ix.

[144] Niklasson, p. 47.

[145] Hermann, op. cit, p. 11–12.

[146] Joe D. Hagan and Jerel A. Rosati, "Emerging Issues in Research on Foreign Policy Restructuring" in *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes*, Rosati, Hagan, Sampson (eds.), (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 170.

Sources of change do not always result in foreign policy change or the scope of change would be limited. The impact of stimulators of change is constrained by certain factors. Volgy and Schwarz speak about the 'webs of restraint', which is defined as factors preventing major FPC that foreign policymakers must confront. These are the bureaucratic, regime, resource, global and regional 'webs'.[147]

Barriers to change would be both domestic and external. Among the domestic barriers to FPC; regime, decision-makers, bureaucracy and interest groups are listed in the literature. Volgy and Schwarz reached a conclusion that is of interest of my case: that restructuring "should be easier to achieve in nations where foreign policies are formulated without the trappings of complex bureaucracies, such as in states controlled by a single leader or a small, ruling coalition.[148] According to that view, foreign policy restructuring is more difficult in democracies than non-democracies. The bureaucratic administration may also serve as a barrier to change by resisting or blocking initiatives in case the changes go against their established interests. In addition to regime and bureaucracy, interest groups in the society may act as an impediment to change if their confirmed interests are at stake.

Among the external barriers to FPC are bilateral relations like dependence on an external actor; regional structures like the existence of a dominant hegemon in the region; regional integration; the intensity of regional conflict; and global structures like system stability, system structure, relations between dominant powers and norms.[149] It is argued that when the international system is stable, FPC does not come about easily. On the other hand, change in the international system creates a better opportunity for FPC. Likewise in bipolar systems, FPC is risky, as opposed to in multi-polar systems.[150]

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[147] Volgy, Schwarz, "Foreign Policy Restructuring and the Myriad Webs of Restraint", in Rosati, Hagan, Sampson (eds.), *Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), p. 23.

[148] Ibid, pp. 28-29.

[149] Ibid, pp. 32-36.

[150] Ibid, p. 32.

Kandil argues that while most Arab states realized major foreign policy restructuring, Syrian foreign policy remained constant during the rule of the al-Assad family (1970–present)".[151] I disagree with Kandil on this point; however, Syria did not realize expectations related to foreign policy change after the end of the Cold War. In terms of domestic factors preventing foreign policy restructuring, regime type is important. Although Volgy and Schwarz argue that foreign policy restructuring is easier in authoritarian regimes because of the lack of complex bureaucracies, it is also necessary to keep in mind that a single-leader regime would be an impediment to change on its own. Since the regime is an ideological one, it has to take into consideration of a wide array of social forces in order to maintain its political survival. This forces the president to calculate the domestic consequences of his foreign policy decisions. In the Syrian case, deinstitutionalized foreign policy-making in which the foreign policy is perceived as the "job of president" would make it easier in certain cases to take "radical" decisions such as to join the Gulf War in 1991; however, it would also be an impediment to change. Other domestic barriers to FPC include bureaucracy and interest groups, who have an indirect impact on foreign policy. In such a personalized regime dependent on the cult of the leader, bureaucracy and interest groups would be considered irrelevant. However, certain groups from the bureaucracy, military and business benefit from the current policies of regime. In the case of initiatives related with foreign policy restructuring, which reinforce political and economic liberalization, their position would be threatened. In that sense, military elites depend for their existence on the conflict with Israel, businessmen depend on the state bringing about the term "state bourgeoisie"—and the "old guard" in the bureaucracy, who are known to be against political and economic reforms, can be evaluated as barriers to change, although their impact is indirect.

The external environment undergoing change after the end of the Cold War seems suitable for foreign policy restructuring. In this environment, one power was superior and smaller powers were expected to bandwagon for their survival. However, in the 2000s, external factors such as the rise of the "neo-cons", US support of regime

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[151] Kandil, op. cit, p. 421.

change and economic sanctions in Syria became barriers to FPC. In dealings with their Syrian counterparts, US officials are said to have demanded concessions without offering anything in return. This "sticks without carrots" approach did not successfully translate into foreign policy change. In terms of external barriers, the concurrent regional conflict with Israel also served as an impediment to foreign policy change. This conflict takes precedence over other foreign policy considerations. It also shapes Syria's perceptions of the US as an administration supporting and strengthening the position of Israel while undermining that of Arabs. Developments in Israel, such as the election of "hawkish" leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon, contributed to the stalemate of the peace process.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:
SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE COLD WAR

In this section, Syria's responses to the end of the Cold War will be analyzed in greater depth. In order to realize this objective, it is also necessary to look at the Cold War period in brief. The main purpose of this section is to provide a general understanding of the Syrian foreign policy during these years. It is especially focused on the period beginning in 1970 with Hafiz's rise to power.

4.1. Syrian Foreign Policy during the Post-Independence Period, 1946–1970

Modern Syria had no statehood prior to the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. The Syrian state was established after World War I led by an anti-Ottoman Arab movement. Under the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement, the Syrian state fell under a French Mandate, and Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan were detached from it. The state remained under French Mandate until 1946. Imperialism, the imposed state system, artificial borders ignoring historical Syria (*bilad al-sham*) and humiliating memories of subordination during this period set Syria on a Pan-Arabist and anti-Western course.

Following independence from France in 1946, a parliamentary republic was established. In the post-independence period (1949–1970), the Syrian government suffered a large number of military coups and coup attempts.

The Ba'ath seized power in 1963 through a military coup formed by a diverse coalition of officers and politicians. The coup changed the social structure of Syria. The new political elite were composed of a plebeian, "ex-peasant", rural lower-middle class.[152] Past Arab nationalist movements had had Sunni Islamist bases; in Ba'ath ideology, the goal was to form a united secular Arab society with a socialist system, irrespective of religious sect.[153] The Ba'ath leadership was largely composed of minorities—Alawi, Druze and Ismaili—and was predominantly rural. This new composition at the political level threatened the traditional oligarchy, which had had a Sunni and urban character. The Ba'ath Party in Syria was not monolithic; it was partly divided between the followers of classical Arabism like Aflaq and Bitar, who were primarily in pursuit of forming an Arab federation along with Nasserite Egypt, and followers of moderate socialism fusing Marxism and Leninism with Arab nationalism. The followers of Marxist-Leninist doctrine gained the upper hand within the party. Ideology was not the only issue of contention; there were also personal rivalries among party members. Salah ad-Din Bitar became prime minister of the new Ba'ath-dominated government, and its military committee was put in the hands of three Alawis; namely, Muhammad Umran, Salah Jadid and Hafiz al-Assad.

The foreign policy of the period was deeply affected by the Cold War rivalry. The Soviet Union and the United States sought to create their zones of influence by creating pacts other countries in the region, limiting the power of each within the Middle East.

The center of Syria's foreign policy was shaped with the creation of Israel in 1948 and Arabs' efforts to challenge the state, which was perceived as a foreign intervention. Until 1947, when the United States announced its support for a Jewish state, the United States had had a positive image in Syria. US endorsement of the United Nations' plan for the partition of Palestine and its support for the new Jewish state of Israel had strong negative ramifications for the its popular image around the

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[152] Hinnebusch (2002a), op. cit, p. 47.

[153] Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, (New York: Tauris, 1966), p. 17.

Middle East. Thereafter, the United States became Israel's main benefactor, backing the country in its conflict with the Arabs. Syria perceived Israel, established on land that had historically been part of Greater Syria, as an "imperialist-created colonial settler state unjustly implanted in the heart of the Arab world, as well as a security threat and an obstacle to Arab unity".[154] Syria felt a profound sense of "having victimized by Western imperialism",[155] and began to play a pivotal role in the defense of pan-Arab causes, mainly the Palestinian issue, thus largely shaping Syrian foreign policy on the premise of Arabism.

The Ba'ath Party, which took over the government of Syria in 1963, formulated its foreign policy around Arab nationalism and was preoccupied with the threat of Israeli expansionism. Upon seizing power, it had called for the total liberation of Palestine and pushed Arab states to prepare for a war of Palestinian liberation.[156] This resulted in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, in which Israel captured vast areas of all its Arab neighbors, including the Golan Heights. Thereafter, one of Syria's main policy goals became regaining the Golan Heights. Syria, unlike Egypt and Jordan, rejected any political settlement with Israel and did not accept United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 242.[157] The support given by the US to Israel during the 1967 War severed relations between the US and the Arab countries, including Syria. On the other hand, it is also argued that the Arab defeat in the 1967 War brought about a revisionist era in Syria's foreign policy and its relations with

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[154] Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch , *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991), p. 98.

[155] Ibid, p. 175.

[156] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 2.

[157] United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (S/RES/242) was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on November 22, 1967, in the aftermath of the Six Day War. Operative Paragraph One: "Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:
(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

other states.[158] According to some scholars, this defeat also set the stage for Hafiz's rise to power.

Pan-Arabism was another dominant feature of Syrian foreign policy in the post-independence period. Creating a union with other Arab states was a central concern of the government. The establishment of United Arab Republic (UAR) (1958–1961) between Egypt and Syria was a concrete step in the efforts to achieve unity among the independent Arab states. Iraq supported the UAR and proposed joining; North Yemen was also a part of this loose confederation with Syria and Egypt. However, the UAR's existence was shot-lived, collapsing because of Syria's fear of a Nasserist ambition to dominate it.

4.2. The Hafiz al-Assad Period

The power struggle within the Alawi community made its mark on the years between 1964 and 1970, mainly revolving around three officers of the Ba'athist Military Committee: Muhammad Umran, Salah Jadid and Hafiz al-Assad. The 1967 defeat further provoked the struggle between wings of the Ba'athist state. The socialist wing, led by the party's assistant secretary-general Salah Jadid, gave priority to socialist economic problems and perceived the Palestinian guerillas as vital to the "people's liberation war" against Israel. The other school of thought, led by the Defense Minister Hafiz al-Assad, adopted a nationalist approach, giving priority to the alliance with Arab countries, but with reservations about the role that Palestinian guerillas would play in that struggle. Internal conflict between the two factions heightened in September 1970, when the Syrian regime decided to intervene in the Jordanian Civil War on the side of the Palestinians. Jordan had been providing support for Israel, and allowed the US to a counteroffensive on Syrian and the Palestinian forces. Threatened by the Israeli intervention, Defense Minister and the Air Force Commander Hafiz al-Assad focused on the protection of Syrian army units

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[158] Ahmad Soltani Nejad, "Syria-US Relations in an Historical Context: Prospect of Realism in Syria's Foreign Policy Towards the United States", *IPRI Journal*, Vol. VII, Number 1, (Winter 2007), p. 83.

rather than continuing to fight with the Jordanian army. This strategic decision resulted in a harsh reaction on the side of the civilian wing of the party, which convened for an extraordinary congress in order to take a decision calling for the resignation of the Defense Minister Hafiz al-Assad. Hafiz responded to this decision with the November 13, 1970 coup d'état, becoming Syria's first Alawi President in February 1971.[159]

When Hafiz seized power in November 1970, a new era began in Syrian foreign policy. Most scholars of Syria share the opinion that Hafiz was a prudent and realist politician whose personal characteristics became an asset to the Syrian regime. Quilliam described the Hafiz period as one in which "the role of ideology was relegated, and the new determinants of foreign policy [were] shaped primarily by the international political system".[160] According to Hinnebusch, Hafiz was a "tough Machiavellian" and a pragmatic realist subordinating ideology to the power.[161] He advocated a nationalist policy and pursued limited goals, which consist of full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Palestinian statehood or self-determination, including the repatriation of Palestinian refugees. This policy is interpreted as the beginning of "realpolitik of limited goals" in Syria.[162]

Hafiz's priority was to mobilize power resources towards the struggle with Israel, to recover the occupied territories, to consolidate the Ba'ath regime under a powerful presidency and to enhance its stature in the Arab world. Hafiz's state-building strategies were facilitated by external resources, especially with the support of the Soviet Union. After taking power, he tried to end Syria's isolation within the Arab world, seeing to create ties with Egypt, Jordan and more conservative states like Saudi Arabia with the aim of building a common front against Israel.[163]

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[159] Robert G. Rabil, *Embatted Neighbors: Syria, Israel and Lebanon*, (Colorado, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), p. 21–22.

[160] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 2.

[161] Hinnebusch, (2002a), op. cit, p. 68.

[162] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 103.

[163] Van Dam, op. cit, p. 71.

Hafiz's foreign policy up to the end of the Cold War will primarily be examined through analysis of Syria's stance on the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq War.

4.2.1 Syrian Policy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

4.2.1.1 The 1973 War (October War)

Hafiz believed that a strategic imbalance between Arabs and Israel in favor of Israel had arisen as a result of US support for Israel. After coming to power, he reaffirmed Syria's rejection of UNSCR 242 because he was hesitant to reaffirm the imposed legitimacy of Israel, and because the resolution made no mention of Palestinian rights. In addition, Israel did not interpret the resolution as a requirement to withdraw from the captured territories.[164] Hafiz prepared for a war against Israel to retake the Golan Heights, which had been lost in the 1967 War. With the aim of maintaining a strategic balance in the struggle with Israel, an alliance was formed between Syria and Egypt in 1973. Egypt was the most militarily powerful state, and shared in the aim of recovering the occupied territories. The alliance also helped improve ties with the Soviet Union, especially in arms deals. However, Rabil argues that Syria refrained from signing a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviets, and from being associated with Soviet ideology.[165] At the same time, it maintained new alliances with the Arab oil states, with the intention of providing economic assistance and forming an anti-Israeli eastern front to protect Syria's southeastern border.[166] In March 1972, Hafiz declared that Syria would accept Resolution 242, provided it

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[164] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 105.

[165] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 22.

[166] Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System,* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 69.

would involve an Israeli withdrawal from all captured Arab territories and the recognition of the rights of Palestinians.[167]

Egypt and Syria prepared for war in the autumn of 1972. As part of this process, Soviet military aid to both countries reached unprecedented levels. While Hafiz and Anwar Sadat joined together in this effort, their objectives differed at certain levels. Sadat believed that a successful attack over Israel would disrupt the balance of power and force Israel's hand in the peace negotiations. So, it could be argued that Sadat had a political objective. On the other hand, Hafiz had a clear military objective, the centerpiece of which was retaking the Golan, as well as maintaining the liberation of the Palestinian territories by putting pressure on Israel.[168]

Syria and Egypt made a joint attack against Israel in the Sinai and Golan on October 6, 1973. The two armies successfully surprised Israel with their attack despite declarations of war; it is thought Israel did not believe either army could challenge its own military.[169] At first the Arab armies dominated battle—Egypt managed to cross the Suez Canal while Syria attacked the Golan Heights. However, as Hafiz took a defensive position on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were able to concentrate their efforts on the Syrian front. By October 10, Israel had regained all the territory it had lost on the first day of the war, and had advanced inside Syrian territory. Hafiz called Sadat to his aid even though his attitude throughout the war had generated a great distrust of Egypt in Syria. Egypt initiated an offensive on the Sinai Peninsula but the IDF crossed the Suez Canal and encircled the Egyptian army.[170]

Over the course of time, the superpowers Soviet Union and United States engaged in diplomacy, calling for ceasefire proposals. Egypt and Israel accepted Security

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[167] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 23.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 106–107.

Council Resolution 338 of October 22, 1973, which called for a ceasefire within 12 hours of adopting the resolution. Syria at first rejected the resolution, but acquiesced one day later, interpreting it in the same manner as it had Resolution 242; that is, that Israel should withdraw from the occupied territories before any political settlement could be reached.[171] In accepting Resolutions 242 and 338, Syria for the first time clearly accepted Israel's right to exist within secure borders.[172]

When the consequences of the war are examined, it is seen that Israel's military superiority was deeply shaken. According to Ma'oz, after the end of the war, Israel's defense strategy and the deterrence doctrine failed and it became isolated in the international community, more dependent on the US military and economic assistance.[173] On the other hand, the 1973 War contributed to the maturation of the Syrian regime and Hafiz himself.[174] At the end of the war, Syria did not recover the Golan Heights but had posed a great challenge to the "pro-Israeli status quo".[175] Hafiz emerged from the war as the new pan-Arab leader; most Western leaders also acknowledged his position within the Middle East.[176] After his experience in the war, Hafiz became inclined to rely on diplomacy to achieve his ends.[177] A split also emerged in the Syrian-Egyptian alliance due to the unilateral actions of Sadat, which also pushed Hafiz to rely on US mediation in the disengagement negotiations with Israel.

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[171] Rabil (2003), op.cit, p.25

[172] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 108.

[173] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel from War to Peacemaking*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 133.

[174] Eyal Zisser (2001), op. cit.

[175] Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 70.

[176] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 133.

[177] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 109.

4.2.1.2. The Peace Process Following the 1973 War

After the 1973 War, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who had perceived the war as "neither total victory for Israel nor total defeat for Arab armies",[178] initiated a political settlement process. The first step was the Israel-Egypt Disengagement Treaty, signed on January 18, 1974. Syria was more difficult to negotiate with, as Hafiz demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories as a precondition to initiating negotiations.

Ultimately, Hafiz accepted Henry Kissinger's mediation of the Golan Heights disengagement on the belief that the Arab military challenge to Israel in 1973 and the rise of Arab oil after the war might lead to a divergence in Israeli and US interests, and the further hope that the US might pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in order to protect its own interests in the Middle East.[179] In addition, Hafiz realized that military initiative alone would not be sufficient to recapture the occupied territories. He believed that diplomacy was also needed in order to achieve his ends, and that, after the relative success of the 1973 War, it was time to work towards a comprehensive settlement.

During the negotiation process, the differences between the Egyptian and Syrian perspectives became clearer. Sadat proceeded unilaterally and seemed ready to accept a separate, partial deal with Israel. In contrast, Hafiz was prudent and searched for a common Arab strategy in the negotiations. The Syrian-Israeli negotiations were slowed and disrupted by military clashes arising from a war of attrition that Hafiz initiated against Israel March–May of 1974. After a difficult five-month negotiation process, Syria and Israel reached a disengagement agreement on May 31, 1974. The agreement included the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the locations it occupied during the 1973 War and from the town of Quneitra, which it had been captured in the 1967 War, as well as the deployment of a United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) between Syrian and Israeli lines. While

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[178] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 24.

[179] Drsydale,Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 181.

the Israeli withdrawal was insufficient for a Syrian side committed to retaking the Golan Heights, the agreement was perceived as just a first step in an Israeli withdrawal. However, the presence of the UNDOF on the border made the Syrian ambition to retake the Golan Heights even more difficult while simultaneously decreasing military pressure on Israel. By signing the disengagement agreement, Syria ceded its earlier policy of "rejectionism".[180]

While Kissinger proceeded with step-by-step diplomacy, Hafiz called for the implementation of the UNSCR 242 in order to end the state of belligerency, which would mean the beginning of a real peace. Hafiz's offer was to sign a non-belligerency agreement with Israel in return for its withdrawal from all occupied territories and ongoing recognition of Palestinian rights.[181] Israel declared its willingness to negotiate and assured the US government that territorial compromise was possible, but that it did not intend a total withdrawal from the occupied territories.[182]

Over the next four years of disengagement negotiations, Hafiz's strategy was to maintain the US as a broker. According to him, the US was the only country that would convince Israel to agree to a peace settlement. He also tried to prevent a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement,[183] but a disengagement agreement was reached in September 1975, called the Sinai Interim Agreement, or Sinai II. Hafiz criticized Sadat for causing a rift in Arab solidarity and convinced other Arab countries to reject Egypt's separate agreement with Israel at the Rabat Summit.

During 1976–1977, Syria continued to negotiate with Israel in Geneva. Hafiz reiterated his ambition to achieve full Israeli withdrawal and recognition of

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[180] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 145.

[181] Moshe Ma'oz, "Syria, Israel and the Peace Process", in *From War to Peace: Arab-Israeli Relations, 1973–1993*, Barry Rubin, Joseph Ginat and Moshe Ma'oz (eds.), (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 160.

[182] Ibid, p. 114.

[183] Ma'oz (1994), op. cit, p. 160.

Palestinian rights to newly elected US President Jimmy Carter. Carter expressed his support for a Palestinian homeland and attempted to organize an all-party international conference to be held in Geneva. However, the new Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin rejected meeting with an Arab delegation, the idea of a Palestinian homeland in the West Bank and Gaza, and total withdrawal from the Golan Heights.[184] Carter accepted the Israeli position due to domestic pressure. The US-Israeli agreement and the reluctance of the Syrian side to participate in the conference with these conditions led to a stalemate in the peace process.

Egypt's separate peace talks with Israel led to the collapse of the Syrian-Egyptian alliance and undermined the diplomatic influence needed to pressure Israel on the issue of withdrawal.[185] Syria refused to continue its cooperation with the United States in the disengagement negotiations on the grounds that US policy in the region favored Israel. Egypt's President Anwar Sadat tried to reach an agreement with Israel to recover the lands that Egypt had lost. This was criticized by Syria and other Arab countries, which feared his unilateral diplomacy, would weaken the Arab position in their negotiations with Israel. Egypt-Israeli negotiations concluded with the Camp David Peace Treaty in 1979.

Syria objected to the treaty and tried to isolate Egypt from the Arab world, and to unify the Arab position against any unilateral agreement.[186] In order to counterbalance this loss, Syria tried to create an "Eastern Front", incorporating Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Syria's opposition to Egypt's unilateral peace treaty and its mobilization of the Arab world led it to be viewed as a "rejectionist state". It is believed that until Syria achieved "strategic parity"[187] with Israel, it would obstruct all Israeli agreements with other

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[184] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 151.

[185] Raymond Hinnebusch (2002b), op. cit.

[186] Martha Neff Kessler, "Syria, Israel and the Middle East Peace Process: Past Success and Final Challenges", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VII, No. 2, (February 2000), pp.75–76.

[187] The Arabic phrase *"al-tawazun al-istratiji"* is alternately translated as either "strategic balance" or "strategic parity".

states.[188] Syria's rejectionist policy antagonized the Western powers, and the US followed a policy of containment with regard for the Syrian role in the peace process. The financial and military aid that Syria had been providing to the Arab countries ended when it allied with Iran in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. At this point, Syria lost the diplomatic leverage it needed to counter Israel.

4.2.1.3. Syrian Policy in Lebanon

Lebanon has become central to Syrian security concerns in its struggle against Israel. Lebanon became a foreign policy front after the post-1973 peace process stalled,[189] becoming an arena of Syrian-Israeli struggle for dominance. Lebanon's fragile mosaic, founded in its imbalance of religious confessional power, made it a suitable environment in which to play on this friction.

When the PLO moved its organizational and operational base from Jordan to Lebanon, the imbalance in the Lebanese political system was exacerbated. The Muslim communities in Lebanon, mainly the long-suffering Sunni, Shia, and Druze confessional communities, perceived the existence of the PLO as an opportunity to strengthen their position on the grounds that the system favored Christians. As a reaction to increasing Muslim demands, the Maronites began cooperating with Israel. At that time, the alliance was an important threat to Syria, which was trying to keep Israel out of Lebanon over security concerns.[190]

A civil war erupted in Beirut on April 13, 1975 with a violent clash between Maronite groups (Phalangalist militias) and Palestinian commandos.[191] Initially, Syria refrained from taking direct action in the civil war due to its involvement in the

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[188] Seale (1988), op. cit, p. 344–350.

[189] Hinnebusch, Ehteshami, op. cit, p. 71.

[190] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 43.

[191] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 163.

peace process under US mediation.[192] However, as the violent clashes increased, Syria decided to intervene in the civil war to support the Palestinian-Muslim 'Left' camp against the Maronite 'Right', in order to prevent the collapse of the Syrian system. It imposed an end to the war and put forward a peace plan including a moderate redistribution of power in favor of Muslims and Palestinian respect for Lebanese sovereignty.[193] Syria's own allies—the Lebanese Left—rejected the plan on the grounds that it demanded a secular state and a more radical distribution of power. Fearing efforts on the part of the Maronite Right to draw Israel into the war, Syria intervened against its former allies to prevent a Maronite defeat on June 1, 1976.

This intervention against Syria's traditional allies, which could be regarded as a surprise attack, has been discussed in the literature from various perspectives. According to Ma'oz, the reason behind the attack was to impose a Pax-Syriana in Lebanon, which was perceived as a natural part of Greater Syria by the Syrians.[194] In fact, Syria's intervention in the Lebanese Civil War was motivated by the following security concerns: to create a Levant Bloc, to secure itself an alternative to an Egyptian alliance and to consolidate a position as arbiter in the war.[195] In a similar fashion, Rabil suggests that the Syrian intervention was shaped by Hafiz's strategic security needs rather than by an ideological ambition for Greater Syria.[196]

The US engaged in diplomatic efforts between Egypt and Israel at first and did not pay attention to the Lebanese Civil War. However, as the war escalated and the Palestinians and the leftists were on the verge of a victory, the US understood that it could no longer ignore the Lebanon issue.[197] The US did not want Israel to intervene

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[192] Ibid, p. 164.

[193] Alasdair and Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 75.

[194] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p.164–165.

[195] Hinnebusch (2002b), p. 155.

[196] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 51.

[197] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 52.

in Lebanon for fear of escalation. Therefore, the US supported the Syrian intervention in Lebanon in order to adjust the military balance, and tried to convince Israel and the Christians of Lebanon to consent to this intervention. After a long debate, Israel consented on certain grounds, and an unsigned agreement between the US, Israel and Syria known as the "Red Line Agreement" came to the fore. The agreement included three items: 1) the Syrian army would not enter southern Lebanon, 2) the Syrian army in Lebanon would not be equipped with surface-to-air missiles, and 3) the Syrian army would not use its air force against the Christians in Lebanon.[198]

Anxious about Syria's continuing control over Lebanon following the end of the interim civil war, Maronites cooperated with Israel. The decision of Israel's new government under Menachem Begin to build a close alliance with the Maronites led to the Litani Operation of the Israeli army against the PLO in March 1978. The collapse of the Syrian-Maronite alliance was related to the growing understanding between Syria and the Palestinians. They both opposed Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and the decreasing need for Syrian protection due to the declining Lebanese Left.[199]

After its invasion of Lebanon, Israel consolidated the Maronite-dominated security zone, which had become a serious threat to Syrian security.[200] Syria's security concerns increased when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel known as the Camp David Accords. Thereafter, with the breakdown of the peace process, Syria made the reconstruction of Lebanon a lower priority.[201] The new Maronite leader Bashir Jumayil continuously prompted Israel to intervene in Lebanon because he believed his forces could not expel Syria and the PLO on their own.

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[198] Seale (1988), op. cit., p. 279–280.

[199] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 78.

[200] Ehteshami, Hinnebusch, p. 73.

[201] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, p. 79.

US President Ronald Reagan sent envoy Philip Habib to help resolve the new wave of violence, a. Philip Habib, he managed to reach an understanding between Begin, Hafiz and Arafat.[202] The US set out a plan including the withdrawal of Syrian forces, a call for the PLO to withdraw its heavy weapons from Southern Lebanon and the termination of the Israeli military presence in the Southern Lebanese Army (SLA) strip.[203] However, none of the parties had any intention of complying with the US plan. The PLO continued its operations against Israel, prompting Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to initiate a large-scale military operation against it.

On June 3, 1982, Israel launched "Operation Peace for Galilee", which marked the beginning of the 1982 War. Israel aimed to smash the PLO and expel Syria from Lebanon. Israeli-Syrian fighting resulted in an Israeli victory and a common PLO and Syrian defeat in August 1982. Syria was forced to partially evacuate its forces from Lebanon.

With the assassination of newly elected Lebanese President Bashir Jumayil on September 14, 1982, Israeli forces entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla to expel the PLO. The goal of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was to achieve hegemony in Lebanon at Syria's expense.[204] Militarily, Israel caused Syria major losses on Syria, and pushed it out of the country's strategic sectors.[205] Relying on US mediation, a Lebanese-Israeli accord was signed, known as the May 17 Agreement (1983), wherein both countries should end the state of war between them and agree not to host any hostile activities against the other on its own territory. Furthermore, Israel should withdraw from Lebanon and each should create a liaison office in each other's territory. However, Israel asserted that its withdrawal would be conditional on Syria's and the PLO's withdrawal.[206]

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[202] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 63.

[203] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 172.

[204] Hinnebusch, Ehteshami, op. cit, p. 73.

[205] Ibid, p. 73–74.

[206] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 72.

Hafiz rejected the agreement and mobilized the Lebanese factions that opposed the agreement. Syria committed itself to reconstructing a pro-Syria Lebanon. Lebanese Shi'i militant organization Hezbollah organized a serious of suicide attack against Israeli, American and French targets under Syrian direction. Finally, the US and France withdrew their forces from Beirut in February 1984. Lebanese President Amin Jumayil declared that he abolished the May 17 Agreement. Finally, Israel decided to evacuate its army from Lebanon in 1985.

Syria gained a clear victory by maintaining its existence in Lebanon and forcing the Israeli withdrawal. However, it was left with two main challenges in Lebanon. The first challenge was the PLO who, under the leadership of Arafat, challenged Syria with the notion that it would be claimed as a protectorate. Arafat flirted with Egypt and Jordan, and was involved in the Reagan plan, a version of the Camp David Accords that attempted to maintain autonomy for the West Bank. Under these conditions, Hafiz decided to depose Arafat and reshape a pro-Syrian PLO. He supported the Palestinian National Salvation Front but it never became an alternative to the PLO, and the war with the PLO led to a split in the pro-Syrian Muslim camp.[207]

Another challenge to Syria came from General Michel Aoun, who headed an executive cabinet until a successor was elected to replace President Amin Jumayil when he left office in 1988. General Aoun challenged Syria's presence in Lebanon, and in March 1989, he announced a war of liberation against Syria. In response, the Syrian army launched an attack on Aoun's forces and East Beirut collapsed. The Ta'if Accord, which had previously been opposed by General Aoun, was implemented. The accord legitimized Syria's role in Lebanon, reduced the privileges of the Maronite president and strengthened the positions of both the Sunni prime minister and the Shia speaker of the parliament. It also contained a provision for the Syrian army to assist Lebanese Forces in establishing the state's authority within a

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[207] Ehteshami, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 74–75.

period not to exceed two years.[208] Accordingly, the Syrian-Lebanese Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Friendship was signed on May 22, 1991, institutionalizing Syrian control over Lebanese foreign and security policy.[209]

4.3. Relations with the Superpowers

It is known that Syria was one of the important allies of the Soviet Union, even labeled as a "Soviet satellite" during the Cold War years. Relations with the Soviet Union planted Syria in the anti-Western camp, and was perceived by the US as "a Soviet surrogate and an outpost for Soviet influence".[210] Hafiz had successfully exploited the Cold War rivalry to Syria's advantage by relying on Soviet military and economic assistance, positioning it as a regional power.[211] However, relations with the superpowers were not stable, and certain occasions arose during which Soviet-Syrian relations were severed over disagreements and clashes of interest. There were also some issues leading to cooperation between Syria and the US.

Although the bipolar structure emerged after the end of the World War II, bipolarity had not yet been observed in the Middle East until the Suez War. Great Britain and France continued to exert influence in order to topple pan-Arabism and Egypt during the Suez Canal crisis. The two superpowers entered the Middle East through the Suez War, which is known as one of "the last major examples of intervention by former great powers (Great Britain, France)"[212] At the end of the war, Britain, facing financial difficulties and an oil shortage, lost its status at the expense of the US and ceased to be an influential actor in the Middle East. France, which had a stronger economy and direct involvement in the Middle East through its colony in Algeria,

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[208] Rabil (2003), op. cit, p. 79–80.

[209] Ehteshami, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 75.

[210] Nejad, op. cit, p. 81.

[211] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 149.

[212] Bassam Tibi, *Conflict and War in the Middle East: From Interstate War to New Security*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 92

continued to be involved in Middle East affairs. However, France's attempts to call for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict under the auspices of the four great powers—the USA, the USSR, France and Great Britain—during the 1967 War rebuffed by the superpowers. The Rogers Peace Plan, which was designed to achieve an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict following the 1967 War, assigned roles in the solution of the conflict exclusively to the USA and the USSR[213] Briefly, the 1967 War deepened superpower penetration. In the subsequent years, the Middle East became the scene of a power struggle between the USA and the Soviet Union.

4.3.1. Syrian-Soviet Relations

The roots of relations between Syria and the Soviet Union go back to 1946, one week before Syria declared its independence. The two countries signed a secret treaty in which the Soviets promised to support Syria in the international arena and to help to build a national army. The non-aggression pact signed in 1950 further developed relations.[214] In response to Western efforts to establish a pro-Western military alliance in the Middle East, known as the Baghdad Pact, the Soviet Union joined with Egypt and Syria. Although Syria favored a neutralist foreign policy, it sought support from the Soviet Union because of security considerations after relations deteriorated with neighbors Turkey and Iraq in the wake of the Baghdad Pact. Syria first purchased arms from the Soviet Union in 1955. The economic aspect of the relations was strengthened with an aid agreement signed in October 1957. Under this agreement, the Soviets agreed to finance the construction of a dam over the Euphrates and other projects.[215]

The Soviet Union approached the 1963 Ba'ath revolution with suspicion and mistrust. The revolution was led by two camps: the radical leftist group led by Amin

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[213] Ibid, p. 95.

[214] Rami Ginat, "The Soviet Union and the Syrian Ba'th Regime: From Hesitation to Rapprochement", in *Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 36, No. 2, (April 2000), pp. 150–171

[215] Ibid.

al-Hafiz and the right-wing faction dominated by Aflaq-Bitar. The leftists were divided again into two factions: that of al-Jadid and that of al-Hafiz. In this struggle, the Soviets gave their support to al-Hafiz. The radical neo-Ba'ath groups were composed of ultra-leftists who had come to power under the leadership of Salah Jadid in 1966. Although the Soviet Union was hostile to al-Jadid's faction, the Jadid-Hafiz group showed willingness to improve relations with the Soviet Union. Ginat explains Salah Jadid's willingness to get closer to the Soviets when two major threats faced him upon coming to power. The first threat was internal. Following the coup of 1966, Syria was for the first time ruled by Alawi military officers who displaced the Sunni majority. Second was an external threat: the ruling elite was characterized by anti-Western feelings and socialism, and was isolated internationally. The isolation, both domestic and international, of the new ruling elite motivated it to establish good relations with the Soviet Union.[216] The Soviet Union had supported the Jadid regime with the intention of strengthening its zone of influence in the Arab world. Hinnebusch and Drysdale argue that although Soviet policy toward Syria had been shaped by geostrategic considerations rather than ideology, for the first time, during the leadership of Salah Jadid, ideological similarity linked the two governments.[217]

With the intention of deterring an attack on Israel, the USSR signed a defense agreement with Egypt and Syria. However, Syria and Egypt turned this rearmament for defensive purposes into an offensive act and, along with Jordan, initiated an attack against Israel in June 1967. The Arab armies, in expectation of Soviet military support during the 1967 War, felt a sense of disappointment.[218] The Soviet Union had just broken off diplomatic relations with Israel during the war. The lack of Soviet support during the 1967 War had led to a loss of Soviet prestige in the Arab world. In order to compensate for its position, the Soviet Union moved to rebuild the Arab armies. It would be said that although the Soviet Union was not in support of military attacks, after each of Syria's wars with Israel, its engagement with Syria increased.

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[216] Ginat, op. cit, p. 163.

[217] Drysdale, Hinnebusch , op. cit, p. 150–152.

[218] Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 24.

This is why Alasdair and Drysdale argue that the relationship between Syria and the Soviet Union was primarily shaped within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[219]

Hafiz was known as an "independent-minded nationalist",[220] and had had some reservations about Syria's dependence on the Soviet Union. His rise to power had created concern on the Soviet side. Freedman declares that Hafiz had clear reservations about Soviet involvement in Syrian politics and criticized its failure to provide sufficient weapons.[221] Hafiz was a realist; he knew he could not recover the Golan Heights without the Soviet assistance. After coming to power, he visited the Soviet Union in February 1971. He even sent Syrian Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Mustafa Tlass on an arms procurement trip to China, which was considered as an alternative to USSR. The decision of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to expel Russian military forces from Egypt was a turning point in Syrian-Soviet relations. Egypt after the Suez War had been the first country in the Middle East in which the Soviet Union had formed a zone of influence. Until Sadat decided to expel some 15,000 advisers and technicians in July 1972, Egypt had been the pivotal state and Syria was regarded as secondary.[222] After the Soviet exodus from Egypt, Syria became its main ally in the Middle East.

The initial reaction of the Soviet Union to the Syrian-Egyptian attack aimed at retaking the Sinai Desert and the Golan Heights from Israel in 1973 (known as the October War) was hesitation. It feared that the war would obstruct détente and lead to a confrontation with the US. However, when the war began and the Soviet Union did not manage to end the hostilities, it was compelled to support its allies by providing massive quantities of weapons and experienced Soviet personnel to give advice.[223]According to Freedman, when the Arab side was winning initially, the

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[219] Drysdale, Hinnebusch , op. cit, p. 151.

[220] Ibid, p. 153.

[221] Freedman, op. cit, p. 28.

[222] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 153.

[223] Ibid, p. 154.

Soviet Union perceived it as an opportunity to mobilize the Arab world around "anti-imperialist" rhetoric that would hinder American interests in the Middle East.[224] In order to defend their allies, both the US and the USSR began airlifting massive quantities of arms, bringing the superpowers to the verge of military confrontation. Tibi analyzes the 1973 War from a theoretical framework, explaining how a regional war in the Middle Eastern sub-system turned into an international crisis through the mutual interplay of regional and international environments.[225] Although the superpowers had both been against a confrontation, they were obliged to involve themselves in the war in order to maintain their superpower status.

In the aftermath of the war, the Soviet Union wanted to play a role in negotiations between the Israelis and Arabs. In spite of their efforts to internationalize the peace process, both the Syrians and the Egyptians perceived the United States as a more effective peace broker. The US mediated the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Syrian disengagement negotiations, which were signed in 1974. This reveals the pragmatism in Hafiz's foreign policy. Although the Syrian army had needed Soviet arms in order to enter the 1973 War, he rejected its calls to participate in the Geneva Conference, which was chaired by the superpowers under the aegis of the United Nations. However, Egypt's increasing unilateralism, moving out of the Soviet orbit and signing a second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement in 1975, prompted Syria to move closer to the Soviet Union. Another turning point in Syrian-Soviet Union relations was the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty signed in 1979. This treaty weakened the Arab position and left Syria alone in confronting Israel. In order to do so, it needed a massive arms buildup, which in turn required Soviet assistance. The Soviet Union and Syria signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1980s, which lasted for twenty years.

Syria's relationship with the PLO was a source of tension with the Soviet Union. In 1975, the first attempt by Hafiz's regime to intervene in the Lebanese Civil War was Soviet-supported, but when it attempted to intervene in June 1976 in order to prevent

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[224] Freedman, op. cit, p. 128.

[225] Tibi, op. cit, p.120–125.

the PLO-Muslim leftist alliance from defeating the Maronites, the Soviet Union was harshly critical, threatening to apply if Syria did not withdraw.[226] Syria's attitudes towards the PLO again created problems in Soviet-Syrian relations when Hafiz supported dissident Palestinians against Arafat after the 1982 War. Syria and the PLO were both important allies for the Soviet Union, and the contention between them created disturbance. Relations between them remained a source of disagreement between Syria and the Soviet Union for years. Despite this, the Soviet Union accepted Syria's role in Lebanon as crucial and provided it military and political support again when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. When Yuri Andropov succeeded Brezhnev as Secretary General of the Communist Party in November 1982, the military cooperation between Syria and the Soviet Union reached important levels. In spite of its military and diplomatic support, the Soviet Union was concerned about a heated confrontation between Syria and the West, particularly with the United States, which was increasingly involved in backing the Maronites in the war.

Andropov's successor Konstantin Chernenko, who assumed the presidency in 1984, was not as sympathetic towards Syria. He tried to broaden the Soviet Union's interest in the Middle East and diversify its allies in the region. He restored diplomatic relations with Egypt, and met with Israeli and Iraqi officers on certain occasions. On Hafiz's visit to Moscow, Chernenko advised him to reconcile with Jordan, Egypt and the PLO.[227]

The major transformation in Syrian-Soviet relations occurred in the Gorbachev era, which began in March 1985. Due to changes in the international system that came with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of unipolarity, both the Soviet Union and Syria reviewed their previous policies, which will be examined in detail in the next sections. As a result of the Soviet Union's "new thinking" initiative, support for Syria decreased militarily and diplomatically. Its new approach to the Arab-Israeli problem was to attempt to normalize relations with Israel and pro-Western

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[226] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 156.

[227] Ibid, p. 161.

Arab states. Gorbachev told Hafiz that the Soviet Union would not support Syria's attempts to achieve military parity with Israel. Nevertheless, there was continuity in Syrian-Soviet relations, and it continued to provide a more limited number of weapons based on Syria's geo-strategic importance to it.[228]

In brief, throughout the Cold War, Syria chose to ally with the Soviet Union in a relationship shaped by geo-strategic considerations rather than ideology. Through this alliance, the Soviet Union created a zone of influence in the Middle East and undermined US interests. On the other hand, Syria maintained political and military support in order to confront Israel, which was completely dependent on Soviet assistance. The alliance was marked by various disagreements, which have been detailed here. The rift between them arose out of clear differences in perspectives; Syria with a regional perspective, and the Soviet Union with a global one. The Soviet Union opposed Syria's aggressive policies out of fear of a possible military confrontation with the US in the Middle East. It never signed a strategic alliance agreement despite the expectations of the Syrian regime, especially after the United States and Syria signed a Memorandum of Strategic Understanding in 1981. Syria suffered from this limited Soviet diplomatic and military support. The United States was more cooperative and financially generous towards its ally Israel from the Syrian perspective.[229] On the other hand, Soviet opposition did not prevent Syria from taking military action as it intervened in Lebanon in 1976 despite criticism and threats from the Soviet Union. Despite these disagreements, the two countries managed to maintain their alliance throughout the Cold War.

4.3.2. Syrian-US Relations

Until 1947, the United States had a positive image in Syria. It has even been argued that Syria desired its mandate to be placed with the United States after World War

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[228] John P. Hannah, *At Arms Length: Soviet-Syrian Relations in the Gorbachev Era*, The Washington Institute Policy Papers, No. 18, 1999, pp. 1–3.

[229] Alasdair, Drysdale, op. cit, p. 158.

I.[230] However, US endorsement of the United Nations' plan for the partition of Palestine, and its support for the new state of Israel, had strong negative ramifications for US popular image in Syria. Thereafter, it was perceived as Israel's primary benefactor, backing it in its conflict with the Arabs.

During the Cold War years, US interests in the Middle East included protection of Israel, support for its moderate Arab allies, access to petroleum and exclusion of Soviet influence.[231] The US viewed the Middle East through the lens of East-West conflict. In order to create its zone of influence and to contain Soviet influence in the region, it focused on the establishment of anti-Soviet security alignments in the region, like the Baghdad Pact and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Syria, committed to the principle of non-alignment, perceived these security arrangements as a tool of imperialism. The US viewed its radical nationalist stance as a threat that had to be contained. Syria associated itself with the anti-West camp and depended on the Soviet Union for material support against the Western and Israeli threat. The United States was concerned about the possibility that the radical national government in Syria might act as a Soviet surrogate, a regional output for Soviet influence.[232]

US support to Israel in the 1967 War further damaged between the US and Syria. Until that time, the US had tried to maintain a local arms balance. However, fearing a Soviet intervention to protect its Arab allies, the US began to deliver massive arms to Israel. In this period, the Arab-Israeli conflict began to be regarded as a struggle between imperialists and Arab nationalists due to US involvement in the conflict.

Following the relative success in the 1973 War, the United States and Syria resumed their relationship in June 1974. Syrian leaders believed that the Arabs' military challenge to Israel and the rise of Arab oil after the war might lead to a divergence in Israeli and US interests; it hoped the US might pressure Israel to withdraw from the

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[230] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 175.

[231] Ibid, p. 174.

[232] Nejad, op. cit, p. 81.

territories it had occupied in 1967 in order to protect its own interests in the Middle East.[233] Syria renewed diplomatic relations with the US and accepted Kissinger's mediation in the Golan Heights disengagement negotiations. With a strong belief that the US would be a more effective broker in the peace settlement than the Soviet Union, Syria refused its ally's calls to internationalize the peace process and chose to enter disengagement negotiations with the US mediation. Kissinger's strategy was to roll Soviet influence back and become the sole mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, Kissinger was not a neutral mediator; he assured the Israeli side that the negotiations would not result in a comprehensive peace settlement, and that concessions to the Arab side would be small and symbolic.[234] Syrian expectations from the disengagement negotiations were not realized, and Syria discontinued its cooperation with the United States on the grounds that US policy in the region favored Israel and was committed to divide Arabs.

After the negotiations with Syria came to an end, the US concentrated on a separate peace between Israel and Egypt, which was easier to attain and would have the same effect of dividing Arabs. Egypt's President Anwar Sadat tried to reach an agreement with Israel to recover the lands that Egypt had lost. Syria and other Arab countries criticized Sadat's unilateral diplomacy, fearing it would weaken the Arab position in their negotiations with Israel. Egypt-Israeli negotiations culminated in the Camp David Peace Treaty of 1979, which divided the Arab countries and further weakened their positions in the conflict against Israel. Syria objected to the treaty; it tried to isolate Egypt from the Arab world and unify the Arab position against any unilateral agreement.[235] Syria's opposition to Egypt's unilateral peace treaty and its mobilization of the Arab world against it led the US to view Syria as a "rejectionist state" and a "Soviet surrogate". Thereafter, US policymakers pursued a strategy of containment with regard to the Syrian role in the peace process.

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[233] Drsydale, Hinnebusch, op. cit., p. 181.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Kessler, op. cit, pp. 75–76.

Syria's role in the Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, was an important element in US-Syrian relations. Despite mutual suspicion and disagreement over most Middle Eastern issues, Syria and the US cooperated on Lebanon since both had the goal of re-establishing order and a maintaining a balance between disputing factions. Syria moved its troops into Lebanon in 1976 with US approval in order to maintain a balance of power between the Lebanese factions. At that time, the United States characterized Syria's role in Lebanon as constructive.

However, over the course of time, Syria lost its balancer position between the Lebanese factions and began to support the Palestinian and other National Movement factions. This position coincided with Sadat's unilateral attempts at diplomacy with Israel, which had been sharply criticized by Syria. With dramatic changes in the international environment in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US adapted to a new policy in the Middle East. As a result, Syria began to be viewed as "an outpost of Soviets" and its constructive role in Lebanon began to be challenged.

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, backed by the US, further strained US-Syrian relations. Israelis negotiated normalization of relations with the Lebanese government in early 1983, which led to an agreement on May 17, 1983. Syria soundly rejected the accord, viewing it as a "spoiler" in Lebanon.[236] Relations became critical when US targets were attacked in Beirut, probably carried out by US allies. Thereafter, American forces intervened militarily against Syrian positions in the Middle East. However, significant US casualties were incurred in Lebanon and the US administration decided to withdraw its troops in February 1984 while the Syrian allies were gaining power. The Lebanese crisis and the failure of US military power showed the US that Syria's role in Lebanon could not be ignored.

Syria cooperated with the United States and other Arab countries in negotiating the Ta'if Accord in 1989, which outlined a comprehensive reform plan for ending the Lebanese Civil War. The Accord also endorsed the Syrian military presence in

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[236] Nejad, op. cit, p. 88.

Lebanon. The US administration shared Syria's support for the Ta'if Accord and played a major role in the international legitimization of the pro-Syrian government in Lebanon.[237]

Syrian-US relations during the Cold War years was generally hostile, both diplomatically and militarily, because of the alliance between Syria and the Soviet Union. However, Cold War configurations did not prevent Syria from engaging with the US on certain issues, including disengagement negotiations under the mediation of Kissinger and negotiations regarding Lebanon. Soviet support for Syria decreased dramatically at the end of the 1980s as a part of its "new thinking", and Syria began to question its policy of "tactical rejectionism" and to occasionally cooperate with the United States, which will be examined in detail in the next section.

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[237] Drysdale, Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 197.

CHAPTER 5

THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND SYRIA: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NEW WORLD ORDER

A change of direction had been observed in Syrian foreign policy over the second half of the 1980s. Developments over this period paved the way for the policies followed by Syria after the end of the Cold War. While Hafiz's strategic decisions had then seemed clear-cut and spontaneous, in reality, they were the result of a long process. According to Quilliam, adapting to the prerequisites of the "new world order" was an essential part of Syria's foreign policy in the late 1980s.[238]

In order to analyze the impact of the end of the Cold War on the foreign policy of a particular state, an understanding of the Cold War itself is necessary. In its expression in the Third World, the Cold War "was a proxy conflict between the West and the Soviet Bloc (or between the US and the USSR) for influence and strategic positions in the regions outside Europe and North Africa".[239] The Cold War dominated world politics from the late 1940s until the 1980s, and involved both military and political rivalry for political influence, diplomatic advantage and economic goals. Halliday suggests that on the one hand, the Cold War bore little difference to other Great Power rivalries in that traditional instruments were deployed in the struggle, but on the other, it clearly differed in its strong ideological element.[240] The Cold War was a global conflict in which each side had the objective

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[238] Quilliam, p. 7.

[239] S. Neil Macfarlane, "Taking Stock" in *The Third World Beyond the Cold War: Continuity and Change*, Louise Fawcett and Yezid Sayigh (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

[240] Fred Halliday, "The Middle East, the Great Powers and the Cold War" in Yezid Sayigh, Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The Cold War and the Middle* East, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 6.

of bringing as many states as it could under its influence. Every part of the world was affected, the Middle East being just one, and each of these an impact on the evolution of the conflict, though according to many commentators, Europe was its center. Halliday suggests that the Cold War was sparked by the Berlin Blockade of 1948–1949 ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. However, as the Cold War spread and intensified, the Middle East became more important, considered second to Europe in the rivalry between the two superpowers.[241]

To define the end of a major war is an arbitrary task. As Hansen maintains, a common way to define the end is to focus on one party's surrender. September 1989 is interpreted as the date of the Soviet Union's actual surrender, which also marks the end of the Cold War.[242] The structural transformation is consequently dated to 1989, which is widely recognized to have ushered in a new era in international relations. The end of the Cold War represents a transition from one structure to another and is thereby labeled a systemic change.

5.1. An Analysis of the End of the Cold War as a Systemic Change

The end of the Cold War is related with a change in the distribution of capabilities in the international system. It is related with the rise and fall of great powers. The international system has entered a systemic transformation process, basically from a bipolar structure to unipolar US hegemony.

Systemic change is a relatively rare phenomenon, occurring, according to Hansen, perhaps once in a generation or two.[243] Such a low frequency may point to the limitations of the systemic-structural approach. In the discipline of International Relations, neorealist theory provides a structural approach to the analysis of

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[241] Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.105, Issue 3, (1990).

[242] Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*, (Surrey: Curzon pres, 2000), p. 17.

[243] Hansen, op. cit, p. 5.

international systems. Neorealists are primarily concerned with understanding continuity in world politics and are perceived by some scholars as having "had little to say about epochal systemic changes, such as the end of the Cold War".[244] However, neorealism has an argument about systemic change in contrast to their neoliberal counterparts. Change is said to occur with major shifts in the balance of power, for example from bipolarity to multipolarity, according to the neorealist theory. Such changes are driven by the rise and fall of great powers. At a purely descriptive level, the end of the Cold War would seem to meet this criterion for being an instance of systemic change.

However, it is necessary to assert that neorealism does not have a model for unipolarity. Neorealism recognized the possibility of system change but a change from bipolarity to multipolarity. Many realist theories attribute the absence of war to the bipolar nature of the postwar international system, which is considered less war-prone than multipolar world systems. The long peace between 1945 and 1990, which is characterized by bipolarity, has been attributed to the possession of nuclear weapons by the superpowers. According to the neorealists, a peaceful system change would not be possible. In the unlikely event of a systemic transformation, the catalyst would have to be war between superpowers. This is the fundamental tenet of realist theories on power transition. Neorealism's failure to predict the possibility of such a momentous change in a peaceful manner prompted harsh critique against the theory, which had dominated the literature during the Cold War years. The end of the Cold War undermined neorealism in two ways, as Koslowski and Kratochwil asserts: First, contrary to the expectations of the realists that the bipolar structure of the international system would last, the Soviet Union disintegrated. Second, the manner of system change did not conform to any theoretical model of neorealism. It did not lead to a hegemonic or system-wide war. Instead, the Soviet Union changed its rhetoric, retreated from Eastern Europe and allowed its constituent republics to secede peacefully.[245] Unipolarity is a feature of the existing realist model, and it will

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[244] Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 16.

[245] Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System", *International Organization*, Vol. 48, Issue 2, (1994), pp. 215–247.

be replaced by a multipolar balance of power. According to this view, the US will be challenged by the emerging economic centers of Japan, China and India.

Neorealism also contends that structural changes create expectations about how the units of the system will behave. Although the neorealist analysis mainly focuses on the rise and fall of great powers, it does not exclude the analysis of so-called "other states", as Hansen calls them. These states are also affected by the structure of the international system and they interact with the great power(s).[246] In this context, across various structures, balances of power tend to occur, and the units tend to adapt self-help strategies. That is, most will adapt in the long run to obstacles they face due to structural shifts, although there is no guarantee of this.[247]

5.2 The End of the Cold War: Does It Make a Difference for the Middle East and Syria?

In order to discuss the impact of the end of the Cold War on Syria in particular, it is necessary to analyze the effects of the Cold War around the region. In asking the question, "How has the Cold War affected the Middle East?", the analysis is split into three tiers: relations with superpowers, relations with other regional powers and domestic politics. Neither the systemic nor the regional approaches are adequate on their own to explain the events of the Cold War years. It is also necessary look at domestic politics in order to examine the impact of the Cold War on a particular state. The literature offers many perspectives on this.

According to Halliday, the interaction between the great powers and the states of the Middle East was twofold during the Cold War. Regional powers exploited bipolarity, taking advantage of the superpower rivalry. Challenging the view that Middle Eastern countries were the "satellites" or "puppets" of the superpowers, Halliday

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[246] Hansen, op. cit, p. 9.

[247] Waltz (1979), op. cit.

argues that these countries were directly involved in the process, citing autonomous action, as in the case of Arab unity efforts, and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) crisis. However, he also asserts that the impact of the Cold War is limited because the alliance with the superpowers was an external matter rather than a domestic one. The countries of the region did not adapt their political systems to either the Soviet or the American model. The ideological impact of the Cold War was limited, the superpower rivalry did not change the map of the Middle East and there was no direct military conflict involving major powers in the region.[248] It is argued that it is simplistic to claim that Middle East conflicts were caused by Cold War politics, although its conflicts were exacerbated by it through arms sales, diplomatic rivalries and ideological associations. However, Halliday suggests that there is a "regional narcissism" in the Middle East, which is explained as an understanding among the peoples of the Middle East that US-Soviet relations should be perceived through the lens of their particular pre-occupations.[249]

Efraim Harsh agrees that the Cold War had only a limited impact on the international politics of the Middle East. Neither the US nor the Soviet Union had a decisive role in Middle East developments during this period. He cites three reasons for this. First, none of the Middle Eastern conflicts, like the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Iran-Iraq War, owed its origins to the Cold War. Second, superpower policy towards the Middle East was not just motivated by the competition between them. Both the Soviet Union and the US had deep interests in the region external to the Cold War configuration. Third, the superpower rivalry in the Middle East had nothing to do with a struggle between liberal democracy and communism. Interdependence between the superpowers and their Middle Eastern allies was shaped by national interests rather than by ideology. The allies were junior partners to the

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[248] Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, (New York: Cambrdige University Press, 2005), pp. 97–129.

[249] Halliday (1997), op. cit, p. 11.

superpowers.[250] Patrick Seale agrees that Cold War considerations seemed relatively unimportant in shaping the policies of key players like Syria.[251]

Unlike the authors listed above who believe the Cold War had a limited impact on the Middle East, Peter Sluglett argues for a deep, lasting and traumatic effect on the region. He agrees the Middle Eastern allies were not "puppets", and that local actors took advantage of superpower rivalry for their own benefit. He suggests that the most of the important impact of the Cold War on the internal politics of the Middle East was a legacy of disdain towards local communists and leftists, which led to the emergence of durable dictatorial regimes and the rise of the religious right.[252]

As for the impact of the Cold War on Syrian politics, the main approach has been to perceive Syria as the Soviet Union's avenue of influence in the Middle East. As examined in the previous sections, relations between the two were unstable and full of ups and downs. Seale talks about three distinct periods in the relationship, labeled the 'honeymoon' period, from 1954–1958; a roller coaster 'marriage', marked by numerous ups and downs, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s; followed by 'divorce' and 'disillusionment'.[253]

Briefly, the impact of Cold War politics on Syria, as well as its alignment with the Soviet Union is limited. In terms of ideology, the Cold War alignment produced neither a pro-Soviet revolutionary movement nor a communist regime in Syria. In addition, the alliance did not guarantee Soviet control over Syria's domestic and foreign policy; Syria's intervention in Lebanon in 1976 was a case in point that it continued to direct its own foreign policy actions.

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[250] Efraim Karsh, "Cold War, Post-Cold War: Does It Make a Difference for the Middle East?", *Review of International Studies*, (1997), Vol. 23, pp. 271–272.

[251] Patrick Seale, "Syria", in Sayigh and Shlaim (eds.), *The Cold War and the Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 49.

[252] Peter Sluglett, "The Cold War in the Middle East", in Louise Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 42–58.

[253] Seale (1997), op. cit, p. 49.

However, the impact of the Cold War on Syrian politics is undeniable. This strategic rivalry led to the formation of competitive alliance systems, in which Syria aligned itself with the Soviet Union. This alignment was not unique in the region; the more moderate Arab states tended to align themselves with the United States while the more radical states who were directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict became the Soviet Union's allies, particularly since Israel was closely allied with the United States in the region. Such conflicts had little to do with the Cold war rivalry, but they acquired a Cold War character as the various parties scrambled for superpower backing.[254]

The end of the Cold War and the loss of Soviet support were serious blows to Syria's long-term strategy of balancing Israel. This forced it to diversify its international connections, to establish itself as an unavoidable regional actor in the eyes of the US and to seek to reshape the regional order to its advantage. Syria's participation in the anti-Iraq coalition, along with the US and its participation to the Madrid Peace Conference under less than ideal conditions were perceived as being at odds with its traditional foreign policy. These acts should be interpreted within the context of the end of the Cold War, and Syria's search to guarantee itself a place in the "new world order". However, this study argues that although the changes in the international system resulted in Syria's cooperation with the superpower in the aftermath of the Cold War, domestic factors also facilitated foreign policy change. Analyses of the end of the end of the Cold War generally overemphasize the importance of systemic and structural factors. The study of the Cold War and its ending may emphasize systemic factors; however, this must be examined in relation to the internal characteristics and circumstances of the subject states. To this end, Fawcett relates that "[w]hat may be more useful is to assess the impact of the global structural change in terms of the specific nature of the linkages between the regions and the international system as a whole, and the character of the regions and the units making them up".[255]

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[254] Halliday (1997), op. cit, p. 14.

[255] Macfarlane, op. cit, p. 31.

5.3. Forces of Change in the 1980s

The change of direction in Syrian foreign policy at the end of the 1980s was stimulated both by external and internal dynamics. The forces of change will in this section be analyzed under three headings: internal dynamics, regional developments and external dynamics.

5.3.1. Internal Dynamics: Economic Crisis

Perthes suggests that the Syrian regime faced its first crisis of legitimacy in 1987 due to economic rather than political problems.[256] The economic problems of the 1980s resulted both from internal and external matters. According to Perthes, the internal problems played a major role in this economic crisis, while the external problems had a secondary role. Syria's failed "development strategy" was foremost among these. Arab aid, the rise of oil prices and cheap credit made rapid state expansion possible in the 1970s. When aid declined in the 1980s, the bloated states faced economic stagnation. The Hafiz regime introduced a Syrian version of *infitah* as a response to the increasing pressure for change, which had arisen from the fact that the public sector had not become an effective capital accumulation mechanism.[257] As a part of the new economic strategy, the role of the bourgeoisie and the merchant class in the Syrian economy expanded, but the scope of private business remained limited. In spite of the concessions made to the private sector, the state retained a leading role in industry and foreign trade. Syria's development strategy during these years was to move away from a statist agriculture-based economy towards economic liberalization by reaching the level of more advanced economies. In order to achieve this objective, the regime's social base enlarged by embracing private business and introducing limited liberalization.

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[256] Volker Perthes, "The Syrian Economy in the 1980s", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (1992 Winter), p. 37.

[257] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Asad's Syria and the New World Order: The Struggle for Regime Survival", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, (January 1993), p. 1.

Although the economy grew, structural development remained limited. Low production, a balance of payment deficit, a budget deficit and approximately 40 percent inflation resulted in the devaluation of the Syrian Pound in December 1987. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita decreased from 5890 Syrian Pounds to 4775 Syrian Pounds between 1980 and 1987.[258] As a result of the economic crisis, Syria adopted an economic program intended to increase exports relative to its imports in order to the burden of its balance of trade deficit. Attraction of foreign investments was also an important part of this economic program, as foreign investment levels had been insignificant due to the Ba'ath regime's nationalization policy.[259] The government eventually began to pursue a pragmatic economic policy, contradicting its prior development strategies.[260] Consequently, Syria entered the 1990s economically vulnerable. After its development policy failed and Arab aid was reduced, Syria was forced to expand its economic privatization and try to attract financial resources and investments.

5.3.2. Regional Developments

Since the Camp David Accords signed with Israel in 1979, Egypt had been isolated in the Arab world and Syria had attempted to fill the vacuum of Arab leadership. However, it did not have the necessary political and military power, cultural influence, and demographic weight to sustain this leadership role.[261] It could not prevent the reconciliation between Egypt and the Arabs; the Palestinians, Jordanians, Iraqis and Saudis all reached out to Cairo, each for its own reasons. In November 1987, the Arab League formally adopted a resolution allowing member states to reestablish diplomatic ties with Egypt. Syria's calls to isolate Egypt had not been successful.

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[258] Perthes (1992), op. cit, p. 41.

[260] Ibid, p. 53.

[261] Alasdair Drysdale, "Syria Since 1988: From Crisis to Opportunity", in Robert Freedman (ed.), The Middle East after Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait, (Florida: University of Florida, 1993), p. 278.

Syria's disappointment was not only related to Egypt. The Palestinians had stubbornly resisted Syrian efforts to control them. According to Rabinovich, the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada and the changes in the political strategy of the PLO in 1988 had created some problems for Syria. Although it supported the intifada, it suffered from the enhanced stature of the PLO.[262] Syria feared that any development towards a Palestinian-Israeli settlement would hinder its prospects for recovering the Golan Heights. Lebanon was another challenge. Syria had failed to replace Amin Gemayel as president with a candidate of its own choosing, neither did it prevent the election of Michael Aoun, who posed a serious problem for Syria after his election.

Another difficulty for Syria was Iraq, its main Arab foe. During the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein had been engaged with war and posed little threat to Syria. Although the war ended without an absolute victory for either side, Saddam claimed said victory and, in so doing gained the support of the Arab masses. Iraq also presented itself as the defender of the Arab cause against Israel. Syria had also claimed this role for itself. Finally, and to punish Syria for its support of Iran during the war, Saddam turned his attention to Lebanon, supporting Michel Aoun, who openly challenged the Syrian presence in Lebanon. This strategy created a disturbance in Syria since it considered Lebanon to be within the sphere of its influence.

In addition to its problematic relations with neighboring countries, Syria was also isolated by regional blocs. The Gulf states which had sustained Syria following the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, reduced the amount of its aid, and when the aid agreement expired in 1988, they did not renew it. The formation of the Arab Cooperation Council, in which Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and North Yemen were involved, heightened Syria's growing sense of isolation and peripheralization.[263] Syria also found itself shut of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab Maghreb Union and the Arab Cooperation Council. Its refusal to attend the Arab League Summit

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[262] Itamar Rabinovich, "Syria in 1990", in *Current History,* Vol. 90, No. 552 (Jan 1991), p. 29.

[263] Drysdale, op. cit, p. 279.

convened in Baghdad in May 1990 marked Iraq's rise and Syria's decline in the region.

With the changes in the Soviet Union's position and the increase in its regional isolation, Syria began to reevaluate its regional policies. One of the important outcomes of this reassessment was the resumption of diplomatic ties with Egypt in late 1989. Hafiz visited Cairo in 1990 for the first time in fourteen years. There are two main dimensions to Syria's new relationship with Egypt. Firstly, they would facilitate Syria's rapprochement with the US. Secondly, an alliance with Egypt would counter the Iraqi threat. It was also important for Syria not to be excluded and isolated in inter-Arab relations.[264] According to Drysdale, this rapprochement marked "a major geopolitical realignment in the Arab world".[265] It symbolized the defeat of Syria's policy of "tactical rejectionism". Syria signaled that it was ready to explore new paths of engagement with Israel.

5.3.3. External Dynamics: Loss of Soviet Support

Although, the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, Hafiz's disenchantment with Moscow began several years earlier. It is argued that Hafiz was one of the first leaders in the Third World to realize that the new Soviet leader Gorbachev's policies would have a negative impact on the Third World.[266] During a secret visit to Moscow in 1986, Hafiz expressed his concerns about Gorbachev's intentions in relation to the Communist Party's democratization and allowing internal opposition. After leaving Gorbachev's office, Hafiz told his advisors, "We must look for other options!"[267] Similarly, in an interview, Hafiz declared that, although no one could

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[264] Rabinovich, op. cit, p. 30.

[265] Drysdale, op. cit, p. 282.

[266] Seale (1997), op. cit, p. 73.

[267] Ibid, p. 73.

have predicted the events in detail, the Soviet Union's decline had been apparent to him.[268]

Starting with Gorbachev's ascension in 1985, a "new thinking" had begun to emerge in the Soviet Union. As a part of this "new thinking", Gorbachev declared his desire "to slow down the arms race, to relax international tensions, to seek political solutions to outstanding problems and to develop peaceful cooperation with the West".[269] In other terms, the Soviet Union was reducing the role of ideology in Soviet policy and replacing it with a more pragmatic policy. All these factors led the Soviet Union to change its traditional policy towards the Middle East. For Syria, this new approach meant that the Soviets were no longer willing to support Syria's military objectives.

The visit of Hafiz to Moscow in 1987 was important in the sense that the Soviets had given its first official signals of its new Middle East policy. During the visit, Gorbachev announced that the Middle East would no longer be a zone of superpower confrontation. He commented that the absence of relations between Syria and Israel was abnormal, and informed Hafiz he would not support Syria's quest for strategic parity with its rival. He urged Hafiz to seek a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and pointed out that the strategy of consistently relying on the military option had lost its credibility.[270]

Gorbachev's objectives for the Arab-Israeli peace process were to bring Moscow back into the negotiations, preferably on an equal footing with the US. In parallel, it called for the peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This message was emphasized during on occasions. In 1989, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard

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[268] Special Document, "Interview with the Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 4, Summer 1993, p. 120.

[269] Evgeniy Bazhanov, "Russia's Middle East Policy under Gorbachev and Yeltsin", in *From War to Peace: Arab-Israeli Relations 1973–1993*, Rubin, Ginat, Ma'oz (eds.), (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 207.

[270] Drysdale, op. cit, p. 280.

Shevardnadze, during a visit to Damascus, warned the Syrians of the continuing arms race in the Middle East.[271]

The profound change in Soviet policy towards the Middle East during the Gorbachev era affected Syria negatively. Drysdale asserts that the shift in Soviet foreign policy undermined Syria's credibility as a regional power.[272] One reason for this was the decision to restrict arms supplies. The value of weapons transferred from the Soviet Union to Syria had been approximately $2.4 billion per year during the period of 1977–1984. After the Soviet-Syrian Friendship Treaty was signed in 1980, arms transfers averaged about $2.9 billion a year. In 1985–1989, arms transfers to Syria dropped to $1.3 billion each year.[273] This decrease can primarily be explained by two factors. One of these is political factors; the restriction on arms supplies paralleled the "new thinking", which suggested that the concentration of weapons in the Middle East was a danger to regional and international stability. There was a willingness on the Soviet side to pressure Syria for a political settlement with Israel rather than supporting a military conflict. It declared that it supported "reasonable defensive sufficiency" rather than "strategic parity". The other reason relates to financial factors. Gorbachev had reevaluated Soviet expenditures in an effort to ensure his new economic policy would succeed. One of the key items evaluated was defense and foreign aid expenditures. Gorbachev no longer wanted to give huge amounts of credit to Syria, whose military debt to the USSR was in the order of $9–20 billion in 1989.[274] It was also suggested that the Soviets insisted on repayment of this debt.

It is obvious that Syria was disappointed with Gorbachev's decision to reduce arms supplies and foreign aid. This was not the only source of difficulty between the two countries, however. Several other problems also contributed to this friction.

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[271] Hannah, op. cit, p. 23.

[272] Drysdale, 1993, op. cit, p. 280.

[273] Hannah, op. cit, p. 32.

[274] Ibid, p. 33.

Soviet-Israeli relations progressed quickly in this period, which became another important source of Soviet-Syrian friction. In 1986, Gorbachev declared that Moscow recognized Israel's right to exist. In 1989, the USSR and Israel exchanged consular offices, and several meetings took place between the Israeli and Soviet officers between 1987 and 1990. Soviet Jews were allowed to immigrate to Israel, which resulted in a massive influx of Soviet Jews. According to Bazhanov, the rapprochement with Israel was necessary in order to realize the policy of "new thinking" and the goal of putting itself on equal footing with the US in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

Another issue creating concern in Syria was the Soviet Union's improving ties with moderate Arab states, particularly with Egypt and Jordan. After Egypt expelled Soviet officers in 1972, Syria had become the Soviet Union's only avenue of influence in the Middle East. Syria had benefited from this position for long years in the form of large quantities of arms supplies and foreign aid. However, this new policy of improving ties with moderate Arab states detracted from Syria's privileged positioning. As part of this reconciliation strategy, the Soviets met with the top Jordanian and Egyptian leadership. In December 1987, Jordan's King Hussein visited Moscow and was welcomed as an important Arab leader with a significant role in the effort to achieve a peaceful Middle East. More distressing for Syria was Egyptian Foreign Minister Meguid's visit to Moscow in May 1988. Meguid met with Gorbachev first rather than his Soviet counterpart Shevardnadze, agreements on series of bilateral deals were reached. This was interpreted as the process of signaling Syria's *de facto* acceptance of the Camp David Accords.[275] In the following years, Egypt continued to be a focal point of the Soviet Union's Middle East policy. This was presented in Shevardnadze's decision to start his 1989 Mideast tour in Egypt and deliver his major policy statement in Cairo.

Another area of concern for Syria was the Soviet policy towards the PLO. For years, Hafiz had opposed the PLO's political moderation, fearing it would be accepted as a serious partner in the peace negotiations. Moscow had supported Syria's opposition.

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[275] Hannah, op. cit, p. 15.

By 1988, however, the Soviet position vis-à-vis the PLO has begun to change. During Arafat's visit to the Soviet Union in 1988, Gorbachev urged him to recognize Israel's right to exist, to accept a negotiated settlement and avoid engagement in armed struggle and terrorism.[276]

The differences over Lebanon increased tension between Syria and the Soviet Union. Syrian involvement in Lebanon had created ambivalence in the Soviet Union ever since the Syrian military intervention in 1976. Soviet fears about Syrian involvement increased during Israel's 1982 invasion. Despite these fears, until Gorbachev's presidency, the Soviet Union consented to the Syrian presence in Lebanon. In 1989, when Syria was involved in the Lebanese Civil War along with its Muslim Lebanese allies against the Christian forces of Lebanese General Michel Aoun, Gorbachev called for a ceasefire leading to the withdrawal of the foreign forces rather than supporting Syria's action. Gorbachev's policy toward Lebanon seemed to have more in common with the policy of the United States than with that of Syria. In May 1989, a joint US-Soviet statement on Lebanon was issued during a meeting between US Secretary of Defense James Baker and Shevardnadze. It drew attention to the escalation of the conflict in Lebanon and called for the parties involved in the conflict to adopt a ceasefire.[277]

There was a clear change in policy towards Syria in parallel with the new global Soviet policy named "new thinking" during Gorbachev's era. A significant cutback in Soviet support for the Syrian military was observed in 1985–1989. The Soviet rapprochement with Israel, its growing ties with Egypt and Jordan, its support for PLO moderation and its objection to Syria's involvement in Lebanon during the 1989 fighting strained Syrian-Soviet relations at the political level. However, the Soviet Union did not totally abandon aid. It is known that military sales to Syria continued to account for a significant percentage of the Soviet Union's hard currency earnings during the Gorbachev era. The Americans, dissatisfied by this, remarked,

[276] Ibid, p. 17.

[277] Ibid, p. 29.

"how far Moscow is ultimately willing to go in reducing its support for Syria remains an open question".[278] It seems that Gorbachev wanted to maintain his country's relationship with Syria, which was still a key figure in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but without paying such a high price in terms of financial aid and political support.

In spite of a great deal of skepticism, unrest and concern related with Moscow's changing foreign policy, Syria tried to adapt to the new situation. In the years just before the end of the Cold War, Damascus made dramatic changes in Syrian foreign policy. Meetings of "conciliation" were realized between Arafat and Hussein. In December 1989, Syria announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Egypt. In addition, Hafiz softened the Syrian position vis-à-vis Israel. In 1990, he informed former President Carter of his willingness to talk with Israel under certain conditions.[279]

In addition to the realm of foreign policy, changes were observed in internal policy. In 1989, government officials agreed to meet with Amnesty International. In 1990, the government lifted emergency law provisions. Invitations were made to Syrians in exile to return and the population found the opportunity to criticize the government in the mosques. More importantly, the government called for parliamentary elections on May 22, 1990 and allowed the Independents to increase their share in the parliament, from 18 percent to one-third. In order to appease Western sentiment, Hafiz also toned down anti-Western propaganda in his speeches.[280]

5.4. Syria and the Gulf War (1990–1991)

Syria was among the first states to respond to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, condemning the Iraqi move and demanding immediate and unconditional

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[278] Hannah, op. cit, p. 51.

[279] Daniel Pipes (1991), op. cit, pp. 40–41.

[280] Ibid.

withdrawal from Kuwait. Syria, together with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, adopted a series of anti-Iraqi resolutions at the Arab summit in Cairo on August 10–11, 1990. It was also decided that Arab troops would be sent to the Gulf alongside US forces. This summit was interpreted as the emergence of a new political axis in the Middle East.[281] During his visit to Damascus, Hafiz promised Secretary of State James Baker that the 4000 commando troops already deployed to Saudi Arabia would be reinforced by an additional 11,000 strong forces.[282] He also agreed with the US that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process should not be linked to the issue of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.[283]

The US-led coalition launched an attack against Iraq on January 17, 1991. During the war, Syrian forces were based in Saudi Arabia, engaging Iraqi troops that crossed the border, but took no part in offensive actions against Iraq. Although some scholars underestimate Syria's position in the Gulf War, suggesting that Hafiz's contribution to the coalition had been limited to diplomatic support,[284] Syria's presence nevertheless had symbolic importance, particularly considering its radical anti-American stance.

5.4.1. A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syria's Decision to Participate in the Gulf War Coalition

Syria's decision to join the Western-led anti-Iraq coalition is a difficult case to reconcile with its Arabist foreign policy. There are various explanations for this. This section contains an analysis of Syria's foreign policy behavior during the Gulf War through the framework of neoclassical realist theory.

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[281] Kienle, Eberhard, "Syria, the Kuwait War, and the New World Order", in *The Gulf War and the New World Order, International Relations of the Middle East*, Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael (eds.), (University Press of Florida, 1994).

[282] Freedman and Karsh, op. cit, p. 96.

[283] A.H.H. Abidi, "Arab-Islamic Responses to the Gulf Crisis" in A.H.H. Abidi and K.R. Singh (eds.), *The Gulf Crisis*, (New Delhi: Lancers Book, 1991), p. 85.

[284] Pipes (1991), op. cit, p. 21.

5.4.1.1. International Level

The concept of the "new world order", which entered the language of international politics with the collapse of communism, was invoked by US President George H.W. Bush in response to the Gulf crisis, perhaps making its historical reference points the end of the Cold War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The "new world order" both signifies the end of the superpower rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States and the initiation of a US foreign policy doctrine based on US hegemony in the international order.[285]

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait created a double challenge to the international system. First, the invasion was a direct challenge to the global economy due to its oil-dependent structure and the strategic relevance of the Gulf region to that global economy. Secondly, Iraq's invasion violated the UN Charter of 1945 based on the principle of the inviolability of state borders.[286]

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was both a challenge and an opportunity for President Bush. Should the US be successful in expelling him, it would become possible to speak of a "new world order" in an optimistic way.[287] Bush described the conflict as a "defining moment", for it was shaped by the changes taking place in international politics and also set a precedent for future developments.[288]

The crisis was also an opportunity for the US to display the rules of the "new world order" and to reveal itself as the sole hegemon. However, it extended beyond American interests, having an impact on every region. The European Community perceived the crisis as an opportunity to turn itself into a force in international

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[285] Tareq Y. Ismael, Jacqueline S. Ismael, *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1991), p. 1.

[286] Quilliam, op. cit., p. 156.

[287] Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990–1991*: *Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. xxix

[288] Ibid, p. xxx.

politics and economic affairs, Eastern Europe to undertake a program of post-communist reconstruction, and China to reintegrate itself to the international community.[289] It was also an opportunity for Syria to attract financial resources, to establish relations with the US and to relieve its international and regional isolation.

It is also important to note that international system was unprecedentedly united during the Gulf War. The US provided an international coalition consisting of 34 countries including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt to counter Iraqi aggression. Although Russia did not send troops, it joined the United States in condemning Iraq. The legitimization of the anti-Iraq coalition in the United Nations Security Council was also an important dimension of the Gulf War. The American proposals did not face a certain veto in the Council, thanks to the positive relations with the Soviet Union and China in the post-Cold War environment. A resolution condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was followed by another, imposing economic sanctions on Iraq.

5.4.1.2. Domestic Level

It has been established that Syria was receiving pressure to change its foreign policy behavior during the Gulf War crisis. As neoclassical realism suggests, it is also necessary to examine how systemic pressures filter in at the domestic level.

5.4.1.2.1. The Leader's Perceptions

The first domestic intervening variable is individual leaders' perceptions of the distribution of power. As Zakaria asserts, "statesmen, not states, are the primary actors in international affairs, and their perceptions of shifts in power, rather than objective measures, are critical".[290] In reality, Hafiz realized the changes in the

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[289] Ibid.

[290] Fareed Zakaria (1999), op. cit., p. 42.

international system and the negative impacts of the possible Soviet decline on Syria before the end of the Cold War. In that period, Syrian foreign and domestic policy underwent major re-evaluations.[291] Hafiz became convinced that Syria would no longer pursue anti-Western policies.

When, Hafiz's decisions after the end of the Cold War are examined, it is seen that the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the superpower rivalry forced Hafiz to rethink the strategy of "tactical rejectionism". The "new world order", characterized by unipolarity, was less favorable to Syrian interests than the bipolar world in which Syria could exploit Soviet-American rivalries. Since the end of the Cold War removed the option of balancing between the superpowers, Syria began to "bandwagon" with the US in order to balance the threat from Israel and to provide the opportunity to recover Syria's power position in the changing international climate. This forced Hafiz to diversify his international connections. By joining the Gulf War coalition, Hafiz had shown that Syria wanted to be on the right side of the US-centered world. This action was interpreted as a reflection of Syria's new strategy in foreign policy. The primary explanation for this was Hafiz's perception of the external threats and opportunities emerging in this period.

The Gulf War was the first major international crisis after the end of the Cold War. It was like a test for the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and also for the UN in its ability to play a leading role in world affairs in the post-Cold War era. Although the Soviet Union did not join the coalition, its cooperation as a member of the UN Security Council allowed the UN to play a leading role in the crisis. The unification of 34 countries in the anti-Iraq coalition led by the US created a positive environment and it is proved that new forms of international cooperation were possible in the post-Cold War era. The unified international community at that time contributed Hafiz's participation in the coalition. Hafiz seemed to be involved in the newly emerging coalitions formed in the aftermath of the Cold War. The confirmation of the Gulf War in the United Nations also facilitated Hafiz's decision

[291] Tahir I. Shad and Steven Boucher, "Syrian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Winter/Spring 95, Vol. 17, Issue 1–2, pp. 77–94.

to join the coalition which provided a ground for Syria's action in the eyes of the public.

Regional factors also forced Hafiz to realign its position. As explained in the previous section, Syria was isolated from the regional order during the 1980s. Participation in the Gulf War coalition guaranteed it a key role in the post-war order, including Gulf financial aid and the appreciation of countries around the region. In the Damascus Declaration, the GCC states that Egypt and Syria had agreed on a new formula for guaranteeing Gulf security.[292] Participation also gave Syria a chance to reaffirm its strategic interests in Lebanon.

Another factor pushing Hafiz towards the coalition was the rivalry with the Iraqi regime. His personal animosity with Saddam Hussein facilitated Syria's participation to the anti-Iraq coalition. Miller states that Hafiz made the critical decision to join the American-led coalition in less than five minutes. During the visit of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who had been sent by Saudi King Fahd to seek Syria's support, Hafiz asked him only three questions: "Are the Americans serious about supporting the Iraqis?", "Will they finish the job by going all the way?" and "Do you trust them?" Satisfied by Bandar's answers, Hafiz moved quickly.[293] Although both were Ba'athist regimes, there was a deep rivalry between Syria and Iraq with had historical, ideological, political and personal roots. The rivalry had deepened with Syria's decision to support Iran in the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), which contributed to its isolation and exclusion from regional economic and security arrangements. The formation of the GCC in February 1989 was a threat to Syrian security. Pipes argues that Syria's participation in the Gulf War could be seen in the context of relations between Baghdad and Damascus. The tense mood between the two regimes helps explain Hafiz's motivations for joining the coalition against Saddam Hussein.[294] If

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[292] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 161.

[293] Judith Miller, "Syria's Game", *The New York Times*, January 26, 1992.

[294] Daniel Pipes, *Damascus Courts the West: Syrian Politics, 1989–1991*, (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1991), p. 20–21.

Saddam had not been challenged, he would have been in a stronger position vis-à-vis the other countries in the region.

5.4.1.2.2. Domestic Constraints

Despite the argument that political participation is limited and the public has no effective access to government decisions in the Arab world, it is important to address the role of public opinion in Syria's Gulf War participation. The public was discontented with the decision to join the American-led coalition and to become involved in a war against a fellow Ba'athist Arab state. In that sense, Hafiz engaged in a dangerous gamble by aligning with the US. At the beginning of the war, it was estimated that 90 percent of Syrians supported Iraq.[295] A group of Syrian intellectuals even issued a public protest over the country's involvement in the war, an unprecedented activity since Hafiz had come to power 21 years earlier.[296]

After the protests, the Syrian regime began a propaganda campaign to legitimize its actions. Hafiz tried to justify the intervention in a speech delivered on September 12, 1990. In the speech, he argued that the aim was to constrain the foreign powers and to pressure them to depart. He further asserted that Syrian troops were being sent to Saudi Arabia as "an Arab national duty".[297] He suggested that Western governments would be forced to implement UN Resolutions 242, 338 and 425 in order to restore international laws and norms. In addition, he asserted that an international peace conference would be held after the liberation of Kuwait.[298] Hafiz's illustration of Saddam as an ambitious leader acting illegally and independently of his public's wishes was used as a justification for Syria's involvement in the coalition. As Zisser suggests, despite the Syrian public's initial disapproval, they came to perceive the

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[295] Pipes (1991), op. cit, p. 51–53.

[296] Ray Moseley, "Syria's Support of US in the Gulf War Paying Dividends", *Chicago Tribune*, March 12, 1991.

[297] Abidi, op. cit, p. 87.

[298] Quilliam, op. cit., p. 165.

regime's measures as unavoidable under the regional and international circumstances.[299] In addition, although cooperating with the US, the regime did not portray itself as its ally of the US, and Syrian officials regularly criticized its policies in the media. Just after the end of the Gulf War, Syrian Foreign Minister al-Sharaa, while praising the US for its desire to help bring peace in the Middle East, criticized Washington for its "double standards" and "ugly hypocrisy" in judging Israeli and Arab behavior.[300]

5.4.1.2.3. Domestic Motivations

In addition to the propaganda activities of the Syrian regime in justification for its involvement in the anti-Iraq coalition, the benefits it brought at the end of the war facilitated legitimization of its actions. In that sense, Syria's alignment with the US during the Gulf War could be perceived within the framework of Schweller's "bandwagoning for profit" thesis. Its involvement in the American-led coalition had brought many benefits to the Assad regime. To begin with, the coalition partners provided Syria with large amounts of funds, which relieved its economic woes to some degree. The European Community provided $200 million, Japan loaned $500 million and the Gulf Cooperation Council states contributed more than $2 billion.[301] These benefits compensated for the loss of the Soviet aid. As Pipes puts it, Syria received nearly $3 billion in return for stationing 20,000 troops in Saudi Arabia.[302] Syria also benefited from the rise in oil prices.

Syria's participation in the coalition ended its international and regional isolation. There was significant improvement in relations with the West as the US expressed its appreciation for Syria's involvement. US Secretary of State James Baker visited

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[299] Zisser, Eyal, *Asad's Legacy: Syria in Transition* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2001), p. 52.

[300] "After the War: Syrian Official Voices Doubt Hussein Will Survive Revolts in Iraq", *The New York Times*, March 25, 1991.

[301] Hannah, op. cit, p. 22.

[302] Pipes (1991), op. cit, p. 22.

Syria and the European Union (EU) began to discuss lifting of sanctions it had imposed.

The Kuwait crisis also enhanced Syria's regional position. Joining a coalition with Egypt and Saudi Arabia had brought an end to its regional isolation. After the end of the war, cooperation between Arab countries was formalized on March 6, 1991 in Syria's capital, Damascus. In the agreement known as the Damascus Declaration, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries plus Egypt and Syria agreed on the continued presence of Egyptian and Syrian forces in Saudi Arabia in exchange for economic cooperation. On April 22, 1991, the GCC decided to create a fund to be funneled to Syria and Egypt for 10 years.[303]

Another advantage of the Gulf War for the regime was the affirmation of Syria's regional ambitions. The US made itself complicit in this with its tacit approval of Syria's virtual annexation of Lebanon in the form of an attack on the rival forces of Michel Aoun on October 13, 1990.[304] Both the US and Israel recognized Syria's hegemony in Lebanon. This maintained the full implementation of the Ta'if Agreement and the Syrian-Lebanese Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Coordination, signed in May 1991. This treaty merely put the seal on the effective occupation of Lebanon by Syria, which included cooperation in the political, military, economic, cultural and scientific realms; establishment of a supreme council made up the president and three other officials from each country and a formal request for Syrian troops to remain on Lebanese soil. Although words such as "unity" or integration" were not used, the agreement meant "one people in two separate states".[305]

The Kuwait crisis also led to the destruction of Iraq's military capabilities. With its main rival incapacitated, Syria's arms capabilities became the largest in the Arab

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[303] Hannah, op. cit, p. 23

[304] "Syria's Sins", *The New Republic*, July 1, 1991.

[305] Pipes (1991), op. cit.

world with the exception of Egypt. In addition, Iraq's defeat weakened the Syrian opposition, which had been receiving support from Iraq. Hafiz once again pursued power as Arab champion; after two decades of intense dispute between them, for the first time, he directly and openly called for the Iraqi leader's assassination in an interview with a journalist from the *Al-Thawra* newspaper.[306]

Although Syria and the US had cooperated on the issue of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, public reaction in each country was complicated. In the US, committee was organized in New York to reconsider Syria's invitation to the Gulf War. Some committee members were the relatives of people killed in the bombing of Pan-American Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. They objected to Syria's participation because it had been implicated in the attack. The committee also pointed out the 1983 bombing of the United States barracks in Lebanon, in which Syria was accused of killing 200 marines. They thought the US was wrong to have made Syria an ally in the war and that the invitation should be withdrawn.[307] The US media criticized the state for improving ties improving of ties with Syria and Iran, asserting that "for years, the two were pariah states, financing terrorism and castigating America. Now both want economic support and closer ties with the West: Syria to make up for the loss of its longtime Soviet patron; Iran, to help rebuild its economy shattered by an eight year war with Iraq", and asking, "Does Syria want to be the leader of the Arab world or does she want continuing aid from Saudi Arabia and perhaps even some money from America?"[308] American public opinion was also critical; the US policy of giving way to Syria's full annexation of Lebanon as a reward for the country's cooperation was met with harsh opposition. It was argued that the administration's appeasement of Syria would fail on its own terms.[309]

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[306] Alan Cowell, "War in the Gulf: Syria; Official Syrian Paper Urges Iraqis to 'Liquidate' Hussein", *The New York Times,* October 02, 1991.

[307] Felicia R. Lee, "Syria Invitation to Gulf Parade is Reconsidered", *The New York Times*, May 23, 1991.

[308] K.T. Walsh, D. Makovsky, "George Bush's new friends?", *US News & World Report*, August 26, 1991 and September 2, 1991, Vol. 111, Issue 9, p. 24.

[309] "Syria's Sins", p. 9.

Equally, Syria's decision to participate in the American-led coalition contradicted its own previous foreign policy decisions, which had been shaped by anti-American rhetoric. However, to explain this through systemic factors alone would be insufficient. Both domestic and international factors were at work in the decision, ranging from domestic and regional issues like historical rivalry and economic imperatives, to those arising from the changing global context like regional isolation and geostrategic ambition, as has been discussed throughout this chapter. However, the presence of these domestic and regional dimensions, in addition to the international dimension, strengthened Syria's justification for the nature of its participation in the war.

In brief, Syria joined the US-led coalition to find a place for itself in the new world order and to achieve its regional ambitions. Although the rational actor model appears to be the most explanatory, justification of the war at the domestic level facilitated this process. We can thus see in this situation the interplay of domestic, regional and international levels.

5.5. Syria and the Madrid Peace Process

Another "strategic decision" by Syria after the end of the Cold War was to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, hopes were raised for reconciliation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In an attempt to take the advantage of the change in the international environment, US Secretary of State James Baker made eight trips to the region in eight months following the Gulf War. A number of international and regional conditions facilitated the realization of the Madrid Peace Conference, at which the actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict—Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation—came together for the first time. According to Flamhaft, the factors that paved the way to the convening of the conference were: the end of the Cold War; changes in the Soviet Union's Middle East policy and its

willingness to cooperate with the US in the region; Syria's need to cooperate with the West after losing Soviet support; Bush Sr.'s rising popularity in the region due to his performance in the Gulf War; the deterioration of the PLO's status in the Arab world after having supported Saddam Hussein in the war; Israel's shocking trauma after being attacked by scud missiles during the war, along with its need for economic assistance to handle its influx of Soviet immigrants; and Arabs' expectations of the US to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. [310]

The United States proposed a peace plan based on a land-for-peace formula , which included reaching a comprehensive peace plan based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the preservation of Israel's security and its recognition by the Arab states, and the granting of legitimate political rights to the Palestinians.[311] In that sense, the US merely repeated its long-held positions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Nonetheless, it was not easy to convince these parties to participate in a peace conference. After Bush declared his plan for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, Baker began promoting the idea of convening a peace conference around the region. The Israelis were agreed to a two-track approach to settlement, although its government, led by Shamir, had some conditions. First, the Israelis conditioned their participation on the exclusion of Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the Palestinian supporters of the PLO from the conference. Secondly, they refused any role for the UN, either as sponsor or to influence the negotiations. This is related to the Israeli perception that the UN favored the Arab side in the conflict.

Hafiz also had some reservations about the peace conference. Syria demanded UN sponsorship, the guarantee of Israel's full withdrawal including East Jerusalem,

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[310] Ziva Flamhaft, *Israel on the Road to Peace Accepting the Unacceptable*, (Colarado, Oxford: Westview Press, 1996), p. 89.

[311] Ibid, p. 77.

formation of a joint Arab delegation in the negotiations with Israel and direct representation of the Palestinians by the PLO. [312]

Baker tried to convince the parties to participate in the peace conference. Cobban states that during his several visits to the region, "it is promised to the Israelis that the US would give great weight to Israel's position that any remaining peace agreement with Syria must be predicated on Israel remaining on the Golan Heights".[313] On the other hand, Baker also gave importance to Syria's involvement in the peace process even though it remained on the US's lists of states responsible for terrorism and drug trafficking.

In order to break the deadlock, President Bush sent letters to Prime Minister Shamir, President Hafiz, President Mubarak and King Fahd on June 1. In the letter, President Bush suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union would convene the conference as co-sponsors; the United Nations and the European Community (EC) would attend as observers and the conference would include a series of bilateral negotiations that would be convened periodically.[314]

Israel and Syria had differing reactions to Bush's proposal. While, Syria together with Jordan and Lebanon, accepted the offer, Israel rejected it. Syria accepted the new terms in which the UN's role in the conference would be diminished, while Israel rejected the idea that the UN would play any role in the conference, even that of "silent" observer. Israel still perceived the UN as a pro-Arab organization, and asserted that any attempt to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict would have to be made without the involvement of the UN.

After receiving approval from the Syrian side, Baker focused on Israel and visited the country on July 21–22. During his visit, he realized an issue of contention

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[312] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 166.

[313] Helena Cobban, *The Israeli-Syrian Peace Talks, 1991–1996 and Beyond* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), p. 26.

[314] Flamhaft, op. cit, p. 79.

between Israel and the US on Palestinian representation. Shamir stated that Israel had the right to veto the participation of any member of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Finally, Israel announced on August 1 that it would participate in the peace talks, provided its conditions on the composition of the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation were met.[315]

After receiving the approval of all parties, the US and USSR jointly invited Israel and its immediate neighbors, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan—in a joint delegation with the Palestinians—to a peace conference in Madrid. The UN was represented by an observer. The European Community was invited to participate alongside the co-sponsors, and the other Arab states were represented by observers from the GCC and Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Direct negotiations were planned along two tracks: between Israel and the Arab states, and between Israel and the Palestinians, based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The two-track process was complemented by a multilateral track on key regional issues to find solutions to the major problems of the region.

The invitation from Presidents Bush and Gorbachev to the Madrid Conference read, in part, as follows:

> The Madrid Invitation, inviting Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians to an opening conference represents the result of this shuttle diplomacy. The invitation, an outcome of comprises by all sides, details the structure of the Madrid process: an opening conference having no power to impose solutions; bilateral talks with the Arab states bordering Israel; talks with the Palestinians on 5-year interim self-rule, to be followed by talks on the permanent status; multilateral talks on key regional issues, like refugees.[316]

In addition to a general invitation, US President Bush sent letters of assurance to all participants, including Hafiz al-Assad and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. In the letter addressed to Syria, Bush assured Hafiz that the peace conference would be

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[315] Flamhaft, op. cit, p. 80.

[316] "Letter of Invitation to Madrid Peace Conference", http://www.usembasy-israel.org.il/publish/peace/madrid.htm (Accessed on 05/09/2011)

based upon UN Resolutions 242 and 338. This was emphasized after Soviet involvement in the conference was announced. In addition, the US agreed to continue opposing Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, a major obstacle to the peace. Meanwhile, in the US letter of assurance to Israel, it is stated that Israel holds its own interpretation of the Security Council Resolutions and that the US would not support the creation of an independent Palestinian state.[317]

5.5.1. A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syria's Participation to the Madrid Peace Conference

Syria was the first state to accept the US proposal for a peace conference and the other Arab states soon followed. Hafiz's decision to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference, which tried to obstruct any bilateral, direct and unconditional peace initiatives with Israel, marked a significant and radical change in the country's strategy towards the peace in the Middle East.

5.5.1.1. International Level

Quilliam suggests that Syria's participation to the peace process was related with the change in the configuration of global power.[318] The end of the Cold War, changes in the Soviet Union's Middle East policy and its willingness to cooperate with the US in the region facilitated the convening of an international conference. It is also evident that the Gulf War served as a catalyst for convening a peace conference. Since the Arabs and Israelis faced a common enemy during the Gulf War, the possibility of a peace at the end of the war was greater than ever. After the defeat of Saddam Hussein, Bush also perceived the process as an opportunity to settle his idea of a "new world order". The US also seemed to be benefitting from the international

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[317] "Main Points of the US Letters of Assurance on the Terms of the Madrid Peace Conference", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (Winter 1992), pp. 117–149.

[318] Quilliam, p. 75.

coalition that had formed during the Gulf War in its efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Drysdale and Hinnebush assert, "the US found itself well positioned to harness international energies it had mobilized in the gulf crisis to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all". [319]

5.5.1.2. The Domestic Level

5.5.1.2.1. The Leader's Perceptions

It is seen that Hafiz's perceptions relating to the "new world order" had an impact on Syria's decision to participate in the peace conference. At the Madrid Conference, Hafiz agreed to participate in direct, unconditional, bilateral negotiations with an Israeli commitment for full withdrawal from the occupied lands. Syria pursued the goal of a direct and major role for the United Nations and direct representation for the Palestinians. It is obvious that Syria's participation in the peace conference under these less-than-ideal conditions was a consequence of the new order. Hafiz's decision was not to abandon Syria's general stance relating to the peace process, rather to revise his rejectionist policy and to accept the changing structure of the international system. A separate peace with Israel was not on its agenda; it sought a state of non-belligerency. It is also important to note that Syria made a number of concessions on the issue of procedure, but the essence of the peace remained the same. [320] However, Hafiz's acceptance of several conditions contradicting his previous stance and his tolerance of Israel's declarations, such as Shamir's refusal of the land-for-peace formula and the Knesset's approval of a non-binding resolution declaring the Golan non-negotiable during the opening sessions in Madrid, demonstrated Syria's regional and international vulnerability. Hafiz realized that rejecting the peace process was not a realistic option in the newly emerging international order and without its former Soviet patronage. In addition, for Syria to

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[319] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, op. cit, p. 208.

[320] Ibid, p. 188.

exit negotiations would serve Israel's interests by demonstrating it had no intention to achieve peace.

The Gulf War also had an important impact on Hafiz's decision to participate. Through its participation in the Gulf War coalition, Syria had developed relations with the US and had formed an alliance between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which helped to counterbalance the Israeli-US strategic alliance. However, accepting that Israel still had the upper hand in the balance of power, Syria abandoned its strategy of strategic parity and decided to follow the example of Egyptian experience.[321]

The Palestinian issue was essential for the fulfillment of Syrian interests in the peace process. On every occasion, Hafiz put forward the linkage between the Palestinian problem and the conflict between Israel and Syria. To put the Palestinian issue on its agenda was crucial both for Hafiz's aim of maximizing regional order and to satisfy public opinion. This is why previous peace schemes that had excluded the Palestinians were rejected by Syria. However, the demands of the "new world order" required a change in Syria's perception of the Palestinian role in the peace process, at least in terms of procedure. Because of the prevailing conditions, Syria accepted the inclusion of the Palestinians on the Jordanian negotiating team.

5.5.1.2.2. Domestic Constraints

In the Syrian domestic realm, Arab nationalism, the continuing war with Israel and the Golan Heights are sensitive issues. Then, the inclusion of Syria in the peace process could be regarded as risky business for the Syrian regime. However, the Syrian regime followed certain policies in order legitimize its participation within the regional and the domestic environment. During the peace process, Hafiz tried to remain committed to Arab nationalism. Before the conference began, Syria conducted a coordinating session on October 23, 1991 with the other Arab states taking part in the peace conference. Its aim was to prevent the Arab parties from

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[321] Ibid, p. 186.

reaching separate peace treaties with Israel and to form a unified Arab position during the talks. After two days of meetings, the representatives from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the PLO jointly declared that they "guarantee a unified Arab stand throughout all the phases of the conference and the talks that complement it." However, the Syrian proposal to preclude Arab participation in regional talks on environmental and arms control issues until Israel returned occupied Arab lands was not accepted.[322]

In addition, the Syrian regime followed some policies in order to acquire public justification. The regime introduced some new notions, such as "honorable peace" and the "peace of the brave" in order to justify its actions in the eyes of the public. Syrian Foreign Minister al-Sharaa's refusal to shake hands with the Israeli delegate, and al-Sharaa's and Prime Minister Shamir's mutual accusations of the acts of tyranny and terrorism were interpreted as posturing to satisfy public opinion.[323]

5.5.1.2.3. Domestic Motivations

The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference provided a direct and active role for the US, which Syria had long sought. The emergence of the US as the world's sole superpower provided the context for it to impose a peace process. Hafiz's desire to improve relations with the United States was an important incentive for Syrians to participate in this process. As if to prove Kissinger famous phrase that "there could be no war in the Middle East without Egypt and no peace without Syria"[324], Syria tried to show the US that it had long been a regional player in the Middle East, and that its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be ignored. By participating to the Gulf War, Hafiz managed to occupy an important position in the peace process.

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[322] "Arabs Meeting in Syria Bar Seperate Deals with Israel", in *The New York Times,* October 25, 1991.

[323] Quilliam, op.cit, p.187.

[324] Pipes (2005) op. cit, p. 198.

5.5.2. The Madrid Conference and the Israeli-Syrian Track

This was the first time that the participants in the Arab-Israeli conflict—Israel, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation—had come together to discuss peace. In this sense, it was a historic occasion. At the opening session held on October 30, 1991, US President Bush announced, "Our objective must be clear and straightforward. It is not simply to end the state of war in the Middle East and replace it with a state of non-belligerency… Rather, we seek peace, real peace…"[325] However, Bush asserted that as realists, the US did not expect to reach a solution in a day, or a week. In his speech, he put forward the general framework for peace, asserting that the negotiations were to be conducted on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The conference would not impose a settlement or veto any agreements and could only be reconvened with the consent of the participations. The process would begin with bilateral talks and continue with multilateral negotiations.

In the opening session, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir centered his speech on Arab hostility towards Israel and Arab refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel. He asserted that their Arab partners would make territorial demands on Israel even when conflicts were not territorial. He went on to say, "It will be regrettable if the talks focus primarily and exclusively on territory. It is the quickest ways to an impasse. What we need, first and foremost, is the building of confidence, the removal of the danger of confrontation, and the development of relations in as many spheres as possible".[326] There was little in Shamir's speech to indicate willingness to compromise.

In its opening speech, Syria, through the representation of Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, emphasized the role of the United Nations in spite of the status given to it

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[325] "Excerpts from Speeches at the Madrid Peace Conference", http://lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br3/madrid3.html, (08/09/2011)

[326] Ibid.

at this conference. Sharaa attacked Israel in his speech for its occupation of the Arab lands since 1948 and for its inhuman and unjust behavior in the occupied territories. Sharaa based his arguments on UNSCR 242 and 338 and declared that every inch of the occupied territories—the Golan, the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip— must be returned to their rightful owners.[327]

Although the parties had come to Madrid for peace talks, the hostility between the Israelis and the Syrians was evident. This was related to the complexity of the conflict, which could not be resolved within a short period of time. In addition, each side had to exhibit hostility in order to satisfy domestic public opinion, as it would require time for the people to get used to the idea of the "peace". In the days following the opening session, Shamir characterized Syria as one of the most oppressive, tyrannical and brutal regimes in the world.[328] According to Church, Shamir was playing for home, not for world, opinion.[329]

In spite of their prior reservations, the Syrian team agreed to negotiate directly with the Israelis, and on November 3, 1991, the first round of bilateral talks were held. The Syrian team, headed by Muwaffaq al-Allaf, sat for bilateral talks with the Israeli team, headed by Yossi Ben-Aharon in Washington D.C. The differences between the parties marked the first round of negotiations. The Syrian side revealed its willingness to negotiate on the basis of UNSCR 242 and 338 and demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan. However, the Israelis refused to deal with the territorial issue; rather they first sought to identify smaller steps in order to build confidence between the two sides. In that phase, Israel and Syria each tried to find out whether it would be possible to reach a peace agreement with the other. However, the Israeli government, led by the Likud Party, insisted on a "peace for peace" formula, which prevented the possibility of any resolution. The Israeli team had its own interpretation of Resolution 242. Yossi Ben-Aharon stated that Resolution 242 required Syria to make territorial withdrawals. On the other hand, the

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[327] Ibid.

[328] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 216.

[329] G.J. Church, "Finally Face to Face", *Time*, November 11, 1991, Vol. 138, Issue 19, p. 54–55.

Syrian team based its arguments on the "land for peace" formula, suggesting Israeli withdrawal from the occupied lands.

In addition to the bilateral talks held by Israel and each Arab state involved in the Madrid Peace Conference, multilateral talks were organized. These talks started on January 28–29, 1992 in Moscow. As stated before, Hafiz tried to form a unified Arab position at the Madrid Peace Conference in order to realize his ambition of achieving a comprehensive peace settlement. Hafiz tried to persuade other Arab countries to participate in multilateral talks. The Syrian view was that Arab delegations could resist US diplomatic pressure by forming a unified front. Hafiz refused to participate in the multilateral talks on the grounds that regional cooperation could not be discussed before Israel made a commitment to peace. Despite Syria's attempt to prevent them from joining the multilateral talks held in Brussels, Geneva, the Hague, Ottawa, Paris, Rome, Tokyo, Vienna and Washington, with the exception of Lebanon, all Arab states attended.

Another phase of the Israeli-Syrian negotiation process began with the election of Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin in the summer of 1992. After his accession to power, Rabin declared that a deal with Syria was at the center of his foreign policy agenda.[330] He declared that Resolution 242 applied to the Golan. During negotiations in Washington in fall 1992, Israel's ambassador to the United States and its chief negotiator Itamar Rabinovich announced that Israel would introduce the element of withdrawal to the talks, though he did not specify the extent of this withdrawal. During the negotiations Israel demanded that Syria explain the nature of the peace it was offering. Israel interpreted Syria's offering as no more than a non-belligerency agreement rather than a peace agreement.[331] After discussions about the context of the peace Syria offered, Rabinovich reached a formula that became the cornerstone

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[330] Muhammad Muslih, "Dateline Damascus: Asad Is Ready", *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1994, Issue 6, pp.145–164.

[331] Ma'oz (1995) op. cit, p. 167.

of his Syrian foreign policy: "The depth of withdrawal will reflect the depth of peace".[332]

In an interview to Patrick Seale in May 1993, Hafiz stated that both the Israelis and the Arabs have their place in Palestine, and came up with a proposal indicating "full peace for full withdrawal". The Israeli side welcomed this proposal. Rabinovich interpreted Hafiz's interview as "one of the most important developments of the round of the Arab-Israeli peace talks".[333] However, Israel demanded that Syria elaborate the meaning of "total peace for total withdrawal". For Rabin, this explanation was necessary in order to sway Israeli public opinion and the skeptics, including those within his party, about the idea of withdrawal. Elaboration on the concept of peace was necessary. According to Rabin, withdrawal was something concrete, but peace was an abstraction. This is why, since he became prime minister, Rabin had never confirmed that he would give the entirety of the Golan to Syria even in exchange for comprehensive peace.[334] On August 3, 1993, Rabin asked the US secretary of state to convey the message to Hafiz that Israel was prepared to make a "significant" withdrawal from the Golan Heights provided that Syria would satisfy Israel's security and peace concerns.

Although, Rabin's declaration that Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights was important and historic, the Syrian regime approached the proposal with caution. The idea withdrawal in phases was problematic for Syria—Hafiz had envisioned a withdrawal over a period of months rather than years. He was fearful of a political shift resulting from the rise of the rightist Likud, which might not follow through with a phased withdrawal. In order to convince his people to agree to peace with Israel, Hafiz was in need of a concrete timetable for withdrawal. Although, Hafiz made the final decisions of his country as an authoritarian leader, he was constrained

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[332] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 202.

[333] Ibid, p. 204.

[334] Muslih, op. cit.

in certain matters. He couldn't convince his people to agree to concede any portion of the Golan to Israel.

In fact, the Golan was the most critical and problematic issue in the negotiations between Israel and Syria. Israel had occupied this area since the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. In December 1981, the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, made the decision to annex the Golan to Israel. However, no other state except Micronesia accepted this decision. Israel's status in the Golan is accepted as one of a "belligerent occupying power".[335] The Golan Heights form a rocky plateau of great strategic importance at an average altitude of 1,000 meters (3,300 ft) and an area totaling 1,800 square kilometers (690 sq mi). The plateau is located at the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains and straddles the borders of Syria and Israel. Elevations range from 2,814 meters (9,232 ft) in the north at Mount Hermon, to below sea level along the Sea of Galilee and the Yarmuk River in the south. The area is important to both Israel and Syria for several reasons. This fertile plateau lies at the center of a strategic balance in eastern Mediterranean. Cobban notes, "a visitor can look further west across Lake Tiberias or the Jordan Valley, over to the hills of (Israeli) Upper Galilee or the mountainous part of south Lebanon called Jebel Amel".[336] Its strategic importance has never been in doubt for by either country. Until 1967, it had been the site of violent clashes and the source of strategic depth for both—for Syria, this importance stemmed from its proximity to Damascus, just 50 kilometers away. After its capture, Israel began to utilize these advantages; the location's importance for Israel was demonstrated in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

In addition to its strategic importance, the Golan is also significant to both Israel and Syria because of its water resources and demography. The headwaters of the Jordan River pass through the, providing about 15% of Israel's water supply, and thus also supports a large proportion of its agricultural production. If Israel were to withdraw, Syria would regain control of the Jordan River headwaters.

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[335] Cobban (1999), op. cit, p. 29.

[336] Ibid.

In terms of demography, the occupied area's civilian population is around 38,900 according to 2005 figures. When Israel occupied Golan in 1967, nearly 140,000 people lived there. After the occupation, Arab inhabitants were forced out and their villages, which were then destroyed by the Israeli army. For Syria, the return of the displaced Golan settlers to their homes and lands is an imperative in a peace agreement. However, since June 1967, Israel has followed a policy of building paramilitary settlements in the Golan in order to shift the demography of the region to its advantage.

In addition to the issue of withdrawal from the Golan, from the beginning of negotiations, Syria demanded that a "just and comprehensive" peace should be reached, and that it should include the Lebanese, Jordanian and Palestinian fronts.[337] In contrast, Israel believed that peace with a given Arab country should not be dependent on other tracks. However, over the course of time, Syria became more moderate on this issue. In February 1993, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa declared that Syria would no longer link the return of the exiled Palestinians to the issue of peace, because the peace agreement was more important.[338] Hafiz recognizes that the problems between Israel and each Arab country have their own characteristics. By "comprehensive peace", he meant to ensure that progress on all tracks was maintained before Syria entered into normal relations with Israel.

In spite of these developments on the Israeli-Syrian track, Syria was not ready to say "peace and normalization", and Israel was not ready to talk about "total withdrawal". In July 1993, Rabin refused to give up the entire Golan for peace. In reaction, Syria restarted its campaign of military pressure on Israel through southern Lebanon. The Syrian-controlled Hezbollah and Jibril groups launched several attacks on Israeli targets. Through American mediation, an understanding between Israel and Syria-Lebanon was reached in August.

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[337] Ma'oz (1995), op. cit, p. 172.

[338] Ibid, p. 174.

The secret agreement between Israel and the PLO surprised the Arab world. Prior to the signing of Oslo Accords (August 19, 1993), the two had agreed formally to recognize each other. The secret negotiations between them created shock among Syrians. From the beginning of the peace negotiations, Syria insisted on a "comprehensive peace" in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories including Palestine. The PLO's bilateral agreement with Israel curbed Syria's policy of regional leadership. Syria had perceived Syrian and Palestinian interests interlinked, and thereafter began to separate its own interests and create distance between the Palestinian and Syrian struggles.[339]

After the Oslo Accords, Syria refused to attend another round of talks. US President Bill Clinton then met with Hafiz in Geneva on January 16, 1994. During the Clinton-Assad meeting, significant progress was made. Hafiz spoke for the first time about "normal peaceful relations", "real and durable peace" and "respectable peace", and declared, "we are ready to sign peace now".[340] Hafiz's statements were welcomed by Clinton, who referred to Syria as the key in achieving peace in the Middle East; he also declared his support for its approach of a comprehensive peace.[341]

Despite his strong discontent with the PLO-Israeli breakthrough, Hafiz did not adopt a rejectionist attitude, as he had after the Camp David Accords. This reflects Syria's adaptation to the requirements of the "new world order". Hafiz's meeting with Clinton in Geneva also signaled to the international community that Syria was in harmony with the norms of American hegemony.[342]

After the Clinton-Assad meeting, Syria and Israel decided to resume negotiations. However, before talks began, on February 25, 1994, an Israeli settler named Baruch Goldstein shot 48 Palestinian Muslims praying at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron. In

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[339] Quilliam, op. cit, pp.198–199.

[340] Ma'oz (2005), op. cit, p. 176.

[341] Ibid, p. 177.

[342] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 202.

reaction to the Hebron massacre, all Arab parties including Syria suspended peace talks.

After the shock of the PLO-Israeli Accord, Syria was once again stunned with the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty on October 26, 1994. The Syrian regime charged the Jordanian regime with betraying Arabs. In spite of Syria's decisive attitude on the "comprehensiveness" of peace including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, other Arab states began signing bilateral peace agreements with Israel one by one. The successes of the bilateral peace processes weakened Syria's position vis-à-vis Israel. It also revealed that in the post-Cold War atmosphere, the ability of any country in the region to influence the decision-making process within the Middle East diminished.[343] Individual countries began to stick to their national interests rather than Arab interest. After Jordan's peace deal with Israel, Syria modified its concept of "full withdrawal". In a speech, Ambassador Walid Muallem declared that "comprehensive peace from our perspective includes Syria and Lebanon together at the same time".[344]

After Israel had agreed to a full withdrawal and after the timetable for this withdrawal had been discussed, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a radical right-wing Orthodox Jew who opposed the signing of the Oslo Accords. After his assassination, elections dominated the Israeli political scene. Although the re-election of the Labor Party under the leadership of Rabin's successor Shimon Peres was a strong choice, the operation named "Grapes of Wrath", which targeted Hezbollah's Katyusha rockets, weakened the Labor Party. The excessive use of force and the human devastation led to harsh criticism of the governing Labor Party. In the subsequent May 1996 elections, the Likud Party, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, displaced Labor. Netanyahu rejected Syria's sovereignty over the Golan, and the parties reached no agreements during his term in office.

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[343] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 206.

[344] L. Butler, "Fresh Light on the Syrian-Israeli Peace Negoitations: An Interview with Ambassador Walid al-Moualem", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Winter 1997), pp. 88–89.

The Madrid Peace Conference presented an opportunity for all sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict to reach a settlement. The international environment was appropriate for settlement of the conflict and the US was in a position to exert its influence. While, the PLO and Jordan took advantage of this opportunity and signed agreements (the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, and the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan), Syria was unable to reach any agreement with Israel. Despite the argument that Syria was not ready for a peace agreement and obstructed any attempt at a settlement, Syria was committed to peace during the negotiations. Cobban argues that during the peace negotiations (1991–1996), both Israel and Syria showed actual diplomatic progress and gained "peace-oriented learning".[345]

During the negotiations, Syria modified its position in relation to Israel. Since 1973, Assad had been clear on his condition of "no talks before withdrawal". However, this changed on July 14, 1991 when he accepted the peace conference initiative. Second, Syria rejected any direct bilateral negotiations with Israel and supported multilateral negotiations, including all of Arab parties within the framework of a UN-sponsored international conference. Hafiz's position was also modified with Syria's agreement to enter bilateral talks with Israel. Third, Syria rejected a formal peace treaty with Israel; rather it supported a non-belligerency agreement on the condition that Israel met all its demands. It also modified its stance from "no talks before withdrawal" to "full peace for full withdrawal".[346]

In spite of its policy of rejectionism during the Cold War years, during the peace process, Syria tried to win the support of the international community, mainly the US—Syria had made several concessions and modified its position with regard to Israel in accordance with the United States' requests. Despite its previous insistence on UN sponsorship, peace under US mediation presented itself as a strategic choice. On the other hand, both President Bush and President Clinton signaled that Syria held the key to war and peace in the Middle East. Although the United States had

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[345] Cobban (1999), op. cit, p. 5.

[346] Pipes (1991), op. cit.

been an active participant in the negotiations, it was not successful in facilitating a peace between Syria and Israel. This has been due to several factors, including the struggle for regional hegemony between Israel and Syria, as Quilliam asserts.[347] However, the Madrid Peace Conference was important in the sense that it marked the beginning of a new era. For the first time, Israel engaged in direct, face-to-face negotiations with representatives of all its immediate Arab neighbors.

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[347] Quilliam, op. cit, p. 218.

CHAPTER 6

THE POST-SEPTEMBER 11 PERIOD:
SYRIA'S DETACHMENT FROM THE NEW WORLD ORDER

As analyzed, previously, at the beginning of the 1990s, right after the end of the Cold War, Syria's foreign policy seemed to undergo a change. This was clearly observed in the decisions made by Hafiz upon the bipolarity, such joining the anti-Iraq coalition and participating in the Madrid Peace Conference. It was interpreted during this period that Syrian national identity, which had been shaped by pan-Arab interests, was moving towards a more distinctive Syrian identity. According to Hinnebusch, "Assad pursued the limited and conventional goals prescribed by realism, namely, recovery of territorial losses and maintenance of a balancer of power against threats".[348] However, things began to change at the beginning of the next decade. The attacks launched on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent US military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq made a mark on Syrian-US relations.

6.1. September 11 and its Aftermath: Implications for the International System

The 9/11 attacks and the developments that followed caused systemic shock and raised questions about the international system that had emerged after the end of the Cold War. It is argued that the period following the attacks exposed the limits of America's global reach and created problems for maintaining unipolarity. In that sense, some scholars attributed a significance to the events of 9/11 that was comparable to the collapse of the Soviet empire. It is argued that 9/11 can be

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[348] Hinnebusch, (2002a), p.151.

compared with the end of the Cold War not just because it caused a shock that reverberated internationally and forced all significant actors to respond, but because it challenged the core conceptions of the existing international system, the one that had emerged from the post-Cold War order.

The impact the September 11 attacks and its aftermath on the international system caused considerable debate. The most important among these was over whether the trend of bandwagoning with the great power that had characterized the initial post-Cold War period was sustainable.[349] The September 11 attacks raised questions for the US about how to maintain its unipolar status. These developments arose after the attacks were interpreted by realists as a shift back towards international instability and great power balancing. In fact, great power balancing against the US had predicted by many scholars following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but this did not come to pass despite the huge surge US power. The September 11 attacks and the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq led to the emergence of analyses claiming that balancing had begun to emerge. Some scholars claimed that traditional forms of balancing could be observed when internal defense buildups and external alliance formations were taken into account, but after a while, no evidence of traditional balancing could be found.[350] Some scholars then suggested a new form of balancing, called "soft balancing". Walt describes this as the "conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to US preferences, outcomes that could not be gained if the balancers did not give each other some degree of mutual support."[351] Instead of directly challenging the US, which would be a costly

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[349] Ewan Harrison, *The Post-Cold War International System: Strategies, Institutions and Reflexivity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 137.

[350] IR theorists have developed standards for measuring traditional balancing behavior. As Lieber and Alexander suggest, "the most important and widely used criteria concern internal and external balancing and the establishment of diplomatic "red lines." Internal balancing emerges when states invest heavily in defense by transforming their latent power (i.e., economic, technological, social, and natural resources) into military capabilities. External balancing occurs when states seek to form military alliances against the predominant power. Diplomatic red lines send clear signals to the aggressorthat states are willing to take costly actions to check the dominant power if it does not respect certain boundaries of behavior (Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing", *International Security*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, (2005), p. 119.

[351] Stephen Walt, "Can the United States Be Balanced?", paper prepared for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 2–5, 2004, p. 14.

action, states are said to engage in actions that made life difficult for Washington, like constraining and undermining the US's freedom of action or complicating its diplomacy.[352]

Initially, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, all the major powers continued to bandwagon with the US. In its military response in Afghanistan, several European states and Japan played a supportive role, and most remarkably, Russia and China accepted direct intervention by the US even though Afghanistan is within their sphere of influence.[353] In that sense, the responses of the major powers to 9/11 fit the bandwagoning trend of the post-Cold War era. However, the major powers began to diverge on the issue of US pre-emptive action in Iraq. This led to debates concerning the emergence of "balancing" behavior in the post-9/11 period. However, as Lieber and Alexander suggest, divergences between the great powers on the US invasion of Iraq could not be regarded as a balancing behavior. Rather, they could be labeled "traditional diplomatic friction". In saying so, Lieber and Alexander evaluate the criteria for soft balancing behavior that could be found in Walt's and Pape's works. These are "states' efforts (1) to entangle the dominant state in international institutions, (2) to exclude the dominant state from regional economic cooperation, (3) to undermine the dominant state's ability to project military power by restricting or denying military basing rights, and (4) to provide relevant assistance to US adversaries such as rogue states". After delineating and applying these criteria, they were unable to find any evidence of balancing in the great powers' strategies towards the US.[354] Rather it was interpreted as being reflective of diplomatic friction, characterized by disagreement about tactics, not goals.[355]

This study accepts the argument of Lieber and Alexander that major powers have not engaged in traditional balancing against the US in the post-9/11 era. It is possible to talk about continuing American dominance in the international system since the end

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[352] Lieber, Alexander, op. cit, p. 125.

[353] Harrison, op. cit, p. 140.

[354] Lieber, Alexander, op. cit, p. 125.

[355] Ibid, p. 133.

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of the Cold War. And since the international system is hegemonic in both cases, it becomes feasible to compare Syrian foreign policy responses in each of the periods focused on in this research. Syria's defiance of the global hegemon is labeled by certain authors as "asymmetric balancing". "Asymmetric balancing" is defined as "efforts by sub-national actors and their state sponsors to challenge and weaken established states using asymmetric means such as terrorism".[356] In the absence of an international or regional bloc to compete strategically with the US and the lack of latent power potentiality, Bashar's motivations, intentions and domestic concerns in the decision to defy the hegemon will be analyzed through the case studies in this section.

6.2. The September 11 Attacks and the Middle East

The Middle East was dramatically affected by the 9/11 attacks and the developments that followed it. The linking of the attacks to the Middle East region is rooted with al-Qaeda. First, most of the organization's members were of Middle East origin. Second, the primary source of its hostility towards the US was related to its Middle Eastern politics.[357] George W. Bush's initial campaign, which focused on Afghanistan, drew attention away from his more general focus on the Middle East. Following the September 11 attacks, a belief that the roots of Islamic extremism lie in the Middle East emerged. The "spread of democracy" to the Middle East region thus became the cornerstone of the Bush administration's "war on terror".[358]

The primary cause of the terrorist attacks directed at the US was seen to be the lack of democracy in the Middle East. Thus, the Bush administration embarked on a mission to bring democracy to the region as a solution to the problems posed by rogue regimes, terrorists and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). In order to aid

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[356] T.V. Paul, "Introduction" in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice of the 21st Century*, James J. Wirtz and Michel Fortmann (eds.), (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

[357] Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Middle East in the Aftermath of September 11 Attacks", in *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 27, No. 3–4, (2001), p. 21.

[358] Christopher Hobson, "A Forward Strategy of Freedom in the Middle East: US Democracy Promotion and the 'War on Terror'", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1, (March 2005), p. 39.

the spread of democracy, the US initiated "a forward strategy of freedom". Within the framework of this strategy, a regional policy specific to the Middle East, known as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), was introduced in 2002. MEPI has a small budget of $29 million for the entire region aimed at helping the democratization process of the region through civil society and education programs.[359] An enlarged program was introduced with new funding and broader programs at the G8 summit in June 2004, called "The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative".

With the implementation of the project to promote democracy, two more policies became central to the US effort. In that sense, the events of September 11 provided an opportunity to realize goals the administration had been unsuccessfully trying to implement up to that point.[360] The first of these were the attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict was perceived by the Bush administration as an important factor interrupting stability in the Middle East. Thus, the Bush administration tried to make progress with efforts such as the launching of the "road map to peace" in 2002 and President Bush's declarations calling for an independent state existing side-by-side with Israel in peace.

The second move in the US effort to promote democracy was the overthrow of Saddam's regime. In reality, several members of the US government had assertive policies with regard to Iraq even before September 11 attacks. However, these had not been developed into a particular policy.[361] The "war on terror" policy adopted following the September 11 events paved the way to toppling the Iraqi regime. The accusations that Iraq had been involved in the September 11 attacks and had possessed WMDs were both discredited. The justification for the invasion thus became liberating Iraq and bringing democracy to the country. The Bush

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[359] Ibid, p. 42.

[360] Altunışık, op. cit, p. 24.

[361] Ibid, p. 26.

administration claimed that replacing the tyrannical regime in Iraq with a democratic one could act as a catalyst in the democratization of the Middle East region.[362]

President Bush's belief in the link between terrorism and a lack of democracy shaped his policy vis-à-vis the Middle Eastern states. He declared explicitly that promoting democracy in the Arab world was central to US interests.[363] But despite its determination, the US campaign to promote democracy has been unsuccessful for several reasons. First, studies on and past experiences with democratic transition reveal that for democracy to take hold, it must emerge through internal processes. In the Middle East there is limited demand for democracy, and the conditions necessary to foster a functioning democracy tend to be non-existent or underdeveloped.[364] Secondly, the US does not have any credibility or moral standing in the region, especially after the invasion of Iraq. A poll conducted by Zogby International-Sadat Chair in May 2004 revealed that only 25 percent of Jordanians and 10 percent of those in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) believe that promoting democracy was a major motive of the Iraq War. The majority believed the war was motivated by the US's desire to control Iraqi oil, protect Israeli interests and weaken the Muslim world.[365] The US did little to recover its image in the region. In spite of its calls for democracy, continued to support non-democratic regimes like Saudi Arabia and to form new alliances with non-democratic regimes like Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Its treatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison and the civil causalities during the Iraqi War worsened the image of the US in the eyes of the Arab pubic.

As stated before, the Middle East is the region most deeply impacted by the September 11 attacks. After the attacks, the US focused on the region and initiated the "war on terror" and the "forward strategy of freedom". The countries accused of

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[362] Hobson, op. cit, p. 42.

[363] F. Gregory Gause III, "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 5, (September/October 2005).

[364] Hobson, op. cit, p. 45.

[365] Gause (2005), op. cit.

supporting terrorism became targets of the US. Although intervened in the region in order to stabilize it, new security problems began to emerge in the region after US involvement. In the absence of great power balancing, regional states like Syria and Iran who were threatened by the US engaged in "asymmetrical balancing". The outcomes of US efforts ran counter to their intended effects; the strategy to promote democracy collapsed and had been unsuccessful in combating terrorism. Other impacts of the American intervention included an increase in the political sphere of influence of Shias, Iran became more assertive in countering the US, a deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and an upswing in anti-American movements.

6.3. Reasons for Syria's Disengagement with the West

In reality, the nature and landscape of Syria's relations with both the US and Israel were transformed with the beginning of the 2000s. Several factors contributed to the change in the relations between these countries. All three underwent significant domestic political change during this period. In Syria, upon the death of Hafiz, he was succeeded by young and inexperienced Bashar. In the US there was a presidential power transfer from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush. Bush distanced himself from the Arab-Israeli peace process and focused on the regimes of Iran and Iraq. In Israel, Sharon came to power with the elections held in February 2001. Sharon was not interested in the Syrian track of peace negotiations and firmly opposed the notion of withdrawal from the Golan Heights. This situation further deteriorated with the al-Aqsa Intifada, the events of September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq.

There are different interpretations for Syria's disenchantment from the West. Some scholars accused Syria of non-cooperation, while others blame the US for failing to reward Syria for its cooperation. According to these analysts, the value of Syria's cooperation had not been recognized by the US. It is argued that Hafiz requested financial aid, Syria's removal from the list of states sponsoring terrorism, political pressure on Israel and the guarantee that Israel would not use force against Syria.

During a visit of US senators to Syria, Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa stated that if the US wanted good relations with Syria, it must remove Syria from the terrorism list. However, none of Syria's expectations were realized, and a strong distrust among Syrians emerged in relation to cooperation with the US.[366]

The US adopted an ambiguous policy on its relations with Syria. On the one hand, the US Commerce Department made significant changes in US export regulations applying to Syria as a preliminary step towards the removal of sanctions applied to it in September 1991. On the other hand, a House resolution was introduced in congress that placed certain restrictions on it.[367] Negative perceptions relating to Syria in the US have also been a major barrier to improved relations.

Scholars like Pipes and Kirkpatrick offer different explanations, casting serious doubt on Syria's intentions towards Israel and the US. These authors approach Syria's cooperation with the US and its willingness to work for peace process with suspicion. According to them, Syria was not sincere in its negotiations with Israel, and Hafiz never actually wanted a settlement; instead, that his strategy was to sustain the conflict without reaching a solution.

None of the reasons listed above are adequate to explain Syria's detachment from the West. In the aftermath of the Cold War, Syria cooperated with the West and especially with the US, not just because of the pressures of the new international system but also because of domestic and regional requirements. As analyzed in previous sections, an intersection of the domestic, regional and the international factors resulted in Syria's decision to participate in the American-led coalition in the 1991 Gulf War. Despite the permanence of the structural determinants that had necessitated Syria's cooperation with the US, that cooperation began to wane in the subsequent years, as Syria retreated from the West. How, then, can we explain this development, which realist theory would label "irrational"?

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[366] Meredith Reid Sarkees, Stephen Zunes, "Disenchantment with the 'New World Order': Syria's Relations with the United States", *International Journal*, Vol. 49 No. 2 (Spring 1994), p. 355–377.

[367] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 97.

The ongoing conflict with Israel and the non-existence of any peace agreement is the most important factor preventing Syria from cooperating with the West. If Syria had sign a peace treaty with Israel like Egypt and Jordan, its relations with the US and its international standing would be completely different. Contrary to the views of some scholars like Pipes and Kirkpatrick, I think that Israel sought actual peace in the negotiations beginning with the Madrid Peace Conference. However, Hafiz's non-negotiable condition for peace was the return of the whole Golan Heights. Israel had captured this territory during the 1967 War while Hafiz had been defense minister. Syria wanted its return for both symbolic and geo-strategic reasons; both to recover its lost honor from the defeat in 1967, and because of its extensive water resources that constituted a defensive buffer against Israel. Israel's insistence on keeping the Golan led to deadlock in the peace negotiations. It is known from previous experience that peace can only be achieved when one party abandons its claims over a disputed territory. Egypt and Israel reached a peace agreement after Egypt retook the Sinai, and Jordan and Israel reached a peace settlement immediately after Jordan abandoned its claim over the West Bank. However, in the conflict between Israel and Syria, none of the parties exhibited willingness to withdraw their claims on the Golan.

Despite arguments that the Syrian regime had a substantial autonomy over domestic constraints on foreign policy, peace with Israel is a sensitive issue. When the issue is the peace process, the regime cannot disregard the need to protect its legitimacy. There has been a historical rejection of Israel's legitimacy in Syrian political culture, but this has not meant that Syrians are completely opposed to peace with Israel. Syrians are tired of war and aware of the benefits of peace. The best settlement for Syria would require it to accept normalization of relations with Israel in return for the Golan. However, this continues to seem out of reach for the foreseeable future.

As Fakash notes, at the beginning of the 1990s there was great momentum to encourage Syria to be open to the West. The US should motivate Syria towards moderation, and to move away from radicalism and militarism, which in turn would facilitate the search for a settlement in the Arab-Israeli struggle. However, Syria did

not manage this. I don't think that US state policy or public perception were completely responsible for preventing cooperation with Syria, nor a lack of shared values between the two countries, as has been argued. The US has been cooperated with Saudi Arabia and Egypt for several years, despite perceived differences in ruling system and values. However, there remains the question of US commitment to improving its relations with Syria, and whether it put adequate pressure on Israel and Syria to reach a peace settlement. The US continued to accuse the Syrian government of engaging in state-sponsored terrorism, of committing systematic human rights abuses and of pursuing high levels of militarization. Syria's perception of the US as the historical protector of Israel in peace negotiations, and US reluctance to put pressure on Israel led to mutual misperceptions.

6.4. Bashar's Rise to Power: A Reason for Deterioration of Relations?

When Bashar came to power following the death of his father Hafiz on June 10, 2000, Syrians had high hopes that he would transform Syria into a more open society in terms of politics, culture and economics. After all, he was young, educated in London, and deeply familiar with Western ideas. He also created a positive impression among the Western leaders and journalists who had met him before he took office, being described as "a young, open-minded, very intelligent man, well versed in details and quite in control of facts".[368] Personal statements in his first interview with the Western media strengthened this impression, describing himself as a jazz fan who frequently surfed the Internet.[369] It was known that Bashar tried to persuade Hafiz of the importance of allowing Syrians to use the Internet.[370] Many viewed him as indisputably representative of a younger generation of Arab leaders,

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[368] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 130.

[369] Ibid.

[370] Eyal Zisser, "Bashar Al-Assad: In or Out of the New World Order?", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 115–131, p. 120.

along with King Abdullah II of Jordan, King Muhammad V of Morocco, the ruler of Qatar and the crown princes of a number of the Gulf emirates.[371]

The Syrian people and the international community thus welcomed Bashar's rise to power as a refreshing breeze. Following his succession, Bashar confronted two major issues. First were the collapse of the peace process and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa *intifada*. The second was the increasing demand from Syrian citizens to reform the economy and to open up the political system.[372]

The eruption of the second *intifada* following Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque in September 2000 posed a serious challenge for Bashar. The Syrian regime had strongly criticized Arafat and the Palestinian Authority for violating the principle that "peace must be comprehensive" when it signed its bilateral "Declaration of Principles" with Israel. The second *intifada* forced the Syrian regime to soften its criticism of Arafat and to provide assistance to the Palestinians. Renewed Hezbollah activities against Israel's northern border following the *intifada* could potentially have created an Israeli-Syrian confrontation. Since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, Syria and Israel had twice come close to military conflict. At first, Israel threatened to retaliate when Hezbollah captured three Israeli soldiers on October 7, 2000. Any potential confrontation was prevented by American intervention. Secondly, after a military operation carried out by Hezbollah, Israel retaliated on April 14, 2001 by attacking a Syrian military unit in Lebanon. Bashar could not strike back and declared that Syria reserved the right to retaliate. The Israeli military attack was an embarrassment to Bashar and he escalated is rhetoric against Israel. This was reflected in his speeches, such as his accusations of Jews as those who had "betrayed" and "tortured" Jesus Christ during Pope John Paul II's visit to Damascus.[373]

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[371] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 130.

[372] Ghadbian, op. cit, p. 625.

[373] Quoted in Eyal Zisser, "Does Bashar Al-Assad Rule Syria?", *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No.1 (Winter 2003), p. 19.

As a response to the demand for reform among the Syrians, Bashar initiated a new era of progress known as the "Damascus Spring". He adopted a policy of reforming the country while preserving the political structure. Demands for reform came from academics, journalists and intellectuals, as well as from the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. They called an end to the state of emergency and martial law; released all political prisoners and allowed exiled Syrians to return; and granted political freedoms including the freedoms of expression and press.[374] In the first six months of Bashar's presidency, he encouraged the proliferation of cultural and political forums formed by intellectuals to discuss issues such as civil society, human rights and pluralism. In that period, Bashar took two important steps on the way of political liberalization. The Syrian government released 600 political prisoners of Islamist, Iraqi Ba'athist and Communist background. Secondly, it allowed the establishment of the first privately owned newspaper in 40 years, which was named *al-Dumari* (The Lamplighter). The Communist Party, loyal to the regime, was also permitted to publish its newspaper.[375]

This political opening was quickly stopped, which came as a surprise to most observers. In spite of his early commitment to political and economic change, at the beginning, Bashar seemed to abruptly change his mind. Just a year after assuming power, Bashar began to lead a counterattack of the regime against its reformers. In an interview with *Al Sharq al-Awsat* on February 8, 2001, Bashar labeled the reformists "Western agents whose only aim was to undermine Syria's internal stability from within, in the service of the state's enemies".[376] In the same interview, Bashar referred to the "intellectuals" as a "small elite" that were not representative of the Syrian people. This interview was interpreted as a turning point and marked the turn of the Damascus spring into a "Damascus winter".[377]

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[374] *Al-Hayat*, September 26, 2000.

[375] Ghadbian, op. cit, p. 637.

[376] Zisser Eyal, "Bashar al-Assad: In or Out of the New World Order", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.3, (Summer 2005), pp. 118.

[377] Lesch, op. cit, p. 92.

In the area of economics, Bashar's reform program was a continuation and deepening of the economic liberalization that had begun under Hafiz.[378] As a result of the problems created by the system of Import Substitute Industrialization (ISI) and the statist-populist economic model, a consensus had emerged that economic survival required private investment. As a part of adapting to the "market economy" strategy, Bashar's economic reforms included restricting the involvement of the state in economics, creating a framework for a more market-oriented economy, and opening up private banks and insurance companies.[379] Although, Bashar intended to integrate the Syrian economy into the global market, there were some obstacles to Syria's economic liberalization. First was the existence of the "crony capitalists", which gave support to the regime in turn for subsidized food and fuel, state jobs and farm support prices as a part of a "social contract". In addition, private investment was deterred by bureaucratic obstacles and the lack of rule of law.[380] Secondly, the regional insecurity mainly stemming from the failure of peace negotiations with Israel in 2000 had a negative impact on the reform process. Rather than integrating into Western markets, Syria opted to develop economic relations with Iraq by re-opening the closed pipeline. According to Hinnebusch, "integration into the Western market had been reconciled with Syria's Arab nationalist identity and this was impossible as long as the conflict with Israel and Western "imperialism" continued".[381]

Bashar's inexperience and his dependence on the "Old Guard"—companions of his father—was revealed as an obstacle to domestic reform and international opening by some scholars. According to that view, although Bashar had a clear vision of "modernization", which included economic liberalization, the fight against corruption and political and cultural openings, the old guard prevented the realization of a "modernization" process. Bashar's most important problem was his isolation. He

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[378]Raymond Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad", *Ortadoğu Etüdleri*, July 2009, Vol. 1, No.1, pp. 7–26, p. 10.

[379] Ibid, p. 13.

[380] Ibid, p. 11.

[381] Ibid.

failed to create an inner circle of loyal associates on whom he could rely. Rather, he continued to be surrounded by his father's close associates. As if to prove this argument, in an interview with *The New York Times* on November 30, 2003, in response to the question of why the reform movement had slowed, he answered, "The major problem that I am facing as somebody who is responsible in this country is the cadre; the efficient, trained people to do the reform particularly in the administrative reform".[382]

Initially, Bashar lacked an inner circle and was forced to share power with the old guard of his father's close associates who dominated important positions like the party politburo, the cabinet, the army high command and the security forces. He inherited a foreign policy team composed of Vice President Khaddam and Foreign Minister Sharaa, who supported continuity in foreign policy.[383] However, over the course of time, he replaced the old guard with appointees beholden to him and established himself as the "prime decision maker".

At the beginning, the corner stone of Bashar's foreign policy was a strategic opening towards Europe. In order to realize this objective, he made his first visits to Western European capitals, rather than to Syria's old Eastern Bloc allies.[384] Syria's young, Western-educated and "reform-minded" leader was also welcomed by Europe. However, Bashar's efforts to improve Syria's standing regionally and internationally were unsuccessful. Even, his early efforts to promote a certain degree of political openness and economic liberalization failed. During Bashar's term, relations with Western countries have worsened in comparison with Hafiz's term. The Western politicians and journalists who had praised Bashar after his rise to power began to criticize him harshly. Zisser states that although Bashar had been seen as a member of the generation of young Arab leaders who support reform processes in their countries, he gradually revealed himself to be nearer to Hasan Nasrallah, the leader

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[382] "Assad Interview: Syrian Pressing for Israel Talks", *The New York Times*, November 30, 2003.

[383] Hinnebusch, (2009), op. cit, p. 12.

[384] Hinnebusch, (2005), op. cit., p. 3.

of Hezbollah, than he was to the likes of Kings Abdullah II and Muhammad V.[385] The article, written by Dennis Ross, who served as special Middle East coordinator under President Bill Clinton, is important to an understanding of how the US perceived Bashar. In his article, Ross states that although Hafiz had not been an easy person to negotiate with, he was a good calculator of power and he was playing his "cards"—Syria's connections with Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad—carefully; that is, he always kept his word and he never put himself in a precarious position. However, American officials' perceptions of Bashar were problematic even though they had welcomed his rise to power in the beginning. Ross characterizes Bashar's rule as one of "vacillation and a constant pattern of miscalculation".[386] He also asserts that although some of Hafiz's reactions would be similar to Bashar's, there were clear differences between father and son. The first difference has to do with relations with Hezbollah. According to Ross, Hafiz used Hezbollah as a tool but did not perceive it as a reliable force. Bashar, on the other hand, seemed to have an admiration for Hezbollah and described Nasrallah as a democratic figure. Secondly, Bashar also differed from his father in his dealings with Israelis. Ross states that, Hafiz never shied away from dealing with Israel; even in high crisis periods like the Hebron massacre of 1994, he resumed negotiations with the Israelis at Washington's request. In contrast, after the 2000 Camp David negotiations, Bashar shied away from contact with the Israelis. Thirdly, according to Ross, Hafiz would have recognized the value of cooperating with the US in its struggle with al-Qaeda after the September 11 attacks, and would have called on Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad to halt their attacks for a while. Bashar, he claims, did nothing to stop these attacks. In terms of Lebanese policy, Ross declares Hafiz would have been more willing to surrender Syria's control in Lebanon after the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. However, Bashar increased the size and presence of Syrian intelligence and undermined Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri's efforts to establish a greater Lebanese autonomy. Finally, Ross believes that Hafiz's response to the US invasion of Iraq would have been different than Bashar's, in that

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[385] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 131.

[386] Dennis Ross, "US Policy toward a Weak Assad", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 2005), p. 87.

he would not have provided military equipment to Saddam until the eve of the US invasion.[387]

It is impossible to know how Hafiz's would have reacted against the crises that confronted Syria in the 2000s, like the American occupation of Iraq and the pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. We can only speculate, but it is clear that Hafiz was an experienced, rational and prudent actor, and his reactions can be expected to have been different from those of his inexperienced successor. However, in the analyses of continuity and change in Syria, most scholars share the view that Bashar's presidency is marked by continuity in foreign policy and new dynamics within domestic politics. Bashar has also made statements concurring with this view. In an interview, he confirms that under his leadership, the Syrian position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, specifically on the Golan Heights, is the same as it was under his father. However, he declares that his vision of reform and modernization is different because of needs and circumstances.[388]

When Bashar came to power, he seems to have been decisive on introducing reforms and improving Syria's relations with the outside world, but he failed in both realms. Why did he not materialize these expectations in relation to political and economic reform and Syria's international standing? His lack of experience and personal weakness as a leader contributed to this. However, some major international developments, including the campaign against terrorism after the events of September 11, had nothing to do with Bashar's leadership, yet dramatically altered Syrian foreign policy. It would be unfair to perceive Bashar's accession as the sole factor in the deterioration of relations with the US. The rise of the "neo-cons" in the US also led to a decline in US-Syrian relations and a sharp departure from traditional US policy towards Arab states. Syria's unwillingness to fight terrorism alongside the US coincided with the new doctrine in Washington that any state believed to support terrorism was an immediate threat to the US and subject to have preventive war waged on it. What should be discussed is the degree of Bashar's adaptation to

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[387] Ibid.

[388] "Assad Interview: Syrian Pressing for Israel Talks", *The New York Times*, November 30, 2003.

changes in his foreign policy environment, which will be analyzed in the next section's case studies.

6.5. The September 11 and Syria

The September 11 terror attacks on New York and Washington opened a new era in Syrian-US relations. Relations had already begun to deteriorate before the terrorist attacks of September 11. Although the Syrian regime had been hopeful about the new American administration led by George W. Bush, within a very short period, it became clear that Bashar was being confronted with a more anti-Syrian and anti-Israeli administration.[389] An important element of hostility between Syria and the new US administration was the growing relationship between Damascus and Baghdad. Iraq had begun to export oil to Syria via Kirkuk-Banyas Pipeline in the autumn of 2000, which had previously been shut down by the Syrians in 1982 over the conflict between Syria and Iraq due to Syria's support to Iran in the Iran-Iraq War. Washington strongly criticized Damascus for violating its sanctions against Iraq. Bashar's explanation was that the inflow of oil from Iraq was only for purposes of testing the pipeline.[390]

On his 36th birthday, which fell on September 11, 2001, Bashar encountered an unanticipated surprise, as the first reports of terror attacks by Osama bin Ladin's al-Qaeda organization on New York and Washington began coming into Damascus. His first reaction as president was to send a condolence message to the White House, calling for "world cooperation to eradicate all kinds of terrorism."[391]

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[389] Moshe Ma'oz, "Washington and Damascus: Between Confrontation and Cooperation", *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, August 2005, http://www.usip.org/publications/washington-and-damascus-between-confrontation-and-cooperation (accessed on 27/11/2011).

[390] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 133.

[391] "International Reaction to the September 11, 2001 Attacks in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington", http://www.september11news.com/InternationalReaction.htm (Accessed on 15/11/2011).

In the following days, in addition to denouncing the attacks, Syria offered to assist the US in its search for the responsible parties. Since Muhammad Ata, who was identified as the mastermind behind the attacks, was Syrian-born, the US welcomed this offer and sent FBI agents to investigate al-Qaeda activists who had been in Syria or who had had contact with Syrian citizens. US Secretary of State Colin Powell commented that Syria had contributed a "treasure trove" of materials on al-Qaeda, including information on Syrian members of the organization. Damascus also helped save American lives by assisting the US in preventing terror attacks targeting US troops and interests in Bahrain and Ottawa.[392]

In the war on terrorism declared by the United States after the September 11 attacks, Syria seemed to be readily in the camp of "with the US" as opposed to "with the terrorists". However, it called for a distinction between fighting occupation and acts of terror. Specifically, it distinguished Palestinian resistance to Israel's occupation as distinct from terrorism. Bashar gave clear support to the Palestinian *intifada*, stating that Palestinians had the right to determine the form by which to liberate a land that was theirs.[393] Damascus also refused to label Hezbollah a terrorist organization, and Syria continued to cultivate relations with the countries of the "Axis of Evil"—North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Hezbollah—as defined by George W. Bush. Although Syria and the US continued to cooperate on intelligence issues regarding al-Qaeda, the US criticized Syria for its continuing support to a number of Palestinian groups and to Hezbollah. This made improved relations impossible, since the US's vision of the war on terrorism was clear and guided by four principles, which were outlined by the State Department in a document titled "Patterns of Global Terrorism". These principles are: first, make no concessions to terrorists and strike no deals; second, bring terrorists to justice for their crimes; third, isolate and apply pressure on states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior, and fourth, bolster the counterterrorist capabilities of those countries that work with the United States and

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[392] Rabil, (2006), op. cit, p. 132.

[393] Ibid.

require assistance.[394] In the same report, Syria was once again listed as among the seven designated states that sponsored terrorism, along with Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Sudan. Bashar denied the accusations over Syria and said:

> This report is a political report which has no relation to terrorism. Several years ago I asked one of the American leaders who visited us whether he thought that Syria is a terrorist state, and he answered no. When I asked him why Syria is included in the report on terrorism published by the State Department, he attributed this to domestic American political considerations.[395]

In conformity with its vision of the "war on terrorism", the US became critical of Syria, because not severing its ties with the "Axis of Evil" and terrorist organizations made it a "*de facto* member of the axis of evil".[396] American officials also began to accuse Syria of possessing non-conventional, mainly biological and chemical weapons.[397] While accepting that Syria had cooperated with the US in certain areas, they also did not discount the possibility of the use of force against it because of its support for terrorism.[398] In the summer of 2002, the US Congress brought up for discussion the "Syrian Accountability" draft law because of its support for terrorism and its continuing presence in Lebanon. However, the administration opposed that draft and declared that, despite the differences between Damascus and Washington, it was necessary to act with prudence.[399] The draft law approved by Congress in October 2003 and was signed by President Bush in December 2003 following the War in Iraq.

Zisser argues that Syria's immediate reaction to the war on terrorism was identical to its reaction to the Gulf War in the early 1990s. He states that Syria "adopted an

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[394] US *Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, US Department of State, (April 2004), p. ix.

[395] Ibid.

[396] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 133.

[397] *The Times*, December 13, 2002.

[398] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 137.

[399] Ibid, p. 138.

evasive policy, desiring to eat its cake and keep its penny".[400] On the one hand, it tried to prevent direct confrontation by cooperating with the US in its struggle against al-Qaeda. On the other hand, it continued to adhere to its radical stances that were in opposition with US policies. Syria's cooperation ended at the point where US demands extended beyond al-Qaeda to Hezbollah,[401] since Syria did not put Hezbollah in the same category as al-Qaeda.

American preparations for the invasion of Iraq created new tension in Syrian-US relations. President Assad clearly objected to a strike against Iraq. He declared that "there was no justification for a US war on Iraq, it would kill millions of people and plunge the Middle East into uncertainty".[402] In spite of the fierce opposition to the US invasion of Iraq, Syria acted prudently and backed off under US threats. It closed its four official border posts with Iraq and expelled some former Iraqi officials. However, it is argued that Syria also facilitated a pre-invasion sale of arms to Iraq. Its anti-American stance before the invasion of Iraq put Syria on the wrong side of the "with us or against us" dictum of the Bush regime.

Syria voted in favor of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441 on November September 2002, which included the renewal of UN inspections in Iraq. Although some of the Iraqi press viewed Syria's vote as a "betrayal of the Arab cause", the Syrians justified the vote by saying it had done so in order to postpone the American attack on Iraq. Some officials even declared that Washington had guaranteed Syria that if Iraq cooperated with the inspection regime, war would be prevented.[403] Foreign Minister Sharaa, in an interview with Helena Cobban, said that Colin Powell had verbally assured him that Resolution 1441 "cannot be used on its own as a pretext for a strike against Iraq". Though he also declared that Powell's assurance did not constitute a clear guarantee, he observed that "if the Americans

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[400] Eyal Zisser, "Syria and the War in Iraq", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (June 2003).

[401] Eyal Zisser, "Syria and the United States: Bad Habits Die Hard", in *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (Summer 2003), p. 32.

[402] Reuters, November 18, 2002.

[403] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 134.

want to strike against Iraq, they will do so without international cover, without U.N. cover, and without Arab cover".[404]

In spite of efforts to postpone an attack against Iraq, Bashar believed war was inevitable: "Despite the UN Resolutions and the fact that the inspectors are there, they [the US] are all the time announcing that they want to launch a strike against Iraq".[405] In a similar way, Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam declared that the strike against Iraq is aimed at dividing the country, which served the interests of Israel; he said that Syria was defending Iraq as an Arab country.[406] Foreign Minister al-Sharaa admitted that Syrian diplomacy to prevent an American invasion had failed. He commented that the US would intervene in Iraq and there was little hope that Europe, Russia or China could stop it.[407]

Bashar also accused other Arab countries of not giving their support to Iraq and of remaining uninvolved onlookers at the March 2003 Arab Summit in Sharm al-Shaykh.[408] Egypt, which had adopted a passive bystander position on the Iraqi issue, was criticized harshly by Bashar. The American offensive in Iraq also worsened Syria's relations with the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, because of accusations by Damascus that they are collaborating with the US.

In addition to the harsh tone of Syrian officials' speeches in their criticisms against the US, the Syrian public was also mobilized against the US. Street demonstrations were held near the American Embassy in Damascus and boycotts of American goods, personalities and even cultural symbols were organized.[409]

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[404] Helena Cobban, "Waiting for War in Damascus", *Boston Review*, February–March 2003.

[405] *Times Online*, December 13, 2002.

[406] SANA, September 6, 2002.

[407] Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Syria After the Iraq War: Between the Neo-Con Offensive and Internal Reform", *Deutsches Orient-Institut (DOI)-Focus*, Nr. 14, March 2004, p.13–14.

[408] Zisser (2003a), op. cit.

[409] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 139.

6.6. The 2003 Iraq War and Syria

After the US military intervened in Iraq on March 19, 2003, the tension between the US and Syria intensified, with Syria becoming the leading critic of "Operation Iraqi Freedom". In an interview after the war broke out, Bashar declared that the US was incapable of controlling Iraq; he also warned that Syria might become its next target of the US, adding that it was ready for a confrontation.[410] Syrian Foreign Minister al-Sharaa made the sentiment explicit: "We want Iraq's victory".[411]

6.6.1. Accusations over Syria

After the war started, the US accused Syria of activities that interfered with the American war effort in Iraq.

Firstly, it was charged with providing Arab resistance fighters across the Iraqi border to aid the movement, and with giving refuge to some Iraqi officials fleeing Iraq after Saddam's regime fell.[412] Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld charged the Syrian administration with transferring night vision goggles and other military equipment to Saddam Hussein's forces and with engaging in illegal arms sales to Iraq. Rumsfeld also warned Syria that the confrontation could include states aiding Iraqi forces.[413] It was additionally argued that the loyalists to Saddam Hussein found sanctuary in Syria and were channeling money and support to the fighters from there. The Syrian regime rejected these accusations. Bashar accepted that there had been a huge

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[410] "Bashar Al-Asad's Interview to Al-Safir", March 27, 2003. http://www.memri.org/report/en/print839.htm.

[411] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 140.

[412] Hinnebusch, (2009), op. cit, p. 18.

[413] David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt, "A Nation at War: The Pentagon; Rumsfeld Cautions Iran and Syria on Aid to Iraq", *The New York Times*, March 29, 2003.

transfer of goods from Syria to Iraq, but claimed there had been no armaments among them.[414]

Syria's demand of the US was to control the Syrian-Iraqi border in order to prevent infiltration by individuals. This issue became another issue of contention between Syria and the US during the Iraq War. American officials accused Syria of intentionally not controlling the border, making way for smuggling activities. Syrians never accepted these allegations. Villagers along the Syrian-Iraqi border stated that, "as long as the Americans are here, we cannot smuggle".[415] This border issue led to a series of clashes between American Army Rangers and Syrian troops along the border with Iraq, which resulted in several casualties, including among civilians living in the villages. In response to allegations that Syrians were arrested while infiltrating Iraq, Bashar stated that this was merely conjecture; that the Americans did not give out information about the detainees. He also talked about the difficulties of controlling the border by drawing a comparison between the Syrian-Iraqi border and the US-Mexican border as follows:

> [The Americans] are demanding that we close the borders, sealing the border like a mailing envelope. I ask them: Your border with Mexico is like the Syrian border with Iraq, and there too there are infiltrations and penetrations. The [Syria-Iraq] border is wide, and in the late 1970s the old Iraqi regime would send truck bombs [to Syria]. We tried then to stop them, but in many cases they got through and exploded in Syria. If this was the situation in the past, how is it possible to control the borders during this difficult period and prevent the infiltration of individuals when we found it impossible to stop trucks in the past? It is inconceivable that we should be helping those who harm the security of our residents to infiltrate our borders and our cities.[416]

During the war, the Bush administration declared that Syria had a big arsenal of chemical weapons and one of the more active chemical weapons programs in the

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[414] "Interview with Syria's President", *The New York Times*, November 30, 2003.

[415] Dexter Filkins, "After the War: Frontier; Conflict on Iraq—Syria Border Feeds Rage Against the US, in *The New York Times*, July 15, 2003.

[416] The Middle East Media Research Institute, February 5, 2004, Special Dispatch, No. 657.

Middle East.[417] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) claimed that Damascus continued to assemble liquid-fueled Scud C Missiles, probably with North Korean support, which could reach Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and most of Israel and be developed into chemical and possibly biological weapons in order to start a civic nuclear program with the help of Iran.[418] According to Ma'oz, for years, the US considered Syria to be a "junior varsity Axis of Evil", together with Libya and Cuba, mainly because it had developed WMDs. However, previous American administrations had overlooked Syrian missiles and chemical programs because they considered President Hafiz a potential partner in containing Iran and Iraq, stabilizing Lebanon and making peace with Israel. In the wake of the Iraqi invasion, Syria's initial assistance to the Saddam forces and its opposition to the US invasion made it a *de facto* member of "axis of evil".[419] Rejecting the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Syria in an angry tone, Bashar stated that it was not logical to demand from the Arab and Islamic states to allow searches of their facilities without any evidence that they possessed such weapons, and asked Bush, "where are the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?"[420]

During the Iraq War, the US administration also escalated demands for Syria to scale back sponsorship of groups such as Hezbollah. The US also asked Syria to expel Palestinian elements (the Islamic Jihad and Hamas) from Syria. During Powell's visit in May 2003, Bashar promised that the Palestinian offices operating in Syria would be shut down. He argued that there had been Palestinian organizations in Syria for decades and that they only provided information and organized social activities, so closing them would solve nothing.[421] Later, the offices were closed on the initiative

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[417] Barbra Slavin, "Syria's support for Saddam draw US Wrath", *USA Today*, April 15, 2003.

[418] Moshe Ma'oz, (2005), op. cit, p. 6.

[419] Ibid.

[420] Bashar Al-Assad, Corriere della Sera Interview", February 14, 2002, http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/ASSAD_CORRIERE_DELLA_SERA_INTERVIEW.htm (accessed on 12/02/2012).

[421] Bashar Al-Assad's Interview with Al-Arabiya," June 9, 2003, http://www.memri.org/report/en/print893.htm (accessed on 01/03/2012).

of the Palestinian organizations themselves.[422] However, the US was not satisfied. On the issue of relations between Syria and Hezbollah, Bashar complained that the US consistently confused Hezbollah and the Palestinian organizations as being aligned with Al-Qaeda.[423] It is argued that Syria supports Hezbollah politically in its fight against occupation but does not provide it with money or armament.[424]

Washington's initial military successes in Iraq led Syrian officials to rethink their policy regarding the Iraq War. According to Zisser, Bashar had difficulty understanding the US's moves. After realizing that US had become its neighbor to the east, Syria softened its tone.[425] Under US threat, Syria closed its four official border posts with Iraq on April 5, 2003 and expelled several Iraqi senior officials.

6.6.2. The Strategies of the US and Syria during the War

With the invasion of Baghdad, all eyes were on the US, waiting to see how determined it was to settle accounts with Syria. Two camps emerged within the US regarding relations with Syria. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith led the anti-Syrian camp and called for a confrontation with Syria, whereas Secretary of State Colin Powell led a more moderate camp, which called for Damascus to be granted a second chance. The State Department's softer approach regarding Syria was related to the Syrians' past decisiveness not to cross any red lines in their relations with the United States. Colin Powell visited Damascus in May 2003 with a long list of American demands, including the closure of the offices of Palestinian organizations, the disarming of Hezbollah, withdrawal from Lebanon and cooperation with the occupying regime in Iraq. According to Hinnebusch, the US

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[422]Bashar Al-Assad's Interview with Al-Sharq al-Awsat,, January 19, 2004, http://www.memri.org/report/en/print1056.htm (accessed on 01/03/2012).

[423] Ibid.

[424] *The New York Times*, November 30, 2003.

[425] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 139.

wanted Syria to give up all of its "cards". Although some argued that Syrian opposition to the US in the Iraq War had been irrational and stemmed from Bashar's inexperience, Hinnebusch asserts that no Syrian government would accept these conditions without a major threat. It is also interesting to note that, while the US presented Syria with a list of demands, it offered nothing. A remark from the State Department before the visit that "We're not coming bringing any carrots"[426] reflected the mentality of the American regime in its relations with Syria. Salhani argues that the American regime believed the stick to be more effective than the carrot in achieving the American objectives in the Middle East.[427]

Under US threat, the Syrian regime played a double game. On the one hand it sought accommodation by the US, while on the other it continued to criticize the American presence in Iraq. Syria continued to depend on its "cards". There was a belief within the Syrian regime that, depending on whether the US would respect its interests, Syria would obstruct or advance US interests in the region. These "cards"—its ability to control Hezbollah, its intelligence network in the fight against al-Qaeda and its ability to contribute to the stabilization and de-stabilization of Iraq—were key to Syria's status in the Arab-Israeli conflict. All these provided it with a sense of confidence in its relations with the US. In an interview with Al-Hayat, Bashar observed, "[Syria] is not a superpower, but [it] is not a weak country either. We have cards; we are not a country that can be ignored".[428]

Although Syria had made significant concessions in order to appease the US, including tightening its borders with Iraq, the United States continued to accuse it of aiding Iraq by smuggling military equipment into the country, of allowing Arab insurgents to reach Iraq via Syria, and of allowing Iraqi leaders to escape via its territory several times during the invasion. The tense atmosphere in US-Syrian

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[426] *Financial Times*, August 26, 2003; Federal News Service, June 18, 2003, cited in Raymond Hinnebusch, "Defying the Hegemon: Syria and the Iraq War", conference paper given at the European Consortium on Political Research conference Budapest, September 2005, p. 7.

[427] Claude Salhani, "The Syrian Accountability Act: Taking the Wrong Road to Damascus", *Policy Analysis*, No. 512, March 18, 2004.

[428] Bashar Al-Assad's Interview with Al-Hayat, October 15, 2003.
http://www.memri.org/report/en/print971.htm (accessed on 07/03/2012).

relations led to the emergence of the idea of punishing Syria. Following its passage in both Houses of Congress by a majority, President George Bush signed into law the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA) of 2003 on December 12. The act called on Syria "to halt support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, and stop its development of weapons of mass destruction". It also envisages imposing a ban on US exports to Syria other than food and medicine, prohibiting US businesses from investing there and restricting the movement of Syrian diplomats in the US.[429] On May 11, 2004, the White House announced a ban on the sale to Syria of US goods with dual military and civilian uses, barred Syrian airlines from entering US airspace and banned exports of most US goods other than food and medicine.[430] Due to the low levels of trade between the US and Syria, the sanctions did not hurt Syria economically, but they had an important psychological effect. Syrian officials perceived SALSRA as a *de facto* international boycott because of its impact on its trading partners other than the US. They thought the sanctions had an indirect impact, especially in the minds of Syria's European trade partners, which became reluctant to invest in and trade with Syria.[431] The sanctions were criticized mainly for two reasons. One relates to the image of the US in the region. Murhaf Jouejati, an expert on Syria at the Middle East Institute, said that the timing of the sanctions had been a mistake and would hurt American interests in the region: "The sanctions come at a very bad time, when US credibility in the region is on the floor".[432] Secondly, it was argued that the act was more likely to radicalize the Syrian regime and curb Bashar's efforts to pursue economic reform. It put pressure on Syria but did not offer any incentives. Rabil argues that it would be wrong to think that SALSRA would dramatically change Syrian behavior unless the US also

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[429]The text of act found at http://www.coherentbabble.com/PublicLaws/HR1828PL108-175.pdf. (Accessed on 12/05/2011).

[430] Barbara Slavin, "US to Impose Sanctions on Syria; Iraq War Actions a Factor", in *USA Today*, May 05, 2004.

[431] International Crisis Group, "Engaging Syria? US Constraints and Opportunities", Middle East Report, No. 83, February 11, 2009, p. 7–8.

[432] Slavin, op. cit.

addressed Syrian demands for retrieving the Golan Heights and maintaining its regional interests.[433]

The US-led invasion of Iraq, which had been regarded as the start of a campaign to dispatch regimes thought to back terrorism brought the question: "Is Syria next?" At the beginning of the war, Bashar told a Lebanese newspaper, "The possibility is always there".[434] The public warnings of Syria by Rumsfeld and Powell on the issue of aiding Iraqi insurgents led to the emergence of speculations that "Syria would be next". Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld accused Syria of committing "hostile acts" by funneling military aid to Iraq, and said that it will be held "accountable". Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Syria would bear the consequences for its aid to terrorist groups.[435] Syria's policy of confronting the US was interpreted as "suicidal", in that it risked becoming America's next target.[436] As the US began to be entangled with Iraq, the idea of a "regime change" in Syria rather a military intervention gained the upper hand in the Western media. This situation fostered confidence among the Syrians that they would not be attacked. There was a belief that the US sought cooperation with Damascus rather than confrontation. During a visit in Athens in December 2003, responding to a question by a reporter on if he believed Syria could be the next US target after Iraq, the Syrian President replied that Syria is not Iraq.[437] In 2004 and 2005, there had been strong propaganda in the American media demanding that the Bush administration get serious about Syria. There was a lot of news and opinion accusing Syria of providing material support to terrorist groups killing American soldiers in Iraq in the editorial pages of The Washington Times, The Weekly Standard and the Wall Street Journal. In one such article, the Bush Administration was charged with responding to the Syrian regime with mixed

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[433] Rabil, 2006, op. cit, p. 158.
[434] "Bashar Al-Asad's Interview to Al-Safir".....

[435] Thomas Omestad, Beth Potter, "The Syrian Factor", *US News and World Report*, April 21, 2003, Vol. 134, Issue 13, p. 31.

[436] Meyrav Wurmser, "The Road to Damascus", *National Review,* May 5, 2003.

[437] The Meetings of the Syrian President in Athens, December 16, 2003. http://www.hri.org/news/greek/mpab/2003/03-12-15.mpab.html. (Accessed on 12/07/2011)

political signals and weak gestures.[438] Some of the daily news welcomed the departure of the "doves" of the administration like Colin Powell and ex-CIA Director George Tenet, who had opposed a military campaign in the Arab world, stating that "with the departure of Powell and Tenet, and a second term safely in hand, the military option has again risen to the surface".[439]

6.6.3. Syria's Relations with the Iraqi Government after the Invasion

Syria refused to recognize the Iraqi Governing Council established by the US and launched a diplomatic campaign to prevent its recognition in the Arab world. It also announced that it would not cooperate with any puppet regime established in Iraq.[440] Although some other Arab states had shared Syria's concerns about the situation in Iraq, they had opted to support the council rather than to weaken it. In September 2003, the Arab League voted to allow the Governing Council to assume Iraq's seat for a provisional one-year period. A few weeks later, the council was given Iraq's seat at OPEC.[441] In spite of its objections to the interim government and US policies in Iraq, Syria voted for UNSC 1483 on May 22, 2003, which lifted sanctions on Iraq and legitimized the occupiers' control of Iraqi money. Syria voted for this resolution in order to prevent its isolation in the Security Council under an immediate threat from the US. Despite its refusal to recognize the council, a member of Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council said that any attack against Syria would be considered an attack against Iraq.[442] Syria then voted for UN Resolution 1511 in October 2003, which affirmed "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, and [underscored], in that context, the temporary nature of the exercise by the Coalition Provisional Authority… of the specific responsibilities, authorities, and obligations under

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[438] "Serious about Syria", *The Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2004.

[439] "US Mulling Military Options against Syria, http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1302092/posts. (Accessed on 12/08/2011).

[440] Hinnebusch, 2004, op. cit, p. 15.

[441] Garry C. Gambill, "Syria's Failure in Iraq", *Middle East Bulletin* Vol. 5, No. 11, November 2003.

[442] "Governing Council Member: Iraq Will Stand with Syria", October 13, 2003, http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,99959,00.html (Accessed on 13/12/2011).

applicable international law".[443] With regard to the Governing Council, Bashar stated that "[w]e recognize the Governing Council as a fact in the field… As policy, we have no right to give them legitimacy; that it is an internal Iraqi matter. An Arab summit, the neighboring countries, or the U.N. are not entitled to give it legitimacy."[444] While declaring that it recognized the Governing Council as a fact, Syria openly received a delegation of Sunni groups who opposed the invasion and the Governing Council. Syria also supported the Shias demanding elections for the transition to self-rule.

Following the general election in December 2005, the Iraqi government took office on May 20, 2006 following approval by the members of the Iraqi National Assembly. The government succeeded the Iraqi Transitional Government. Syria welcomed the Iraqi government and it was announced in November 2006 that Iraq and Syria decided to resume diplomatic relations after twenty-five years of abeyance. Syria became a marginal player in the Iraqi scene. It established a strategy to cultivate relations with the key Iraqi political players across ethnic and sectarian lines. Syria exploited its links with the key figures in Iraqi politics. Iraq's Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had lived in Syria for 20 years, while Iraq's Kurdish President Jalal Talabani had lived several years in Syria and held a Syrian passport until 2004. It is also claimed that 17 of the 25 key leaders of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) had sought refuge in Syria during Saddam's regime.[445] Syria also established good relations with the Iraq's Sunni community. Damascus had fears about Kurdish separatism in Iraq. That is why it supported a unitary Iraq led by an authoritarian government.

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[443] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1511 (2003), http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/563/91/PDF/N0356391.pdf?OpenElement, (Accessed on 13/12/2011).
[444] Interview with Bashar al-Assad, Al-Jazeera, April 27, 2004.

[445] Mona Yacoubian, "Syria's Relations with Iraq", *USIPeace Briefing*, April 2007.

6.6.4. A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syrian Policy during the Iraqi War

6.6.4.1 The International Level

The international environment before and during the American invasion of Iraq has been discussed in detail in previous sections. Since the 9/11 attacks, the US military had become determined to safeguard national security and the American political leadership had adopted rhetoric of the "war on terror". The first target of the US on this war was Afghanistan, followed by Iraq. The invasion of Iraq created a feeling of insecurity in the international community, especially in the Middle East. Despite the turbulence in the international system due to the opposition of major powers to the American invasion, no bloc emerged to balance the US.

Given that the international system was hegemonic over the course of two wars and both of these reinforced the logic of supporting the United States, the question is why Syria did not cooperate with the US in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as it had during the 1991 Gulf War. The answer to this question is important to an understanding that structural factors are not adequate to explain a country's foreign policy decisions. The reasons for Bashar's harsh anti-American stance during the invasion have also been discussed at length. Neorealist theories of International Relations expect weak powers, insofar as they are rational actors, to bandwagon with a superior threatening power. Therefore, from a realist point of view, a rational Syrian regime should have bandwagoned in order to neutralize US hostility, since it did not have the ability to deter the US. In the analyses that compare the Gulf War period when Hafiz bandwagoned with the US, it is argued that Syria, on the way to reform under the leadership of Bashar, had more incentives to bandwagon than it had under his father. However, the situation during the US invasion of Iraq was entirely different.

In making a comparison between Syria's responses to 1991 Gulf War and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it is also necessary to examine the position of the international community. As oppose to the Gulf War, the international community was highly fragmented during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US tried to rally

an international support before the attack. The members of the United Nations Security Council did not authorize the March 19, 2003 attack on Iraq. Security Council passed Resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002, calling for new inspections in Iraq intended to find and eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The US began to seek a second UN resolution sought for a second UN resolution to declare Iraq in material breach of its obligation to disarm. However the France, Russia and China as the permanent members of the UN as well as a number of other members decided to give inspectors more time and the U.S. pulled its proposal on March 17.

Although the official public list of the United States' allies as of March 21, 2003 contained 31 countries, the members of the coalition have had very strong objections to the invasion at some level.[446] Britain and Japan provided the main international support for the US in the War in Iraq. The war also led to a fragmentation within the European Union. While, the member states including Britain, Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands supported the invasion France and Germany were the major opponents of the US-led military intervention against Iraq.

6.6.4.2 The Domestic Level

6.6.4.2.1 The Leader

The policies adapted by Bashar during the American invasion of Iraq have long been debated. This was an important test, and in the assessment of many commentators, he failed. His strategy was perceived as irrational, motivated by Arab nationalist and anti-Western feelings. He was accused of lacking experience, self-confidence, a functioning decision-making apparatus and experienced advisors. Although the leadership characteristics played a role, it is believed that the position of the international community contributed to the policies followed by Bashar during the US invasion of Iraq. The international community was highly fragmented during the US invasion of Iraq. The United Nations Security Council did not approve US'

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[446] Steve Schifferes, "US says 'coalition of willing' grows," BBC News, 21 March 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/2870487.stm, (Accessed on February 1, 2012).

invasion. The occupation has been officially condemned by 54 countries and worldwide huge protests were organized including millions of participants. Even some of the NATO allies strongly criticized the war. The invasion led to a deep rift in transatlantic relations. In such an international environment, it would be hard to expect Syria to ally with the US during the US invasion. Rather, Bashar tried to be benefited from the fragmented international environment in diversifying his ties with other countries, especially the members of the European Union opposing the invasion. Bashar became considerably successful in achieving this objective which is analyzed in the next pages in the analysis of the methods adopted by Bashar coping with the US policies.

Despite opposing the invasion and the denying the legitimacy of the new regime established in Iraq, over time, Bashar tried to find a way to accommodate the US to prevent being its "next target". Syria's vote in favor of UNSCR 1511, which affirmed the Governing Council's sovereignty in Iraq and the closure of Syria's four official border posts with it, along with the expulsion of several Iraqi senior officials due to American demands, could be seen as examples of the strategy of accommodation. While challenging the US, Syria also continued to send it messages of cooperation. In one interview, Bashar commented, "When our interests matched, the Americans have been good to us, and when the interests differed, they wanted us to mold ourselves to them, which we refused."[447] The Syrians always tried to maintain a dialogue with the Americans in this process in order to ensure their national interests. This ambivalence reflected Bashar's difficult position after the occupation of Iraq. While strongly opposing to the invasion, Bashar also tried not to defy UN legitimacy in order to rescue its interests in Iraq and to extract concessions on Syrian-US relations.

Hinnebusch asserts that "policy zigzags and paralysis" were indicative of incoherence in Syrian policy.[448] It was also argued that there was a conflict between the Syrian elites on how to deal with the US. However, the conflict did not turn into

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[447] "Bashar Al-Asad's Interview to Al-Safir", March 27, 2003.

[448] Hinnebusch (2004), op. cit, p. 10.

clear factions. The main divergence was said to have occurred between Bashar and Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa. While Bashar had been willing to make some concessions and to maintain a dialogue with Washington, some members of the "old guard" headed by Sharaa found little room to accommodate the US. The absence of a Syrian delegate in the voting for UNSC Resolution 1483 was also interpreted as having resulted from a dispute between Sharaa, who opposed the resolution as legitimizing the invasion, and Bashar, who did not want to put Syria outside the UN framework.[449]

Bashar tried to find a path between defiance of the US and cooperation during the American invasion of Iraq. In order to realize this objective, he first of all tried to show the US that he had enough "cards" to play to make its cooperation important. Syria had tried to play a spoiler role in Iraq and tolerated if not encouraged transit to Iraq and insurgent operations. However, Washington's accusations, for example that it was funneling insurgents and arms across its border into Iraq became the key issue of contention between the countries. This strategy also created some problems for Bashar over the course of time. With the possibility that just over its border a state would divide itself into three separate ethnic identities and that this could lead to a flow of refugees into Syria caused him concern. He then began to give his support to efforts that would stabilize Iraq rather than trigger further chaos.

Another strategy that Bashar followed in order to cope with the US during the war was to diversify his ties. He also took steps to strengthen Syria's position vis-à-vis the United States. Efforts were made to improve Syrian-Turkish relations, as the two countries shared an interest in containing Kurdish separatism in Iraq. Additionally, he made efforts to improve his country's relations with the European Union, both for economic support and to provide a political shield against US hostility. While some European countries had given their support to the American invasion, they did not follow the US in its policy against Syria. The European Commission had concluded that "[t]he policy of imposing sanctions on Syria is not useful".[450] However, Syria's

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[449] Ibid.

[450] Hinnebusch (2005), op. cit, p. 12.

relationship with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership negatively affected by this process. Although the European Union and Syria had reached an agreement at the end of 2003, some European governments wanted to make it conditional on Syria's adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The US had been successful in its policy of estranging Syria from Europe to a certain extent. Bashar tried to formulate denser economic and political relations with Russia, China and Iran.

6.6.4.2.2 Domestic Constraints

In terms of domestic considerations, in the Gulf War of 1991, Iraq was the aggressor against another Arab state; however, in this case, an Arab state was the victim of a foreign power. In the 1991, most of the countries in the region supported the liberation of Kuwait and participated in the American-led coalition. Syria's contribution to Kuwait was rewarded by countries around the region, alleviating its regional isolation. However, with its invasion of Iraq in 2003, even the US's long-term allies hesitated to grant it their open support, for fear of domestic public opinion.

To have participated in an alliance with the US in the 2003 Iraq War would have been in contradiction with the Arab nationalist values that were rooted in Syrian thinking. For the Syrian regime, in which this identity was strongly institutionalized, cooperation with the US in this case would have meant sacrificing domestic legitimacy. It is known that some half-a-million Syrians protested the war in Damascus.[451] Syria's Grand Mufti, Ahmad Kaftaru, urged Muslims throughout the world "to use all means and martyrdom operations to defeat the American, British and Zionist aggression on Iraq".[452] There was strong propaganda in the Syrian media against the US invasions, which described US actions as "genocide", "terror", and "war crimes", comparing President Bush to Hitler and American claims to those of

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[451451] Stalinsky and Carmelli, "The Syrian government", Oxford Business Group, "Online Briefing", March 31, 2003, cited in Hinnebusch, 2004, op. cit, p. 14.

[452] Ibid.

Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels.[453] Syrians of all ages, sects and classes shared a very strong dislike of Bush. Even the key opposition figures in Syria were against concessions to the US, and the regime was criticized over its vote for UNSCR 1441.[454] The war on Iraq was seen as a strategy to maintain Israel's national interest and to seize Iraq's oil. In such an atmosphere, the regime needed to make clear to its population that it would absolutely not participate in a military action against Iraq. Cobban asserts that the need to reverse Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1991 had given Hafiz an "Arab-liberationist" spin to his support for the American intervention. However, in 2003, such a spin seemed unavailable. She asserts that certain acts by Syria that violated Arab norms, such as the policy against the Palestinians in 1970 and 1976, had been taken without putting any spin on them, but that the situation now was different because public awareness was shaped by possession of satellite dishes and the Internet connections.[455]

6.6.4.2.3 Domestic Motivations

In terms of material benefits, while Hafiz had been given incentives to bandwagon with the United States in the Gulf War, including ending its isolation, removing it from US state-sponsored terrorism lists and the promise of a US peace effort, Bashar was only offered threats. During his visit to Syria after the fall of Baghdad, Secretary of State Colin Powell conveyed a long list of demands for regime behavioral change without offering anything in return.

However, because of the strong hatred for US policy in Arab public opinion, Bashar's defiance of the US helped to legitimize him. In that sense, he became successful. His behavior during the war granted him immediate political rewards in Syrian and inter-Arab opinion.

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[453] Ibid.

[454] Hinnebusch (2004), op. cit, p. 22.

[455] Cobban (2003), op. cit.

In reality, Bashar's defiance of Washington "[was] both a legitimacy asset and a security liability".[456] Although opposition against the US increased the regime's credibility at home, it was weakened against strong external threats. Defiance of US power had some consequences for Syria. Syria began to feel insecure, and was ill-prepared for the neo-con offensive against it. The US began a campaign of accusations against it including that it supported Iraqi resistance, had close ties with terrorist organizations and possessed weapons of mass destruction. As a part of Washington's revenge strategy, the US bombed the Syrian Trade Center in Baghdad; shut down the oil pipeline to Syria, which had been an important source of revenue; and sent continual messages to Syria that it would be its next target.

In addition to the increasing the US threat at its border, the invasion of Iraq had some domestic consequences for Syria. As is known, when Bashar came to power, he seemed to be decisive about introducing reforms and improving his country's relations with the outside world. He did not realize these goals, particularly those in the political and social realm. The American invasion of Iraq also became a pretext for postponing reform. Some opposition activists perceived the fall of the Iraqi regime as a catalyst for initiating change in Syria. They believed the regime could only respond to the American threat through democratic openings designed to mobilize the masses.[457] However, according to the regime, openings would be regarded by the US a sign of weakness. It thus opted instead to awaken Arab nationalist and anti-imperialist feelings among the masses, and thus to maintain domestic legitimacy by defying the US; that is, Bashar used the invasion as a cover for the deadlock in reform. As expected, the harsh attitude of the US towards Syria and the decision to apply sanctions led to its marginalization. The sanctions, which targeted Syria as whole, rather than the regime, hurt the Syrian private sector. This led to increasing hostility towards the US among the Syrian business community and among democracy activists.

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[456] Hinnebusch (2004), op. cit. p. 4.

[457] Hinnebusch (2004), op. cit, p. 22

6.7. Syrian Foreign Policy in Lebanon

Syria's role in Lebanon became another issue of contention between it and the West in the post-September 11 period. As mentioned in previous sections, Syria had been involved in Lebanon since its troops entered in 1976 during the Lebanese Civil War. Over a fifteen-year period it increased the number of its troops in Lebanon; political and intelligence services maintained a presence throughout the country and considerable number of Syrians moved there. The Ta'if Agreement, designed to end the decades-long civil war, recognized Syria's "special relationship" with Lebanon in 1989. The agreement also set a date for Syrian withdrawal two years later. In spite of this commitment to withdrawal, the administration of George H.W. Bush implicitly allowed Syria to "stabilize" its neighbor by maintaining its troops there.[458] This act was interpreted as a prize to Syria by the US for its involvement in the American-led Gulf War coalition. In 2003, however, the US, which had consistently perceived Syria as a force of stability in Lebanon, openly called on Damascus to withdraw its occupying army. As Rabil asserts, "It is hardly imaginable that Washington, which mediated the entrance of Syrian troops into Lebanon in 1976 and all but rewarded Lebanon to Syria as a prize for joining the US-led anti-Iraq coalition during the first Gulf War (1990–1991), would reverse course and become an advocate of a free Lebanon". [459] The international community followed US suit and called on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. The Lebanese also began to challenge Syrian hegemony, and an internal opposition against Syria arose with the 2000s. How, then, can we explain the external and the internal challenge that emerged against the Syrian presence in Lebanon in the 2000s?

First, Israel, whose withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 ended an eighteen-year occupation, influenced views about the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak described the withdrawal of Israeli forces as an achievement. Barak believed that by withdrawing, Israel relieved itself of "the Lebanon complex",

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[458]William Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble", *The Middle East Quarterly*, (Summer 2005), pp. 33–44.

[459] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 162.

also known as "the Lebanon syndrome".[460] Meanwhile, Hezbollah perceived Israeli withdrawal as a victory for the organization. The struggle against Israel had been the major reason for Hezbollah's establishment, making the organization a leading force in Lebanon. As Zisser suggests, Hezbollah managed what no other army or country had been able to do: to expel Israel from Arab territory without any concessions.[461] The implications of this for Syria were twofold. On the one hand, it reduced the costs of the Syrian occupation, since Syria sponsored Lebanese paramilitary groups against Israeli attacks in Lebanon. On the other hand, it removed Syria's most important bargaining chip against Israel.

Israeli withdrawal created an expectation among some Lebanese that Syria would also be forced to withdraw. A shift occurred within Lebanese public opinion; before Before the Israeli withdrawal, protesting the Israeli occupation was the only way to express their hatred over their country's loss of sovereignty to outsiders. Afterward, the target of that hatred became Syria. Anti-Syrian newspapers and Lebanese opposition figures made reference to United Nations Security Council 520, which called for the withdrawal of all non-Lebanese forces.[462]

Several factors contributed to the emergence of Lebanese opposition to Syrian authority. The first was Syria's involvement in Lebanese domestic politics. The special relationship between Lebanese politicians and their patron Syria had created disturbance among those who were against Syrian domination. It was known that pro-Syrian Lebanese politicians routinely visited Syria before making any major decision. In certain cases, the Prime Minister and most of the members of his cabinet have traveled the 110 kilometers to Damascus. Former President of Lebanon Ilyas al-Hirawi expressed his disturbance with the change in this relationship, saying, "We

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[460] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 181.

[461] Ibid, p. 182.
[462] Gary C. Gambill, "Is Syria Losing Control of Lebanon?", *Middle East Quarterly*, (Spring 2001), pp.41–49.

now disagree on the appointment of a doorman and go to Damascus to submit the problem to the brothers [there]".[463]

Certain acts by the Syrian government that violated the principle of Lebanese sovereignty also created disturbance among the Lebanese people. In March 1999, 26 polling stations were set up to allow Syrian workers living in Lebanon to ratify Hafiz's candidacy for a fifth term in office, and again in July 2000, to ratify Bashar's candidacy for presidency.[464] The occurrence of two anniversaries in 2000, possibly under pressure by Damascus, reinforced the opposition against Syria. First was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Lebanon's Civil War, and second was the tenth anniversary of Syria's invasion and occupation of East Beirut. The former was a reminder of the deaths of thousands of civilians and the second underscored Syrian domination over Lebanon[465]

The presence of hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers in Lebanon created fertile ground for opposition to Syrian authority, as it had had an important impact on the increasing unemployment rate in Lebanon in the 2000s. The Syrian workers were perceived by the Lebanese as stealing their livelihoods, and certain acts were realized against them.[466] An additional reason for resentment towards Syria was the decision to reduce customs on Syrian agricultural products taken by the government of Lebanon under Syrian pressure in 2000. This decision hurt local farmers deeply and led to protest. The Syrian policy of dumping produce and other goods in Lebanon created great losses for local farmers and businesses. All these acts had a devastating impact on economic conditions in Lebanon. There was public consensus on the economic costs of Syrian authority in Lebanon and this was expressed through protests and campaigns.[467]

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[463] Daniel Pipes, "We Don't Need Syria in Lebanon", *Middle East Quarterly*, (September 2000).

[464] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 186.

[465] Gambill (2003), op. cit.

[466] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 187

[467] Gambill (2003),op. cit.

Along with the Maronites, both Druze and Muslims joined this criticism against Syrian action and involvement in Lebanon. Previously, Muslim political and religious elites had not involved directly criticizing the Syrian occupation. At the beginning of the 2000s, former Muslim politicians and journalists became highly critical of Syria. Druze leader Walid Jumblatt criticized Syrian interference in Lebanese domestic politics. The Council of Maronite Bishops condemned the Syrian presence in September 2000.[468]

After his father's death, Bashar came to power amidst an atmosphere of growing criticism in Lebanon of the Syrian presence. Before his presidency, he had been responsible for the "Lebanese file"—for maintaining Syria's presence and control in Lebanon. He followed in his father's footsteps in his approach developing relations with the Lebanese notables. One of these was Tony Franjiyhya, grandson of the former president of Lebanon Sulayman Faranjiyya; with Talal Arslan, a prominent member of the Druze Arslan family perceived as a counterweight to the Junblatt family; and with the Sunni Miqati family, who became prominent after the Ta'if Agreement.[469] Different from Hafiz, Bashar maintained personal ties with Hasan Nasrallah, leader of the Hezbollah movement. Assad-the-father had never met with Nasrallah personally, but Assad-the-son met with him frequently and declared on many occasions that he perceived Nasrallah as a victorious hero. This special relationship increased Bashar's dependence on Hezbollah and its leaders.

Bashar adopted various strategies to deal with the increasing resentment among the Lebanese population. Knowing that the Syrian military presence was at the root of deteriorating relations between the two states, he began redeploying most of the Syrian forces from Beirut and other Lebanese cities. However, it was declared by the Syrian administration that the aim was redeployment and not a comprehensive withdrawal. In March 2002, Bashar realized his first visit to Beirut as president of Syria to attend the Arab summit to be held there. It was significant both because it was the first visit of a Syrian president to Beirut and because it was intended as a reconciliation message to Lebanon's Christians. However, this failed to stem the

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[468] Harris, op. cit.
[469] Zisser, (2007), op. cit, p. 184.

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growing criticism of its presence among Lebanese. Anti-Syrian criticism, especially among the Maronite community, increased. Maronites also brought the issue of the Syrian presence in Lebanon to the attention of the international community at a Maronite conference held in Los Angeles in June 2002. There, attendees called for Syria's withdrawal, which provoked a more aggressive response than in the past. Various methods of coercion were employed on those who provided forums for opposition activity. Dozens of former Lebanese military personnel were accused of spying for Israel and arrested.[470]

Although many Lebanese expected that the US and the international community would pressure Syrian to withdraw after the Israelis had left, the Clinton administration approved the Syrian occupation, calling on prominent Lebanese politicians and opinion-makers to allow the troops to remain.[471] Likewise, the US Secretary of State, during a meeting in Cairo with Syria's Foreign Minister on June 7, 2000, declared, "Syria has played a constructive role as far as Lebanon is concerned. We hope that they will continue to do so".[472] As opposition increased in Lebanon, Washington turned a blind eye. Secretary of State Colin Powell and other senior officials refused to meet Maronite Patriarch Sfeir, one of the main critics of the Syrian regime, during his visit to Washington in March 2001. All these acts were interpreted by Syria as a green light by the US to continue putting pressure on Lebanon.[473]

6.7.1. September 11 and Syrian Involvement in Lebanon

The September 11 attacks radically changed the US administration's perceptions relating to the Middle East. The US started a "war of terror" campaign against

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[470] Ibid, p. 192.

[471] Pipes (2000), op. cit.

[472] http://usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/peace/archives/2000/june/me0607b.html .(Accessed on February 07, 2012).

[473] Harris, op. cit.

terrorist organizations and states that harbored terrorist groups. While cooperating with the US on gathering information about the al-Qaeda organization and its members, Syria's continuing support for Hezbollah and Palestinian groups simultaneously caused relations to deteriorate. The first calls from the US administration for the Syrian regime to withdraw from Lebanon came in the post-September 11 period.

Lebanese lobbies also played a role in forcing the US to pressure Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. According to Rabil, Washington would not have taken its decisive position without the efforts of the Lebanese-American lobby.[474] Lebanese-American organizations are mainly composed of Maronites and members of other Christian denominations. After the Israeli withdrawal, these organizations intensified their "free-Lebanon" efforts in the US on the argument that there was no longer any need for Syrian troops to protect Lebanon and to support Lebanese activism. This new lobby mainly focused its efforts on Congress, and its efforts were integrated into the Bush administration's campaign for democracy in the Middle East. It is argued that Tony Haddad, head of the Lebanese-American Council for Democracy (LACD) played an important role in lobbying congressional members Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Eliot Engel, who in turn introduced the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act of 2003.[475]

In the wake of the Iraq War, the US increased its calls for Syrian withdrawal. This hardening of the US stance was first reflected in Colin Powell's speech on March 13, 2003, in which he declared that the "US wanted to see Syria withdraw its occupation army from Lebanon".[476] National Advisor Rice also called Syria to move beyond its partial redeployments and to end the occupation in Lebanon completely.[477] As the Iraq War got underway and relations between Syria and the US began to deteriorate,

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[474] Rabil (2006) op. cit, p. 164.

[475] Ibid, p. 166.

[476] Secretary Powell's testimony on Iraq, Europe before House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs, 13 March 2003, cited in Syria Under Bashar (I): Foreign Policy Challenges ICG Middle East Report No. 23, Amman, Brussels, 11 February 2004, p. 14.

[477] Ibid.

the US further increased its pressure for withdrawal. Syria's backing of Hezbollah and the close relationship between Bashar and Nasrallah had irritated the US, causing it to strengthen its position that Lebanese sovereignty must be restored. All these developments led to the re-introduction of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act by Congress. In December 2003, the House and Senate passed the bill, and in May 2004 President Bush signed it into law. Syria was called upon to end its occupation in Lebanon in order that it be able to restore its sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity; to deploy its army in the South, and to evict all terrorist and foreign forces, including Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.[478]

While the international community increased its attention to Syria's presence in Lebanon, a provocative action came from the Syrian administration. Damascus began to pressure for three-year extension of Lebanese President Emile Lahoud's term of office. A constitutional amendment and two-thirds majority vote in favor of the extension was required to take this decision, and to do so, Hariri and his parliamentary bloc's position was critical. Despite French and American calls for the election of a new president, Bashar summoned Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in August 2004 to change the constitution on Lahoud's behalf. Hariri's son Saad reported after his father's assassination that he had confided in them that Bashar had merely informed him of the decision to extend President Lahoud's term and threatened to "break Lebanon over your [Mr. Hariri's] head and Walid Jumblat's".[479]

At this stage, it is necessary to analyze how France and the US cooperated on Lebanon. Although, they had diverged on the issue of Iraq, their interests converged on Lebanon. A French-US understanding emerged on two main points with respect to Lebanon. The first was the necessity for a complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in accordance with the Ta'if Accord. The second was the election of a new

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[478] The text of the act can be found at http://www.coherentbabble.com/PublicLaws/HR1828PL108-175.pdf. (accessed on 12/06/2011).

[479] Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1595, 2005, October 21, 2005, paragraph 26. http://www.un.org/news/dh/docs/mehlisreport/ (accessed on 30/03/2012).

president in accordance with the constitutional mechanism in place, as opposed to amending the constitution for the purpose of extending Lahoud's term. Rabil asserts that the Lebanese lobbies in each of these countries played a crucial role in bringing about this joint action.[480] It is also known that French President Jacques Chirac had a negative perception of his Syrian counterpart. The tense relations between the two presidents go back to the early days of Bashar's presidency. Rizk argues that "Chirac tried to play the role of the young president's godfather, trying to orient him in his political choices, but the Syrian leader refused to be tutored. Ever since, their relations have become more or less tense".[481] In addition, Syria's continuing insistence that Lahoud's presidential term be extended affected embraced Chirac, who was a main associate of Hariri.

The international conjecture and the efforts of the "free-Lebanon lobby" brought France and the US together on the issue of Lebanon. A meeting held on June 5, 2004 in Paris between US President George W. Bush and French President Jacques Chirac highlighted some mutually held convictions between Washington and Paris with respect to Lebanon. In a joint press conference after the meeting at the Elysee Palace, Bush stated that the United Nations and France had agreed that "the people of Lebanon deserve to acquire the freedom to choose their future without the intervention of foreign forces." Chirac, in turn, said, "we have renewed our conviction that it is imperative that Lebanon's independence and sovereignty be guaranteed."[482] In order to internationalize the issue, the two countries sponsored a UNSC Resolution. At the same time, the Lebanese lobby was sustaining campaigns in most European capitals in order to promote approval of the Resolution. On September 2, 2004, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1559 with the support of nine members, while the other six abstained.[483] The resolution called for respecting Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political

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[480] Rabil (2006), op. cit, p. 167.
[481] Zeina Abu Rizk, "For Chirac, Lebanon's politics are personal", *The Daily Star*, June 15, 2004.

[482] Ibid.

[483] By a vote of 9 in favour (Angola, Benin, Chile, France, Germany, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom, United States) to none against, with 6 abstentions (Algeria, Brazil, China, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation), the Council adopted resolution 1559 (2004).

independence under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon, the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. Zisser reports that the final version was softer than the original; for example, the final version did not mention Syria by name or refer to the Syrian forces deployed in Lebanon as foreign forces, but the target was clear.[484] By passing the resolution, Syria was introduced explicitly as an occupying power and the channels for putting international pressure on Syria were opened.

The resolution shocked Syria and its Lebanese allies, who denounced it as interference in the internal affairs of a UN member state. Meanwhile, anti-Syrian forces within Lebanon, while they welcomed the resolution in principle, were uncomfortable with the demand for Hezbollah's disarmament. Hariri himself declared that Hezbollah and its weapons were an internal matter of Lebanon, not to be settled with external interference.[485]

Just one day after the resolution was approved; the Lebanese parliament approved a constitutional amendment. Of its 128 parliamentarians, 96 voted in favor of the amendment,29 voted against and 3 members did not attend the session. Druze leader Walid Jumblat's parliamentary bloc vetoed the constitutional amendment. Emile Lahoud's term was now to be extended, under exceptional terms, for another three years.

After the passing of UNSC Resolution 1559 and Lahoud's resultant extension of term, opposition to Syria's role in Lebanese politics grew stronger than ever. While the Syrian regime put pressure on anti-Syrian forces in Lebanon, especially the Druzes, Chirac welcomed Druze leader Jumblat in Paris. Some commentators suspected Syria was responsible for the attempted assassination of Minister of Economy and Trade Marwan Hamade, a close associate of Jumblat, as a reprisal

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[484] Zisser (2007), p. 193.
[485] David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, the Battleground of the Middle East*, (New York: Nation Books, 2010), p. 303.

against his parliamentary bloc's vote against Lahoud's extension.[486] Hariri resigned from his post on October 20, 2004 over fears his country would turn to bloodshed.

6.7.2. The Assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri

A few months after pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud's term was extended, Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri was assassinated in a car bombing on February 14, 2005. The Lebanese opposition pointed the finger of responsibility at Syria, claiming it had previously threatened to force him out of office. In reality, Hariri had previously cooperated with Damascus, although he had not been comfortable doing so. In spite of his constant conflict with Lahoud, Hariri and his parliamentary bloc had voted in favor of the constitutional amendment that made possible the extension of Lahoud's term. However, it is known that behind the scenes, he played a key role in the drafting of Resolution 1559 in collaboration with the American-French axis. Hariri was a billionaire with international contacts and broad popularity in Lebanon. He had very good ties with the Saudi royal family; the president of France, Jacques Chirac, and even the American administration. According to Zisser, "Syria had every reason to want him out of the way.[487]

After Hariri's resignation he preferred to remain behind the scenes, while Jumblatt took the public lead. He was preparing for the internationally monitored May 2005 parliamentary elections and had deployed his popularity and resources to rally Lebanese opposition against Syrian domination. It is claimed that Hariri was preparing for a Ukrainian-style election campaign and had bought large quantities of orange ribbon in Paris.[488] In reaction to Syria's maneuvers, like rediscovering clauses in the Ta'if Agreement in order to avoid the full implementation of Resolution 1559, Hariri directed a statement to the public on February 2, 2005, calling for the

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[486] Hirst, op. cit, p. 303.

[487] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 195.

[488] Harris, (2005), op. cit.

withdrawal of Syrian forces and intelligence services in Lebanon. After a mission to Damascus, U.N. special envoy Terje Roed-Larsen warned Hariri about a "very high risk for violence and assassinations" just four days before he was killed.[489]

Hariri's assassination caused considerable reaction both in Lebanon and abroad. The Lebanese opposition named Syria and its Lebanese allies responsible for the killing. Jumblatt, upon assuming leadership of the opposition movement, put the blame squarely on Syria. Meanwhile, the Sunni community, for the first time in the history of Lebanon, turned into a strong opposition group with hostile sentiments towards Syria. In fact, Sunnis, with the leadership of Hariri's son Saad, joined forces with Christians and Druzes to issue a joint declaration holding "the Lebanese… and Syrian authority responsible for this and other similar crimes", and called for the formation of a provisional government and the withdrawal of Syrian forces before the parliamentary elections of May 2005.[490] Hariri's funeral united all confessional groups, including Shias, Sunnis, Christians and Druzes, which had never been realized before.

After the funeral, political demonstrations continued with the participation of Sunnis, Christians and Druzes. Shias remained out of the demonstrations, which came to be known as the 'Independence *Intifada*' under the slogan 'Independence, Liberation and Sovereignty".[491] On the other hand, many Shias worried about the political atmosphere in Lebanon. It was known that there had been a bargain between Hezbollah and Syria for many years. Syria supported Hezbollah's "regional role" against Israel, and Hezbollah had maintained Syria's domination over Lebanon. Hezbollah organized a demonstration in Beirut on March 8, 2005. Nearly 500,000 demonstrators came together to show their support to Syria and to reject Western "interference". Hezbollah's leader Nasrallah warned the US military not to interfere in Lebanon, saying, "If the American fleet lands in Lebanon, it will be defeated."[492]

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[489] "U.N. Envoy Says He Warned Hariri", *CNN World*, February 15, 2005.
[490] Hirst, op. cit, p. 306.

[491] Ibid.

[492] "Huge Beirut Protest Backs Syria", in *BBC News*, March 8, 2005.

As a reaction to Hezbollah's demonstration, on March 14, 2005, the opposition organized the largest demonstration in Lebanon's history, bringing one million people together in protest against the presence of Syrian forces in Lebanon. The two demonstrations revealed the sectarian divide in Lebanon. While the 8 March demonstration had been completely composed of Shias, the 14 March demonstration brought Christians, Sunnis and Druze together. "14 March" became the name of the anti-Syrian political coalition in Lebanon, while Hezbollah and its allies identified themselves as the "8 March alliance".

Although the opposition had been an indigenous affair, internal to Lebanon, over the course of time it became internationalized. The movement changed its name to the "Cedar Revolution". The Bush administration gave its support to the opposition and told it that "the American people, millions across the earth, are on your side".[493] The United States did not directly accuse Syria of being responsible for the assassination of Hariri; however, both the US and the French governments viewed Hariri's murder as an indictment of the Syrian regime. The Arab world followed the Franco-American stand, albeit reluctantly. The European Union, despite its previous cooperative strategy towards Syria, refused to sign a Euro-Mediterranean association agreement insisting on full withdrawal from Lebanon and free parliamentary elections.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced on February 18 that he was sending a team to Beriut on a fact-finding mission to gather information about Hariri's assassination. The report concluded, "The Government of Syria bears primary responsibility for the political tension that preceded the assassination of former Prime Minister Mr. Hariri".[494] The US and France brought the assassination to the attention of the Security Council in order to bring the killers to justice. The Security Council responded quickly and an international investigation was called to look into Hariri's

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[493] Hirst, op. cit, p. 307.

[494] "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Lebanon Inquiring into the Causes, Circumstances and Consequences of the Assasination of Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, 25 February–24 March 2005", in Peter Fitzgerald, Head of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission in Lebanon, New York, March 24, 2005. http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/79CD8AAA858FDD2D85256FD500536047 (accessed on 20/04/2012)

murder. The international community also insisted that Syria leave Lebanon immediately.

In his first meeting with the Western press since the murder, Bashar rejected the accusations of Syria's involvement: "…if we really killed Hariri, that would be political suicide for us. Beyond ethical and human principles, the question is, who benefits from the crime? Certainly, not Syria".[495] In a speech delivered in parliament on March 5, 2005, although Bashar gave signals of withdrawal from Lebanon, he criticized Resolution 1559 sharply. He argued that the passing of the resolution had created serious problems in Lebanon in terms of its implementation, and in the absence of an appropriate mechanism.[496] After Hariri's killing, Bashar was clear that there was no option other than withdrawal, but made contradictory statements on the issue. An interview with Joe Klein passed with the following exchange:

> I asked again when Syrian troops would withdraw, and he responded, "Out completely?" I said yes. "It should be very soon and maybe in the next few months, not after that," he said. "I can't give you the technical answer. The point is, the next few months."
>
> Two days later, however, the Syrian government issued a correction: the President hadn't really been talking about a total withdrawal but about compliance with the 1989 Taif Agreement ending Lebanon's long civil war.[497]

However, Syria could not hold out any longer, and withdrawal was ultimately completed on April 26, 2005, bringing the nearly three decade-long Syrian military presence in Lebanon to an end. It was difficult for Syria to give up its control in Lebanon, which had come with military, economic and political benefits, but withdrawal was not as an end of the Syrian role in Lebanon. Rather, it tried to

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[495] "An Interview with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad", *La Repubblica*, February 28, 2005. http://www.presidentassad.net/INTERVIEWS/ASSAD_LA_REPUBBLICA_INTERVISTA.htm (accessed on 20/04/2012).

[496] "President Assad Parliament Speech", March 5, 2005, http://www.presidentassad.net/SPEECHES/ASSAD_2005_PARLIAMENT_SPEECH.htm (Accessed on 20/03/2012).

[497] Joe Klein, "Appointment in Damascus", *Time*, March 06, 2005.

maintain a certain amount of influence through its cards and through its allies in Lebanon, mainly Hezbollah.

In spite of its efforts to maintain influence in Lebanon, developments were disadvantageous for Syria. First, it suffered from the victory of the anti-Syrian coalition in the May 2005 elections. The "14 March" coalition won 72 seats out of 128, tipping the balance in the Lebanese parliament in favor of anti-Syrian opposition. Then, in October, chief UN investigator Detlev Mehlis issued the first interim report of the International Investigation Commission. It had determined that "[t]here is probable cause to believe that the decision to assassinate former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri could not have been taken without the approval of top-ranked Syrian security officials and could not have been further organized without the collusion of their counterparts in the Lebanese security services".[498] The official Mehlis Report made no specific mention of anyone in the Syrian government being responsible for the assassination. However, it was argued that a previous editing of the report stated that "Maher al-Assad, Assef Shawkat, Hassan Khalil, Bahjat Suleyman and Jamil al-Sayyed" were behind the killing, to be replaced in the official version by "senior Lebanese and Syrian officials". After the release of the first report, the term of the investigation was extended to December 15, 2005; a second report with further findings was released on December 10, 2005. In the second report, Detlev Mehlis upheld his original thesis, indicating that "[t]he Commission has not found any significant evidence that alters the conclusion of probable cause which is set out in the previous report concerning the involvement of top-ranked Syrian and Lebanese officials" in the killing of Hariri. In addition, it is stated that Syria had failed to cooperate with the international commission of inquiry.[499] This report opened the door for further Security Council Resolutions. With the UNSCR 1644, the Council demanded that Syria respond to the inquiry of the United Nations International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC) into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and extended the investigation until

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[498] Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission established pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1595, 2005, 21 October 2005, paragraph 123.

[499] Second Report of the Independent Investigation Commision, 10 December 2005.

June 15, 2006. The Security Council then issued a new resolution calling on Syria to respond positively to Lebanon's request to delineate borders and establish diplomatic relations, with the purpose of asserting Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Bashar rejected the accusations of Syrian involvement in Hariri's killing and the findings of the Mehlis report. He declared that "we are completely innocent. Syria has nothing to do with this crime".[500] After the first Mehlis report was released, Bashar argued that the witnesses had confessed and that he had been forced to a give a statement supporting a one-sided investigation. He added that "[t]his makes us feel worried over where this investigation is heading… what we expect, in the first place, is to see a professional interrogation and at the same time to see the Investigation Commission reconsider past mistakes in order to arrive at a just and objective report".[501]

6.7.3. A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syria's Lebanon Policy

In order to understand Syrian foreign policy with regard to Lebanon, it is necessary to analyze the international and domestic levels. It is argued that the pressures of the international system and the perceptions of Bashar and his domestic concerns did not match, and as a result Syria was ultimately forced to withdraw from Lebanon.

6.7.3.1. The International Level

As explained in previous sections, the US had supported the Syrian presence in Lebanon for many years. However, the September 11 attacks radically changed the US approach with regard to the Middle East. According to Hirst, getting Syria to withdraw from Lebanon became central to its post-9/11 design.[502] The roots of the

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[500] President Assad CNN Interview, October 12, 2005.

[501] President Assad *France 3 Interview*, December 5, 2005.

[502] Hirst, op. cit, p. 297.

struggle to reclaim Lebanon from Syrian occupation flourished in reaction to Damascus' continuing links with groups deemed to be "terrorists" by the US, Hezbollah in particular. The Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 and the growing opposition among the Lebanese people to Syria facilitated this pressure. The US Congress took certain steps to make this happen, beginning with Bush's signing of SALSRA in December 2003.

It is important to note that an international consensus emerged against Syria. For the first time, the United States, European countries and most Arab states were united on the need to exert pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. Until recently all these countries preferred to maintain the *status quo* in Lebanon.[503] In September 2004, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559 jointly sponsored by the United States and France. The resolution called on "all remaining forces to withdraw from Lebanon" and for Hezbollah's armed faction to be dismantled. The international pressure increased with Syria's insistence on the extension of Emile Lahoud's presidential term and then Hariri's assassination. In brief, the international environment shaped after the 9/11 attacks forced Syria to withdraw from Lebanon.

6.7.3.2. The Domestic Level

As neoclassical realism suggests, in addition to international system structures and constraints on the foreign policy choices of states, it is also necessary to analyze how systemic pressures are translated at the domestic level. In Syria's policy toward Lebanon in the aftermath of 9/11, it is seen that although the international system forced Syria's withdrawal, Syria had been resisting these calls because of Bashar's perceptions, the historical and ideological importance of Lebanon for Syria and the material interests it had in Lebanon.

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[503] Ma'oz (2005), op. cit, p. 7.

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6.7.3.2.1. The Leader's Perceptions

It is argued by most scholars that Bashar misread the international atmosphere on the issue of Lebanon. According to Harris, "international pressure for Syrian withdrawal resulted from a cascading series of Syrian miscalculations". Although Bashar realized that it is necessary to cooperate with Washington vis-à-vis al-Qaeda, he failed to understand that Washington's war on terrorism included Hezbollah. Hezbollah was a serious subject for Washington, seen as responsible for the October 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 US marines.[504] In a similar way, Zisser talks about a series of Syrian efforts leading to its expulsion from Lebanon. First was its decision to force an extension of Lebanese Prime Minister Emile Lahoud's term of office. Syria was insistent on this issue in the face of international pressure, and in response UNSCR 1559 was passed. The timing of the parliamentary vote, which took place just one day later, was interpreted as a challenge to UNSCR 1559. Bashar denied this, saying that the vote "has no connection to that, and is unconnected to the extension of President Lahoud's term". Hariri's assassination in February 2005 led to another crisis. Although it had not proven that the Syrian regime was directly responsible for the murder, this was the general belief, especially following the revelation that Hariri had been threatened by Bashar on the issue of the presidential extension.

Harris characterizes Bashar as not having weighed the strategic implications of defying the United States and France. If it had selected anyone other than Lahoud as Lebanese president, it might easily have prevented trouble.[505] Syria made a strategic mistake when it compared the extension of President Elias al-Hirawi's term in 1995, which had been supported by the US, with that of Lahoud's term in 2004. As Bashar put it, "They [the Americans] have said publicly that they are against the extension [of Lahoud's term]. If they are against the extension in principle, why did these countries and the same people agree to 1995 extension, [yet] oppose it in 2004—

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[504] Harris, op. cit.

[505] Ibid.

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even though the section [of the constitution] is exactly the same section?".[506] Bashar's words revealed that he did not fully appreciate the differences in the international context between 2004 and 1995.

Bashar seemed confident about Syria's role in Lebanon, which had long been supported by the US and Europe. He failed to understand that perceptions had changed due to the changes in the international environment. Bashar continued to overestimate Syria's strategic weight in Lebanon, believing it to be immune to US and French retaliation. In an interview after Hariri's assassination, he commented that sooner or later, Washington would realize how much it needed his help.[507]

During this process, Bashar made no attempts to cooperate with the US, France or the Lebanese opposition. To the contrary, his confidence led him to adopt a harsh attitude. As the US increased its pressure on Syria, rather than retreating, he adopted an offensive position, labeling the Bush administration "extremists".[508] According to Harris, "the US occupation of Iraq confirmed to the Syrians the judiciousness of their policy". During the occupation of Iraq, Syria once again realized that its continued occupation in Lebanon provided it with strategic depth and a diplomatic and political card.[509]

Reacting to the international community's attitude towards Syria on the passing of UNSCR 1559, Bashar not only denied any connection to the extension of President Lahoud's term, but asserted that Syria's goals included "the internationalization of the internal situation in Lebanon—which means Lebanon's return to the atmosphere of the 1980s and a blow to the existing relationship between Syria and Lebanon".[510] He rejected using the term "withdrawal", asserting instead that "Lebanon has no

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[506] Syrian President Bashar al-Asad's speech at the Conference of Syrian Expatriates, Damascus, October 8, 2004. MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 799, October 14, 2004.
[507] An Interview with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, in *La Repubblica,* February, 28, 2005.
[508] Hirst, op. cit, p. 300.
[509] Harris, op. cit.
[510] Syrian President Bashar al-Asad's speech at the Conference of Syrian Expatriates, Damascus, October 8, 2004, MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 799, October 14, 2004.

border with the US, so [redeployment] cannot be an American demand. Thus, it is an Israeli demand".[511]

6.7.3.2.2. Domestic Constraints

In order to understand Syria's Lebanon policy, it is also necessary to understand the importance of Lebanon for Syria, which served as a domestic constraint. Historically and ideologically, Syria perceived Lebanon as a detached part of "Greater Syria", and thus a part of Syria's natural sphere of influence. This is why Syria has never had formal diplomatic relations with Beirut.[512]

Syrian troops moved into Lebanon in 1976 after the outbreak of the civil war and remained there until 2005. Through the 1989 Ta'if Agreement Syria's role as "stabilizer" in Lebanon was implicitly recognized by the international community. In coordinating Lebanese policy, the Syrian regime emphasized Lebanon's Arab identity and followed a policy of "one people in two states". Command of Lebanon was a matter of Syrian regional prestige and fundamental to the Syrian regime's internal staying power.[513] As Harris argued before the withdrawal, "For Bashar, the loss of command in Beirut may mark a psychological tipping point toward overall erosion of his authority".[514] In that sense, fearing the loss of his authority in Lebanon and the regional prestige, Bashar long defied the appeals of the international community on this issue. After the passage of UNSCR 1559, which called for "all remaining forces to withdraw", Damascus declared that it would not comply with the resolution, claiming its troops in Lebanon were not "foreign".[515] Withdrawal was a painful process for Syria, but eventually it was left with no more options. Afterward,

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[511] Syrian President Al-Assad Interviewed by Al-Hayat, *MEMRI*, Special Dispatch No. 589, October 15, 2003.

[512] Ma'oz (2005), op. cit, p. 7.

[513] Harris, op. cit, p. 1.

[514] Ibid.

[515] Ma'oz (2005), op. cit, p. 7.

Bashar emphasized Syria's continuing influence in Lebanon, noting that "foreign policy is guided by the principle of protecting pan-Arab interests by holding onto Arab identity".[516] He also declared that "Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon does not mean the absence of Syria's role. Syria's strength and its role in Lebanon are not dependent on the presence of its forces in Lebanon".[517]

6.7.3.2.3. Domestic Motivations

In addition to the ideological and historical importance of Lebanon for Syria, it is also necessary to analyze Syrian state interests in Lebanon as a third domestic variable. State interests are important for understanding why Syria had so long resisted to the demands of the international community to withdraw.

First, Syria had vital security interests in Lebanon. The Biqa Valley in particular was regarded as a strategic asset in the event of a war with Israel.[518] Through controlling Lebanon, Syria was able to keep Israeli influence out of Lebanon, and additionally to prevent Lebanon from becoming a base for the Syrian opposition elements that had sometimes made it a safe haven. The Hezbollah-Syrian alliance also became strategic for Damascus. According to Hinnebusch, Hezbollah's ability to stand up against Israel was an important part of the Israeli-Syrian power balance.[519]

The command of Lebanon also provided Syria with political benefits, especially given the tacit approval of the Syrian presence by the international community. Lebanon obediently followed Damascus in the areas of foreign policy and security, and fully supported its policies in both the inter-Arab and international arenas. This

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[516] Rabil, 2006, op. cit, p. 174.

[517] *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2005.

[518] Ma'oz (2005), op. cit, p. 7.

[519] Hinnebusch (2009), op. cit, p. 20.

situation gave Syria a second voice in Arab councils and in peace negotiations.[520] Lebanon functioned as a strategic card in any peace negotiations with Israel. Syria linked the Lebanese and Syrian tracks in peace negotiations. It had the ability to veto a separate Lebanese peace with Israel. According to Zisser, an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement could have been achieved relatively easily since there were no territorial demands between the two sides. However, any separate peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel became impossible because of the linkage between Lebanese and Syrian tracks.[521] Bashar also benefited from his close personal ties with Hezbollah's leader Nasrallah, who had won enormous prestige in the Arab realm by standing up to Israel.

Economic benefits were another dimension of this dynamic. There is no actual data concerning Syrian revenue from Lebanon. In 2005, Jibran Tueni, editor of Beirut's daily newspaper *An-Nahar* estimated an annual ten billion US dollar intake from Lebanon, equalling 47 percent of Syria's gross domestic product.[522] While Tueni's estimate was overly generous, the figure was certainly in the billions of dollars, which can be subdivided into direct and indirect profits. First, we can talk about regime patronage networks under the heading of indirect profits, which were obtained by Syrian army officers and politicians from commissions and payments. Direct profits included smuggling and the cultivation and trade of drugs.[523] The Biqa Valley was known for producing high quality hashish. It is argued that it became a major global narcotics producer under Syrian occupation. According to a 1992 report by the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Crime and Criminal Justice, it was estimated that the Syrian military earned between $300 million and $1 billion from narcotics production and trafficking in Lebanon.[524]

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[520] Pipes (2000), op. cit, p. 1.

[521] Zisser, 2007, op. cit, p. 177.

[522]"One of Hariri's Legacies—A Massive Debt for Lebanon", *Inter Press Service*, March 10, 2005, cited in Gambill, 2005, op. cit, p. 1.

[523] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 177–178.

[524] Gambill (2005), op. cit.

Lebanon also provided job opportunities for Syrian workers, which became a remedy for the major unemployment problem in Syria. The flow of remittances from Syrian workers in Lebanon has been estimated to range from \$2–\$4 billion annually,[525] which is a significant contribution to the Syrian economy. The actual data regarding the number of Syrian workers in Lebanon is not clear. Estimates varied from 600,000 to 1.5 million in 2000–2001.[526] Since Syria's gross domestic product was smaller than that of Lebanon, workers were willing to accept lower wages and without insurance. As unemployment rates soared in Lebanon, the presence of the Syrian workers created disturbance among the Lebanese.

In brief, the Syrian regime's consolidation of power in Lebanon directly challenged US President George W. Bush's Middle East vision. The Syrian government underestimated the seriousness of US policy with regard to Lebanon. Washington had also grown increasingly disturbed with Syria's links to Hezbollah. The international community, as well, opposed the Syrian role in Lebanon, which resulted in the passage of resolutions calling for its withdrawal. Although Syria understood that there was no way of securing its presence in Lebanon, it was determined to defy the calls, and took provocative action to this effect. However, this strategy had considerable risks. The Lebanon issue brought an end to Syria's reconciliation with the West and led to its isolation both internationally and regionally.

6.8. Syria and the "Axis of Resistance": Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas

The alliance between Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas is labeled by some scholars as the "axis of refusal" or "axis of resistance". Their general stance is one of opposition against perceived imperialism in the Middle East, which was increasingly rooted in the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.[527] Although portrayed as a marginal

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[525] Ibid.

[526] Zisser (2007), op. cit, p. 178.

[527] Rola El Husseini, "Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 5, 2010, p. 803.

fringe alliance supporting international terrorism in certain areas of the Western world, Iran and Syria are sovereign states, Hamas is the elected government of the Palestinian Authority and Hezbollah holds 12 of the 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament and two ministerial portfolios.

Contrary to the general assumption that religion is behind this alliance, the driving force uniting these actors is politics. Iran and Hezbollah are governed by Shia extremists, Hamas is the Palestinian branch of Muslim Brotherhood—a Sunni movement, and Syria is led by a secular Ba'ath regime. The relationship between these four actors bridges the Shia/Sunni divide and is one of broad ideological affinity. This relationship is based on a rejection of Israeli and US policies in the region and attempts to reshape the Middle East in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. What these four actors exemplify is "a new form of international anti-imperialism", as Halliday suggests.[528] According to Satloff, the quartet of Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah is a more cohesive unit than the Middle East Quartet including US, the UN, the EU and Russia.[529]

Syria's links with Hamas and Hezbollah were subject to criticism by the US, especially in the aftermath of September 11, when Syria came under scrutiny for supporting and harboring terrorist organizations. Syria has been considered a state sponsor of terrorism by the US since 1979. The US State Department classified Hamas as a terrorist organization in 1993. Hamas had its headquarters in Damascus until January 2012.[530] Although the Syrian government claims these headquarters were used only as a political and informational hub, and that the actions of these groups "represent legitimate resistance activity as distinguished from terrorism", the US charged that Syria provided ongoing training, weapons, a safe haven, and

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[528] Fred Halliday, "The Left and the Jihad", *Open Democracy*, September 8, 2006.

[529] Robert Satloff, "The Rogues Strike Back", *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 11, No. 42, July 24, 2006.

[530] Hamas leaders, including chief of the politburo Khaled Meshal, left the organization's longtime headquarters in Damascus due to increasing tensions in Syria as the regime of Bashar Assad clashed with opposition forces.

logistical support to Hamas.[531] Meanwhile, the State Department officially designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Hezbollah had committed terrorist attacks against the US and other Western targets including a series of kidnappings of Westerners in Lebanon in the 1980s, as well as the bombing of the US Marine barracks and the US Embassy in Beirut in 1983. According to the State Department, Syria granted Hezbollah political, diplomatic and organizational aid, and that Iranian military aid to Hezbollah was passed through Syria, particularly when Syria effectively occupied and controlled Lebanon from 1990 and 2005.

In order to understand the dynamics of the "axis of resistance", an analysis of Syria's relations with each of its members is crucial.

6.8.1. Syria and Iran

In Middle Eastern politics, the alliance between Syria and Iran has had significant impact since 1979. It has transcended fundamental differences dividing two countries like Arab vs. Persian, secular vs. theocratic, Sunni-majority vs. Shia-majority.[532] The alliance was born out of common goals and enemies, namely Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and American and Israeli policy. Both are also supportive of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine.

The alliance between Syria and Iran has been labeled an "alliance of convenience", "unnatural" and "unlikely". As Robert Malley from the International Crisis Group observes, "…there's one very secular and one very religious regime. One is Arab, one is Persian. One has negotiated with Israel the other one has had no dealings with Israel. And yet, they have found common interests and enemies, and that's what's made this relationship intriguing and extremely very solid".[533] Much speculation has

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[531] Holy Fltecher, "State Sponsor: Syria", *Council on Foreign Relations,* February 2008.

[532] Mona Yacoubian, "Syria's Alliance with Iran", *United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Briefing*, May 2007.

[533] Deborah Amos, "Iran and Syria: An Alliance Shaped by Mutual Foes", NPR, August 22, 2007.

been made about the Iran-Syrian relationship since its inception. It has been argued that the alliance, which was formed against a common enemy, should have dissolved after the US invasion of Iraq. Although the Iraqi threat has waned, the alliance endured. Instead, the September 11 attacks and the wars following it altered the political landscape of the Middle East and resulted in a strengthening of the Iranian-Syrian alliance. It is also argued that if Syria signs a peace treaty with Israel, the *raison d'étre* of the alliance will disappear.[534] These approaches just regard the partnership as the result of geopolitical realities. Confounding speculation, the alliance has endured. There has been much discussion about the rationale behind the cooperation. The motive can be described as a combination of ideological alignment and common strategic goals.

At first sight, an ideological link cannot be found in the Syrian-Iranian partnership among their ethnic, religious and governmental structures. According to Gelbart, the partnership is counterintuitive because Iran is an Islamic theocracy while Syria is a secular pan-Arab regime.[535] However, Goodarzi asserts that despite the common view that the alliance between Syria and Iran would be a short-term cooperation, their shared perceptions sustain the partnership.[536] Ideologically, they also overlap in their "anti-Zionist" and "anti-imperialist" notions. Anti-Zionism as a cornerstone of both regimes is especially displayed through their vocal support of the Palestinian cause, using "anti-Zionist" and "anti-imperialist" rhetoric in their declarations. Some commenters perceive religion as another motive for the partnership. Although the majority of the Syrian population is Sunni, the ruling Assad family is Alawi, which is a branch of the Shia sect. According to that view, the Assad regime and Iran have n affinity for one another, and have a mutual objective of restraining the power of the Sunni community in the region. The Shia connection may have strengthened the partnership but was not its impetus. In fact, the Assad regime is opposed to basing a regime on any sect of Islam. In addition, the status of the Alawi sub-sect is a matter

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[534] Tony Badran, "The Syria-Iran Alliance", *Focus Quarterly*, (Spring 2009).

[535] Jonathan Gelbart, "The Iran-Syria Axis: A Critical Investigation", *Stanford Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Fall 2010), p. 39.

[536] Goodarzi, op. cit, p. 135.

of dispute. Although they label themselves as belonging to a branch of Shia Islam, conservative Shias do not consider them as belonging to the Shia community.

Second, common strategic goals prompted the two countries to join forces geopolitically. They cooperated on most key regional issues, including the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), the Lebanon War (1982 and 2006), the Gulf War (1991), the Iranian Nuclear Crisis (since 2003)[537] and the Syrian Uprising (since 2011). According to some authors, the military cooperation between Syria and Iran resembles the US-Japan alliance.[538] However Syria and Iran have never signed a formal military treaty. In the absence of a formal military agreement, which is the main condition for the establishment of a "formal alliance", Sun proposes the term "quasi-alliance" to define Syrian-Iranian relations, to refer to an informal security arrangement.[539]

Third, the fact that each needed the other in order to survive is another dimension of the relationship. Both regimes, except during the period of Syria's cooperation with the West between 1990 and 2000, have been isolated internationally. Both struggle with foreign and domestic demands for change. By standing together, they had a better chance for survival. In addition, the partnership serves as a benefactor for pursuing their strategies and goals. For Syria, Iran is a politically influential partner in the region helping it to pursue the objectives of reacquiring the Golan Heights and preserving its influence in Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Syrian alliance provides Iran with a path to the Arab world and to become a key regional player in the Middle East. The connection between the two countries also made it possible for Iran to spread its influence to Lebanese Shias.

After defining the parameters of Syria-Iran relations, the evolution and development of the alliance from a historical perspective is also necessary. The historical analysis

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[537] Degang Sun, "Brothers Indeed: Syria-Iran Quasi-alliance Revisited", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* (in Asia), Vol. 3, No. 2, (2009), pp. 67–80.

[538] Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, op. cit, Goodarzi, op. cit.

[539] Sun, op. cit.

of the alliance benefits from Goodarzi's periodization. His analysis of the alliance during the 20th century is elaborated here.

In the period between 1979 and 1982, the foundations of the Syrian-Iranian alliance were laid. Before 1979, relations were hostile because of the two countries' diverging ideologies. Iran under Shah Reza Pahlavi closely associated himself with the Western camp in the Cold War configuration, and had good relations with the United States as well as Israel. Meanwhile, Syria was allied with the Soviet Union and pursuing an anti-Western and anti-Israeli policy. The antagonism between the two countries disappeared with the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Syria was the first Arab country to recognize the Iranian Islamic Republic. Later, it took the side of Iran in the Iran-Iraq War. During the war, which lasted until 1988, Syria provided Iran with significant diplomatic and military support.

The second event that increased bilateral cooperation between Syria and Iran was the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel. Both Iran and Syria began to send significant support to Lebanese Shia war efforts. As Lebanese allies, Syria and Iran dealt devastating blows, including the assassination of President Beshar Gemayel, bombings of the Israeli military headquarters, the US Embassy in West Beirut and a US Marine.[540] Finally, the US withdrew in 1984 without completing its mission, and Israel partially withdrew its forces in 1985. Apart from ideological cooperation, it was the first time Syria and Iran had cooperated militarily, which was a defining moment in the relationship.

In the late 1980s tensions between the two countries increased, and this can be described as the most problematic phase of the partnership. Although cooperating in the war against mutual opponents, Syria's proxy Amal and Iranian-backed Hezbollah engaged in two wars against each other at the end of the 1980s. Syria backed secular group Amal and supported the multi-confessional system in Lebanon, while Iran backed Hezbollah, which was more religiously inspired, and supported greater power

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[540] Goodarzi, op. cit.

for the Muslim population in Lebanese politics, especially the Shias.[541] Despite, conflicting views, Syria and Iran reached an understanding on Lebanon that ended the confrontation between the two sides.

In the period between 1988 and 1991, the common issue for the partners was again Iraq. The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein revealed to the allies that his regime must be checked and contained. Much speculation had been made at the end of the Iran-Iraq War about the Syrian-Iranian relationship. It was argued that the rationale between the two states had lost its meaning and would therefore dissolve. However, Iraq once became again a threat to Iran and Iraq. During the 1990–1991 Gulf War, Syria participated in the US-led coalition against Iraq while Iran remained neutral. Their divergent positions during the Kuwait crisis were interpreted as the demise of the partnership; instead, they took one step further by institutionalizing their relationship in the form of a higher cooperation committee in November 1990.[542]

After the end of the Cold War, when the United States became the dominant power in the international system, this partnership became increasingly important. Both countries tried to adapt to the "new world order" and flirted with the US on certain occasions. It was during this period that Syria cooperated with international efforts in response to the Kuwait crisis and its aftermath, and participated in the US-initiated peace efforts. While not cooperating directly with the US as Syria did, Iran sent positive signals at the end of the 1990s under the leadership of reformist President Mohammed Khatami, who proposed to overthrow the "wall of mistrust" between Iran and the US. During this period, Syria aligned with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to form the so-called "Arab triangle" as a part of a strategy of diversifying its ties in the post-Cold War era. Iran was alarmed by the permanent deployment of Egyptian and Syrian troops in the Persian Gulf, and this created a tension in the Iranian-Syrian alliance. However, in the long run, Iran also benefited from this situation, as it kept Saddam Hussein under control and broke through its regional and international

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[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid, p. 289.

isolation. On the other hand, in spite of its alliance with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Syria continued to rely on Iran to know the limits of the "Arab triangle".[543] Iran and Syria cooperated in arming and supporting Hezbollah and Hamas, and influencing the events in Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

The September 11 attacks and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed strengthened the Syrian-Iranian partnership. The toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime following the 2003 invasion prompted ambivalent reactions in Iran and Syria. While both welcomed the ouster of a hostile regime in Iraq, they felt threatened by subsequent developments. They were concerned in particular with the US military presence in Iraq and felt whether they would become the next targets of Bush's "war on terror". Their partnership became vital to a challenge of US power and to shaping newly emerging Iraqi politics. Both were isolated internationally for their continued support for terrorism at the time, and Iran was subjected to criticism and sanction because of its nuclear program while Syria was attacked over its involvement in Lebanese politics and implicated in the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri. Under intense international pressure, the two countries were united under the banners of "anti-Americanism" and "anti-Zionism".[544]

After the 2006 Lebanon War ended, the idea of engaging Syria began to take hold with the Iraq Study Group Report (also known as the Baker-Hamilton Report), which assessed the situation in Iraq and the US-led Iraq War, as well as making US state policy recommendations. The report advised the Bush administration to engage both Iran and Syria constructively.[545] Prominent Democrats in the US Senate also emphasized engaging Syria and Iran, including Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Joe Biden. However, engagement with Iran was not embraced because of the continued nuclear crisis and Iran's newly elected President Ahmadinejad's harsh anti-American and the anti-Israeli rhetoric. On the other hand, engagement with

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[543] Ibid, pp. 290–292.
[544] Gelbart, op. cit, p. 39.

[545] "Restarting Israeli-Syrian Peace Negotiations", International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 63, 10 April 2007, p. 7.

Syria remained on the table, and the idea of detaching Syria from Iran gained ground. For example, according to a 2006 International Crisis Group report, "peace negotiations between Israel and Syria would profoundly alter the regional atmosphere", and following the peace deal, "[Syria's] relationships with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran inevitably would change".[546]

Despite arguments about the durability of the Iranian-Syrian alliance, the partnership has endured thus far. As turmoil in Syria due to domestic opposition against the Assad regime continues, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has declared he would do "all in its power to support this country" and praised Bashar's handling of the uprising.[547] The argument that the only way the Iranian-Syrian partnership would collapse is through the regime change gained has acceptance in the recent years. As long as Bashar and Ahmadinejad remain in power, the alliance would likely endure.

6.8.2 Syria and Hezbollah

Hezbollah has a paradoxical position; while the organization is a legitimate political actor in Lebanon it is regarded as a terrorist organization by the US.[548] Although it has always been perceived as the "client" or "proxy" of Syria and Iran, in recent years, the organization has emerged as a more independent player in Lebanese and in Middle East politics.[549] Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 and Hezbollah's victory against Israel in the summer of 2006 have contributed to that process.

Hezbollah grew out of Harakat al-Mahrumin (The Movement of the Deprived), which was established in 1974 by an Iranian cleric named Musa al-Sadr. After the

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[546] The Iraq Study Group Report, December 6, 2006.
http://www.bakerinstitute.org/publications/iraqstudygroup_findings.pdf (accessed on 05/05/2012).

[547] " Iran Praises Syria for Its Handling of Uprising", *Reuters*, March 27, 2012.

[548] Husseini, op. cit, p. 803

[549] Emile El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship", *The Washington Quarterly,* Vol. 30, No. 2, (Spring 2007), pp. 35–52.

start of the civil war in Lebanon, a group of militia separated from the movement known as Amal to resist the Israeli occupation; this group formed the nucleus of Hezbollah.[550] Iran, rather than Syria, had an important role in Hezbollah's birth. Syria contributed to the foundation process by allowing Iranian Pasdaran (members of the Revolutionary Guard) to enter Lebanon for organizational, logistical and operational support to its guerilla operations.[551] Most Hezbollah clerics were educated in Shi'ite seminaries in Najaf, Iraq, and embraced the Ayatollah Khomeini's concept of the just juriconsult (*al-wali al-faqih*). In its 1986 manifesto, the leadership expressed their loyalty to Khomeini and the goal of establishing an Islamic state.[552]

Following the Israeli invasion and the deployment of the multinational force composed of US and European troops, Syria's position in Lebanon weakened. Syria used Hezbollah as a way back into Lebanon. To that end, it facilitated Hezbollah's asymmetrical war against Israel and the organization's efforts to expel the multinational force. However, on some occasions, Syria prevented Hezbollah from taking certain actions, especially during the group's campaign of kidnapping Westerners in Lebanon. On certain occasions, the Syrians or their allies in Amal clashed directly with Hezbollah. Three Hezbollah members and two Syrian soldiers were killed in May 1986 during an attempt to rescue hostages from the Shaykh 'Abdallah Barracks.[553] In a disastrous campaign launched by Amal against rival Druze and Palestinian forces in West Beirut, Syrian troops killed 23 Hezbollah members.[554] Amal-Hezbollah clashes continued during 1988 and Amal managed to expel Hezbollah from south of Lebanon.

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[550] Husseini, op. cit, p. 806.

[551] Hokayem, op. cit, p. 36.

[552] Gary C. Gambill and Ziad K. Abdelnour, "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (February 2002).

[553] Abbas William Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No.1, (Winter 2008), p. 39.

[554] Gambill and Abdelnour, op. cit.

As the Lebanese Civil War came to an end, relations between Syria and Hezbollah were reconciled. The 1989 Ta'if Accords ended the civil war and established Syrian dominance in Lebanon. The decline in Iranian ideological domination over Hezbollah following the death of Khomeini in 1989 contributed to the accommodation between Syria and Hezbollah. Hezbollah's spiritual leader Muhammad Hussein Fadlalllah did not feel obedience towards Khomeini's successor Ayatollah Khameini.[555] Hezbollah's political leadership abandoned the goal of establishing an Islamic state, which was a turning point in the movement's evolution. The post-war strategy became to maximize its influence in Lebanon, and this has been interpreted as the "Lebanonization of Hezbollah". To that end, in October 1989, it decided to abide by the multi-confessional system designed by the Ta'if Accords. After this decision, Hezbollah has made an effort to transform itself into a political party. The issue of participation in legislative elections caused debate within the organization. Some members opposed to the legitimacy of Hezbollah's political participation in elections based on the argument that the multi-confessional-system designed by the Ta'if Accords kept Shias out of the offices of president and prime minister and allocated equal numbers of parliamentary seats to Christians and Muslims.[556] Despite this, it did ultimately decide to participate in all legislative and municipal elections.

After Madrid Peace Progress negotiations were initiated, Hafiz relied on Hezbollah as a bargaining card vis-à-vis Israel, leaving Lebanon dependent on Syria. El-Hokayem recounts that "there was an informal understanding that once peace between Syria and Israel was signed, a treaty between Israel and Lebanon would follow, providing a framework for Hezbollah's disarmament and the integration of its fighters into Lebanon's regular fighters".[557] Syria adopted the official position

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[555] Ibid.

[556] Ibid.

[557] El-Hokayem, op. cit, p. 38.

that Hezbollah was a legitimate actor in Lebanon, but did not discuss its future at the negotiation table with Israel in the case of a Lebanese-Israeli peace understanding.[558]

Between 1992 and 2000, Hezbollah maintained a war of attrition against Israel, during which a broad consensus emerged among the Lebanese people to support its resistance movements. Israeli operations during "Operation Grapes of Wrath" in 1996, which included the massacre of UN refugees in Qana, united all factions of the Lebanese community, including Christians and Muslims, in a nationalist resistance front.[559] This situation bolstered Hezbollah's organizational power and consolidated it as an autonomous political player in Lebanon. Its military successes were also an important asset in Syria's negotiations with Israel.[560]

According to El-Hokayem, the change in Syrian leadership from Hafiz to Bashar marked a turning point in Syria-Hezbollah relations.[561] The succession also coincided with the unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000, after which a dispute arose over Sheeba Farms. While Lebanon and Syria claimed the area as Lebanese, Israel declared it to be part of the Golan Heights. In the discussion over Hezbollah's strategy in the post-withdrawal period, it was argued on the one hand that withdrawal would create a crisis within the organization since its main role was to resist Israeli occupation; that is, that Hezbollah would solely focus on Lebanese politics.[562] However, the dispute over Sheeba Farms and Hezbollah's rejection of new boundary lines reinforced the organization's posture of resistance. While less frequent than the attacks during the occupation, Hezbollah attacks against Israeli forces (and vice versa) continued in the post-withdrawal period.[563]

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[558] Ibid.

[559] Husseini, op. cit, pp. 807–808.

[560] El-Hokayem, op. cit, p. 38.

[561] Ibid, p. 41.

[562] Husseini, op. cit, p. 808.

[563] Gambill and Abdelnour, op. cit.

The youth and inexperience of Bashar was a relevant issue with regard to his strategy towards Lebanon after Israeli withdrawal. Hafiz, although he used Hezbollah as a card, chose to approach the organization and its leaders with caution. His successor closely associated himself with the organization and developed a close personal relationship with its leader. This is most vividly illustrated the posters of Hafiz, Bashar and Nasrallah plastered across Syria and Lebanon since 2000.[564] Some observers attribute Bashar's closeness with Hezbollah to naiveté. This understanding depends on the argument that Hezbollah is first and foremost an Iranian proxy rather than a Syrian one.[565] Other scholars argue that his "love affair" with the organization was the product of rational calculation. El-Hokayem argues that Bashar, lacking legitimacy at home and around the region, relied heavily on Hezbollah's popularity and reputation for anti-Israeli and anti-US opposition to boost his own regime's credibility in the face of domestic and the regional crises.[566]

Syria apparently benefited from its partnership with Hezbollah after 2004. Following the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 on September 2, 2004, which called on all foreign forces to leave Lebanon and for the disarmament of Hezbollah, and then the assassination of Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005, Syria began to heavily rely on Hezbollah. Hezbollah organized a rally in Beirut on March 8, 2005 to support Syria, which was under domestic and international pressure. At the rally, Nasrallah openly supported Syria, declaring, "no one force Syria out of Lebanon".[567] Following the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, pro-Syrian figures circled around the 8 March alliance and competed against the anti-Syrian 14 March alliance in the next elections.[568]

The summer war of 2006, which was initiated by Hezbollah against Israel with the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, reinforced both Hezbollah's and Syria's positions.

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[564] El-Hokayem, op. cit, p. 42.

[565] Gambill and Abdelnour, op. cit, p. 8.

[566] El Hokayem, op. cit, p. 42.

[567] Samii, op. cit, p. 46.

[568] The 8 March coalition has been the ruling coalition since January 25, 2011.

Although Syria was not directly involved in the war, Israel and the US alleged the involvement of both Iran and Syria in the conflict, which lasted almost six weeks. Syrian and Iranian officials openly supported Hezbollah; Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki and Syrian Vice President al-Sharaa issued a joint statement condemning Israel and expressing their solidarity with Hezbollah.[569] The conflict ended with a United Nations-brokered ceasefire on August 14, 2006. Hezbollah declared victory.

The war strengthened Hezbollah's position within Lebanon—most Lebanese had sided with it in the conflict. Husseini notes, for example, that debate over Hezbollah's disarmament and criticism over its existence temporarily ceased during this period.[570] Similarly, el-Hokayem asserts that "the war validated the need to preserve Hezbollah as a militia to defend Lebanon".[571] Hezbollah had shown itself to be the only force capable of confronting Israel, and its popularity extended beyond Lebanon. Its resistance was regarded as a "Divine Victory" in the eyes of Muslims. In a speech after the war, Nasrallah "characterized his movement as a "spearhead of the [Islamic] umma" and described the conflict as "surpassing Lebanon… it is the conflict of the umma"".[572] The perception of Hezbollah's victory imbued the Arab community with considerable confidence. Hezbollah had not just survived against Israel, it had countermanded the myth of its invincibility. According to Hirst, "[the war was] a double achievement for Hezbollah, a military one against the Israelis, a moral, political and psychological one against virtually all the Arab regimes but especially against the moderates".[573]

The war also reinforced Syria's position; the regime perceived the victory as its own. Bashar, in a speech to the Syrian Journalists Union in Damascus on August 15, 2006, labeled Hezbollah's resistance against Israel the "new paradigm of Arab nationalist

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[569] Samii, op. cit, p. 50.

[570] Husseini, op. cit, p. 808.

[571] El-Hoakyem, op. cit, p. 46.

[572] Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "Hezbollah's Apocalypse Now", *The Washington Post*, July 23, 2006.
[573] Hirst, op. cit, p. 378.

struggle against a weakened Israel".[574] He also called Arab states that criticized Hezbollah during the war "half-men".[575] The speech negatively impacted relations between Syria and the "moderate" Arab states. According to el-Hokayem, the war also provided Syria an opportunity to remind the international community of the pacifying role it had played in Lebanon since 1990.[576]

Another view that took hold, however, was that Hezbollah's rise had come at Syria's expense.[577] According to this line of thinking, the organization had acquired a prestige and confidence after the 2006 war that made it a more autonomous actor, moving beyond protecting Syrian interests. It was even argued that "Syria is more pro-Hezbollah than Hezbollah is pro-Syria".[578]

Although Hezbollah had acquired this degree of autonomy vis-à-vis Iran and Syria, the Syria-Iran-Hezbollah axis remained intact. Even when the Obama administration's expressed a desire to engage with Syria on the condition that it broke off ties with Hezbollah, it stood by the organization. The uprising against the regime that began in 2011 has been another challenge for Hezbollah-Syrian relations, but Hezbollah remains firmly in support of its ally, believing "Syria is the resistance camp's gate to the Arab world".[579] Hezbollah officials believe that Bashar's regime has a wide base of support and will survive. The regime's survival is also important for Hezbollah because of the personal relationship between Nasrallah and Bashar and the political and military support the organization gives the regime.

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[574] Robert G. Rabil," Has Hezbollah's Rise Come at Syria's Expense?", *Middle East Quarterly*, (Fall 2007), pp. 43–51

[575] Paul Rogers, "Lebanon: The War after the War", *Open Democracy*, 11 October 2006, http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict/lebanon_war_3992.jsp (Accessed on 16/05/2012).

[576] El-Hokayem, op. cit, p. 47.
[577] Rabil (2007), op. cit.

[578] El-Hokayem, op. cit, p. 36.

[579] Randa Slim, "Hezbollah's Most Serious Challenge", *Foreign Policy,* May 2, 2012.

6.8.3. Syria and Hamas

Syrian relations with Palestinian Islamic organizations have been problematic because of the regime's policy towards its fundamentalists. The state's brutal repression of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in 1982 had been met with harsh criticism in Palestine. The chairman of the Higher Islamic Council in Jerusalem even declared that killing Hafiz was the duty of all Muslims.[580] Until the mid-1990s, the two most important state sponsors of Hamas were Iran and Jordan. Even though Iran is neither a Sunni nor an Arab state, supporting the Palestinian cause has been an important issue for it since the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Iranian support to the Palestinians is generally understood as a source of its hostility towards Israel and its main ally, the United States.[581] In October 1992, a Hamas delegation that visited Iran received assurances that it would be provided an annual subsidy of $30 million, along with weapons and training at the Pasdaran (the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution) facilities.[582] Jordan also provided Hamas certain benefits. King Hussein established good relations with Palestinian Islamic organizations as a way to counter the PLO and allowed Hamas to establish its main headquarters in Amman. After Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel and developed relations with the Palestinian Authority, Hamas' activities in Jordan gradually subsided.

Cooperation between Syria and Hamas began after the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993. Hafiz invited Hamas to join the Palestinian National Salvation Front, a Syrian-sponsored Palestinian rejectionist group established in 1984. Hafiz's rapprochement with Hamas could be interpreted as a reaction to the PLO's bilateral peace talks with Israel in Oslo and Madrid. A new era of relations began with the visit of a Hamas delegation to Syria in June 1994. Operational headquarters for the Qassam Brigades were established in Damascus with the help of Syrian military intelligence, and by 1995 Damascus had become the center of

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[580] Gary C. Gambill, "Sponsoring Terrorism: Syria and Hamas", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 10, (October 2002).

[581] "Hamas's Hezbollah Connection", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue No. 1085, February 16–22, 2011.

[582] Gambill, (2002), op. cit.

Hamas.[583] Syria also made it possible for Hamas to establish links with Hezbollah, providing it with access to Hezbollah camps. Hundreds of Hamas recruits were trained by Hezbollah at these camps.[584]

In addition to military and logistical aid, Syria also gave Hamas political support. Hafiz refrained from publicly condemning Hamas' suicide bombings. The Syrian regime perceived Hamas as a "legitimate resistance movement against the Israeli occupation".[585] However, with American pressure on Syria to stop terrorist groups from operating on its soil, Vice President Khaddam met with Palestinian extremists and urged them to adopt peaceful measures in their opposition to the peace process. After the breakdown of talks and the beginning of the second *intifada* in September 2000, Hamas launched its operations. It is argued that Syrian sponsorship of Hamas increased its operational capacity during the *intifada.* According to Israeli sources, most of the deadliest attacks perpetrated by Hamas have been linked to Damascus.[586] The Syrian regime publicly characterized Hamas attacks in Israel as "martyrdom operations". It is also argued that during the second *intifada*, coordination between Syrian military intelligence and Hamas leaders was on the rise.

In its "war of terror" campaign after the September 11 attacks, the US once again put pressure on Syria to cede its support to Hamas. During Colin Powell's visit in Damascus in May 2003, Bashar promised to close down Hamas' offices and to constrain its activities. A key demand Powell presented to Bashar was the expulsion of the leaders of the 10 Damascus-based Palestinian organizations, especially Khaled Meshaal, chairman of Hamas' Politburo. Indeed, only the "media offices of Hamas" were closed down, while senior Hamas leaders remained in Syria.

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[583] Ibid.

[584] Ibid.

[585] Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, (New York: Nations Books, 2007), p. 145.

[586] Gambill (2002), op. cit.

In January 2006, Hamas won a decisive majority in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, defeating the Fatah Party. In March 2007 a national unity government headed by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas was formed. This situation transformed Hamas from a "terrorist organization harbored by Damascus to a legitimate movement."[587] Syria welcomed Hamas' election victory and the newly formed Palestinian government headed by Haniya. It also continued its cooperation with the "internal leadership" of Hamas in the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, the "external leadership" of Hamas was headed by Khaled Mashal in Damascus. A US intelligence report states that "the real focus of Hamas power is in Damascus, where Khaled Mashal operates under Syrian aegis, and not in the PA with Ismail Haniya. It is Khaled Mashal who dictates Hamas terrorist policy in the PA, even if he does consult with the "internal" leadership".[588]

Since the Syrian regime depends on a secular and nationalist ideology, Hamas would be regarded as an unlikely ally. However, the rift between Syria and the Palestinian Authority caused by the latter's signing of the Declaration of Principles with Israel increased cooperation between Syria and Hamas. This cooperation provided both sides certain benefits. For Hamas, Syrian sponsorship had an enormous impact on the operational capabilities of the organization. Damascus had become its operational headquarters and a transit point for the transfer of external funds, weapons. After being expelled from Jordan in 1999, the movement's external leadership shifted to Damascus, where Syrian support strengthened its position vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

In an analysis of its policy towards Hamas, it could be argued that the Hamas connection provided Syria with certain political and domestic advantages. Given Israeli military superiority, Syria tried to put pressure on Israel through its support of Hamas. It also tried to maintain its Palestinian card in peace negotiations with Israel. Ehud Ya'ari, the Arab affairs correspondent for Israel's Chanel 1 News, stated that

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[587] Ibrahim Hamidi, "Was Syria Right to Hail Hamas' Victory?", *The Daily Star*, March 20, 2006.

[588] "Syria as strategic support for Hamas", *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies* (C.S.S.), July 5, 2006.

"Assad is telling us: Look, I hold the strings of terror in Lebanon—Hezbollah—as well as the strings of terror in the West Bank. Give me more, talk to me differently".[589] Hamas was a strategic asset in Syria's struggle to regain the Golan Heights in its negotiations with Israel.[590] Through controlling Hamas, Syria prevented any chance for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement that was not incorporated into the Syrian track. In terms of domestic public opinion, supporting the Palestinian resistance movement provided credibility at home. The Assad regime's legitimacy is rooted in its support for "Arab nationalism", which is closely linked with opposition to Israel. In that sense, supporting the Palestinian cause increased its popularity both in the Arab world and at home. Relations with Hamas became more crucial due to the shifts in regional and domestic power after 2003.[591]

The relationship between Hamas and Syria has begun change with the start of domestic opposition against the Bashar regime in 2011. During a Friday prayer in al-Azhar Mosque in Egypt, Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniya gave the first indication that it might off its relations with Syria, expressing open support for the Syrian opposition: "I salute all people of the Arab Spring, or Islamic winter, and I salute the Syrian people who seek freedom, democracy and reform."[592] Hamas then decided to abandon its external headquarters in Damascus and its leaders decamped to Egypt and Qatar. The decision to leave Syria and to break off its connection with the regime led to the argument that the "axis of resistance", composed of Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, has started to fray.[593] At this point, rapprochement between Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Gulf states began to be observed, which led to speculation that a Sunni alliance was on the rise, aimed at reducing Shia

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[589] *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 August 2002.

[590] Sebastian Harnisch, Magdalena Kirchner, "Neoclassical Realism and State Sponsorship of Terrorism: The Case of Syria", contribution to the panel "The Foreign Policies of Renegade States", at the 6th ECPR General Conference in Reykjavik, August 25–27, 2011, p. 26.

[591] Ibid, p. 29.

[592] "In Break, Hamas Supports Syrian Opposition", *The New York Times*, February 24, 2012.

[593] Scott Peterson, "Syrian Crisis Causes Iran-led "Axis of Resistance to Fray", in *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 16, 2012.

power in the region. By the end of the first year of the Arab uprisings, Hamas' reversal on Syria was a good example of the changes in longstanding Middle East power balances. Transitions are under way in the region that make outcomes even more unpredictable.

6.8.4 The Underlying Rationale of the "Axis of Resistance" for Syria

In the absence of any conventional hard balancing in the post-Cold War era, the most observable examples of balancing behavior have been displayed by Iran, Syria and their non-state partners Hezbollah and Hamas. According to Hansen, with the majority of states refraining from balancing the single superpower, the engagement of these states in balancing behavior could be labeled a "misperception" or "misconduct".[594]

As with Hansen, many scholars have perceived the behavior of the members of the "axis of resistance" as "irrational". The behavior of Syria in particular, which is seen as the most "moderate" member of the alliance, and which has cooperated with the US and the other Western states on certain occasions, has been discussed at length. Its alliance with Iran and its support for Hamas and Hezbollah baffle analysts. It is argued that if Syria severs its links with the other members of the "axis of resistance", it could have felt much more secure against Israel, improved its regional and international position and acquired economic and financial aid. Why, then, does it continue to cooperate with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas? And is this begavior irrational?

The alliance between Syria and the other members of the "axis of resistance" could be regarded as a response to the international and domestic security dilemmas Syria is facing. In terms of international security problems, it is known that Syria has been under constant pressure from Western countries for its support of terrorist groups and violation of international law. The invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003, rhetorical

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[594] Hansen, op. cit, p. 29.

threats against the US application of harsher sanctions and its forced withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 raised Syria's security concerns. The "axis of resistance" thus becomes a vital tool by which it can counter the US threat and to prevent foreign penetration into the Middle East.

The "axis of resistance" also has a domestic dimension for Syria. Despite the Shia/Sunni and Arab/Persian divide, its members are united by their strong feelings of "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism". In Syria, the Assad regime's legitimacy was rooted in its opposition to Israel and its "Arab nationalist credentials".[595] Bashar relied more on "anti-Zionism" than his father, and due to the international and the regional conjuncture, "anti-imperialism" rather than "Arab nationalism" gained ascendancy during his period. Bashar relied more on Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran than his father. This is related to the fact that as Bashar was ascending to power, he lacked the experience and domestic base of his father, which left him little room for political maneuver. Pursuing pro-American policies would have been more costly for him in terms of domestic politics, especially in the absence of any positive incentives in the post-September 11 period. Through the struggle against Israel and the US he countered domestic opposition against his presidency. At the same time, by aligning himself with the members of the "axis of resistance" he strengthened his domestic credentials.

It is accepted in this work that domestic considerations and the external security environment are not entirely independent from each other. When Syria's domestic and international security dilemmas are both taken into account, its relationship with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas can be better understood. The insecure international and regional environment, especially since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the domestic challenges that each member of the axis faces can be listed as the driving forces behind this alliance.

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[595] Harnisch and Kischner, op. cit, p. 14.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, Syrian foreign policy during two periods of international change—namely the end of the Cold War and the post-9/11 period—have been analyzed. Upon drawing this comparison, this work has reached several conclusions.

First, it has been established that Syria has been affected by the changes in the international environment, and that these changes have forced the country to reconsider existing policies and to develop new strategies. This was first manifested with the end of the Cold War. When it lost the support of the Soviet Union, its superpower patron, it transformed its "rejectionist" foreign policy, making a historic decision to join in the American led anti-Iraq coalition in the 1990–1991 Gulf War. This was the first case study examined in the analysis. Its subsequent decision to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference, convened through the initiative of the US in 1991, is the second case study. Hafiz, who had previously tried to obstruct any direct, unconditional and bilateral negotiations with Israel, surprised observers by modifying his position with regard to the peace process. These two foreign policy decisions have been interpreted as Syria's successful adaptation to the post-Cold War "new world order" characterized by American hegemony.

Relations between Syria and the West, especially the US, began to deteriorate at the beginning of the 2000s. The stalemate in the peace process, the death of Hafiz, the election of "hawkish" Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Israel and the rise of the neo-cons through the election of George W. Bush as US president in 2000 were perceived as reasons for this situation. However, the September 11 attacks on the US homeland had a deep impact on Syrian-US relations. Although Syria cooperated with US efforts to gather information about al-Qaeda and its members, the US did not find

this sufficient and demanded it cut off relations with all organizations deemed "terrorist" by the US. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 had devastating effects on the Syrian-US relations; this situation is analyzed as the third case study. During the invasion, Syria was the subject of harsh criticism by the US administration, including that it was providing shelter for Iraqi insurgents and helping them to smuggle military equipment into the country. Bashar's close relations with Hezbollah's leader Nasrallah also created a problem for the US. The tense atmosphere between Syria and the US during the Iraq War led to the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA), which called on Syria to halt its support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, and stop its development of weapons of mass destruction. The act also envisaged a ban on US exports to Syria and a prohibition on US business investments in the country. Defying the hegemon during the American invasion of Iraq created serious security problems for Syria, and its behavior was labeled "irrational".

Syria's Lebanon policy in the post-9/11 period became another issue of contention with the West, is analyzed as the fourth case study. EU member states and most Arab states, which had diverged from the US as it prepared to invade Iraq, cooperated with it in pressuring Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. Despite the international consensus displayed in UNSCR 1559, Syria reacted with provocative steps like pressuring Lebanese politicians to extend the presidential term of pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud. Bashar's decisions with regard to the Lebanon in that period were interpreted as "misconduct" and based on "misperception". It thus becomes necessary to analyze how the pressures of the international system were translated by Bashar. At the domestic level, due to the historical, symbolic, strategic and the economic importance of Lebanon to Syria, Bashar resisted withdrawal. After Rafiq Hariri's assassination, however, Syria was forced to pull out.

Second, with regard to the main research question asked at the beginning of this study: "Why did Syria respond differently to the end of the Cold War and the "war on terror" processes initiated by the US after September 11 even though the external constraints were similar?", this study has arrived at the conclusion that it was

interaction between the international and domestic environments that determined Syrian foreign policy behavior during each of these international changes. It is obvious that the changes in the international system had an important impact on Syria's foreign policy orientation. However it is argued that decisions taken by the Syrian regime in the aftermath of the Cold War, which contracted its previous standing, were the result of this interaction between the external and internal environments. The way Hafiz perceived the international environment, his successful method of passing over domestic constraints and the benefits satisfying state interests through cooperation made it possible for Syria to cooperate with the West, especially the US, within the changing international system. In other words, in the aftermath of the Cold War, an overlap of the international and domestic environments was observable in the Syrian context. On the other hand, it was conflict between the international and domestic environments in the post-September 11 period that led Syria to defy the US, resulting in its international isolation. The operative question is, "Why did Syria not cooperate with the US in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as it had during the Gulf War in 1991?" In both cases, there was strong pressure for Syria to bandwagon with the US in the absence any great power balancing. However, it is argued in this work that to compare these two periods just at international level is insufficient. The perceptions of Bashar with regard to the international environment, the domestic constraints and the absence of any positive incentives to cooperate with the US, determined Syria's position during the Iraq War of 2003.

Third, it is concluded that Syria was motivated by state interests as well as security concerns in forming its alliances. Neoclassical realist Schweller's balance of interest theory is a useful tool in explaining Syria's alliance behavior. It is argued that Syria's cooperative attitude towards the West during the 1990–1991 Gulf War and the Madrid Peace Conference were motivated by incentives satisfying its national interests in addition to its security concerns. In a similar way, the absence of any such incentives from the US in the post-September environment was a determining factor in Syria's strategy of defying the hegemon.

Syria's relations with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas, known as the "axis of resistance" or "axis of refusal", is crucial to an understanding of Syria's alignment behavior. Syria has had bilateral relations with each member of the "axis of resistance" for several years. However, their general stance against perceived imperialism in the Middle East became increasingly rooted in the wake of 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Neither religion nor ethnic identity was behind this alliance; rather, it was forged by a shared ideology based on "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism", which overcame the Shia/Sunni and Arab/Persian divide. In the post-September 11 period, Syria's relations with Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah have been the subject of criticism by the Western powers, mainly the US. Syria was perceived as the most "moderate" member of this axis, and some members of the US administration put forward the "flip Syria" to detach it from the other members of the axis. However, the strategy didn't work. The reasons behind Syria's alliance with the other members of the "axis of resistance" have been long discussed; the reasons can also be summarized as being a response to international and the domestic challenges. The alliance provided shelter for Syria against US rhetoric, sanctions and international pressure with regard to its involvement in Lebanon. It also provided Bashar with a certain domestic legitimacy, which he had lacked upon initially coming to power.

The neoclassical realist framework facilitated reaching the conclusions of this study. While accepting that a state's relative power or its place in the anarchic international system is a determining factor, neoclassical realism suggests also looking at domestic-level variables in order to understand a state's behavior. These domestic intervening variables act as medium between independent (relative power) and dependent (foreign policy outcome) variables. Rather than dealing with "power" as an abstract concept, neoclassical realism incorporates the policy makers' perceptions with regard to that power. It also displays how leaders are constrained by their domestic environments. Through applying the neoclassical realist model, it becomes possible to argue that although the international system structured and constrained the policy choices of Syria, its leaders' perceptions, domestic political constraints and considerations about state interests were domestic intervening variables that also

guided Syrian foreign policy through the aforementioned international changes, and these have been analyzed within the framework of this study.

It is important to note the merits and the weaknesses of neoclassical realism. In this work, neoclassical realism is used as a model. The aim is to test the premises of neoclassical realist theory on Syrian foreign policy during international changes. Three merits for adopting a neoclassical realist framework to study Syrian foreign policy during international changes can be provided. First, neoclassical realism provides a useful framework for the study of foreign policy in the wake of international changes through taking the international system as the independent variable. Second, neoclassical realism allows for a model incorporating distribution of power with domestic-level variables. These unit-level variables-leader's perceptions, domestic constraints and domestic motivations- are helpful in understanding how the systemic pressures are translated in the domestic level. Thus, neoclassical realism shows that we should find evidence of domestic politics "when states do not respond ideally to structural situations".[596] Third, in neorealism, "national interest" is an abstract concept common to all states. However, through focusing on the leader, neoclassical realism suggests that leaders choose foreign policies with regard to their domestic considerations rather than some abstract "national interest".[597] For the weaknesses of the theory, neoclassical realism has been criticized because of being reductionist, lacking theoretical rigor and predictive power and repudiating the core assumptions of realism in general by some of the scholars.[598] It is also argued that neoclassical realists cannot be considered as realists as long as they deal with domestic politics.[599] I believe that neoclassical realism successfully integrates domestic politics into structural conditions without sacrificing the central arguments of realism. However, it is accepted that the analysis of the domestic dimension is remained limited which could be considered as the weakness

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[596] Rathbun, op.cit, p.296.

[597] Balkan Devleni, Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crises", in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison, Patrick James (eds), *Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009), p.160.

[598] Lobell et al, op.cit, p.21-23.

[599] Rathbun, op.cit, p.297.

of this study. In accordance with the foreign policy model of neoclassical realist foreign policy model, leader's perceptions about the international system and their domestic considerations including the internal constraints and motivations are taken as domestic intervening variables. Although the role of the state institutions, bureaucrats and the elites in foreign policy of Syria is analyzed in the second chapter titled "Foreign Policy Formulation in Syria", they are not taken as unit-level variables in the analysis of Syrian foreign policy in the case studies. In addition, there isn't any in-depth discussion about state-society relations. Leader's need for public support is taken as the most important parameter defining state-society relations. In brief, the unit-level variables analyzed in the work cannot explain all the dimensions of Syrian domestic politics.

Today, Bashar's regime is facing strong domestic opposition. The Syrian uprising is part of the wider Arab Spring, which began with Tunisia in December 2010. Since March 2011, Bashar has been facing an unprecedented challenge to his authority. The regime has used violent measures to suppress the pro-democracy protests. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated that as of May 2012 more than 13,000 people had been killed.[600] The violence has been condemned by the international community. A UN Security Council Resolution calling for the Syrian president to step down was vetoed by Russia and China. In fact, the uprising has become an arena for Russia and China to assert their increasing global prowess and influence as actors in the Middle East, and has been crucial for Syria as it struggles against international pressure during this period. With the exception of Hamas, which supports the Syrian opposition, Syria's regional allies have remained loyal to the Assad regime, but it is in a fragile position. The steps taken by the regime, which have included passing a law to lift the country's decades-old state of emergency; constitutional amendments including political pluralism, a seven year cap on the presidential term; and parliamentary elections that more than 7000 candidates contested, have all been dismissed by the opposition.[601] It is clear that the

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[600] http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=253828 (Accessed on 27/05/2012).

[601] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/07/syrians-vote-parliamentary-elections (Accessed on 27/05/2012)

Syrian opposition has strengthened its position and gained international support in the process. Even if the Assad regime survives, the opposition would likely continue to be an important element in Syrian politics. Despite the UN-brokered truce, the violence continues and the country's future remains uncertain. What is happening in Syria today is also a case study for testing the neoclassical realist theoretical framework. The events of the Arab Spring have led scholars of International Relations to engage more with the domestic dimension in their analyses of the Middle East. In addition to the international dimension, the domestic demand for change and the leaders' resistance to these appeals has become central to discussion of the Arab Spring. Neoclassical realist analyses of contemporary events in the Middle East are thus useful in understanding what is going on in the region, and will therefore contribute the evolution of the theory.

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APPENDIX A.

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EDUCATION, ACADEMIC DEGREES

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MSc	METU, Middle East Studies	2006
BS	Bilkent University, International Relations	2003
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WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2007-	Atılım University Department of International Relations	Research Assistant
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FELLOWSHIPS

2006- 2011   Doctorate Fellowship, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, awarded by monthly grant for 5 years.

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Dersan Orhan, Duygu. *Dynamics and Evolution of European Union's Middle East Policy*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010)

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September, 1-4 2009, Russia, St. Petersburg State University, CEEISA conference, paper presented "Rethinking and Reimagining Middle Eastern Nationalism in the Globalized World"

May 23, 2007, Çorum University, Turkey, paper presented "Iraq after the 2003 War"

APPENDIX B.

TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışma temel olarak Suriye'nin uluslararası sistemde meydana gelen iki değişime verdiği tepkinin karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmesini amaçlamaktadır. Bu değişimlerden ilki Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesidir. Soğuk Savaş süresince Sovyetler Birliği'nin yakın müttefiki olarak yer alan Suriye, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinden en çok etkilenen ülkelerin başında yer almaktadır. Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından ABD, uluslararası sistemde Amerikan hegemonyasını pekiştirici bir dış politika doktrini ortaya koymuştur. Bu politikanın ilk ürünü Irak'ın Kuveyt'i işgaline karşı ABD'nin Irak'a müdahale etme kararı olmuştur. Suriye, Irak krizine, ABD'nin önderliğinde oluşturulan anti-Irak koalisyona katılarak cevap vermiştir. Soğuk Savaş süresince ABD'nin karşıt kampında yer alan Suriye'yi bu koalisyon içerisinde görmek dikkat çekici olmuştur. Arap-İsrail sorununa çözüm bulmak adına ABD'nin girişimleri ile başlatılan Madrid Barış Konferansı, ABD'nin "yeni dünya düzeni" fikrini yerleştirmesi adına önemli bir adım teşkil etmektedir. Suriye, ABD'nin konferans çağrısını ilk kabul eden ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Tüm bu gelişmeler, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında aldığı dış politika kararları ile ABD'yle işbirliği içerisinde olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışma kapsamında incelenen ikinci uluslararası değişim 11 Eylül olaylarıdır. 11 Eylül saldırılarından sonra, süpergüç pozisyonunu yeniden ortaya koymak adına "teröre karşı savaş" başlatan ABD, önce Afganistan'a daha sonra da Irak'a müdahale etmiştir. Suriye bu süreçte ABD'nin Irak'a müdahalesine karşı çıkmış ve ABD'nin izlediği politikaların en büyük muhalifi olmuştur.

Uluslararası boyutta değişime yol açan iki olay da (Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi ve 11 Eylül saldırıları), ABD'nin hegemon poziyonunu güçlendirme kararlılığına

neden olmuş, küçük güçler için de ABD ile ortak hareket etme baskısı yaratmıştır. Benzer bir dışsal kısıt ile karşı karşıya kalmasına rağmen Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesine ve 11 Eylül sonrasındaki gelişmelere verdiği tepkiler oldukça farklıdır. İlkinde ABD ile ortak hareket eden Suriye, ikincisinde ABD'yi dengeleme politikası izlemiştir. Bu çerçevede, araştırma sorusu; "Dışsal kısıtlar (Amerikan hegemonyası, küçük güçler için süpergüçle ortak hareket etme baskısı) benzer olmasına karşın, Suriye neden Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesine ve 11 Eylül sonrasındaki "teröre karşı savaş" sürecine oldukça farklı tepkiler vermiştir?"'dir.

Çalışmanın amacı Suriye'nin uluslararası değişimler sırasında izlediği dış politika davranışını açıklamak ve zaman içerisinde benzer bir dışsal kısıtla karşı karşıya kalan ülkenin dış politikasında sergilediği farklılıkları açıklamaktır. Çalışmanın temel argümanı, uluslararası sistem Suriye'nin politika seçimlerini etkilese ve sınırlasa da, Suriye liderlerinin uluslararası sistemi algılama biçimleri, iç siyasete ilişkin kısıtlar ve motivasyonlar uluslararası değişimler karşısında sergilediği dış politika davranışını şekillendirmektedir. Çalışmada neoklasik realist teorik çerveden faydalanılmaktadır. Neoklasik realist teorinin, her ne kadar uluslararası sistem, bir devletin dış politika sınırlarını belirlese de, sisteme ilişkin baskıların devletler tarafından nasıl algılandığının incelenmesi gerektiğine ilişkin argümanı kullanılmaktadır. Çalışma temel olarak Soğuk Savaş sonrası ve 11 Eylül sonrası Suriye Dış Politikası olmak üzere ikiye ayrılmakta, teorik çerçeve örnek olaylara adapte edilmektedir. Soğuk Savaş sonrası Suriye Dış Politikası'nın analizinde 1990-1991 Körfez Savaşı ve Madrid Barış Konferansı; 11 Eylül sonrası için de 2003 Irak Savaşı ve Suriye'nin Lübnan'dan çekilmesi konuları değerlendirilmektedir.

Ortadoğu Çalışmaları dış politika analizleri açısından zengin olsa da, Uluslararası İlişkiler (Uİ) teorisinin gelişimine katkısı sınırlı olmuştur. Bunun sebebi Ortadoğu'nun kendine has özellikleri nedeniyle Uİ disiplinin genellemelerinden muaf olduğuna ilişkin genel kanıdır. Ancak bu inanış, son yıllarda Ortadoğu siyasetini Uİ disiplinini çerçevesinde ele alan çalışmalarla birlikte değişmeye başlamıştır. Bu çabaya, Fawcett, Gause, Hinnebusch ve Halliday'in incelemeleri örnek olarak verilebilir. Ancak, bu çalışmaların halen istenilen düzeyde olmadığını

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belirtmek gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma, kendine has özelliklerinden ötürü uzun yıllar Uluslararası İlişkiler (Uİ) disiplinin genellemelerinin dışında tutulan Ortadoğu siyasetini, Uİ'nin çalışma kapsamında değerlendirmeyi ve göreceli olarak yeni bir çalışma alanı olan neorealist klasik teorik çerçeveye katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, Suriye'nin uluslararası değişimler esnasında segilediği dış politika davranışlarını neoklasik realist teori perspektifinden incelemektedir. Gideon Rose, 1998 yılında *World Politics* dergisinde yayınlanan makalesinde, Thomas Christensen, Randall Schweller, William Wohlforth and Fareed Zakaria'nın çalışmalarına ve *International Security* dergisinde yayınlanan makalelere atıfta bulunarak, "neoklasik realizm" terimini ortaya atmıştır.

Rose'a göre, bir devletin uluslararası sisteme verdiği tepkileri anlamak için, sisteme ait baskıların birim düzeyindeki aracı değişkenler tarafından nasıl aktarıldığının analiz edilmesi gerekmektedir. Her ne kadar çalışmasına, neorealizm'in uluslararası sistemin devletlerin dış politika davranışlarını şekillendirdiği ve sınırladığına ilişkin temel argümanı ile başlasa da, Rose, bir devletin dış politika davranışını açıklamada güç dengesi ve yapısal kısıtların yeterli olmadığını ifade etmektedir. Neoklasik realizm Waltz'ın neorealizmine hem bir cevap hem de teorik katkı niteliğindedir. Neoklasik realizm, devletlerin dış politikalarının analizinde, iç politika; içsel çıkarım kapasitesi ve süreci; devlet gücü ve liderlerin niyetleri ve nispi gücü algılama biçimlerini ele almaktadır.

Neoklasik realist modelde başlangıç noktası ve bağımsız değişken nispi güçtür. Neoklasik realistlere göre, anarşik uluslararası sistem ve güç dağılımı bir devletin çıkarlarını ve davranışlarını etkileyen birincil etmendir. Bu aşamada, nispi gücün bir devletin dış politikasının temel parametrelerini nasıl oluşturduğu incelenmektedir. Bu neoklasik realistlerin neorealistlerle kesiştiği noktadır. Neoklasik realistler bir devletin dış politikasının uzun vadede uluslararası sistemin ortaya koyduğu sınırlamalar ve fırsatların ötesine geçemeyeceğini savunmaktadır. Ancak, devletlerin dışsal çevreyi nasıl yorumladığı ve nasıl tepki verdiğini anlamak için sisteme ilişkin

baskıların devletler tarafından aktarılma yöntemlerinin de incelenmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Neoklasik realistler, sistemsel baskıların devlet liderlerinin algılamaları ve içsel devlet yapısı gibi birim düzeyindeki aracı değişkenler tarafından aktarıldığını savunmaktadır. İçsel aracı değişkenler, neoklasik realizmin en temel ve önemli katkılarından bir tanesidir. Birinci aracı değişken sisteme ait baskıları aktaran lider algılamalarıdır. Neoklasik realistlere göre lider ve elitlerin nispi gücü algılama biçimleri analiz edilmelidir çünkü uluslararası sistemin temel aktörleri devletler değil, devlet adamlarıdır. Bu anlayışa göre, bir devletin dış politikası devlet adamlarının, devletin uluslararası sistemdeki yerini algılama biçiminin ve rejimin devamlılığı, riskler, fırsatlar ve ideolojik yaklaşımlar gibi içsel kaygıların bir ürünüdür. İkinci aracı değişken liderlerin algılamalarını sınırlayan içsel devlet gücüdür. Bu yaklaşıma göre, liderler içsel çevre tarafından sınırlanmaktadır. Neoklasiklerin içsel kısıtlara ilişkin değişkenleri farklılık göstermektedir. Örneğin Schweller'a göre, liderleri sınırlayan dört tane içsel değişken vardır. Bunlar; elitlerin görüşbirliği, elit uyumu, sosyal uyum ve rejimin kırılganlığıdır. Diğer taraftan Taliaferro, lideri sınırlayan içsel değişkenleri devlet kurumları, devlet milliyetçiliği ve devlet karşıtı ideoloji olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu nedensellik zincirinde, dış politika çıktısı bağımlı değişkeni teşkil etmektedir. Neoklasik realizm bir devletin yeteneklerinin artmasının dış politikadaki aktivite alanını genişleteceğini öngörmektedir. Ancak bu süreç sadece objektif unsurlara bağlı değil, devletlerin bu süreci subjektif olarak nasıl algıladığı ile de ilintilidir. Aynı zamanda, zayıf güçlerin artan yeteneklerini dış politikaya dönüştürmesinin daha fazla zaman alacağı tahmin edilmektedir.

Dış politika her zaman sistemin zorunlulukları ile örtüşmemektedir. Neoklasik realizm, içsel kısıtları çalışma içerisine dahil ederek, devletlerin neden sisteme ilişkin kısıtlara uygun bir şekilde karşılık vermediğini ve bu durumun sonuçlarını analiz etmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın temel sorusu olan "Suriye neden Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde ABD ile birlikte hareket ederken, 11 Eylül sonrasındaki süreçte ABD'yi dengeleme politikası izledi?"yi cevaplamak için ittifak oluşumu ve zayıf güçlerin büyük güçlere

yönelik tepkilerini inceleyen teorik çerçeveye bakmakta fayda vardır. Devletler hangi durumlarda dengeleme veya ortak hareket etme politikaları izlerler? Bu soruyu Suriye ve ABD ilişkileri çerçevesinde cevaplamak Suriye dış politikasını anlama noktasında önem taşımaktadır.

"*Bandwagoning*"- ortak hareket etme- kelimesi ilk kez detaylı olarak Kenneth Waltz'ın Theory of International Politics adlı eserinde ittifak oluşturma davranışını tanımlamak için kullanılmıştır. Waltz bu kavramı "dengelemenin" karşıtı olarak kullanmaktadır. Ortak hareket etme güçlü olan koalisyona katılmak olarak, dengelemek ise güçsüz olan tarafla ittifak kurmak olarak tanımlanmıştır. Waltz, "güç dengesi teorisi" çerçevesinde, dengelemeyi uluslararası ilişkilerde sık tekrarlanan bir durum olarak görmüştür.

Waltz, temel olarak uluslararası sistemdeki güçlü devlet davranışının teorik boyutuyla ilgilenmektedir. Neorealizm, devletlerin benzerliği ilkesini benimsediği için zayıf güçler üzerine geliştirdiği teorik bir yaklaşımı bulunmamaktadır ve bu sebepten ötürü de eleştirilmektedir. Aslında, bu durum Uİ disiplinindeki genel yaklaşımla ilgilidir. Uİ tarihi olarak büyük güçlerin davranışlarına odaklanmıştır.

Stephen Walt, *Origins of Alliances* adlı eserinde, Waltz'ın "güç dengesi teorisi" ne devlet davranışlarını etkileyen bir unsur olarak tehdit algılamasını eklemiştir. Tehdit dengesi teorisinde, devletlerin sadece güce karşı değil tehditlere karşı da dengeleme politikası içerisine girdiklerini savunmuştur. Dengelemeyi bir devletin, oluşan bir tehdit karşısında diğer güçlerle ortak hareket etmesi olarak tanımlarken, ortak hareket etme kavramını tehditin kendisi ile ittifak kurmak olarak tanımlamıştır. Walt, zayıf devletlerin davranışlarını inceleyerek literature önemli bir katkıda bulunmuştur. Teorisini Ortadoğu'daki ittifak oluşumları üzerinde test etmiştir. Walt'a gore ittifak davranışı belirleyen unsurlar toplam güç, yakınlık, saldırma kapasitesi ve güçlü aktörün saldırma niyetidir. Walt'a gore, zayıf devletler kendilerine eşit güçte bir devlet tarafından tehdit ediliyorlarsa dengeleme politikası izler ancak büyük bir güç tarafından tehdit ediliyorlarsa ortak hareket etme politikasına yönelirler. Walt, Waltz gibi dengeleme ve ortak hareket etme politikalarını birbirinin zıttı kavramlar olarak

görmektedir. Walt'a gore ortak hareket etme eşit olmayan bir ilişki biçimini içermektedir, güçlü olan tarafla ittifak kuran bir devlet çeşitli ödünlerde bulunmaya zorlanmakta ve güçlü tarafa itaat etmeyi kabul etmektedir.

Walt'ın teorik çerçevesi bu çalışma kapsamında ele alınan Suriye'nin ittifak davranışlarını açıklamada yetersiz kalmaktadır. Walt, zayıf devletlerin büyük güçlerle ortak hareket etme eğiliminden söz etmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında ABD ile ortak hareket etme davranışına adapte edilebilir olarak gözükse de Walt ortak hareket etme kavramını zayıf tarafı güçlü tarafın hukuk dışı hareketlerini kabul etme ve gönülsüz de olsa uyum sağlama gibi davranışlara iten bir durum olarak görmektedir. Her ne kadar güvenlik kaygısı, Suriye'yi Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinin ardından ABD ile işbirliğine yönelten faktörlerden biri olsa da, Suriye'nin tek motivasyonunun güvenlik olduğu söylenemez. Buna ek olarak, ABD ile işbirliği, Suriye'yi, Walt'ın bahsettiği gibi ABD'nin hukuk dışı davranışlarını tolere etmeye zorlamamıştır. Walt, ortak hareket etme kavramını zayıf ve güçlü taraf arasında asimetrik bir ilişki olarak tanımlasa da, Suriye de bu ilişkiden ekonomik ve siyasi kazanımlar elde etmiştir.

Diğer taraftan, Walt'ın teorik çerçevesi Suriye'nin 11 Eylül sonrası dönemde ABD'yi dengeleme politikasını da açıklayamamaktadır. Walt, dengeleme ve ortak hareket etme davranışlarına ilişkin çalışmasında, aşağıdaki hipotezleri ortaya koymaktadır. Walt'ın hipotezlerini, 11 Eylül sonrası Suriye'sine adapte ettiğimizde, Suriye'nin ABD ile ortak hareket etmiş olması gerekmektedir. ABD'nin büyük bir güce sahip olduğu, Irak'ı işgal ederek bir anlamda Suriye ile komşu olduğu, ABD'nin saldırma kapasitesinin arttığı ve Suriye'ye bir sonraki hedefi olabileceği yönündeki sinyalleri ile agresif yaklaşımını ortaya koyduğu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, Walt'ın teorik çerçevesine göre Suriye'nin ABD ile ittifak içerisinde olması gerekirdi. Ancak, Suriye bu hipotezi çürüterek ABD'nin karşısında yer almış ve adete hegemona karşı meydan okumuştur.

Bu durumda, Suriye'nin 11 Eylül sonrasında izlediği politikayı nasıl açıklamak gerekmektedir. Walt'ın teorisinin tersine, neden bazı durumlarda güçlü devletler

ortak hareket etme politikasını benimserken, güçsüz devletler dengeleme yoluna gitmektedir. Neden aynı devlet benzer dışsal kısıtlara farklı dönemlerde farklı tepkiler vermektedir? Bu soruların cevabı, neoklasik realizmde bulunmaktadır. Devletler her ne kadar sistemin yarattığı baskılara cevap verseler de, ittifak davranışları bazı içsel faktörlerden etkilenmektedir.

Randall Schweller, bir neorealist klasik olarak, Walt'ın "tehdit dengesi teorisi" ni eleşirmiştir. Schweller'in eleştirisi oldukça geniş kapsamlıdır ancak bu çalışma kapsamında dikkati çeken en önemli eleştirisi, Walt'ın güvenlik yerine kazanç maksatıyla yapılan ortak hareket etme eğilimini göz ardı etmesidir. Schweller ittifakın ardında yatan nedenleri genişletmekte ve ittifakların tehlike ve korkuyla olduğu kadar kazanç sağlama olanıkları ile de oluştuğunu iddia etmektedir. Schweller, "çıkar dengesi teorisi"nde, kazanç sağlama motivasyonuyla yapılan ittifakları incelemektedir. Walt ve Waltz'ın aksine dengeleme politikasının ortak hareket etme politikasından daha zorlu bir aktivite olduğunu savunmaktadır. Schweller'ın teorik çerçevesi hem sistemsel hem de birim düzeyindeki değişkenleri ele almaktadır. Uluslararası sistem devletler için olanaklar ve korkular yaratsa da, sisteme ilişkin varsayımlar dış politika kararlarını analiz etmeden tek başına yeterli değildir. Çünkü devletlerin birim düzeyinde incelenmesini gerekli kılan motivasyonları olabilir.

Schweller'ın ittifak oluşumu literatürüne katkısı son derece büyük bir önem taşımaktadır. "Çıkar dengesi teorisi", ittifakın ardında yatan motivasyonun güvenlik olmadığı durumları açıklamada ve teorinin öngördüğü durumların aksi ittifak oluşumlarını analiz etmede önemli bir çerçeve teşkil etmektedir. Teori, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrası ve 11 Eylül olayları karşısında benimsediği dış politika yaklaşımlarını anlamayı mümkün kılmaktadır. İrredentist, diğer bir ifadeyle mevcut sınırlarından tatmin olmayan bir devlet olarak Suriye'nin, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde Irak'a karşı oluşturulan ABD koalisyonuna katılmasında bu ittifaktan çıkar sağlama motivasyonun olduğu açıktır. ABD'nin sunduğu teşvikler, Suriye'nin motivasyonu güçlendirmiştir. Suriye'nin motivasyonları arasında, uluslararası ve bölgesel arenada güvenilirlik sağlama, ekonomik çıkar elde etme ve Golan Tepelerini

geri almak sıralanabilir. Bu ittifak sayesinde, Suriye'nin, Golan'ı geri almak dışında diğer tüm motivasyonları gerçekleşmiştir. Diğer taraftan, 11 Eylül saldırıları sonrasında ABD'nin yoğun tehditleri karşısında, Suriye, ABD'nin saflarına katılmak yerine, hegemona meydan okumayı tercih etmiştir. Bu durumda, ABD'nin Suriye'ye hiçbir teşvik sunmamasının, havucu göstermeden sadece sopayı sallamasının etkisinin büyük olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Suriye her ne kadar tarih boyunca sistemsel güçlerden derin bir şekilde etkilense de, bu güçlere yönelik olarak verdiği tepkiler sadece yapısal sınırlamalar tarafından belirlenmemiştir. Aksine, Suriye bu sistemsel yapıları aşmaya çalışmıştır. Bu sebepten ötürü bu çalışma dış politikayı uluslararası sistemin ve devletin içsel kaygılarının etkileşiminin bir sonucu olarak tanımlamakta ve teorik çerçeve olarak neoklasik realizmi uygulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, uluslararası değişim bağımsız değişken, Suriye dış politikası ise bağımlı değişken olarak ele alınmaktadır. Birinci aracı değişken, Suriye liderlerinin algılamalarıdır. İkinci aracı değişken, liderler üzerinde kısıtlayıcı etki yaratan devletin kurucu kurumları, ideoloji /kimlik ve kamuoyu görüğü gibi iç kısıtlardır. Üçüncü aracı değişken iç siyasete ilişkin motivasyonlardır. Dış ve iç dinamiklerin birbirleriyle etkileşim halinde olduğu ilkesini benimseyen bu çalışma, güç odaklı siyasi argümanlarla bir devletin iç siyasete ve toplumsal yapıya ilişkin kaygılarını bir araya getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma kapsamında, neoklasik realist anlayışa uygun olarak, "bir devletin uzun vadede izleyebileceği politikaların sınırlarını devletin uluslararası sistemdeki pozisyonun belirlediği" ilkesi benimsenmektedir. Bu çerçevede, Suriye dış politikasının uluslararası siyasi sistemden ve Ortadoğu bölgesel sistemi tarafından şekillendirildiği kabul edilmektedir. Emperyalizm Suriye devletini derinden şekillendiren uluslararası güçlerden bir tanesidir. Suriye, 1. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Batı Emperyalizmi tarafından oluşturulmuş bir devlettir ve bu durum Suriye devlet sistemi ve kimliği üzerinde keskin etkiler yaratmıştır.

Suriye'nin gücü ve jeopolitik poziyonu da Suriye'nin izlediği politikaları şekillendirmektedir. Suriye'nin nüfusu, yüzölçümü, sınırlı insan gücü, Suriye'nin

uluslararası sistemde "küçük devlet" olarak konumlandırılmasına yol açmıştır. Suriye'nin en büyük düşmanı İsrail karşısındaki zayıf poziyonu Suriye'nin güvenlik endişesini arttırmaktadır. Suriye'nin İsrail karşısındaki dezavantajlı poziyonu İsrail realitesini kabul etmek zorunda kalmasına ve bu devleti kuşatma politikası izlemesine yol açmıştır. Diğer taraftan, Suriye'nin coğrafi poziyonu bu ülke için hem bir yük hem de bir avantaj olmuştur. Ortadoğu'nun kalbinde yer alan Suriye büyük bir stratejik öneme sahiptir. Bu poziyon Arap-İsrail sorununun çözümü çabalarında Suriye'yi önemli bir noktaya taşımıştır. Ancak, Irak, Türkiye ve ana düşmanı İsrail tarafından çevrili olan toprakları, Suriye'yi korunaksız bir hale getirmiştir. Savaşlar da Suriye dış politikasını şekillendirmiştir. 1967 savaşında Arapların yaşadığı hezimet Suriye dış politikasında revizyonist bir dönemi başlatmıştır. 1967 yenilgisi, Suriye'nin realist devlet sistemine uyamamasının bir sonucu olarak yorumlanmıştır. Hafız el-Esad, Suriye'nin tarihi irredentist hırslarını büyük ölçüde bir kenara bırakarak, daha gerçekçi bir politika izlemeye başlamıştır.

Uluslararası güç dengesindeki değişim, dış politika davranışını etkileyen diğer bir unsurdur. Soğuk Savaş süresince Suriye, Sovyetler Birliği'nin yanında yer almış ve bu ilişki Suriye'ye İsrail'e karşı olan mücadelesinde önemli bir katkı sağlamıştır. Ancak, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması ile birlikte, Suriye temel koruyucusu ve silah tedarikçisini kaybetmiştir. Bu durum, Suriye'nin izolasyonuna yol açmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında ABD ile yakınlaşma çabaları uluslararası sistemdeki değişimin bir sonucu olarak yorumlanabilir.

Bu çalışma kapsamında ele alınacak diğer bir analiz düzeyi iç aracı değişkenlerdir. Suriye'nin küresel düzlemdeki bağımsız bir aktör olma çabalarını analiz edebilmek için içsel özelliklerine odaklanmak gerektiği düşünülmektedir.

Rose, liderlerin algılamaları ve iç siyasi yapıyı aracı değişkenler olarak tanımlamaktadır. Neo-klasik realist ekol içerisinde yer alan diğer teorisyenler Rose'ınkine ek olarak farklı aracı değişkenler tanımlamışlardır. Örneğin Schweller, üçünü aracı değişken olarak "devlet çıkarları ve motivasyonunu" ortaya atmıştır. Schweller bu yaklaşımıyla, neorealizmin uluslararası sistemde benzer poziyonlardaki

devletlerin çıkarları ve motivasyonlarından bağımsız olarak sistemsel baskılara aynı şekilde yanıt vereceğine ilişkin argümanına karşı çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma kapsamında da içsel motivasyonlar üçüncü aracı değişken olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Pek çok analist, Suriye dış politikasını Hafız Esad'ın kişisel kararlarının bir ürünü olarak görmüştür. Esad Alevi azınlığın yönetiminde "kişiselleşmiş" bir yönetim oluşturmuştur. Hafız Esad dönemiyle birlikte, Suriye dış politikasının realist bir çizgiye kavuştuğu ifade edilmektedir. Esad'ın liderliğinde "Büyük Suriye" gibi tarihi iddialar bir kenara bırakılarak, işgal edilmiş toprakları geri almak ve Filistin haklarını savunmak merkezinde gerçekçi bir dış politika izlenmeye başlanmıştır. Esad yönetimindeki Suriye rejiminin temel kaygısı devamlılığını sağlamak ve ulusal çıkarları korumak olmuştur. Rasyonelliği ve öngörüsü Hafız Esad'ı diğer Ortadoğu liderlerinden ayırmıştır.

Hafiz Esad'ın ölümünden sonra Haziran 2000'de yerine oğlu Beşar Esad yönetime geçmiştir. Beşar'ın yönetime geçişi beraberinde Suriye'de siyasi ve ekonomik liberalleşmenin gerçekleşmesine ilişkin beklenti yaratmıştır. Hafız Esad değişime direnirken, Beşar iktidarının ilk zamanlarında değişime vurgu yapmıştır. Ancak, zaman içerisinde Beşar Esad da babasının izinden gitmeyi tercih etmiştir. Beşar'a başkanlığının ilk yıllarında babasının yakın arakadaşlarından oluşan siyasi grup statükoyu devam ettirmesi yönünde baskıda bulunmuşlardır. Beşar temel olarak babasının politikalarını devam ettirse de, iki liderin yaklaşımları konusunda belirgin farklılıklar vardır. Bunun yanısıra iki liderin karşı karşıya kaldığı farklı uluslararası ortam da, farklı politikalar izlemelerine yol açmıştır. Örneğin, Beşar Batı'yla yapıcı politikalar geliştirmeyi açmaçlasa da, Beşar Esad döneminde batıyla olan ilişkiler Hafız Esad döneminden daha kötüye gitmiştir. Bu durumda, Beşar'ın tecrübesizliği, kişiliği, algılamalarının etkisi olduğu kadar, barış sürecinin durma noktasına gelmesinin, ABD'de neokonların iktidara geçmesininin ve 11 Eylül olaylarının etkisi de göz ardı edilmemelidir.

Devletin kuruluş felsefesi /kurumları, kimlik ve ideoloji, rejimin kırılganlığı gibi husuların Suriye dış politikası üzerinde önemli kısıtlar yarattığı savunulmaktadır.

Tarihsel olarak bir devlet geleneğine sahip olmayan Suriye, Arap devriminin bir ürünüdür. Arap milliyetçiliği, Suriye'deki farklı dini ve mezhepsel grupları birleştirici bir kimlik olmuştur. Suriye'nin, 1. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında tarihsel parçalarından (Ürdün, Filistin, Lübnan) koparılarak ayrı bir devlet olarak kurulması, mevcut sınırlarına ilişkin bir tatminsizlik duygusu yaratmıştır. Bu derin irredentist duygu, Suriye'nin, emperyalizmin yapay bir ürünü olarak görülen Suriye ulusal kimliğinden ziyade Arap milliyetçiliğini benimsemesine yol açmıştır. Ancak, 1967 yenilgisi ve Hafız Esad'ın 1970 yılında iktidara gelmesi ile birlikte, Suriye devletinin inşa süreci tamamlanmış ve milli egemenlik Arap milliyetçiği karşısında önemli bir güç kazanmaya başlamıştır. Kimlikte değişim olsa da, Suriye, Arap milliyetçiliğine Suriye merkezli bir boyut katarak bağlı kalmaya devam etmiştir. Özellikle, Mısır'ın 1979 yılında İsrail ile barış antlaşması imzalamasının ardından, Suriye kendisini Arap dünyasının lideri olarak görmeye başlamıştır. Bu çerçevede, kapsamlı barış anlaşması savunulmuş, İsrail ile bireysel müzakerelerden kaçınılmıştır. Suriye'de kimliğin ulusal çıkarları şekillendirdiği ve kimlik politikasının takip edilmesinin bir ulusal çıkar halini aldığı gözlemlenmektedir. Devletin devamlılığı ve ulusal çıkarlarlara vurgu yapan Suriyeli kimliği ve Arap milliyetçiliğine dayanan Arap kimliği Suriye dış politikasını şekillendirmiştir.

Dış politika analizinin nedensellik zincirinde, devlet çıkarları ve motivasyonunu incelemek, Randall Schweller'ın neoklasik realizmin katkısıdır. Schweller, neorealizmin, benzer pozisyonlardaki devletlerin sistemsel baskılara aynı şekilde yanıt vereceği şeklindeki genellemesine karşı çıkmaktadır. Her ne kadar neorealizm devletlerin büyük güçlere karşı dengeleme politikası izleyeceğini savunsa da, tarih bu devletlerin güçlü devletlerle ortak hareket ettiği örneklerle doludur. Schweller, sınırlı amaçları olan revizyonist devletlerin ulusalararası değişimler esnasında çıkar sağlama maksadıyla sınırsız amaçları olan revizyonist devletlerle işbirliği yaptığını iddia etmektedir. Schweller çıkarlar dengesi yaklaşımında, ittifakların korkudan olduğu kadar çıkar sağlamak maksadıyla da yapıldığını ifade etmekte ve bu durumun benzer devletlerin aynı dışsal kısıtlara neden farklı şekilde tepki verdiğini anlamada faydalı olduğunu ifade etmektedir.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından, Suriye güvenlik açısından son derece kırılgan bir noktaya gelmiştir. "Yeni dünya düzeni" olarak tanımlanan bu uluslararası ortamda, Suriye'nin önünde ABD'yi dengelemek veya ortak hareket etmek şeklinde iki seçenek oluşmuştur. ABD'yi dengeleme imkanın olmadığı gerçeğiyle, Suriye, ABD ile ortak hareket etme kararı almış ve bu pozisyonunu ABD önderliğindeki Irak karşıtı koalisyonuna katılarak göstermiştir. Suriye'nin bu tavrının, Walt'ın "zayıf güçler büyük bir devlet tarafından tehdit edildiklerinde bu güçle ortak hareket ederler" hipotezine uygun olduğu iddia edilse de, Suriye'nin tek motivasyonun güvenlik kaygısı olmadığı düşünülmektedir. İlerleyen bölümlerde de açıklanacağı üzere, Suriye'nin 1991 Körfez Savaşı'nda ABD ile işbirliği yapmasında, uluslararası sistemin yarattığı zorunluluğun etkisinin olduğu kadar, ABD ile işbirliğinden elde edilmesi umulan beklentilerin ve sunulan teşviklerin etkisi büyüktür.

Diğer taraftan 11 Eylül sonrası döneme bakıldığında, Suriye'nin güvenliğine yönelik en büyük tehdidin yine ABD olduğu gözlenmektedir.ABD, El-Kaide örgütünün kendisine yönelik hedeflerine yönelik saldırılarından sonra teröre karşı savaş başlatmıştır ve Suriye'de bu süreçte ABD'nin sözlü saldırılarına maruz kalmıştır. ABD'nin Irak'ı işgali kararı sonrasında Suriye ve Amerika ilişkileri büyük bir gerginlik dönemi içerisine girmiştir. Suriye'nin ABD'ye meydan okuma tavrı çok tartışılmış, Suriye'nin neden 1. Körfez Savaşı'nda olduğu gibi ABD ile ortak hareket etmediği soruları gündeme gelmiştir. Bu durumda pek çok içsel ve uluslararası faktörün etkisi olduğu kadar, ABD'nin Suriye'ye yönelik yaklaşımının da son derece belirleyici olduğu düşünülmektedir. Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemin aksine, bu süreçte ABD, Suriye'ye herhangi bir teşvik sunmamış, sadece tehdit etme yolunu seçmiştir. Bu dönemde, Walt'ın "küçük güçlerin kendilerini tehdi eden büyük güçle ortak hareket etme" hipotezi gerçekleşmemiştir. Büyük bir güç tarafından tehdit edilen Suriye, işbirliğine yönlendirici herhangi bir çıkar sağlama veye teşvik motivasyonunun eksikliğinde, her ne kadar riskli bir aktivite olsa da ulusal çıkarlarını ve rejimin devamlılığını sağlamak adına ABD'yi dengeleme politikası izlemiştir.

Suriye dış politikasının analizinde kullanılan örnek olaylar temel olarak iki dönem içerisinde analiz edilmektedir. İlk olarak, Suriye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrasında başta

ABD ile olmak üzere batı ile ilişkilerini geliştirdiği döneme ilişkin olarak, ABD'nin 1991 Körfez Savaşında ABD önderliğindeki koalisyona katılması ve daha önceki önkoşullarını bir kenara bırakarak Madrid Barış görüşmelerine dahil olma kararı incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde ise, Suriye'nin ABD ve diğer Batı ülkeleri ile ilişkilerinin gerildiği ve neredeyse kopma noktasına geldiği 11 Eylül sonrasında dönemde, Suriye'nin, ABD'nin 2003 yılında Irak'a yönelik müdahalesi karşısında izlediği tutum ve Lübnan'da çekilmeye zorlanması konuları ele alınmaktadır.

Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi ve Sovyetler Birliği desteğinin yok olması, Suriye'nin İsrail'i dengeleme politikasına büyük bir darbe vurmuştur. Bu durum, Suriye'yi uluslararası bağlantılarını çeşitlendirmeye, kendisini ABD'nin gözünde önemli bir bölgesel aktör olarak konumlandırmaya ve Soğuk Savaş sonrası şekillenen bölgesel düzeni lehine dönüştürmeye zorlamıştır. ABD liderliğindeki Irak karşıtı koalisyonuna dahil olması ve Madrid Barış Süreci çerçevesinde İsrail ile ikili müzakereleri kabul etmesinin, Suriye'nin geleneksel dış politikası ile çeliştiği düşünülmüştür. Bu kararların, Soğuk Savaş'ın bitişi ve Suriye'nin "yeni dünya düzeni" içerisinde kendisine güvenilir bir poziyon sağlama çabaları çervesinde değerlendirilmesi önem taşımaktadır. Ancak, Suriye'nin bu süreçteki dış politika kararlarını uluslararası sistemdeki değişim şekillendirse de, bölgesel ve içsel faktörlerin de dış politikadaki değişimi kolaylaştırdığı düşünülmektedir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesine yönelik analizler, sistemsel ve yapısal faktörlere vurgu yapmaktadır. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi her ne kadar uluslararası sisteme ilişkin bir konu olsa da, devletlerin bu süreçten nasıl etkilendiğinin analizinde, devletlerin iç koşulları da göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır.

Suriye, Irak'ın Kuveyt'i 2 Ağustos 1990'daki işgaline ilk tepki veren ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Suriye, Irak'ı kınamış ve hızlı ve önkoşulsuz bir biçimde çekilmesini talep etmiştir. Suriye, 10-11 Ağustos 1990 tarihinde Kahire'de gerçekleştirilen Arap Zirvesi'nde, Mısır ve Suudi Arabistan ile birlikte bir seri Irak karşıtı karara imza atmıştır. Bu zirve, Ortadoğu'da, Suriye, Mısır ve Suudi Arabistan yeni bir siyasi eksenin oluştuğu yorumlarına neden olmuştur. Hafız Esad, ABD Dışişleri Bakanı

James Baker'a, Şam ziyareti esnasında, Suudi Arabistan'da konuşlanan 4000 kişilik birliğe ek olarak, 11.000 kişilik ilave askeri güç sözünde bulunmuştur. Amerika önderliğindeki koalisyon güçleri, 17 Ocak 1991 tarihinde Irak'a saldırıda bulunmuştur ve savaş süresinde Suriye güçleri Suudi Arabistan'da konuşlanmıştır. Suriye'nin Irak'a yönelik herhangi bir saldırıya dahil olmamasından ötürü savaşa katkısının sınırlı olduğu yönünde yorumlar yapılsa da, Suriye'nin geçmişte izlediği Amerika karşıtı politikalar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda katkısının önemli olduğu düşünülmektedir.

"Yeni dünya düzeni" kavramı, Körfez Savaşı ile birlikte literatüre girmiştir. Bu kavram, hem Sovyetler Birliği ve ABD arasındaki süpergüç mücadelesinin sona ermesini hem de uluslararası sistemde ABD hegemonyasına dayalı dış politika doktrinini ifade etmektedir. Saddam'ın Kuveyt'i işgali ABD Başkanı Bush'un "yeni dünya düzeninin" kurallarını ortaya koyması açısından bir fırsat niteliğinde olmuştur. Ancak, savaşın etkileri ABD'yi aşmış, tüm dünyayı etkilemiştir. Avrupa Topluluğu krizi kendisini uluslararası politikada ekonomik bir güç haline getirmek maksadıyla bir araç olarak kullanmış, bu süreç Doğu Avrupa'nın komunizm sonrası yeniden inşa sürecine katkıda bulunmuş, Çin'in uluslararası topluma entegrasyonu açısından bir şans yaratmıştır. Suriye açısından ise, finansal kaynaklar sağlama, ABD ile ilişkileri geliştirme ve uluslararası ve bölgesel entegrasyonunu kırma olanağı sağlamıştır.

Körfez Savaşı esnasında Suriye'nin geleneksel dış politika tavrını değiştirmesi yönünde sistemsel bir baskı oluşmuştur. Ancak neorealizmin öngördüğü üzere, bu sistemsel baskının yerel düzeyde nasıl aktarıldığının incelenmesi gerekmektedir. Birinci iç aracı değişken olarak liderin algılamalarına bakıldığında, Hafız Esad'ın uluslararası sistemdeki değişimi ve Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinin Suriye üzerindeki muhtemel etkilerini 1980'lerde gördüğü gözlemlenmektedir. Esad, uzun vadede Amerikan karşıtı politikalar izlemesinin gerçekçi olmadığını anlamıştır. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi, süpergüçler arasında dengeleme politikasını ortadan kaldırdığından ötürü, Suriye değişen uluslararası ortamda, İsrail'den gelen tehdidi, ABD ile yapıcı ilişkiler kurarak dengeleme yoluna gitmiştir. Körfez Savaşı ile birlikte, Suriye, "yeni dünya düzeni" içerisinde doğru yerde durmak istediğini ortaya

koymuştur. Sistemsel baskıların yanısıra, bölgesel gelişmeler de Esad'ı dış politikada değişime zorlamıştır. 1980'lerde bölgesel olarak izole edilen Suriye, Körfez Savaşı ile birlikte bölgesel ittifaklar kurma şansı elde etmiştir. Esad'ın Irak karşıtı koalisyona katılımını kolaylaştıran diğer bir unsur ise, Saddam Hüseyin ile olan kişisel rekabetidir. Her iki ülke de Baas rejimini benimsese de, Irak ve Suriye arasında ideolojik, tarihsel, siyasi ve kişisel kökenleri olan bir düşmanlık vardır. Bu düşmanlık, İran-Irak Savaşı (1980-1988) esnasında, tüm Arap devletlerinin aksine, Suriye'nin İran'ı desteklemesi ile derinleşmiştir. Pipes'a göre, Suriye'nin Körfez Savaşı'na katılımı Bağdat-Şam ilişkileri ekseninde değerlendirilmelidir. İki lider arasındaki gergin ilişkiler, Esad'ın Saddam Hüseyin karşıtı koalisyona katılımını kolaylaştırmıştır.

Çalışma kapsamındaki ikinci aracı değişken içsel kısıtlardır. Bu bağlamda, Suriye'nin Amerikan ittifakına katılımının kamuoyunda nasıl bir etki yarattığı önem taşımaktadır. İlk etapta, Suriye'nin emperyal bir güç olan ABD ile birlikte ortak hareket ederek, diğer bir Baas rejimine müdahale etmesi Arap milliyetçiliğine aykırı bulunmuş ve kamuoyunda büyük bir tepki ile karşılanmıştır. Esad, ABD ile işbirliği yaparak iç siyaset açısından büyük bir risk içerisine girmiştir. Savaşın başında, Suriyelilerin yaklaşık %90'ının Irak'ın yanında yer aldığı gözlemlenmiştir. Rejime karşı propaganda aktvitesinin başlamasının ardından, Suriye yönetimi, kendini meşrulaştırmak için çeşitli stratejiler izlemiştir. Esad, müdahaleyi meşrulaştırmak maksadıyla 12 Eylül 1990 tarihinde gerçekleştirdiği konuşmada, Suriye birliklerinin Suudi Arabistan'a "Arap Misyonu" çerçevesinde gittiğini belirtmiştir. Sürecin uluslararası hukuka uygun olarak işlediğini savunmuştur. Bunun yanısıra, Esad, Saddam'ı halkının arzuları dışında hareket eden hırslı bir lider olarak resmetmiş, koalisyonun amacının Kuveytlileri Saddam'ın zulmünden kurtarmak olduğunu ifade etmiştir.Zisser'in de belirttiği gibi, Suriye halkı ilk etapta, müdahaleye sert bir biçimde karşı çıksa da, zamanla bunun bölgesel ve uluslararası konjonktür dahilinde kaçınılmaz olduğunu anlamıştır.

Üçüncü iç aracı değişken olan içsel motivasyonlar çerçevesinde analiz yapıldığında, Suriye'nin koalisyona katılarak elde ettiği avantajların, ABD ile ortak hareket etme

kararında önemli bir payı olduğu düşünülmektedir. Elde edinilen kazanımlar, müdahalenin halk nezdinde meşrulaştırılmasını da kolaylaştırmıştır. Bu anlamda, Suriye'nin ABD önderliğindeki Irak karşıtı koalisyonuna katılımı, Schweller'ın "çıkar için ortak hareket etme" teziyle uyum içerisindedir. Bu işbirliği öncelikli olarak Suriye'ye büyük ekonomik çıkarlar sağlamıştır. Ayrıca, Suriye, yükselen petrol fiyatlarından da istifade etmiştir. İkinci olarak, Körfez Savaşı'na katılımı, Suriye'nin bölgesel ve uluslararası izolasyonunu kırmıştır. ABD, Suriye'nin işbirliğine büyük önem atfetmiş, Avrupa Birliği, Suriye'ye yönelik olarak uygulanan yaptırımları kaldırmayı tartışmıştır. Mısır ve Suudi Arabistan'la oluşan işbirliği ortamı, "Şam Deklarasyonu" ile resmi bir hal almıştır. Körfez Savaşı'na müdahil olmanın Suriye'ye kazandırdığı diğer bir avantaj, Suriye'nin Lübnan'daki varlığının ABD tarafından onaylanmasıdır. 1991 Mayıs ayında imzalanan Taif Antlaşması ile birlikte, Suriye'nin Lübnan'daki pozisyonu resmi bir hal almıştır. Son olarak, Körfez Savaşı ile birlikte, Suriye'nin rakibi olan Irak'ın askeri yetenekleri sarsıntıya uğramış ve bu durum da Suriye'nin güvenliğini sağlamlaştırmıştır.

Suriye'nin, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde aldığı diğer bir stratejik karar, 1991 yılında gerçekleştirilen Madrid Barış görüşmelerine katılmasıdır. Suriye, ABD'nin barış konferansı önerisini kabul eden ilk devlet olmuştur. Daha önceki yıllarda, herhangi bir ikili, önkoşulsuz ve direkt barış görümesi teklifini reddeden, Hafız Esad'ın bu hamlesi, Suriye'nin Ortadoğu Barışı konusunda ciddi bir politika değişikliğine gittiği şeklinde yorumlanmıştır. Madrid Barış görüşmelerinin, Suriye-İsrail ayağı tıkansa ve bir sonuç alınamasa da, Suriye'nin barış konusundaki motivasyonun incelenmesi açısından önem taşımaktadır.

Suriye'nin barış sürecine dahil olması küresel güç dengesindeki değişim ile ilintilidir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin Ortadoğu politikasındaki değişim ve ABD ile işbirliğine yönelmesi uluslararası barış konferansının oluşturulmasını kolaylaştırmıştır. Arap devletleri ve İsrail, Körfez Savaşı esnasında Irak gibi ortak bir tehditle karşı karşıya kalmışlar ve bu durum da işbirliği ortamını yaratmıştır. ABD ise oluşan bu işbirliği ortamından faydalanmayı ve "yeni dünya düzeni"ni sağlamlaştırmayı amaçlamıştır.

İç aracı değişkenler açısısından değerlendirme yapıldığında, Hafiz Esad'ın "yeni dünya düzeni" ne ilişkin algılamalarının konferansa katılımında etkili olduğu düşünülmektedir. Madrid Barış görüşmeleri çerçevesinde, Esad, Suriye'nin İsrail ile direkt, önkoşulsuz ve ikili görüşme yapmasını kabul etmiştir. Suriye'nin yıllardır arkasında durduğu ideal koşulların altında bir görüşmeyi kabul etmesinde, "yeni dünya düzeni" nin etkisinin olduğu şüphesizdir. Hafiz Esad'ın yaklaşımı Suriye'nin İsrail'le barış konusundaki genel tavrını terk etmeyi değil, değişen uluslararası koşullar çerçevesinde gözden geçirmeyi içermektedir. Esad, barış sürecini engellemenin veya reddetmenin Soğuk Savaş sonrası oluşan uluslararası ortamda sürdürülebilir bir politika olmadığını fark etmiştir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi ile birlikte Suriye, İsrail'e karşı izlediği stratejik eşitlik politikasını bir kenara bırakmak zorunda kalmıştır.

İç siyasi kısıtlar devletlerin ittifak ilişkileri üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Suriye iç siyaseti özelinde, İsrail'le devam eden savaş hali ve Golan Tepeleri'nin iadesi hassas konuları teşkil etmektedir. Bu anlamda, Suriye'nin ideal koşullar altında İsrail ile barış görüşmelerinde bulunması, rejimin meşruiyeti açısından sıkıntı yaratacak bir problem olarak algılanmıştır. Ancak, Suriye rejimi çeşitli politikalar izleyerek barış görüşmelerini iç ve bölgesel siyaset açıdan meşru kılmaya çalışmıştır. Barış süreci boyunca, Hafiz Esad, Arap milliyetçiliğine bağlı olan duruşunu korumuştur. Barış görüşmelerine katılan diğer Arap devletleri ile görüşmeler başlamadan önce bir koordinasyon toplantısı düzenlemiştir. Bu toplantıda, Arap devletlerine İsrail ile ikili anlaşma imzalamaktan kaçınmaları ve ortak Arap pozisyonu belirlenmesi telkin edilmiştir. Bunun yanısıra, barış görüşmelerini halk nezdinde meşrulaştırmak adına, "onurlu barış" ve "kahramanların barışı" gibi kavramlar ortaya atılmıştır. Görüşmeler esnasında, Suriye Dışişleri Bakanı Faruk el-Şara'nın İsrail delegasyonun elini sıkmaması ve İsrail'i tiranlık ve terörizmle suçlaması da kamuoyunu tatmin etmek amacıyla gerçekleştirilen hamleler olarak yorumlanmıştır.

Suriye'nin barış görüşmelerine katılımı, üçüncü iç aracı değişken olan içsel motivasyonlar açısından değerlendirildiğinde, Esad'ın barış görüşmelerine

katılımındaki temel motivasyonun ABD ile işbirliğini geliştirmek olduğu düşünülmektedir. Suriye uzun zamandır ABD'nin, İsrail'le gerçekleştirilecek barış görüşmelerinde aktif bir rol almasını arzu etmiş ve bu isteği Madrid Barış süreci ile de gerçekleşmiştir. Suriye, bu süreçte Kissinger'ın meşhur sözü "Ortadoğu'da, Mısır'sız savaş, Suriye'siz barış olmaz" sözünü doğrularcasına, Ortadoğu bölgesel siyasetindeki ve Arap-İsrail görüşmelerindeki kilit poziyonuna vurgu yapmıştır.

Suriye dış politikasında 1990'larda ciddi değişimler yaşanmıştır. Batı ile işbirliğinin geliştiği bu dönemde, Suriye geçmişte izlediği radikal, katı Arap milliyetçisi tutumunu geride bırakarak, realist ve işbirlikçi bir dış politika içerisine girmiştir. Bu yaklaşım 2000 yılında, Hafız Esad'ın vefatının ardından oğlu Beşar Esad'ın iktidarı devralması ile birlikte daha da kuvvet kazanmış. batıda eğitim görmüş, genç, dinamik ve vizyon sahibi bu liderin Suriye'de siyasi ve ekonomik liberalleşmenin önünü açacağı savunulmuştur. Ancak beklentilerin aksine, bir takım içsel, bölgesel ve uluslararası gelişmeler neticesinde Suriye'nin Batı ile ilişkileri Hafız Esad döneminin oldukça gerisine gitmiştir. Bu durumu tek bir faktöre bağlamak doğru olamayacaktır. Bu faktörler arasında, Beşar Esad'ın babasına kıyasla siyaseten tecrübesizliği, doğru manevralar yapamaması, İsrail'de barış karşıtı Sharon hükümetinin iktidara geçmesi ve ABD'de George W. Bush yönetiminde neokonların iktidara gelmesi sıralanabilir. Ancak, 11 Eylül saldırıları ve akabinde yaşanan gelişmeler, Suriye'nin uluslararası poziyonunu en çok etkileyen unsur olmuştur.

11 Eylül saldırıları, Suriye-ABD ilişkileri açısından yeni bir dönemi başlatmıştır. Suriye, El-Kaide örgütü tarafından ABD'ye yönelik olarak gerçekleştirilen saldırıları kınamış ve El-Kaide konusunda ABD ile istihbarat paylaşımı yapmıştır. Ancak, ABD'nin "teröre karşı savaş" başlattığı süreçte, Suriye'nin Hamas, Hezbollah, İslami Cihad gibi ABD'nin terör listesinde yer alan örgütlerle işbirliği problem yaratamıştır. Suriye bu örgütlerin meşru direniş gücü olduğunu savunmuş ve ABD'nin bu örgütlerle ilişkilerini koparma talebini geri çevirmiştir. Bu durum, Suriye'yi "şer ekseninin" fiili bir üyesi haline getirmişir. Ancak ilişkileri derinden sarsan olay ABD'nin 2003 yılında Irak'ı işgali olmuştur.

ABD'nin 19 Mart 2003 tarihinde Irak'ı işgal etmesiyle birlikte, ABD-Suriye ilişkileri derin yara almıştır. Suriye ABD'nin "Irak'ı Özgürleştirme Operasyonu" nun en büyük karşıtlarından biri olmuştur. "Suriye'nin neden 1991 yılında Körfez Savaşı'nda olduğu gibi 2003 yılındaki ABD'nin Irak'a yönelik müdahalesinde de ABD'nin yanında yer almadığı?" sorusuna verilecek cevap, bir devletin dış politika kararlarını açıklamada sadece yapısal faktörlerin etkili olmadığını anlama noktasında önem taşımaktadır. Beşar Esad'ın Irak müdahalesi esnasındaki ABD karşıtı tutumu literatürde tartışılan hususlar arasındadır. Uİ'de neorealist teoriler, zayıf güçlerin rasyonel oldukları varsayımından hareket ederek, tehdit oluşturan büyük bir güçle ortak hareket etmelerini öngörmektedirler. Bu bakış açısına göre, Suriye'nin ABD'yi gerçek anlamda dengeleme imkanın olmadığı bu süreçte süpergüç ile ortak hareket etmesi beklenmektedir. Bu çerçevede, 1991 yılında ABD ile yapılan işbirliğine atıfta bulunulmaktadır. Bu iki dönem arasındaki farklılıkları ortaya koymak, Suriye'nin neden farklı dış politika stratejileri izlediğini anlamayı sağlamaktadır.

Materyal kazançlar anlamında, ABD, Hafız Esad yönetimine Körfez Savaşı'nda çeşitli teşvikler sunarken, 2003 yılındaki ABD yönetimi Beşar Esad'a sadece tehditler sunmuştur. Colin Powell, Suriye ziyareti esnasında, Beşar Esad yönetimine yönelik bir liste dolusu beklentilerini açıklarken, karşılığında herhangi bir teşvik edici unsur sunmamıştır.

İkinci olarak, Suriye'nin iç siyasi kaygıları ve hesapları açısından bir kıyaslama yaptımızda Körfez Savaşı'nda Irak agresif olan tarafken, Irak işgali esnasında mağdur poziyonundadır. Diğer bir taraftan, Körfez Savaşı esnasında birçok Arap ülkesi ABD'nin yanında yer alırken, ABD'nin Irak işgaline çoğu Arap ülkesi ABD ile yakın ilişkiler içerisinde olsalar dahi açık destek verememiştir. Kimliğin bu derece kurumsallaştığı bir devlet için, ABD ile işbirliği, iç meşruiyetten ödün vermek anlamına gelebilecekti. ABD'nin Irak'a yönelik müdahalesine %90 oranında karşı çıkıldığı ve ABD'nin "soykırım" ve "terör" gibi suçlamalara maruz kaldığı ve ABD Başkanı Bush'un Hitler'le kıyaslandığı bir ortamda, Beşar Esad, ABD politikalarını eleştirme stratejisi izlemiştir. Bu strateji, Beşar Esad'a Arap kamuoyunda büyük bir prestij sağlamıştır. Ancak beraberinde güvenlik sorunlarını da getirmiştir. ABD'ye

meydan okumak Suriye açısından güvenlik problemleri yaratmıştır. Suriye, ABD karşısında kendisini güvensiz hissetmeye başlamış ve bunun bir sonucu olarak da çeşitli stratejiler izlemeye başlamıştır. Suriye zaman içerisinde, ABD ile belirli noktalarda uzlaşma yolu aramış ve ABD'nin bir sonraki hedefi olmayı engellemeye çalışmıştır. Suriye Ortadoğu siyasetinde önemli kartlara sahip olduğunu göstermeye çalışmıştır. İzlediği diğer bir strateji, işbirliği kanallarını geliştirmek olmuştur. Türkiye ile iki ülkenin Irak işgali ile birlikte tekrar gündeme gelen Kürt sorununa ilişkin kaygıları nedeniyle işbirliği kanalları kurulmuştur. Diğer taraftan, ABD'nin Irak müdahalesine destek vermeyen bazı AB ülkelerinin desteğini aranmıştır.

Suriye'nin Lübnan'daki rolü Suriye'nin Batı ile ilişkilerinde krize yol açan diğer bir konu olmuştur. Suriye'nin 1976 yılından itibaren Lübnan'da süregelen varlığını, 1989 yılında imzalanan Taif Antlaşması ile resmileşmesine olanak sağlayan ve Suriye'yi Lübnan'da bir istikrar unsuru olarak gören ABD, 2003 yılında Suriye'ye, Lübnan'dan geri çekilmesini söylemiştir. Uluslararası toplum da bu konuda, ABD'nin tavrını benimsemiştir. Diğer taraftan, Lübnanlılar da 2000'lerle birlikte, Lübnan'daki Suriye hegomonyasına karşı çıkmaya başlamış ve Suriye'ye karşı yoğun bir muhalefeti başlatmıştır. Bu çerçevede, Suriye'nin Lübnan'daki varlığına yönelik olarak artan muhalefeti ve baskıyı uluslararası ve iç siyaset düzeyinde incelemelidir. Uluslararası sistemin baskılarının, Beşar Esad yönetiminin algılamaları ve iç siyasete ilişkin hesaplarla ile örtüşmediği ve bu durumun bir sonucu olarak da Suriye'nin Lübnan'dan çekilmek zorunda kaldığı argümanı benimsenmiştir.

ABD'nin Suriye'nin Lübnan'daki varlığına ilişkin yaklaşımının farklılaşmasının temel nedeni konjoktürel değişimdir. Kimi analistler, Suriye'nin, Lübnan'dan çıkartılması ABD'nin 11 Eylül sonrası dünya dizaynının bir ürünü olarak görmektedir. Bu hususta, Suriye'nin ABD'nin itirazlarına rağmen devam ettirdiği Hizbullah ilişkisi etkili olmuştur. Bu konuda uluslararası anlamda görüş birliği sağlanmış ve yakın bir zamana kadar Suriye'nin Lübnan'da statükoyu sağlama görevini üstlendiği fikrini savunan devletler, ABD ve Fransa'nın girişimleri ile oluşturulan ve Lübnan'daki tüm yabancı güçlerin geri çekilmesini ortaya koyan 1559 sayılı Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi kararını devreye sokmuşlardır.

Uluslararası sistem düzeyindeki bu baskının, Suriye rejimi tarafından nasıl algılandığını incelendiğinde, Suriye yönetiminin açık bir şekilde bu baskıya karşı durduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Neoklasik realist teori kapsamında birinci aracı değişken olarak ele alından lider algılamalarına bakıldığında, Beşar Esad'ın Lübnan konusunda uluslararası atmosferi yanlış okuduğuna ilişkin bir görüş birliği mevcuttur. Beşar Esad, 11 Eylül sonrası süreçte, ABD ile El-Kaide konusunda işbirliği yapma gerekliliğini hissetmiş ancak bunu ABD tarafından terör örgütü olarak algılanan başta Hizbullah olmak üzere diğer gruplarla olan ilişkilerine yansıtmamıştır. Bu bazı yorumculara göre büyük bir stratejik hata olmuştur. Benzer bir şekilde Suriye'nin izlediği diğer taktiksel hatalardan bahsedilmektedir. Bunlardan bir tanesi, uluslararası toplumun yoğun baskılarına rağmen, Beşar Esad'ın, Suriye yanlısı Lübnan Başbakanı Emile Lahud'un görev süresini uzatma konusundaki ısrarıdır. Bu süre, Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi kararının uygulanmasının önünü açmıştır. Diğer taraftan, Hariri suikastı, Suriye'yi zor bir pozisyona sokmuştur. Her ne kadar, Suriye rejiminin bu suikasti gerçekleştirdiği iddiası kesin olarak doğrulanmasa da, bu suikastin içerisinde Suriye yönetiminin olduğu yönünde genel bir inanış oluşmuştur. Beşar Esad, bu süreçte, ABD veya Fransa ile işbirliği yolunu aramamış, Lübnan'daki poziyonunu vazgeçilmez olarak görerek, tavrını daha da agresifleştirmiştir.

Suriye'nin, Lübnan'daki varlığını sürdürme kararlılığının arkasında yatan en önemli neden ikinci aracı değişken olan kimlik, ideoloji ve rejiminin devamlılığı gibi hususları içeren iç siyasi kısıtlardır. Suriye, tarihi ve coğrafi olarak, Lübnan'ı, "Büyük Suriye" nin bir parçası olarak görmüştür. Lübnan politikasında Arap kimliğine vurgu yapılmış, "bir millet, iki devlet" sloganı benimsenmiştir. Lübnan'ın yönetimi Suriye açısından bölgesel prestij unsuru ve rejimin devamlılığının garantisi olarak görülmüştür. Bu sebeplerden ötürü, Beşar Esad yönetimi, Lübnan'dan çekilmeye son ana kadar direnmiştir. Lübnan'dan geri çekilme gerçekleştikten sonra da, Suriye'nin etkisinin devam edeceğine, Lübnan'daki varlığının askeri mevcudiyetine bağlı olmadığına vurgu yapılmıştır.

İdeolojik ve tarihsel öneminin yanısıra, Suriye'nin Lübnan'a ilişkin çıkarlarını üçünü aracı değişken olarak incelemek, Suriye'nin Lübnan'a yönelik yaklaşımını anlamada yardımcı olacaktır. Öncelikli olarak, Suriye'nin Lübnan'da güvenliğine ilişkin son derece önemli çıkarları vardır. Suriye, İsrail'le gerçekleşebilecek olası bir savaş halinde Beka Vadisi'ni büyük bir stratejik avantaj noktası olarak görmüştür. Suriye, Lübnan'ı kontrol altında tutarak, kendisine karşı gelişebilecek muhalif hareketleri engellemiş ve İsrail etkisi altına girmesinin önünde durmuştur. Bunun yanısıra, Lübnan'ın kontrolünü elinde tutmak, Suriye'ye uluslararsı anlamda siyasi kazanç sağlamıştır. Lübnan, uluslararası toplantılarda sadık bir şekilde Şam'ın çizgisini takip etmiş bu durum Suriye'ye iki oy elde etme şansı sağlamıştır. Lübnan'ı siyasi olarak elinde tutarak, barış görüşmelerinin Lübnan ayağını da kendine bağlamış, Lübnan-İsrail barış antlaşması ihtimalinin önü tıkamıştır. Suriye'nin Lübnan'a ilişkin çıkarlarının diğer bir boyutu ekonomi kazançtır. Lübnan, Suriye halkına yıllar boyunca oldukça geniş iş olanakları sunmuştur. Bu durum Suriye'nin yoğun işsizlik problemine bir çözüm olmuştur.

Bu çalışma kapsamında ele alınan iki uluslararası değişim (Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesi, 11 Eylül saldırıları) de Suriye dış politikasını önemli önemli ölçüde etkilemiş ve yeni politikalar geliştirmeye zorlamıştır. Suriye, birinci uluslararası değişime batı ile işbirliğine yönelerek tepki verirken, ikinci değişim sonrasında başta ABD olma üzere Batı devletleri ile ilişkilerini gergin bir noktaya taşımıştır. Bu iki dönemin karşılaştırmalı analizi sonucunda, uluslararası sistemin Suriye'nin politika seçimlerini etkilese ve sınırlasa da, Suriye liderlerinin uluslararası sistemi algılama biçimleri, iç siyasi kaygılar ve içsel motivasyonlar, Suriye devletinin uluslararası değişimler karşısında sergilediği dış politika davranışını şekillendirdiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, uluslararası ve iç siyasete ilişkin analiz düzeylerinin sürekli bir iletişim ve etkileşim halinde olduğu vurgulanmaktadır.

APPENDIX C.

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü ☒ X

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü ☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Dersan
Adı : Duygu
Bölümü : Uluslararası İlişkiler

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Responses to International Changes: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of Syrian Foreign Policy, 1990-2005

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☐   Doktora ☒ X

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐

3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☒ X

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:

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